



Heralds? Well, if ye're noble, they keep score, lad – an' help ye remember your name, when one too many mace-blows has come down on the old helm. Oh, aye, they also keep track of which bedchambers the king went into, a hundred years ago...useful, eh?

- Garlandor Bloodshoulder, Hornmaster of the Hunt, to his nephew Belaerdros, in the hamlet of Sulduskoonar (Duchy of Dusk, eastern Tethyr), Year of the Black Wind

There are many heralds in the Realms, from fawning lackeys in Thay to the “banner-lords” of the nomads of the Shaar. Here we are concerned only with the oldest and most important heraldic officers in Faerûn: The High Heralds, who were once part of the Harpers and are still allies of Those Who Harp, Founded in the Year of the Watching Helm (992 DR) as “The Heralds of Faerûn,” these offices left the Harper ranks in the Year of the Empty Scabbard (1116 DR), but most of them still exist today.

It is strongly advised that DMs not allow PCs to join the ranks of the Heralds unless a player wishes to retire a senior, high-level character to a distinguished post. Heralds lead rather boring lives (from an adventurer’s viewpoint), and soon know far too much for good play balance.

Beginnings

Originally the idea of the Harper Aliost Oskrunnar, the offices of the High Heralds were created by the rulers of Baldur’s Gate, Sundabar, and Calimshan. Many of the heraldry of the mining settlements had begun to use heraldry strange to Calishite eyes (in their blazons, hues known as “metals,” such as silver and gold, could be placed one on top of the other—something forbidden in Calishite and other conventional blazonry; the unique rules of Sword Coast heraldry remain in existence today). There had been tragic cases of mistaken identity in battle, and several nasty disputes over ownership of an emblem: everyone agreed that rules had to be established, accurate records kept, and the

increasingly murky business of displaying heraldic arms administered.

Harper agents worked to influence the various rulers into establishing and funding the Heralds, supported by the priesthoods who stood behind the Harpers (who also agreed to help pay for the offices—on the condition that the Heralds be neutral, independent of individual crowns and territories). Nine High Heralds were named; the area they collectively administered was roughly from the northern border of Calimshan westward to all the known islands in the Sea of Swords, north as far as the known world went, and eastward to the Sea of Fallen Stars (their influence has since extended to the Vilhon, the Moonsea North, and the Dragonreach lands).

From the start, the Heralds fulfilled a real need for keeping accurate records, genealogies, and histories in the North. Several of the original office-holders were Harper agents, and they were free to sponsor local heralds or agents to travel the Realms for them, collecting data and proclaiming the judgments of the Heralds. Many of these heralds were also Harpers, although the Heralds presented themselves as strictly neutral in all dealings. A generation later, the Heralds were openly wearing the silver harp badge of the Harpers.

The first Herald to be proclaimed was Unicorn; it remains the oldest surviving office today. The other offices were Black Vizor, Crescentcoat, Old Night, Red Dragon, and four offices that have since disappeared—the Huntsman, Manyshields, Blue Blade, and Starscepter. For most of the existence of the Heralds of Faerûn, there were seven High Heralds—the first two vanished offices named above disappeared only recently, and the latter two failed soon after the establishment of the Heralds.

The Rise of the Heralds

From the beginning, the High Heralds were men (and, in a few cases, women) of integrity. When corruption touched an office so deeply that the



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incumbent had to be slain, the office died with him. That is the reason behind all of the vanished offices. Vacant Herald offices are normally filled by appointment of the High Heralds (after a secret vote of the surviving High Heralds, who all have the right to put forward candidates and to covertly investigate any candidate before the vote). All rulers and high priests dwelling within the area of Faerûn administered by the Heralds may also propose candidates for any new or vacant office, but only the High Heralds can make the appointment.

This integrity made the Heralds the important and respected force for stability in the Realms that they are today – and it also drove them out of the formal ranks of the Harpers.

As the Harpers began to openly fight forces and interests they opposed around Faerûn – with blades and spells, not just by manipulating folk and passing on information to where it will have best effect – the Heralds felt obliged to leave the ranks of the Harpers.

As the Unicorn of the day put it, “Whether or not we agree with what a given Harper is doing, in this or that place or affair, we simply can’t be openly part of any band that does things in the Realms. We are keepers of records, not wielders of swords. We shall retreat into our fortresses, learning of war and magic only what we need to defend ourselves and to properly understand local titles and traditions. The time has come for us to – with regret, but with clear justification – set aside our harps. Fare thee well, friends, and be welcome still in our homes, but please, come in by the back doors from now on.”

