

Scroll Layout for SCA Awards

by Mistress Ygraine of Kellswood

In many kingdoms of the Society for Creative Anachronism, awards are accompanied by scrolls. The purpose of this handout is to help new scribes create award scrolls that are not just records of the award, but are also attractive works of art which recipients will treasure.

To achieve a medieval impression, style your layout after the most common pieces which survive from the middle ages. Legal document arrangements are most commonly horizontal, “landscape” mode, and usually have space left at the bottom for signatures, seal-tags and seals. (See examples 1 through 5.) Manuscript pages are arranged vertically, “portrait” mode, with borders that add weight to the left or right side, or are symmetrically decorated. (Left: 8, 12, 19; Right: 17, 18; Symmetrical: 14.) To handle text which is too large for a single page, or to devote a whole page to an illustration, you can mimic the facing pages of an open book. (Example 9.)

The most successfully “medieval” pieces (and, in my opinion, the best learning opportunities) are achieved by copying the styles and layouts of authentic pieces. Write scroll texts that use the same versals (the decorated capital letters) as the original, and which run the same number of lines or carry the same density as the original text. Practice the appropriate calligraphy, and study and mimic the nuances of the illumination style and colors.

The hand (lettering style) and illumination and layout should all be based upon examples from the same style and period. Don't surround your beautiful 14th century French batarde with 8th century Celtic knotwork!

Remember to add about 1/8” of “air space” between the text and the border, so the overall effect is not too “busy”, and to leave space for the appropriate officials to sign the award.

The layout should give prominence to the most important elements. The viewer's eye will be drawn to color and in the direction of the most interesting or concentrated details. In general, these eye-catching components include miniatures, highlighted words of the text, or decorated versals. For Award of Arms scrolls, draw attention to the names of the recipient and the royalty, and illuminate (or leave space for) the emblazon of the recipient's device. For other SCA awards, the name of the award and its badge should also attract attention.

Tricks for adding interest to the text:

- drolleries or doodles — as filler at line endings
- anecdotes that commemorate events related to the recipient
- anagram — letters which begin lines spell an appropriate word vertically
- poetry — a sonnet or other period form, mimic Shakespeare or Chaucer, etc.
- overall shape of the text, or color patterns within the lettering

Use heraldic principles in choosing your colors. Heraldically speaking, white is equivalent to silver and is considered a metal; yellow is gold, another metal. Never put metal on metal, or color on color – they don't show contrast well from a distance. A gold-leaf versal shows up best on white and off-white backgrounds if it is outlined in black ink or placed onto a colored background.

A mundane consideration: You've spent a lot of effort to create something beautiful. Make it easier for the recipient to protect and display your work, and design it to fit the dimensions common to store-bought frames and mats. Not everyone can afford to have custom framing jobs done. For reference, common measurements include:

Frames	Mat Openings
5" x 7"	3" x 4.5"
6" x 8"	
8" x 10"	4.5" x 6.5" or 5" x 7"
9" x 12"	5.5" x 8.5"
10" x 13"	
11" x 14"	7.5" x 9.5" or 8" x 10"
12" x 16"	7.5" x 11.5" or 8.5" x 11.5"
14" x 18"	10.5" x 13.5"
16" x 20"	11" x 14"
18" x 24"	12" x 16"

Remember to leave at least 1/4" of "air space" around your artwork within the mat opening dimensions, and at least an inch of blank paper on all sides for mounting and matting. For example, your artwork for a store-bought 8" x 10" frame should not exceed 4" x 6", and be done on a sheet at least 5.5" x 7.5". Also note that bigger is not always better! Medieval writing materials were very expensive and time-consuming to produce, so it was common to fit as much writing and artwork as possible onto small pages.

My sequence of steps in producing a scroll:

- Choose a style or example. What time and place does the recipient's persona come from? What style have you always wanted to try?
- Develop the wording. Include as many verifiable specifics as you can, to personalize the text.

