

How to Create a New Award:

A guide for Royalty, Baronage, and Everyone Trying to Help

Cormac Mor, originally published at <http://herald.poore-house.com/protocol/new-award/>

The process of establishing a new SCA award, honor, or order is a bit more complex than many would care to believe. There are rules and procedures to be followed, and those who ignore them run the risk of leaving a headache for their successors. Fortunately, you the reader are a thoughtful and diligent Royal, Landed Noble, or member of their retinue who wants to make sure that you do this right. This article is designed to help guide you through all of the steps to creating a new award.

Where appropriate, I will do my best to distinguish between actual rules and procedures and my personal opinions. However, my opinions are informed by 20 years of service as a herald, including four as a Principal Herald and another three as a Sovereign of Arms, and 10 years as a Peer of the Realm (as of this writing).

Ask yourself: “Do we REALLY need another award?”

Before we even begin discussing how to create an award, you need to ask yourself whether the process needs to happen at all. Does your populace need a new award, or does the existing award structure you’ve inherited already address your needs?

Receiving a new award can feel very special to the first people to receive it. But ours is a game of tradition and history, so joining the ranks of a long-established order can feel just as special, if not more so. Just as importantly, giving an existing award tells all those who’ve previously been recognized with it that the award still means something in your group.

However, creating a new award that functions identically to an existing award may send a message to all of the recipients of the previous award that their recognition is obsolete and will soon be forgotten.

To avoid hurting anyone’s feelings, and to make sure you don’t create unnecessary paperwork, it’s important to look at your existing awards and see whether they can be used either as-is or with some creative interpretation to honor your populace appropriately.

As an example, let’s take a look at the award system of my current barony of residence, the Barony of Three Mountains (with many thanks to Their Excellencies of Three Mountains for allowing this analysis).



Case Study: Three Mountains

The Barony of Three Mountains lists their awards in several places, including [an overview on their website](#), in Section IX of the Customary found in their [document library](#), and buried in the database code of the kingdom [Order of Precedence](#). When the award lists and descriptions don't match, the best practice is to refer to the legal documents; in this case, the Customary functions as the baronial equivalent of kingdom law.

The Barony breaks recognition down into four types: Tokens (“can be given multiple times” and “intended to be presented on the spot”), Awards (for “Merit worthy of recognition by the Barony”), Orders (given after consultation with existing honorees), and Honors (given upon completion of a baronial position, usually a championship).

The Customary contains 32 recognitions, 21 of which are listed as active. Six have been closed, two were one-off awards given specifically for individuals, and the remaining three are more or less dormant. Not included in the Customary at time of writing is the Award of Ethereal Splendour, created during the pandemic and listed on the overview page.

That's a lot of awards for one barony. What are they all for?

The non-closed Three Mountains recognitions fall into the following categories:

- *Service*
 1. **Golden Torc** – token
 2. **Crystal Rainbow** – order
 3. **Three Mountains** – order
 4. **Pinecone** – token, personal service to Baron
 5. **Trillium** – token, personal service to Baroness
 6. **Heart of Three Mountains** – award, youth
 7. **Olwyn o Aur** – token, for waterbearers, field heralds, marshalls, and list officers
 8. **Roland's Oliphant** – award, for those who help clean up at the end of the event
 9. **Ethereal Splendour** – award, for “supporting the barony online through teaching, entertainment, or community building”
 10. **Sergeancy Emeritus** – honor, for former sergeants