Elminster and Khelben argued with the seven High Heralds of the day, but all were adamant. Their role must be peaceful and neutral; they could not retain the trust of rulers and common folk across Faerûn if they were seen as just another power group, striving to make its own way in the Realms, meddling in the affairs of others.

The two archmages knew the Heralds were



right, and they could see no way of changing their minds without using magic, an act that if undertaken in such selfish circumstances was as evil as Zhentarim or Thayan tactics. Whatever happened, the Harpers had to remain better than their foes, or their whole reason for existing would be swept away.

Elminster and Khelben therefore emphasized the power and ability of the Harpers as an information-gathering, widely traveled force that could go to places too dangerous for the Heralds to reach. The Heralds have always been too few to risk—the natural talents are too rare and the training too long and expensive. In most cases, a fully-trained Herald has become too scholarly to defend himself.

In return for Harper legwork, the Heralds promised that their strongholds (notably the isolated Holdfast, a strategic stopover for travelers in the dangerous Savage Frontier lands) would always be open to Harpers, as places to eat and rest and recover from wounds.

The Heralds Today

Today, the Harpers still gather information for, and take messages to and from, Heralds and act as go-betweens in tense situations, standing with local nobility or authorities on one side, and the Heralds on the other.

There are three classes of Heralds. Within each class, Heralds are ranked both by their office and by their personal skills, influence, and seniority.

At the top are the five High Heralds (described individually later). The specific duties, importance, and prestige of these positions vary with the individuals filling them, but in general, it is widely (and correctly) understood among bards across the Realms that the most ancient office, Unicorn, is held to be the highest rank of all. Old Night is the most withdrawn and scholarly, keeping the library at the Herald's Holdfast and eschewing most formal ceremony. Black Vizer has been the most warlike and politically important position.

Crescentcoat (often an office held by a woman) has played "devil's advocate" in Herald debates. Red Dragon has been an office given to younger and more radical individuals.

Below the High Heralds are the Heralds Pursuivant-senior or gifted Heralds who are waiting for one of the High titles to become vacant. In the meantime, they act as the apprentices and personal assistants of the High Heralds, running the most secret and sensitive errands, and learning all of the complex rules, traditions, and lineages that each Herald must master. They take on names and devices of their own invention, which are discarded when they rise to High Heraldship; the design of the blazon of their offices is part of their training.

Beneath these are two short-term heraldic offices, whose service typically lasts from just before a Shieldmeet to just before the next Shieldmeet (four years). Terms may be (and often are) renewed. Known as Green Shield and Gauntlet, these are also described individually hereafter.

At the bottom of the heraldic hierarchy are the many local Heralds, who dwell all over Faerûn. In some cases these Heralds are subjects of the local crown (as in Cormyr) and in some cases they are independent foes or rivals of the authorities (as in present-day Hillsfar and traditionally in Amn). Local Heralds serve as scribes-clerks for census, tax, and genealogical purposes—designers and regulators of the use of armorial bearings, and criers at tournaments and festivals. They are usually trained, inspected, and chartered by the High Heralds. (If they are not—as happened in the case of the infamous "Dark Herald" of Tethyr, who set himself up as an authority after the fall of the royal family, and was killed a year later—the uniformity of standards, armorial bearings, and fees is threatened.) Even these local offices rapidly accumulate rich traditions and lore.

Some local offices and their locations are given here:

Bloodbanner (Hlath)
Blue Velvet (Ithmong)



The High Heralds



Bright Shield (Essembra)
Bronzespur (Arrabar)
Bucklebar (Luskan)
Curved Sword (Saerloon)
Dark Stag (Silvermoon)
Diadar (Amphail)
Dragonplume (Nimpeth)
Drawn Dagger (Hill's Edge)
Falconfree (Waterdeep)
Flailchains (Westgate)
Gold Saddle (Yartar)
Hawkfeather (Sundabar)
High Bow (Secomber)
Ironflower (Elturel)
Jhalvar (Mirabar)
Lazalar (Ordulin)
Moonsilver (Elventree)
Lone Tree (Ormath)
Morningstar (Berdusk)
Narlhelm (Baldur's Gate)
Oakenstaff (Iriaebor)
Purple Halberd (Elversult)
Red Sword (Beregost)
Sable (Crimmor)
Shimmaree (Hillsfar)
Shining Helm (Saradush)
Silver Scales (Neverwinter)
Stars (Athkatla)
Sundazzle (Teziir)
Swanmantle (Eshpurta)
Swordswreath (Zazesspur)
Tallboots (Murann)
Thorn Tree (Riatavin)