- Practice some lines of the wording in the size and style of lettering, and estimate total text area.
- Determine dimensions of finished art and sketch the layout.
- If estimated text will not fit available space in layout, try using a smaller nib and line spacing, or enlarge the layout.
- Pencil guidelines for lettering – horizontal lines for writing on and vertical lines to help maintain correct angle of letters.
- Do the calligraphy. Lettering has least margin for error, so I do it first.
- Do the gilding. Before adding colors, because gold leaf can stick to paint.
- Do the painting. The decoration has the greatest "fudge factor", so I do it last.
- Outline just about everything in black.
- Add signature or maker's mark.
- Write name(s) on back of scroll, so appropriate credit can be given in Court!
- Print "cheat sheet" of the text for the Herald. Calligraphy can be tough to read.
- Packaging. Transport the scroll in a flat folder or envelope to protect it; use some kind of spacer to keep gold from touching; give the packaging to the recipient after Court so they can get your work home safely.

My 3 P's of creating a scroll:
Plan, Practice and Perpetrate!

In the examples which follow, each award scroll shown is my own work, except as noted.

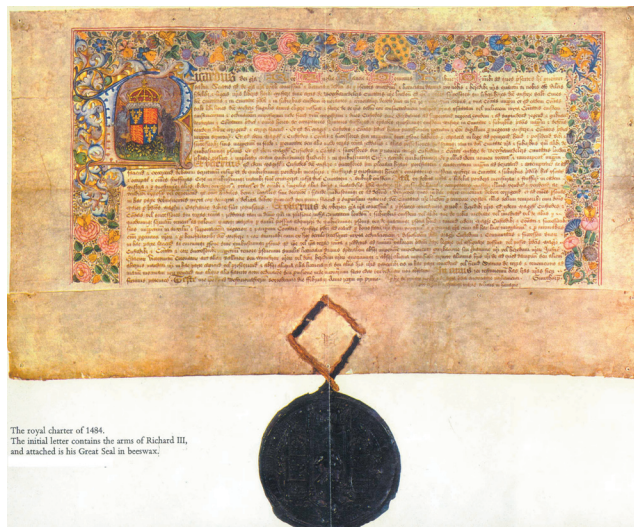
See the "Do It Yourself" page at:
www.kellswood.com/krafts for current copies of all my handouts.



Patent of arms to the Worshipful Company of Tallow Chandlers of the City of London, incorporated in 1463. Uniquely among the livery companies, the Tallow Chandlers have two crests, the first *An Angel issuant from Clouds proper holding a Platter Or thereon the Head of St John the Baptist*, and the second *On a Charger proper rayonné Or the Head of St John the Baptist*. The arms and original crest were granted in 1456, and the second crest and supporters in 1603.

From "A Dictionary of Heraldry"
Edited by Stephen Friar
ISBN #0-517-56665-6
©1987, Harmony Books.
Crown Publishers, Inc., NY

Example #1 — Guild Patent, 1463, England



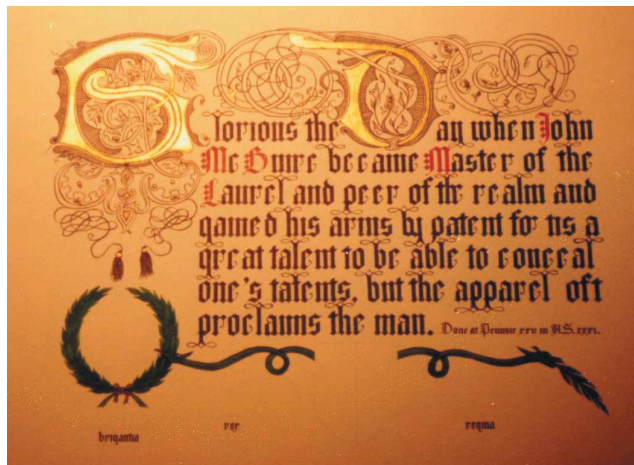
The royal charter of 1484.
The initial letter contains the arms of Richard III, and attached in his Great Seal in beaver.

Example #2 — Royal Charter, 1484, England



87 Anton Neudörffer, Copy-Book, Nuremberg, 1598

Example #3 — Copy-book, 1598, Germany



Example #4 — Laurel scroll based on example #3,
for John McGuire, August 1996.