11. **Heart of the Children** – honor, for children of the Baronage
- *Arts & Sciences*
 1. **Amber Leaf** – token
 2. **Mountain Sun** – order
 3. **Myrtle Leaf** – award, specifically for individual persona development
 4. **Culinaria Ingenium** – award, specifically in culinary arts
 5. **Coronets Dance Favor** – token, given to the sergeantry candidate who excels the most in dancing
 - *Martial activities*
 1. **Mountain's Pride** – honor, for past champions
 2. **Phoenix Favor** – held by the Baronial Armored Champion
 - *Courtesy, behavior or other general esteem*
 1. **Aegidis Honoris** – order, for exceptional courtesy and chivalrous behavior
 2. **Guillermo's Rose** – token, for courtesy and chivalrous behavior
 3. **Damask Rose** – order, for courtesy and chivalrous behavior
 4. **Janeltis Favor** – token, most chivalrous armored combatant at the Champion's Tournament
 5. **Baronial Treasure** – award, "in recognition of the high regard and affection one is held by the Coronet and people of the Barony for one's exceedingly kind and generous support of same"
 6. **Mountain's Muse** – award, for Inspiring others to achieve their highest potential
 7. **Motley Round** – token, given "to those whose efforts promote levity in the Barony"

If the Baron and Baroness of Three Mountains want to honor the service of someone within their barony, they have five options to choose from (including two Orders) regardless of the type of service, and six more recognitions for specific kinds of service.

If Their Excellencies wish to honor a populace member's courtesy, they have three different options from which to choose if the honoree is not a fighter, and another if they're exceptionally chivalrous during a particular list.

If the Baronage wants to recognize a member of their populace who is especially skilled in dance, they can choose to either rely on the two general Arts and Sciences awards, or expand the scope of the Coronets Dance Favor to include the whole populace.

If, however, Three Mountains wanted to highlight the prowess of martial artists beyond honoring the winners of the championship tournaments, then they may find the existing recognition structure to be in need of a more general order or award.

Review all of your existing awards to determine whether an award either covers the behavior or activity being recognized, or whose definition could be easily modified to include it.

Yes, we need a new award. What are the rules for making new awards?

Corpora IV.G.1, IV.H.3, and IV., and V.B.3 first mention the ability to establish and bestow awards to the Crown, Coronet, and Baronage respectively. IV.G.1 explicitly states that “The Crown may establish and present such other awards as the Crown shall deem proper, in accordance with the laws and customs of the kingdom.”

Corpora VIII.B outlines the requirements for awards below the Peerage level in the SCA. VIII.B.2 grants the power to create armigerous (AoA) and grant-level orders and awards to kingdoms and principalities (the latter with crown approval). VIII.B.4 gives the power to create non-armigerous orders and awards to kingdoms, principalities, and baronies, and extends the ability to create armigerous awards (with royal approval) to baronies. It further states that “The Crown must approve any non-armigerous award or order before it may be recognized by the College of Heraldry of a kingdom and given a place in its Order of Precedence.”³

Both VIII.B.2 and VIII.B.4 make it clear that the names and armory/insignia* of the awards and orders must be approved by the Laurel Sovereign of Arms.

So, per Corpora, a new award must:

1. be approved by the Crown for inclusion in the Order of Precedence
2. have any armigerous status approved by the Crown if for a principality or barony
3. have a name and armory registered with the College of Arms, and
4. be established in accordance with kingdom law and custom

For those ambitious Royalty and Baronage in the audience, the same requirements also apply to existing awards, many of which have never been registered and are unregistrable under the current standards for names and armory. So if you're feeling particularly eager to bring your award system into alignment with Corpora, work with your kingdom's Principal Herald and holders of the existing unregistered awards to find a suitable award name and insignia. Feel free to continue to use this guide for assistance.

The first two requirements are resolved quickly by formal communication with the Crown, and the third requirement will make up much of the rest of this document. As for the fourth requirement, this guide is too general to get into the specifics of all twenty kingdoms, but typically the establishment of kingdom and principality awards require that they be included within their respective laws. This will require an amendment to kingdom or principality law, the basic process of which is outlined in Corpora IV.F.2: “All changes...must be proclaimed at a Society event and published in the kingdom newsletter. No provision of law shall be in effect...until such proclamation and publication have taken place.”

Disclaimer: The preceding section is not legal advice. I have not been a seneschal since 2005, and it was for a college group. Consult with your seneschal to ensure the implementation of your new award is in alignment with the appropriate laws and customs of your kingdom, principality, or barony.