In Cormyr, Heralds are sponsored by the crown, and they bear as their title the name of the community they dwell in. The monarch can advance candidates for these posts, but they are formally filled by the Heralds. The current Cormyrean Heralds are as follows:

Arabel: Westar of the Gates (NG hm F8)

Dhedluk: Ildul Stonegiant (LN hf F1)

Espar: Gzelder "Yellow Hand" Yespar (NG hm B8)

Eveningstar: Tzin Tzumner (NG hm B7)

High Horn: Dhag Greybeard (LN hm R10)



Hilp: Baldask Delzantar (NG hm W5)
 Immersea: Geldroon Culspier (CN h-e m F2)
 Marsember: Bledryn Scoril (LG hm F9)
 Suzail: Xromn Hackhand (CG hm R14)
 Tilverton: Cuthric Snow (NG hm F2)
 Tyrluk: "Tooth" Nzal Tursa (LN hm F3)
 Waymoot: Dhag Greybeard (also Herald for High Horn); under him is a herald-intraining, the recently retired—due to a crippling leg injury—adventuress Alatha Korduis (LN hf B6)
 Wheloon: Elaerue Estspirit (CG half-e f R7)

How the Heralds Work

Heralds address each other as "Companion" (formal usage, or to those of lesser rank) or "Brother"/"Sister" (between equals or friends). A herald is properly addressed with his title (not his real name), and when being introduced to an assembly or addressed by commoners, as "Grand (title)." Heralds are more highly regarded by the common folk than by nobles, but the nobility see them as necessary referees in disputes of rank and title, thankfully autonomous from the monarch—but distressingly impervious to bribery and free of servile respect for high birth.

The right to display arms (a heraldic coat-of-arms, motto, banner, badge, crest, or even a simple shield charge; shop signs are exempt, but there is a 500-gp fine for duplicating or closely copying someone else's established blazon in a shop sign) costs a member of the nobility or gentry 1,000 gp to register with the Heralds, plus the limner's (artist's) fee (typically 25 gp per image, or 100 gp per banner, wall-tapestry, or "high hall" giant coat-of-arms).

This gives the bearer clear right to a unique personal display or device (a right that the Heralds will carefully protect), and recognition in all matters of inheritance, heritage (lineage and citizenship), and privilege (the right to titles, special powers of a title or office, the etiquette due to the title or office, and the punishments that can be demanded for ignoring it).

Changes to an existing grant of arms cost

5,000 gp or more (differencing of childrens' arms that follows the existing rules costs nothing), and in all cases the Heralds have absolute control over what may and may not be legally displayed. Those breaking the laws of heraldry are subject to demotion and/or heavy fines (500 gp and up), payable to the Harpers.

All Heralds serve as a diplomatic liaison between nobles within a realm, the governing powers of various kingdoms, and between sages and bards everywhere. Save a very few cases of particular individuals or political situations, the various bardic colleges support the Heralds. Any ranking (i.e., above local status) Herald can call on the aid and service of bards he encounters. The bards are not formally obligated to obey, and abuse of this power will result in its instant loss.

All Heralds hold their offices under charter from the High Heralds; only the High Heralds can issue such a document—or, if the High Heralds are ever all dead at the same time (something that has never occurred), the Scrivener of the Stars (highest ranking priest of Deneir in the Realms, currently based in Suldolphor). The charter sets forth the sigil of the office (known as its "sign").

The High Heralds are ranked by seniority in office, tempered by public feeling (a popular Herald wields more influence than a Companion senior to him but of lesser popularity). Upon the death, resignation, or casting out of one of their number, the High Heralds often change positions by agreement, so the office filled by a newcomer may not be the one earlier made vacant.

The High Heralds have served as war leaders or regents, particularly in times of civil war or when a succession was in doubt. But they are strictly forbidden to take the field against each other, or to command men to harm, capture, or wield arms against any Herald. This rule has been broken only three times, and each time the offending Herald has been cast out.

Heralds all bear curved, ornamented horns that bear enchantments that give them a distinctive note. The sound of a herald's horn is well



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known throughout the Realms; it signals the beginning and end of formal combats, jousts, hunts, and trials-by-arms. During jousts, the herald displays (on a frame known as a jousting pole) the banners of the two competing knights.

Unicorn

The sign of the most highly ranked heraldic office is the famous beast of the same name. The rod of office is of ebony topped with a unicorn's horn. The rod is a +1 weapon, equivalent to a mace in battle, which permanently radiates *continual light* (the light can be temporarily negated by magic, but it can be dispelled only by destruction of the item).