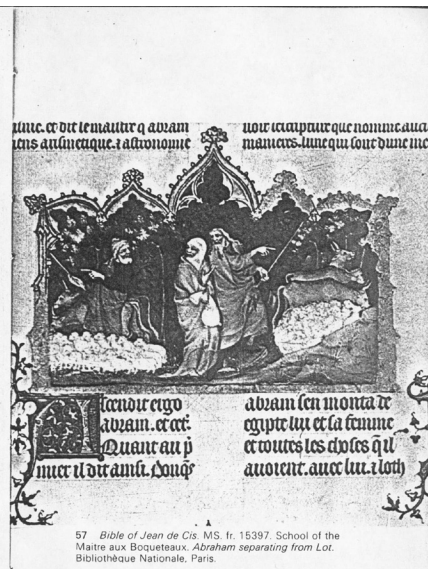
Examples 1 through 5
are legal document or
"landscape" layouts.



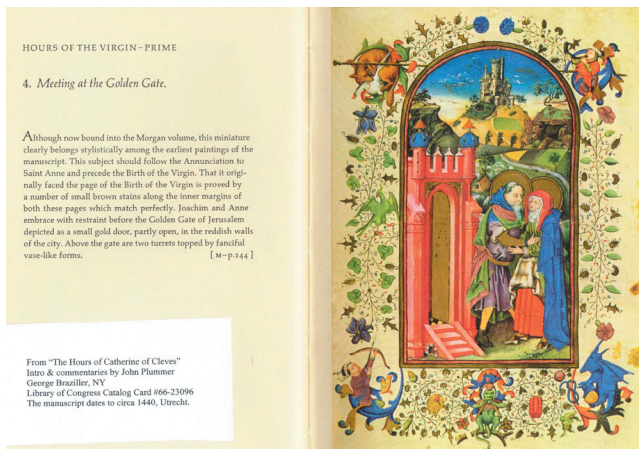
Example #5 — Laurel
scroll for Edward Newman,
November 1999; Seal by
Oohashi Katsutoshi.



Example #6 — 14th century French sources



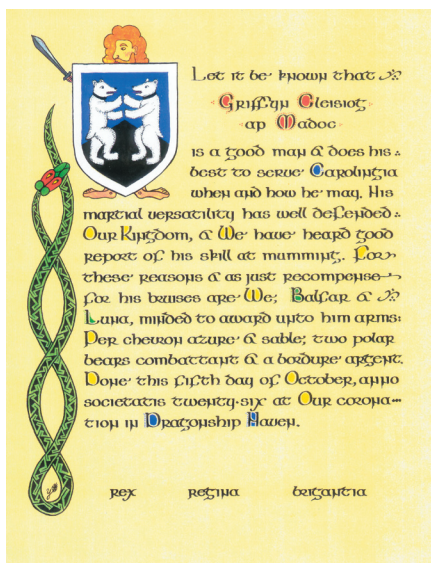
Example #7 — Troubadour scroll: Rhiannon y Ddraig, November 1994; miniature by Caitlin fitz Henry; based on example #6



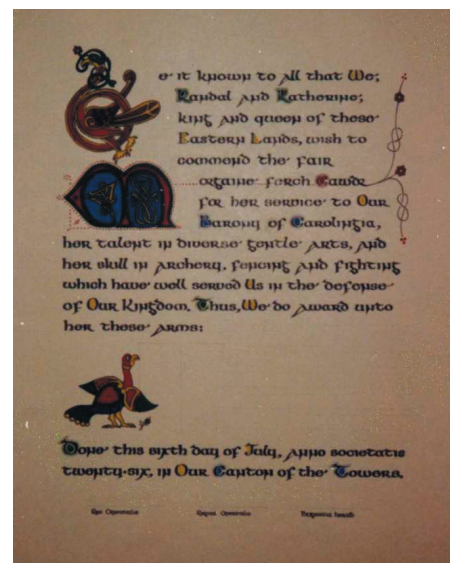
Example #8 — Hours of Catherine of Cleves, circa 1440, fol.116.



Example #9 — Sagittarius scroll based on example #8, for Alberic maqi Droata, April 1996.



