

How To Herald A Court

One of the more visible aspects of heraldry is in court, with a herald supporting Their Majesties or a Baron and Baroness. The secret to success if you are heralding a court is preparation, and a few small pointers! If you are interested in heralding court, approach your Baron and Baroness, or the Trillium Herald — they are always looking for volunteers, and can help you through your first steps of learning the ropes.

THE VOICE OF THE CROWN

The number one thing to remember when you are a court herald: you are the voice of the Crown. What that means is that whenever you speak in your capacity as a court herald, it is really Their Majesties' words you are saying, not yours. So — that means anything you say reflects on the King and Queen. Your words should not surprise or alarm the King and Queen, and while people might be paying attention to what you are saying, court is not about you personally, but the Crown.

PREPARATION BEFORE COURT

Getting ready for court should happen well before people start processing into court, so the first thing that should happen is you should volunteer, or be told you will be helping with court that day — the earlier the better. Approach the royalty, and ask if they have an agenda or list of business they wish to conduct in court — if they do, make sure you have a copy to keep inside your herald's folder — if not, make a list of the people to call up in court, in the order the royalty wishes. If ceremonies are going to be conducted from a script, or fealties will be sworn, make sure you have a copy of this ceremonies book at hand, and have the needed pages pulled out or bookmarked and easily accessed during court. There may be scrolls to be presented, or proclamations to make — have these lined up behind your agenda in your folder in the order to be presented, and take some time in the royalty room to pre-read the scrolls. It is important that you practice the scrolls aloud, at least in a low mutter, so that you identify difficult words and phrases. Usually the scribes will provide a “cheat-sheet” of typed words, but if they haven't, and the scroll calligraphy looks difficult, make sure you write out the wording in advance. It is a rare person who can read calligraphy cold. Even if the scroll text is conveniently typed out in readable format on the back of the scroll, you will want to pre-read it anyway to get a sense of the rhythm and pacing of the text, and to practice all the names which are going to be mentioned.

INCOMING BUSINESS

With Their Majesties permission, you will also want to give the populace an opportunity to bring forth any additional pieces of business for court. About two hours before court is scheduled (if possible), cry the hall. With a loud “Oyez, oyez, oyez!”, announce that anyone wishing to present business in Their Majesties' court must come and see you by a certain time. It is wise not to make this deadline any later than an hour before court is scheduled to start, so that you can incorporate the new pieces of business into your existing court list. Any pieces of business which come from the populace should be run by Their Majesties first to make sure they're okay with it. Their Majesties should never be surprised in court! Even if a gift is being presented, try to give the royalty a rough gist of what is being brought forth (for example, “Your Majesties, the Barony of Skraeling Althing wishes to present some regalia and a donation to your travel fund”). Typically, once approved, ‘incoming business’ or presentations from the populace should occur before their Majesties' ‘outgoing business’ or award presentations. Sometimes if court is long, or presentations are particularly informal or bizarre, the royalty may ask for them to be

presented at feast — however, all gifts of regalia, money, or awards must be presented in an official court.

STARTING COURT

Right before court, make a washroom break, put on your tabard or baldric, arrange the scrolls in your folder in the correct order, and ask the royalty if they have any last-minute changes. If props or other items are needed in court, ensure they are up by the thrones beforehand, ensure chairs have been set up for court, and let the populace know court is imminent. The royalty will often wish to process in to court — if this is the case, the typical order of royalty and retainers are as follows (although this list is very comprehensive, it's just a guideline — sometimes the King's champion may not be present, or the Prince and Princess may not have a herald of their own):

- The King and Queen's herald
- The King and Queen's armed champions and/or spear bearers
- The King and Queen
- The King and Queen's retainers and other champions
- The Prince and Prince's herald
- The Prince and Prince's armed champions
- The Prince and Princess
- The Prince and Prince's retainers and other champions
- The Baron and Baroness' herald
- The Baron and Baroness' armed champions
- The Baron and Baroness
- The Baron and Baroness' retainers and other champions.

When everything is in place, the herald will then announce the presence of the royalty processing into court with a loud **"All Rise for their Majesties!"**

Enterprising court heralds may elaborate the announcement into a 'boast'. If you are trying an elaborate announcement, make sure you have written it out in advance! An extreme example might sound like:

"All rise and due reverence to King Nigel and Queen Adrielle, third of their line and sovereigns of the North, Admiral of the Inland Seas and Protector of the Beornweald come this day on business of the court! Also be upstanding for Prince Siegfried and Princess Xristinia, heirs to the throne, and Baron Dafydd and Baroness Mahild of Septentria!"

As you are announcing the presence of the royalty, you should be processing up towards the thrones at a stately pace — sprinting ahead of the royalty isn't necessary! The spear-bearers (if any) should take their places on either side of the royal presence, and the other retainers should make their way behind the thrones as the royalty become settled. As the royalty sit, they will invite the nobles attending court to sit as well, often saying something along the lines of **"please seek what comfort you may"**.

Once you have checked with the royalty and everyone is ready to go, you should officially 'open' court. It can be as simple as **"herein opens the court of their Majesties!"** or as elaborate as **"All gentles and nobles gathered here mark well the occasion of the court of Nigel and Adrielle upon the occasion of the Feast of the Bear held in their canton of Eoforwic this 12th day of May, Anno Societatis LI! Pay notice to the following business of the Crown ..."**

If there is a baronial court to be held, traditionally their herald will ask permission of the Crown, and it will occur before kingdom business. As you proceed through your court list, you should call people forth, proceed down your court list, and check with a quiet word to the royalty as you complete each item, advising them what is coming up — after all, you have the court list in front of you, and they usually do not! When presenting a scroll, regalia, or gift in court as the herald, do not hand it to the recipient directly! Give it to the royalty to present it from their hands. As awards are given out, wait till the royalty have finished speaking to the award recipient, and they have stood up, and give a hearty **“For John of London, wassail!”** Keep your court list at the front of your herald’s folder, so you won’t blank on the recipient’s name after you have given the scroll to the royalty! If a person is not present, check with the royalty — they will either ask you to call **“... or someone to accept for them”**, and have you read the scroll and they will give it to someone on their behalf, or they will have you simply move on to the next item. After all items on your court list are done, check with the royalty to see if they want to do anything else, and if not, close their court with the announcement **“there being no further business before this court, it is closed, all rise for Their Majesties!”**. If the royalty plan on having another court later in the day, don’t close the court, but instead announce it is suspended or prorogued. Process out with the royalty, and you are (almost) done!