How do I get my new award's name and armory approved by the Laurel Sovereign of Arms?

First things first: You will need to look at known naming patterns for award names, then use those patterns to name your recognition.

Name

A lot of this research has been done already, and easily available on the College of Arms website. The most useful resource is going to be [Medieval Secular Order Names](#) by Juliana de Luna. Briefly summarized, secular order names in period follow one of a few distinct patterns.

They are, in increasing order of rarity:

- **heraldic charge** e.g. Order of the Boar, Order of the Pomegranate, Order of the Star
- **saint's name** e.g. Order of Saint George, Order of the Holy Spirit, Order of Saint Michael Archangel
- **color + heraldic charge** e.g. Order of the Golden Fleece, Order of the Black Swan, Order of the White Greyhound
- **regalia** e.g. Order of the Garter, Order of the Sash, Order of the Collar
- **saint's name + other** e.g. Order of Saint George's Shield, Order of Saint Williams Shield, Order of Saint Georges and Saint Williams Shields
- **non-color adjective + heraldic charge** e.g. Order of the Double Crown, Order of the Crowned Ibex
- **two charges** e.g. Order of the Fish and Falcon, Order of the Hound and Wreath, Order of the Unicorn and Maiden
- **abstract virtue** e.g. Order of Hope, Order of Old Love, Order of Green[Young] Love
- **saint's name + place name** e.g. Order of Our Lady of Gelders, Order of Saint George of Rougemont
- **person** e.g. Order of the Fool
- **place name** e.g. Order of Loreto
- **"complex"** e.g. Order of the Green Shield with the White Lady

You'll note that while there are a lot of patterns of award names used in the SCA that don't appear on this list. Among the more common award patterns that aren't currently documentable are:

- **heraldic charge's body part** e.g. Order of the Viper's Fang, Order of the Lion's Heart, Order of the Unicorn's Fourth Lumbar Vertebra (if the body part is a heraldic charge in its own right, like a bear's head or a lion's paw, this is registerable as "Order of the [heraldic charge]")
- **heraldic charge's possession** e.g. Order of the Griffin's Sword, Order of the Stag's Key, Order of the Wolf's Bagpipe
- **heraldic charge's virtue** e.g. Order of the Hare's Joy, Order of the Ship's Pride, Order of the Cornucopia's Generosity
- **adjectives other than color or "crowned" + heraldic charge** e.g. Order of the Howling Hamster, Order of the Bountiful Table, Order of the Beneficent Gillyflower
- **heraldic charge made out of a particular material** e.g. Order of the Copper Shield, Order of the Crystal Skull, Order of the Velvet Watermelon

These and many other patterns try to imbue the award name with poetry and romance that simply don't follow the evidence we find in period European practice. Fortunately, it's easy

enough to find the essence of an award name and modify it to fit the pattern.

For example, say you want to create an award that recognizes the strength and ferocity of your populace. Your main heraldic charge is a bear, so you've tentatively named your award the Order of the Bear's Strength. Unfortunately, "Order of [heraldic charge]'s [virtue]" isn't a known order pattern. However, Order of the Bear and Order of Strength are both documentable award names, the first being a heraldic charge and the second being a virtue.

Now, to be sure, there are some tricks heralds can pull to force names into a period pattern. For example, when the Kingdom of Æthelmearc submitted "Order of the Howling Wolf," it was found to be undocumentable. However, the pattern of Saint's Name + other (usually a heraldic charge) is documentable. Moreover, the term Saint does not always appear in such period order names, so it can be omitted as necessary. The College of Arms was able to find documentation for the 16th century surname Howling, and for the purposes of this submission assumed the existence of a Saint Howling. And just as Saint George can have a shield, so too can Saint Howling have a wolf. The College changed the name to "Order of Howlings Wolf " and registered it.

The problem with this stunt documentation is that what's registered and what's commonly used should be the same thing. Does the average subject of Æthelmearc think of this award as "Order of Howlings Wolf " with the un-apostrophe'd possessive, or as "Order of the Howling Wolf" with the definite article? Heraldic records show the former, but kingdom newsletter snippets reveal the latter.