Unicorn's decree has precedence in matters of judgment, but abuse of this power may lead to the other High Heralds overruling Unicorn (they can only do this by unanimous vote of a quorum, with Unicorn of course not voting).

Unicorn has the first right to adjudge and cry all single combats, and all ceremonial or ritual contests where creatures other than great cats or horses and their kin are used.

Unicorn also has keeping of the famous Rod of the Heralds, an unadorned black *rod of rulership* (its exact magical nature is unknown to all but the High Heralds; it has 26 charges left, to be used only in emergencies).

The current holder of this office is Alaghust Meldivver (LN hm F12), who resides at Swordsmere (see below).

Old Night

This office trains the Heralds Pursuivant and the "everchanging offices" (Green Shield and Gauntlet) at the Holdfast. It also maintains the main library of the Heralds there. This office carries with it the image of a mysterious, ancient scholar or wizard, benevolent and yet unpredictable—and of great power. Old Night maintains the heraldry of those woodland races that have dealings with men—and even goblinkin—and some whisper that Old Night works to fur-

ther the wishes of those races.

Old Night is an office rarely shuffled from Herald to Herald, but usually held until death. Its most famous holder was the ranger Farsyr, and he was followed by Haemar the Old, who died only recently. Old Night's sign is an ancient, cracked bronze shield hanging on the broad trunk of an oak tree, framed about by the tree's leaves. The rod of office is a gnarled, twisted walking-stick of bronze, crushed into its present shape from the remnants of a broken bronze shield. Its magical powers are still kept secret, but they are known to include those of a *wand of paralyzation*.

The current holder of this office is Shalara Swordshigh (CG hf R9), who resides in the Herald's Holdfast.

Black Vizor

This office requires much traveling and (magically assisted, by a variety of items) communication. Black Vizor is deeply involved in current politics, keeping track of intrigues, changing attitudes, treaties, and shifting balances of power. He also keeps records of all formal declarations of war and peace treaties, and reports on their fulfillment to the Heralds, the Lords' Alliance, and the Merchants' League.

The symbol of this office is a huge black war-helm, preserved through the centuries by careful maintenance (the wearer of this crushingly heavy, gigantic and sinister piece of armor typically staggers under the weight, but he has true sight (a continual *true seeing* spell) while looking out of the helm's eyeslits). The office was once known as "Black Helm," and was later styled "Black Vizier;" its current title is the result of a clumsy attempt to reconcile the symbol with the duties.

The rod of office is a non-magical mace, of massive construction and a length of over four feet. The current holder of this office is Ghelimar Firefrostarr (NG hm F11), who resides in Black Helm Tower, in its own fortified compound near Daggerford.



Crescentcoat

This office requires constant hard work; its chief responsibilities lie in exploring every angle of all matters brought before the High Heralds for debate, and in training local Heralds. It is another office named for its regalia: a tabard covered with interlocked crescent moons worked in cloth-of-silver (which has the same magical powers as a *ring of shooting stars*).

Crescentcoat bears a ceremonial ivory rod of ancient make (actually a *rod of smiting* with 47 charges; its magic renders the ivory harder than adamantine).

The current holder of this office is Naernythra Thaloudyn (CG hf W11), who resides in Moonrise Towers, a fortified compound west of Elturel on the banks of the River Chionthar.

Red Dragon

The sign of this office is a rampant red dragon, of a striking, metallic fiery hue, wings spread and jaws agape. The herald himself bears a rod of fine wood topped by a carved dragon-head that can emit a flaming sphere once a turn. Spells make the rod itself fireproof. Red Dragon has traditionally been the office of young Heralds with new ideas and plans for the future. This has led to an important diplomatic role in arranged marriages amongst the nobility. Red Dragon also has the ceremonial duty of escorting supplicants in rituals of attaining or receiving a title, position, or honor.

Under the tenancies of the ladies Anaethe and Bluthba, the office acquired a reputation of lusty decadence, but the present (male) Red Dragon is either less promiscuous or more discreet.

The current holder of this office is Bellym Glarsh (NG hm F9), who dwells in Dragonrise Keep, a fortified compound south of Easting, near the headwaters of the stream that becomes the southern feeder of the River Chionthar.





The High Heralds

Green Shield

This office is usually filled by one of the Heralds Pursuivant; it can never be held by a current or former High Herald. This Herald presides over Shieldmeet, attending to the rituals, security, and diplomacy of the occasion while the High Heralds sit the Round together. (The Heralds' Round is a court held at each Shieldmeet to decide in public affairs of festival datings, genealogy, inheritance, heraldic trappings, and legitimacy. The High Heralds vote and speak before all who wish to hear, and therefore usually make their decisions in advance, as opposed to the freewheeling debates they have in private.) Many investitures and entitlements are proclaimed at each Shieldmeet; Green Shield must schedule these. After a Shieldmeet is past, Green Shield continues his office in consultation with the High Heralds, following up and disposing of business begun at the holiday.

