

Society for Creative Anachronism
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For the February 2025 meetings, printed April 5, 2025

To all the College of Arms and all others who may read this missive, from Birgitta Laurel, Sara Pelican, and Iago Wreath, greetings.

From Laurel: Hamlets with Old Registrations

A number of kingdoms are allowed to have Hamlets as a type of semi-official branch that does not fulfill the requirements of a shire. Guidelines for heraldic submissions from such entities were established in the April 2018 LoAR Cover Letter, where it was stated that their names will be considered branch names but they may not register arms and thus display a laurel wreath in their armory.

When Hamlets were established, they were seen as a step towards the status of a regular branch and thus little thought was given to what happens when an established Society branch downgrades to a Hamlet. From the point of the seneschalate, such a change is handled procedurally as a dissolution of the branch followed by the establishment of a new branch. From our point of view, however, this would mean that any registrations by the branch would be lost to them, and so at their April 2024 meeting the Board of Directors approved a change to the Administrative Handbook clarifying that a change from full branch status to Hamlet is treated as a routine change in branch status. This was announced in the March 2024 Cover Letter.

An established branch that downgrades its status to a Hamlet will retain any registrations they have. This means, among other things, that if they have registered branch arms that have a laurel wreath they will keep and hopefully continue to use them, even though a Hamlet may not register new arms until they attain the status of a full Society branch.

From Wreath: On Bird Postures and Difference

Two submissions this month caused us to consider how we treat certain bird postures for the purposes of conflict. SENA Appendix M1d states: "Birds in a different category can be substantially different in type if they are in two different groups and are in a period posture for that sort of bird" and "Birds in the same category may be granted a distinct change (DC) between them when they are (a) different in period, (b) in a period posture [for that type of bird], (c) drawn correctly, and (d) there is some visual difference."

The reliance on "period postures" poses a challenge with the expanded scope of the Society. As noted in the acceptance of the badge of Jessa de Hunteleghe on the February 2023 LoAR, basing decisions on period heraldic postures artificially disadvantages non-European species, so we are simplifying our definition of "period posture".

The vast majority of birds (excluding eagles) in period armory are found in the postures *close*, *rising*, or *rising wings displayed*, so going forward we will consider these to be period postures for all birds. *Naiant*, which is a variation on *close*, will be considered a period posture for all swan-shaped birds, plus birds in other categories on a case-by-case basis. For birds in these postures, the existing guidelines in SENA Appendix M1d for determining difference still apply.

Guidelines for birds *displayed* were set out on the April 2024 Cover Letter, but guidelines for *volant*, *volant wings addorsed*, *stooping*, and *striking* need to be considered. (Note: in the following discussion, postures in italics are the postures as used in Society blazon, and postures in quotes are the names given to the postures in the sources being discussed.)

Volant is a very rare posture in period armory. Exactly how rare is hard to say, as the term "volant" has been used to mean different things by different authors, both period and modern. The examples in the Dictionary of British Arms (DBA) where the term is used and period emblazons are available show that their "volant" means our *rising wings displayed* (for example, the DBA blazons the doves in the arms of the Worshipful Company of Tallow Chandlers as "volant", while all depictions of these arms show them as *rising wings displayed*). Bossewell, writing in 1572, also uses the term this way, while Legh, 1597, uses it the same way we do. Some other authors use the term "volant" to mean *volant bendwise*, while others blazon the bendwise orientation explicitly. Outside of treatises, the only independent examples we are aware of are a single example of generic *birds volant* in period Catalan armory, and three examples of *swallows volant* in grey period Austrian armory.

No examples could be found of any birds in the posture *volant wings addorsed*.

Striking is an SCA invention, in use since at least 1973, but first clearly defined in July 1986. It does not appear in any standard heraldic references, either period or modern, other than a single example in the DBA describing arms on a seal as "3 hawks striking 3 birds". The DBA's French source for the blazon, *Inventaire des sceaux de la collection des pièces originales du Cabinet des titres à la Bibliothèque nationale*, describes the seal as bearing "trois faucons coiffant trois colombes" ("three falcons catching by the head three doves"). Neither of these blazons make obvious what actual posture is depicted, but they seem to describe something more like *trussing*.

No examples of *stooping* could be found in period armory. Its use in modern blazon appears to date to the 19th century.

Given the rarity, or non-existence, of these postures in period armory, we feel the above postures should be treated for conflict the same way *displayed* is:

- There is not an SC between birds in the same postures
- There is generally a DC between birds in the same postures which are in different categories if they are emblazoned in a way that makes the category clear
- Birds in the same postures (or postures in the same group in SENA Appendix L1b) which are in the same category will conflict with each other.