AFTER COURT

Congratulations, you are almost done! Return with the royalty to the royalty room, and give back anything that belongs to them as needed. If an award scroll wasn’t presented in court, return it and strike it from your court list as it has not been officially presented. If you are feeling particularly ambitious, you may wish to help the royalty’s retinue disassemble the thrones and banners and pack them up if they are done with them for the day.

SUBMITTING THE COURT REPORT

When you get home, submit a report of the business conducted in court using the ealdormere.courtreports@emaildodo.com email address. This ensures that your report will be sent to both Trillium Herald and Caleygreyhound Herald. This will complete your tasks, and allow the official business to be recorded in our kingdom’s order of precedence!

TIPS TO MAKE COURT BETTER

No one enjoys listening to a herald shrieking incoherently at the top of their lungs. Good court heralds don’t yell, they project, and there is a big difference between the two. The trick is to speak from your diaphragm. The breath should come from deep within your torso, not high up in your chest or throat. This gives strength to your voice and allows you to be loud without yelling. This can be tricky for those who are not used to it — practice is the key. If you’ve got experienced heralds you can practice around, so much the better. If you yell your way through a court, you lose a lot of enunciate control, and your voice. It’s also not particularly pleasant for the audience to listen to. Another important factor in heralding clearly is enunciation. Don’t mumble your way through. In fact, you need to enunciate more than when you normally speak so that the audience can understand what you’re saying (remember, they’re pretty far away). Rhythm, tempo and pacing are also extremely important. Speaking in a monotone is really boring for your audience, and doesn’t bring any kind of dignity to the court. But if your voice flows up and down at the appropriate points, if you pause in the right places, if your phrasing is right, if you speak not-too-fast and not-too-slow, then you will make it interesting and will bring a wonderful sense of ceremony to the whole thing. That makes Their Majesties look good and brings a

sense of mystique and wonder to the institution of SCA Royalty. We've all heard of courts which just dragged on and on and on. Sometimes there is really nothing a herald can do about this. If Their Majesties are giving out 43 awards, for example, then court is going to be long and repetitious and people are going to get bored. But there are some things you can do to snap it up a bit. First of all, if you sound interested, people will find court less boring. A snappy, interesting herald with good rhythm and pacing who does a court with 20 pieces of business will be far less painful than a monotone, hard-to-hear, stumbles-when-they-read herald doing a court with only five pieces of business. Secondly, there is stuff you can do to save time:

- When reading award scrolls, you don't have to read the whole thing. It is not necessary every single time to say the date, event and hosting group, which usually appears at the bottom of the scroll. Everybody already knows this. If you just end with "done this day!", you can skip the last paragraph and shave a few minutes off of each award presented.
- If the hall is really huge and the person being called up has to walk all the way up to the front, and the royalty wish, you can start reading the award scroll as they're walking up. This can save you another few minutes per award.
- If a person is called up, and it turns out that they're at the event but not in the hall, and someone is going to have to go and get them, ask Their Majesties for permission to move on to the next piece of business while the first person is being fetched. This saves quite a bit of time, and you can re-call the missing person as the next item.
- While the royalty are talking to the award recipient, take a moment to make sure your next item of business is in place in your folder and ready to go — that avoids fumbling or delays between awards.
- Watch your timing for completing an award presentation, crying "Wassail!", and calling the next person. Don't step on anyone's lines and keep dignity to the whole affair, but avoid huge long delays.

Never ever forget that it's not your show. As the herald, you are the voice, and the visible stage director of whatever occurs, but it's really Their Majesties who are in charge. Don't lose sight of this. This is why you need to be careful about using humour. If Their Majesties are trying to run something very serious and dignified, and you are attempting to be witty, you have lost sight of whose show it really is. Don't clash with Their Majesties' style and don't try to steal the show. This is not at all to say that being funny is bad — most Royals really like to infuse Their courts with some entertainment, but it's better to channel some British "Yes, Minister" humor rather than Robin Williams zaniness. Know the style of the Royals whose court you are heralding, and follow Their lead, and you should be alright.

As you are the servant of the Crown, try to look the part — take off any coronet you might be wearing, set aside the sunglasses, and don't wear your flashiest court garb that would upstage the royalty.

Another side effect of court not being your show is that Their Majesties may decide to throw in something unexpected — you should always be ready to roll with the punches. A herald who can think particularly well on their feet is a precious jewel.

WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

Even the best heralds mess up — some of them have epic stories! The trick is not to get so totally flustered that you screw up the remainder of court. Don't freeze or panic! If you keep going, the mistake

is quickly forgotten, and if you are mildly self-deprecating, the crowd will love it. Take the stumble with good grace, do the best you can to fix whatever went wrong, and recover as much as possible. If you have a choice between the royalty looking bad, or you taking the blame for a mistake, jump on that grenade (for example, "My apologies your Majesty, I completely forgot to call Master Berengar of Bastille!").

Don't be afraid to roll with the punches. Royals are greatly appreciative of heralds who can really think on their feet.