

## Why Register Your SCA Name and Armory?

by Modar Neznanich ©2010, 2011

One of the first things a member of the SCA does is decide on a name to be called. And for many folk that is followed by creating a heraldic design to symbolize oneself. Most often new members are encouraged to speak with individuals known as heralds who can assist with the selection of a name and construction of a heraldic motif, as they have access to name and device resources plus have knowledge of historic practice in these areas which they can share. This is done so that you can have a name and armory (heraldic design or badge) that is historically plausible and uniquely yours.

Once you have chosen a name and/or created a device, you are usually encouraged to register them. Why register? Since it costs a fee, it's only natural for people to inquire why they need to register their SCA name and/or armory. First and foremost, realize that no one is –required– to register their name or their heraldry. You can use your name and/or armory without ever going through the registration process. But there are some good reasons for doing so.

The primary reason for registration is **Social Courtesy**. The SCA is a polite and honorable society. We attempt to enrich our organization, add to its ambiance and extend respect to all. Registration assists in this by having one's name and armory added to the official rolls. This in turn allows the Crown, heralds and scribes to know what to call you and how to spell your name should you be granted an award. Additionally, registration allows you to be entered onto the Kingdom's Armorial (Roll-of-Arms) thereby adding to the pageantry. And then there is the fact that registering shows you are committing yourself to the SCA and the ideals it is striving for. Because recording heraldic information is a period concept, the SCA strives to provide an opportunity for members to participate in that area, through the registration process.

The secondary reason for registration is to **Safeguard**. Registration includes SCA-wide protection, meaning that no one else in the SCA can register exactly the same name or armory that you have. It also means that your name and heraldic design will be checked to make sure that you don't infringe on someone else's design accidentally, thus saving you from claiming to be someone you're not. Imagine a situation where you've been in the SCA for ten years and have been using a heraldic design, but never got around to registering it. Over the years you've placed the design on a lot of your things; then one day while visiting another kingdom you see someone displaying a banner with your design on it. Upon investigation you discover this other gentle has recently registered the design, not knowing of you. You are now in the situation of having many items that you will need to change or replace because that design belongs to someone else. Registration is designed to prevent such things from happening. And yes, this has happened...safeguard yourself by registering.

The tertiary reason for registration is **Education & Assimilation**. By consulting with the heralds, researching valid heraldic designs and locating proper name documentation, a gentle can find themselves discovering aspects of the Middle Ages that they can utilize to maintain the authentic look and feel which enhances the SCA experience. Additionally, registration may be a gentle's first glimpse into the area of heraldry. This peek may lead to heraldry becoming an area of interest for them to learn about and participate in.

Related Side-Notes:

1. A fairly common misconception of new members to be aware of, is the belief that if you are a paid member, you have registered your name (because the Registrar's office asks for a person's SCA name and the membership card they receive has that name on it). Of course it is not the case that paying one's membership fee and getting a membership card means one has registered their name. The SCA Registrar will put any name you write on your membership form on your membership card. But the office name "Registrar" and the phrase "registering a name" makes it sound like they should go together...hence part of the confusion. However, the Herald's Office has a reciprocal arrangement with the SCA Registrar's office: heralds don't accept membership applications and fees; and

the Registrar doesn't register people's names and armory. This works out very well for the offices involved, but can sometimes confuse new members. The Registrar's office handles memberships, the Herald's office handles name and device registrations.

2. A person does not have to be a paid member of the SCA to register a name and/or armory. Any gentle may submit whether they are a paid member or not. HOWEVER, because the College of Arms' filing system is based on SCA Names and not real-world names, to submit armory (device and/or badge) a submitter must either have a name already registered or be submitting a name along with the armory.

3. By general tradition in many parts of the SCA, the main armory motif an individual registers is referred to as a heraldic device until they receive an Award-of-Arms (or higher award), at which point the design is known as their Coat-of-Arms.