Treatment of postures not discussed on this Cover Letter (such as *hovering* or *striking affronty*) will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Additionally, without evidence that *striking*, *stooping*, or *volant wings addorsed* are period postures for birds, use of birds in these postures will be considered a step from core practice, which we direct Palimpsest to add to SENA Appendix G. This step from core practice will not contribute to returns under SENA A1A1 for items appearing on external Letters of Intent prior to July 1, 2025. After that date, armory using a bird in one of these postures and a second motif with a step from core practice will be returned under A1A1.

From Wreath: Letters, Symbols, and Words

On the December 2023 LoAR, we declined to rule on whether a chi-rho conflicted with "the letters M and X, the latter with a bar above it (Roman numerals for nine thousand)". The question revolved around whether two letters which together have a meaning distinct from the individual letters on their own might conflict with a single symbol. In some situations we absolutely treat unions of characters as a single charge: "[regarding the kanji for "bright"] although this glyph presents two visually unconnected sections it is one abstract symbol. ... Similarly to European letters with accent marks, visually disconnected and yet being a specific letter, the visually disconnected elements of abstract symbols are not separate charges." [Maaicke van Zanten, 06/2014 R-Middle]. (The kanji being discussed in that precedent is made of radicals that mean "sun" and "moon" on their own, but have the meaning "bright" in combination.) But how far does this principal extend? The combination of Latin letters L, O, V, E have a different meaning on their own than they do in combination, so should the word LOVE be treated as a single symbol for conflict purposes as well? Precedent says "...we do not grant difference between abstract symbols including letters and words..." [Kveld-Grimkell gylðir, 05/2014, A-East], but leaves open the question of what makes a word a word. In *Gules, a fess and in chief the letters D*,

O, and *G* are the letters a word? What about *Gules*, a fess between the letters *D*, *O*, and *G*? Or *Gules*, a fess between three letters *A argent*? And in the latter examples, if they are words and are treated as a single charge, are they effectively overall charges, since the "word" crosses the fess?

A submission this month raised that question again, with some new nuances. For example, if a word were to be treated as a single symbol, what constitutes a word? Is any collection of symbols in a linear arrangement a word? What if they're arranged differently but can still be read as a word? What if the collection is only made of multiples of a single symbol? Does it matter if the letters spell a word in some language, or would a nonsense collection of letters also count as a word?

Another question raised by that submission is about whether our current precedent that all abstract symbols conflict with each other is still serving a useful function in our rules. If we were to grant difference between symbols, what would that look like? How would we decide which letters conflict with each other? Since we do not require that the hand a letter is written in to be blazoned, submitters who do not have the hand specified are free to display the letters in any period hand. If we declared that *A* and *C*, for example, had a *DC*, but in practice the *A* was written in Insular majuscule and the *C* was written in Lombardic, they could look very much alike.

With the goal of gathering data to answer these questions, we will be opening a Letter of Pends and Discussion for a broad discussion of abstract symbols in period and Society armory.

From Wreath: SENA Updates

The changes to SENA proposed in Palimpsest's November 30th Rules Letter are accepted. A3C, Voiding and Fimbriation, is revised to clarify that voiding and interlacing may only be considered part of their type for mullets of six or fewer points. A3D1b, Sword and Dagger, is revised to limit in some cases the use of a charge and a demi-charge in the same armory. A3D2c, Unity of Posture and Orientation, is revised to allow arrangements such as *passant counter-passant* and *naiant counter-naiant* for identical animate charges. Similarly, identical inanimate charges may face opposite directions as long as their axes are the same (e.g., *fesswise and fesswise reversed*). Appendix M3 is updated to allow these same types of arrangements. The revised wording will be available at <https://heraldry.sca.org/sena.html> within a few days.

Society Pages

On March 12, 2025, at Gulf Wars, King Kilian and Queen Jalida of the Middle Kingdom awarded Konrad Mailander, Goldstreitkolb Herold Extraordinary and former Dragon Herald, a Court Barony.

On March 15, 2025, at Black Rose Ball 45 in the Barony of the Bridge, Their Majesties Matthew and Fiamuin of the East inducted Mihriban bint Rüstem into the Order of the Maunche for her contributions to heraldic onomastic research, among other things. The Maunche is the East Kingdom's grant-level award for arts and sciences.

On March 22, 2025, at West Kingdom Spring Crown Tournament, Their Majesties Fabian and Eli{sv}ka elevated Victoria of Durham, Sable Swan Herald for the Principality of Cynagua to the Order of the Pelican.

Please send information about happenings to major heralds and major happenings to all heralds to Laurel, so that it can be published here.

Send What to Whom

Letters of Intent, Comment, Response, Correction, et cetera are to be posted to the OSCAR online system. No paper copies need be sent. All submission forms plus documentation, including petitions, must be uploaded to the OSCAR packet for that letter. For armory, only colored forms are required.