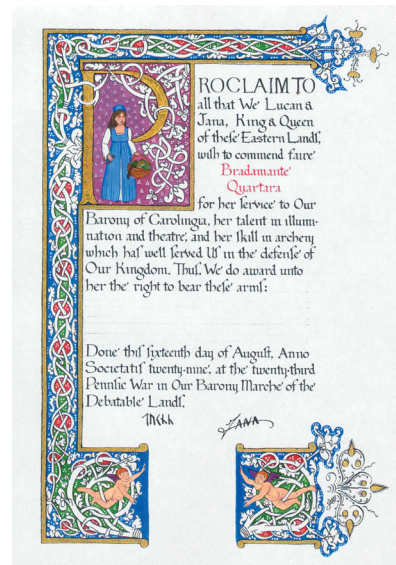
Example #10 — Celtic style Award of Arms scroll for Griffyn Cleisiog ap Madoc, October 1991.



Example #11 — Celtic style Award of Arms scroll for Morgaine ferch Cawdr, July 1991.



Example #12 — 1466
Milan BT Cod.515,
Saint Gregory the
Great.



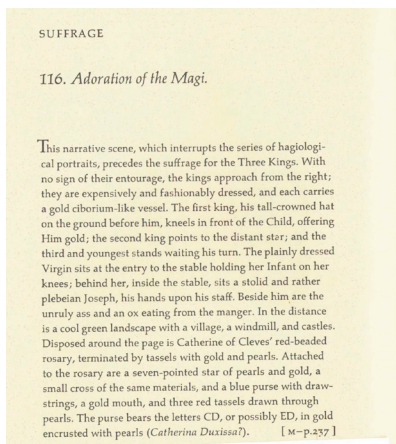
Example #13 —
Award of Arms scroll
based on example
#12, for Bradamante
Quartara, August
1994.



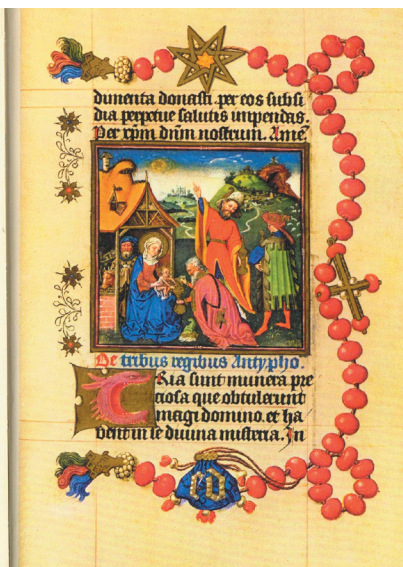
Example #14 — End
13th century Belgium,
Alexander battling
Darius.



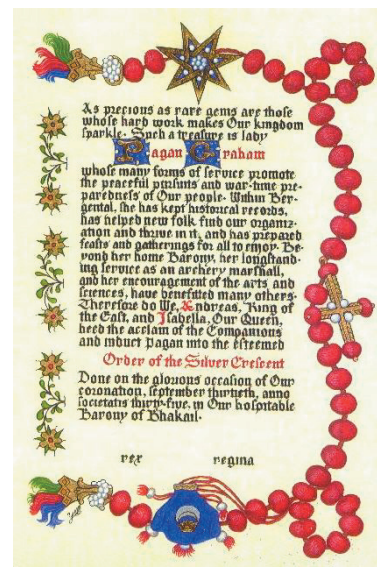
Example #15 —
Maunche scroll based
on example #14, for
Randal vihar Farkas,
September 1997.



From "The Hours of Catherine of Cleves"
Intro & commentaries by John Plummer
George Braziller, NY
Library of Congress Catalog Card #66-23096
The manuscript dates to circa 1440, Utrecht.



Example #17 — Silver Crescent scroll based on example #16,
for Pagan Graham, September 2000.





Example #18 — The Book of the Hunt by Gaston Phebus,
circa 1407, France, folio 13.



Example #19 — The Book of the Hunt by Gaston Phebus,
circa 1407, France, folio 111v.



Example #20 — Sagittarius scroll based on
examples #18 and #19, for Li Kung Lo, April 1993.