

The Basic Herald

Reference Books

Bronwyn ferch Gwyn ap Rhys

Let's face it: practically all SCAdians are bibliophiles. And if, good gentle, you are anything like me, you will want to own a copy of every book available on every subject in which you are interested. Unfortunately, most of the subjects in which SCAdians are interested are esoteric (at the very least), and therefore books on those subjects are expensive and (sometimes) hard-to-find.

Heraldry, of course, is no exception to that rule. Furthermore, it would be unreasonable to expect any local herald to own more than a handful of books; and it would be unkind to expect a small group to pick up the tab for hundreds of dollars worth of books, even if those books would continue to be an asset to the group for years to come.

Therefore, here is a list of what the Kingdom of Northshield College of Heralds currently considers (at least until Lady Polaris reviews it) to be the most important books to which the local herald should have access .

SCA Heraldry

Armory – SCA and Related Sources

The Society Administrative Handbook and Rules for Submission are mandatory. You must have copies of each, and have read them at least once. However, I suspect that you'll have to read them more than that.

Kingdom of Northshield: Submissions Forms. You can find these at the Kingdom web site

The Society's *Armorial and Ordinary* is online. You should familiarize yourself with how to use it since it will be an important part of your life from now until you take off your green tabard. You may find it at four sites, but <http://oanda.sca.org/> and <http://www.heraldsnet.org/heraldry/Oanda/> will give you a good start.

Bruce Draconarius of Mistholme and Akagawa Yoshio. *A Pictorial Dictionary of Heraldry as Used in the SCA*. Private printing, 1988. Second Edition, 1992. Before I obtained a copy of this book, I wondered what all the shouting was about. Now, however, I regularly wonder how I managed without it. While this is not an "official SCA publication," it is invaluable to all levels (both hierarchical and skill) of heralds since it lists the SCA defaults for charges as well as illustrates almost every type of charge known in SCA armory.

The Academy of St. Gabriel's *Medieval Heraldry Archive* <http://www.s-gabriel.org/heraldry> has several articles on medieval heraldry that can be useful in creating a period-style device. It also has links to a large number of online resources.

Armory Texts

One of the following two:

Brooke-Little, J. P. *Boutell's Heraldry*. London: Frederick Warne & Co. Ltd., 1970. One of the standard, basic books on heraldry. The 1890 edition is available for download at <http://books.google.com/books>.

OR

Fox-Davies, A. C. *A Complete Guide to Heraldry*. New York: Dodge Publishing Co., 1909; Reprint: New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2007. This is available at Amazon.com for a modest price. Fox-Davies also wrote

another book entitled *The Art of Heraldry*, which is filled with pictures of arms from several centuries. It's amusing and perhaps inspiring for the heraldic artist, but I wouldn't say it was necessary except as a curiosity.

Friar, Stephen, ed. *A Dictionary of Heraldry*. New York: Harmony Books, 1987. I refer to Friar twenty times more frequently than any other book in my collection (except the *Pictorial Dictionary*). Because there has been a trend to return to a more medieval style of drawing heraldic devices in the British Society of Heraldic Arts, this book is an essential reference to the practicing herald and heraldic artist. Alas and alack, it is out of print; however I picked up another copy from <http://www.abebooks.com> not too long ago.

Neubecker, Ottfried. *Heraldry: Sources, Symbols and Meaning*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Book Co. (UK) Limited, 1976. Neubecker includes a great deal of information on continental heraldic trends as well as British. While it can be difficult to use (unless you know exactly what you're looking for), it is a good background book. It's out-of-print currently, but is still fairly available.

Parker, James. *A Glossary of Terms Used in Heraldry*. Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1970. Even though the drawings are Victorian, Parker describes over a thousand charges found in English armory. I love it. And, it's another book available at <http://books.google.com/books>.

Woodward, John and George Burnett. *Woodward's A Treatise on Heraldry British and Foreign with English and French Glossaries*. Even though it was originally published in 1892, it is still considered a gem. And, guess what? It's downloadable! (<http://books.google.com/books>)

Onomastics:

Onomastics is the study of names, and is the bane to most heralds. I was one of them until just recently, but am starting to learn.

The Society has a number of articles on names at <http://heraldry.sca.org/heraldry/laurel/names.html>

The *Academy of St. Gabriel's Medieval Names Archive* <http://www.s-gabriel.org/heraldry> is a fine library of articles about naming practices throughout the world. This is a good place to start looking for information on names, and can help you and your client in choosing and documenting an authentic name. Another wonderful resource is the library of past Academy reports - studies that have previously been done for other people. There are over 3,000 reports, and the number keeps growing.

IF AND ONLY IF your client would like to have an authentic name, is having trouble with documentation, needs help, and is willing to go along with the restrictions that go along with the service, the Academy offers research help. It ordinarily takes somewhere between one and four months for the research to be conducted, and not everyone who applies is selected.

The *Northshield Herald's Mailing List* is one of your best sources for information on period names. There are a lot of books out there, and members of the list are usually happy to help if you are having problems. If you aren't on the list, you should be.

Ironically, when I first put this bibliography together, Reaney was out-of-print and Withycomb was readily available. Now, the situation is reversed.

Haraldsson, Geir Bassi: *The Old Norse Name*. This was prepared for the Markland group, another medieval re-creation organization. It's the best we have on Norse names, and is available from the SCA Stock Clerk

for a mere \$6.00. Given how popular Norse personae are here in Northshield, it's almost a must for a group herald.

Reaney, P.H. and R. M. Wilson: *The Oxford Dictionary of English Surnames*. Revised Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005 (3rd edition with revisions). Something of a legend in the SCA, the information Reaney & Wilson is drawn from original period sources, and gives dates at which names were first found. If you find it here, you don't even have to provide a photocopy! (See addendum). Better snarf this up before it gets away again.

Withycombe, E. G. *A Dictionary of English Christian Names*. New York: Oxford University Press. Second Edition, 1977; Third Edition, 1988

I could have filled several more pages with great books about our strange avocation, but this should be enough to strain anyone's purse if purchased at the same time. Luckily, as I indicated, some of what would be the most expensive books on the list are now available online.

Enjoy