

Attending Your First Baronial Investiture

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There are a number of events which are ceremonial and significant in our Society. One of these is the changeover of Baronial coronets, or 'Baronial Investiture'. The landed baron and/or baroness of a Barony is/are the titular head(s) of that Barony and holds the "lands" of the Barony in trust for the Crown. They are chosen by and appointed by the Crown and are empowered to act on the Crown's behalf to the best benefit of the group. They are also empowered to hold courts and bestow non-armigerous awards to members of their populace as they deem fit.

A baronial term runs two years, with an option to renew for an additional two years, with the approval of the confidence. This approval is determined by a Vote of Confidence polling, in which all paid SCA, Inc. members residing within the physical boundaries of the Barony are given the opportunity to express their opinion regarding the job the coronet(s) are doing and whether or not he/she/they should be allowed to continue.

Once a coronet has decided it is time to step down, another polling is done to determine who will take their place. Then the fun begins, as a grand investiture is planned to celebrate the appointment of a new coronet.

A baronial investiture is a big deal, with a lot of pomp and ceremony, so it will normally be very well attended. Therefore, if you wish to stay on-site or eat feast, it is imperative that you reserve EARLY! A month ahead, is a good standard to use when planning which events you will attend, and if it is an event which regularly sells out, you should be sending your reservations in on that time frame.

Baronial investitures are also chock full of activities, and can be very tiring for those in charge or "in the show", so if you don't get an opportunity to sit and chat with the new coronet or the autocrat, don't take it personally. There will be a gazillion people demanding their attention that day.

The first thing scheduled will be the last court of the outgoing coronet(s) and the investiture court itself. This is generally scheduled around 10 or 11 a.m. A Royal court must first be opened, and then the outgoing coronet(s) will conduct their last items of business, giving final awards and thanks to those who assisted them during their term. They will release all their retainers and will then hand their coronets to the Crown. This can be a bit emotional. Their Majesties may conduct some other items of business first, and then, they will get to the meat of the day, the investiture of the new coronet(s). This is a special, dignified occasion, much like a wedding. The actual format of the ceremony itself will vary, depending on the wishes of the new coronet(s), the whims of the Crown, and the space constraints of the location.

Usually, the incoming coronet(s) will be called in to TRM's court and will kneel before them. TRM's will speak to them of the job they are undertaking and if they are still willing to do so. Upon their affirmation, TRM's will place the baronial coronets on their heads and will receive their Oath of Fealty. As the Crown's direct representative, they MUST give an Oath of Fealty to the Crown. Then the Crown or their herald will announce the new Baron/Baroness and cheers will ensue! The Baron/Baroness will take their place in court and may say a few words. TRM's will close court and then everyone goes off to the day's scheduled activities.

Tourneys ensue, A&S is displayed and judged, children play... Meanwhile, the new coronets will probably sit in state for a short period of time, in a central location where people can come up and give their personal congratulations and any presents they wish. (Side note: The appropriate time to give personal gifts to landed baronage or Crowns is while they are sitting in state or at feast, NOT during court. Court presentations should be reserved for gifts of regalia, or official gifts from other landed baronage or Crowns. Therefore, if the herald tells you that you cannot be on the court docket to give your gift, don't take offense. It may not be an appropriate gift for presentation in court or there simply may not be enough available time.)

About an hour and a half before the evening court, the new coronet(s) will retire to prepare the agenda and themselves. They will need this time desperately, so please respect that need and allow them to retire, without begging for one last minute of their time.

Then will come their first real court! Now, most people are nervous when speaking in court for the first time, and the new coronet(s) will be no different. It's extremely difficult to switch from single person reference to the royal "we", so you may hear both quite continuously through their performance. There may be verbal blunders, spots where they lose their place or where they overstep the herald. None of that is any cause for alarm and they will become more comfortable with their court presence as time goes by. Just relax, and take your lead from the coronet(s), the crown and the crowd. Sometimes, first timer mistakes are quite charming and can lead to a fond memory between the coronet(s) and their populace.

Finally, the day will conclude with feast (and perhaps dancing or a bardic circle, time and space depending). At this point, the new coronet(s) may be a bit overwhelmed and running on empty, energy wise. If you didn't get a chance to offer your kind words of support or hand over that pretty bauble in the afternoon, this is a great time to do so, while they are wondering what the hell they've just gotten themselves into. If you are close to the new coronet(s), a fun story or the performance of a song, can relieve some of the leftover anxiety they may be feeling regarding their court performance and can let them know they really are supported by their populace.

Attending baronial investitures can be a lot of fun. It's a wonderful feeling to be a part of a new chapter in history for a group and watching new coronet(s) take on the responsibility and role of leader. This type of ceremony can truly lead you to feel the magic of the Middle Ages and a part of the SCA. Hope I'll see you at the next one!