It's also a problem because it reinforces an ahistorical understanding of what awards and honors were called in period, which then perpetuates the undocumentable models when the next Crown or Coronet wants to create a new award.

The simplest names for an Order or Award are often the most memorable and desirable. Consider the Order of Chivalry [virtue], the Order of the Laurel [regalia], or the Order of the Pelican [heraldic charge] in the SCA, and how they emulate the period Order of the Garter [regalia], Order of the Star [charge], and Order of the Golden Fleece [color+heraldic charge]. Trust that the inspiration and poetry will come not from the name of the Order, but instead from the deeds it's used to recognize and from the language your heralds and scribes will craft to bestow it.

Like any submission, award and order names must be checked for conflict. "Order of the Bear," previously mentioned, conflicts with my own personal heraldic title, Beare Herald. However, we can modify the award name to clear conflict, for example by adding a color (quick check: "Red Bear" does not appear to have any conflicts at time of writing).

However, the easiest way to clear conflict is by adding the submitter's branch name to the Order name, i.e. "Order of the Bear *of Bjornsborg*." Laurel has ruled repeatedly that adding an SCA branch to the end of an award name is an acceptable variation on period naming practices. In fact, when a conflict for an award name is found at the Society level, this is the most common change proposed by Pelican to clear the conflict. If you give pre-emptive permission to add "of

[your branch name]” in case of conflict, this will streamline the process.

Second things second: Now that you have an award name, you need to look at badges and insignia.

Badge

Corpora (see references above) requires Laurel approval of all names and armory/insignia of an award or order. The term “armory” is applied to armigerous awards and orders in VIII.B.2, while “insignia” is used for non-armigerous awards and orders. While I can find no confirmation that this is the case, I would make the argument that this differentiates the requirements between armigerous honors which should have registered armory, and non-armigerous honors which could have a token that sits outside of the definitions of heraldry.

If the token of your order is a pendant of any sort, it’s most likely registerable as a fieldless badge. For example, Caid’s youth award, the Order of the Acorn, has as its token a wooden acorn hung from a cord. It’s registered as “(Fieldless) An acorn proper.” However, if the token of your order is a piece of regalia such as a garter or scarf, then it doesn’t fit within the parameters of a registerable heraldic badge and can be relegated to kingdom law, customary, or other relevant regulatory document.

If your award will be a badge, there are several things to consider. The first is to keep the design as simple as possible, so that it may be easily reproduced on medallions and scrolls. Simple, iconic designs will ensure that the recipients of your new award can be identified at a glance. The second is to make sure that the badge fits within the aesthetic of the rest of the awards in your branch’s repertoire. If your group has a motif that they’ve used for the rest of their badges, such as Caid’s blue field and white embattled border, An Tir’s gold and white checky background, or Atlantia’s nautical theme, it’s advisable to either continue the motif for the new award, or have a good reason to make an exception.

Finally, make sure that the design you propose follows the rules of heraldry. For a refresher, [here’s my primer on armorial design](#).

I’ve got my award name documented, and its armory designed and checked for conflict. How do I submit them?

An award name and badge are both standard items within the heraldic submission process. To submit a name, you’ll need to submit a non-personal name form with the information filled out, including documentation of the name elements. To submit a badge, you’ll need to place the artwork on a badge form with the appropriate contact information filled in at the top. You’ll then submit the two items along with the submission fees to your kingdom’s submissions herald (please check with the heralds in your kingdom for location of forms and price for submissions). From the time the submission is received by the submissions herald, it will take approximately eight months to hear back from Laurel on whether the name and armory have been registered.

You will hear back earlier if it's returned in-kingdom. If you're really, really kind and patient with your submissions herald, they may let you know how commentary is going prior to the publication of the decision letter, to better gauge the likelihood of the name and armory passing.

Wait...eight months? Why does it take eight months?

