

Historically, a herald was an officer in medieval Europe charged with carrying messages to and from the commanders of opposing armies. In the 12th century heralds formally announced and conducted tournaments, including the proclamation of each joust and the name of each combatant. To carry out these duties it was essential that the herald be familiar with the family derivation and be able to recognize the arms of local nobles on sight. In the 14th century heralds began to serve nobles on a more permanent basis and became associated with their names and houses. In the late 14th century the authority of the heralds was expanded.

By the early 15th century the principal herald (king of arms) had become a commissioner for *nobilitas minor* ("minor nobility"), a term now embracing all the nobility ranking below the peerage and including baronets, Scottish barons, lairds, knights, esquires, and gentlemen. When the crown ceased to grant arms directly, its powers were delegated to the heralds as commissioners, with authority to issue letters patent. In the 16th and 17th centuries heralds were called upon to carry out visitations at which men bearing arms were required to present proof of their right to do so.

Heralds served throughout Europe, not only the kings and principal magnates but also the great orders of knighthood such as those of the Garter and the Golden Fleece.

Our heralds primary responsibility is to attend to the Shire's needs (in voice, book and Court). He must maintain communication with Kingdom Heralds, and keep safe the regalia for his office. He must supply and organize field and cry heralds at events, and consult on heraldic submissions of the populous. He must also organize Court protocol, acting as a Herald to royalty when needed.

