

The Order of Precedence

by Rhiannon ui Neill, Azure Decrescent Herald

Recently, the Order of Precedence has come up on the Atlantian list and causing great and heated debate. I interpret this to be a cry that not enough people know what the Order of Precedence is, how it is maintained or for what purposes it is used. The New Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines precedence as: "1: the act or fact of preceding. 2: consideration based on order of importance."

From this alone, one could assume that the Order of Precedence relates to rank. This is correct. The Order of Precedence contains information on the Society awards/orders received by members of the Society, i.e., "who to what when." The Atlantian listing includes all awards given in Atlantia or given in other kingdoms to gentles who now live in Atlantia. The Atlantian precedence database also includes information on the dates when the Society College of Arms registered an individual's name and device together with the blazon of the registered device. The Order of Precedence in and of itself does not change rank, does not govern whom you fight in Crown Tourney or affect whether you get polling letters.

Take for example, my listing in the OP. It includes my name as registered with the College of Arms, the awards/orders I have received which convey armigerous status and the dates when I received those honors and the blazon of my arms as registered with the College of Arms. It is Society-wide policy to list names in their registered forms in precedence listings.

When considering where I would be placed within a Grand Procession, the Clerk of Precedence would look at my highest ranking award/order and place me chronologically within the grouping of others holding the same highest award/order, or if no others held the same award/order, then between the next lowest award/order and the next highest award/order.

Now, how can we apply this? Imagine Duke Michael of Bedford, Duke Galmr, Duke Anton Tremayne, Count Thorbrandr, Sir Duncan MacAdam and Baron Jason Michael of Andover all announced their intent to fight in the next Crown Tournament. There is usually a procession of the contenders and their consorts. So, how would we place these lords in a procession based solely upon rank? Splitting the Dukes from the rest would be easy enough, but how do they stand within their own rank? Well, Duke Michael received his duchy many years ago, long before any of the rest, so he would be at the end. Then would come Duke Anton who received his duchy in 1994 and finally, Duke Galmr who became a duke in October of 1996 would finish the ducal rank.

Count Thorbrandr would come next since he is the only count, but what would you do with Sir Duncan and Baron Jason? Without an up-to-date Order of Precedence, one might make the mistake of ranking them merely by title, however, when you look up Baron Jason's listing in the OP, you note that he was knighted many, many years before Duncan, giving him a higher rank in the Order of Precedence. Therefore, our ranking from highest to lowest for this procession would be:

Michael - Anton - Galmr - Thorbrandr - Jason - Duncan

Gee, that seems simple enough, doesn't it? We would wish it so, but unfortunately, usually it is not. Frequently, when monarchs give awards (especially AoA's which come early in one's SCA career), they have received a recommendation for someone whom they know only as Marie who lives in Caer Mear. It is the duty of the Crown and the court herald to exercise due diligence in trying to determine Marie's

correct name, however, since awards are generally hoped to be a surprise, sometimes it is impossible to locate someone who can give you this gentle's correct name prior to court. So, when they call Marie into court, she is called in as Marie of Caer Mear. Immediately after court, Marie giddily goes off with her friends and is lost in the crowd, feast begins and the Crown and court herald are bombarded with other tasks, completely forgetting that Marie's name might need to be corrected. Two weeks or more later, the Crown files a court report with the Clerk of Precedence listing this good gentle as Marie of Caer Mear and that is how they list Marie in the OP.

This is not the only reason we might incorrectly list someone in the OP. Perhaps they received their award/order and later registered a different name. Although the Clerk generally watches the listings of names in The Acorn, sometimes it is not possible to ascertain that George of the Jungle has changed his name to Charles of Aquitaine. Also, there have been many instances where court records have been lost and no reporting made to the Clerk of Precedence, so any awards given are not listed in the OP. Such omissions are unintentional, which is why I insist on court heralds filing a copy of their court report with the Clerk of Precedence. This allows the Clerk to confirm with the Crown whether the award was left off the list by accident. In addition, when a person moves to Atlantia from another kingdom, it is not possible for the Clerk of Precedence to know what awards/orders that person received in their previous kingdom unless notified.

Keep in mind also that the main purpose of the OP is to track armigerous awards, such as AoA's, GoA's, Kingdom Orders of Merit, Peerages, etc. Undines, KAE's and QOC's are not-armigerous awards, however, Mistress Alisoun during her term as Clerk of Precedence, attempted to track these items and also Baronial awards/orders (when provided) as a courtesy to the populace. Many non-armigerous awards have not been provided to the Clerk by the Crown or appropriate Baronial authorities, therefore, these areas are less comprehensive. I am a great believer in personal responsibility of one's own fate and for the OP, this is quite applicable. Although the Crown, the court herald and the Clerk of Precedence will do everything within their power to insure that they correctly list a person's award/order within the OP, the ultimate responsibility falls upon each individual to insure that their listing is correct and complete. If you receive an award/order and the name called in court or listed on the promissory is not correct, please advise the Crown or the court herald as soon as possible after the court or event. During each reign, the monarchs publish itemized accounts of the awards/orders they bestowed during their reign in The Acorn. If you received an award/order from a certain monarch, check the listing and insure that they list it and that your name is correct. When you register a name with the College of Arms, notify the Clerk of Precedence of such registration or name change so that any awards/orders listed under your previous name will be transferred.

Finally, if you move to Atlantia from another kingdom, please write the Clerk of Precedence and advise them of any awards/orders you received from another kingdom. The information in such letters should include your registered name (if applicable); your modern name; the name under which you received the award/order; the monarch who bestowed the award/order; the date of receipt of the award/order; the event name; and the place the event was held. As much of this information as is possible will help the Clerk track down and verify the award.

The Clerk of Precedence is frequently accused of deliberately making errors. People become incensed when misplaced in a procession based upon rank, even though they themselves are unidentifiable under the OP. The Clerk is not a mind-reader. As heralds of Atlantia, it is our responsibility to make sure the

populace understands the Order of Precedence, how it is maintained and how they can insure that their own entries are correct. Please discuss this with your groups so they will understand the OP. If you or they have questions, feel free to contact the Clerk of Precedence or Triton.