Submissions go through a multi-step review process to make sure they are unique, documented, and in keeping with the standards set forth in Society policy. Generally, submissions first go to a kingdom submissions herald, who circulates it to other heralds in-kingdom on a Letter of Intent. After a month of commentary, the submissions herald determines whether there are any glaring rules issues or conflicts, then forwards a revised Letter of Intent to heralds across the Society for two months of further review. After the commentary period closes, the Sovereigns of Arms review the comments, make the final decision on whether a name or piece of armory is accepted or returned for further work, and write their decision in a Letter of Acceptances and Returns. The letter is circulated through a handful of senior heralds for proofreading before publication. The entire process takes about seven or eight months.

For example: The Kingdom of An Tir recently submitted a badge for the Order of Sanguins Thorn. The submission was received by Lions Blood Herald on May 6, and published it on an internal Letter of Intent on May 8. Commentary closed on June 6, Lions Blood reviewed the commentary, and published the external Letter of Intent on June 14. The turnaround for both the internal and external letters in this example are very fast; letters are usually published closer to the end of the month.

Commentary on the external letter closed August 31, after two full months had passed. Wreath King of Arms met on September 10 to review all of the armory on Letters of Intent published in the month of June, and over the course of the month wrote all of the decisions. The initial draft was distributed for proofreading on October 9, with revisions due back October 15. Notes from the reviewers were received and the letter edited. The second draft was sent out to proofreaders on October 24, with revisions due back on October 28. The final notes were reincorporated, the draft finalized, and the Letter of Acceptances and Returns was published on November 10, six months and four days after the submission was received by Lions Blood. Another submission on the same internal Letter of Intent from An Tir was sent to Lions Blood on April 6, which makes the full processing time of that submission at seven months and four days. Submissions from other kingdoms on the same Letter of Acceptances and Returns were completed as early as March, and their path to approval took the more typical full eight months.

Okay, but...eight months?! Crown and Coronet reigns are only six months**! Isn't there some way of making an exception and expediting the submissions process for award names and armory?

Unfortunately for Royal submitters, all submissions are treated equally as a matter of policy. Submissions coming directly from the Crown or Coronet may expedite an internal Letter of

Intent from a particularly attentive submissions herald, but nothing else can make the process go faster.

If a Crown or Coronet wishes to make a new award and see it registered before the end of their reign, they will need to start the submissions process while they're still heirs to the throne.

What can I do during the eight month submissions process to prepare for the new award?

Once you've got the submissions underway, there's plenty to do in advance of their registration. Kingdom and principality awards should appear in their respective books of law, which require their own process for revision. Baronies with charters, customaries, or similar should likewise include their awards in said governing documents. While it's not advised to implement the law changes prior to the registration of the award name and armory, work with your seneschal and chronicler to draft the changes and prepare for their implementation.

If the award is for a barony or principality, you will need to seek approval from the Crown to get the award into the Order of Precedence. If the award is intended to be armigerous, you will likewise need the Crown's blessing for that honor. And be sure to alert your kingdom's keeper of the Order of Precedence, so they know that a new award is incoming and can incorporate it into the database.

Your new award will likewise require a new ceremony and (probably) a scroll text. Work with your heralds and scribes to draft these and have them ready for when you receive notification that the name and badge have been accepted. For more information on how to write scroll texts that follow period forms and patterns, see [Alys Mackintoich's blog](#).

Finally, you have plenty of time to decide who you want to honor as the premiere recipients of your new award!

I hope you found this essay useful as you seek to create a new award. Please let me know if you found it helpful, or if you have any further questions!

*Emma de Fetherstan, Laurel Queen of Arms as of this writing, notes that, especially for non-armigerous awards, it's not absolutely necessary to register insignia, especially if it's a design that will never actually be used for scrolls, medallions, or other regalia. However, you still need to register the name of the award. While I would never deign to contradict Laurel, I still encourage you to both register a badge for each award, to keep with the letter of the law, and to use said badge as much as possible on all paraphernalia associated with the award.

**four months for the Crown of the West