Cheques or money orders for submissions, payable to "SCA Inc.-College of Arms" are to be sent to Trent Le Clair, 928 Frazier Dr, Walla Walla, WA 99362.

Send roster changes and corrections to Laurel. College of Arms members may also request a copy of the current roster from Laurel.

To subscribe to the mailings of the LoAR, please see the bottom of <https://heraldry.sca.org/heraldry/lists.html#lists> for more instructions.

For all administrative matters, please contact Laurel.

Scheduling

Items listed below in square brackets have not been scheduled yet. For information about future scheduling, please review the status table located on the Web at <https://oscar.sca.org/index.php?action=137>.

The February Laurel decisions were made at the Pelican meeting held on Sunday, February 9, 2025 and the Wreath meeting held on Sunday, February 16, 2025. These meetings considered the following letters of intent: Calontir (03 Nov, 2024), An Tir (04 Nov, 2024), Atlantia (04 Nov, 2024), Gleann Abhann (10 Nov, 2024), Caid (11 Nov, 2024), West (11 Nov, 2024), Meridies (14 Nov, 2024), An Tir (18 Nov, 2024), An Tir (19 Nov, 2024), Æthelmearc (25 Nov, 2024), Outlands (26 Nov, 2024), Avacal (27 Nov, 2024), Middle (27 Nov, 2024), Atenveldt (29 Nov, 2024), Ealdormere (29 Nov, 2024), Laurel LoPaD (29 Nov, 2024), Ansteorra (30 Nov, 2024), Caid (30 Nov, 2024), Drachenwald (30 Nov, 2024), East (30 Nov, 2024), Laurel (30 Nov, 2024), Lochac (30 Nov, 2024), Middle (30 Nov, 2024), Palimpsest Rules Letter (30 Nov, 2024), Laurel LoPFR (13 Jan, 2025). **All commentary, responses, and rebuttals should have been entered into OSCAR by Friday, January 31, 2025.**

The March Laurel decisions were made at the Pelican meeting held on Saturday, March 22, 2025 and the Wreath meeting held on Saturday, March 8, 2025. These meetings considered the following letters of intent: Atlantia (30 Nov, 2024) (pushed due to too many items), Palimpsest Rules Letter (02 Dec, 2024), Calontir (06 Dec, 2024), Northshield (09 Dec, 2024), Laurel (10 Dec, 2024), Meridies (10 Dec, 2024), Artemisia (14 Dec, 2024), Northshield (16 Dec, 2024), Æthelmearc (21 Dec, 2024), Avacal (21 Dec, 2024), East (27 Dec, 2024), Palimpsest Rules Letter (29 Dec, 2024), Ansteorra (31 Dec, 2024), Atenveldt (31 Dec, 2024), Drachenwald (31 Dec, 2024), Ealdormere (31 Dec, 2024), Gleann Abhann (31 Dec, 2024), Lochac (31 Dec, 2024), Middle (31 Dec, 2024), Laurel LoPFR (09 Feb, 2025). **All commentary, responses, and rebuttals should have been entered into OSCAR by Friday, February 28, 2025.**

The April Laurel decisions will be made at the Pelican meeting held on Sunday, April 13, 2025 and the Wreath meeting held on Saturday, April 5, 2025. These meetings will consider the following letters of intent: Atlantia (31 Dec, 2024) (pushed due to finalized late), Trimaris (31 Dec, 2024) (pushed due to late finalization), Calontir (07 Jan, 2025), An Tir (09 Jan, 2025), Laurel LoPaD (12 Jan, 2025), Meridies (15 Jan, 2025), Artemisia (21 Jan, 2025), West (23 Jan, 2025), Outlands (27 Jan, 2025), Æthelmearc (30 Jan, 2025), Ansteorra (30 Jan, 2025), Atenveldt (30 Jan, 2025), Drachenwald (30 Jan, 2025), Lochac (30 Jan, 2025), Atlantia (31 Jan, 2025), Caid (31 Jan, 2025), East (31 Jan, 2025), Middle (31 Jan, 2025), Laurel LoPFR (01 Mar, 2025). **All commentary, responses, and rebuttals should have been entered into OSCAR by Monday, March 31, 2025.**

Not all letters of intent may be considered when they are originally scheduled on this cover letter. The date of posting of the LoI, date of receipt of the Laurel packet, or other factors may delay consideration of certain letters of intent. Additionally, some letters of intent received may not have been scheduled because the administrative requirements (receipt of the forms packet, receipt of the necessary fees, et cetera) have not yet been met.

REMINDER: Until all administrative requirements are met, the letter may not be scheduled.

Be assured that I remain

In service

Birgitta Lulli
Laurel Queen of Arms