The sign of the office is a featureless forest green shield; the rod of office is a metal scepter ending in a miniature shield at both ends (it has the powers of a *wand of negation* and a *rod of splendor*).

The current holder of this office is Naerlyn Phalphar (NG hm R8), who resides in Shield House, a fortified compound northeast of Castle Crag, just west of where the headwaters of the Immerflow divide.

Gauntlet

This Herald is regularly replaced for practical reasons, primarily out of a wish to keep the office impartial and free of corruption. Gauntlet's province is adventurers, mercenaries, and militias. He is responsible to the High Heralds for keeping track of the location, strength, performance, and current allegiance(s) and contacts of such groups.

Gauntlet also issues charters and letters of patent for such groups at a monarch's direction (keeping counterfeiting of such documents to a minimum), and maintains a Warriors' Code in certain areas (an agreement regarding treatment

of prisoners, care of wounded, crops and peasants gained, enforced by threat of excommunication from heraldic services and recognition).

The most famous Gauntlet, Esbras, was known for his establishment and use of a group of warriors who acted as a strike force, carrying out the wishes of the Heralds. This group never officially existed, and it is believed to have been dissolved under pressure from (and partially at the hands of) several rulers who'd grown tired of Heralds meddling in their affairs. Rumors persist of ongoing activities of this group; many in the Realms believe it still exists as a phantom secret society, working the will of the Heralds. (The truth is that certain Harpers have always worked covertly with Gauntlet, to do what Heralds dare not do openly, but most wish to have done. These silent works continue.)

This office is usually filled by one of the Heralds Pursuivant; more rarely, it may be a former local Herald or even a High Herald. It is rare for the same person to serve twice as Gauntlet (less so for Green Shield), but an individual is not allowed to serve two consecutive terms.

The current holder of this office is Rundolphyn Taerest (LN half-e m), who resides in Honorgard House, a fortified compound southwest of Murann, on the north shore of the Tethyr Peninsula.

Legends of the Heralds

The most famous of the many traditions that have accumulated around the Heralds is the tale of the Lost Herald, who is said to be heard after dusk on the eve of great battles, crying the names of dead fighting men. Those named would have taken the field leading those who hear the Herald's disembodied voice, if they still lived.

The presence of a Herald at a birth is said to ensure that the child will grow up to do great deeds and achieve political importance or fame at arms. If the Herald is allowed to freely name the child, its chances of greatness are increased.

A High Herald can call up the ghosts of the dead from their graves and speak to them. (This



belief is correct: As a blessing from Oghma, each High Herald can *speak with dead* thrice per day, for nine questions per time, merely by calling out the correct name, or part of the name, of a dead being while within 100 feet of its grave. This power works even if no remains are in the grave at the time. An image of the deceased appears, able to gesture and move about as it speaks.)

Herald Holds

The Heralds are rumored to maintain many hidden caches and hideaways all over the Realms—notably hidden rooms or cellars in many cities. Here we briefly introduce only the two major, fabled Herald strongholds.

Heralds' Hall: The ghosts or wraiths of some famous warriors are said to guard the Heralds' Hall at Swordsmere, where the Heralds preserve their banners and weaponry. These phantoms are actually equivalent to spectral harpists (a new type of undead detailed in this book) in all respects, except that they retain the hit points, saving throws, and THAC0 values they had in life.

Swordsmere is a hidden place. It is an eerie subterranean lake, cloaked with many concealing spells and magical traps, that lies beneath Mount Sklagarra, westernmost of the Troll Mountains (just east of due north from Eshpurta, in Amn). Magical *gates* in Athkatla, Murrann, Eshpurta, Baldur's Gate, and Beregost lead into and out of Swordsmere, helping to confuse many spies about its true location.

On an island in the center of the lake (whose black, still waters resemble a giant mirror and are said to be inhabited by fierce aquatic guardians of an unknown species) rises the Heralds' Hall, a luxurious abode that stands atop armories and treasure vaults that keep safe many famous and infamous weapons and relics of past battle-glories from all over the Realms.

Swordsmere includes a vast spellchamber for the use of mages, a room whose ceiling is enchanted to resemble the starry night sky. It also includes a feasting hall two levels high, ringed at the upper level by a promenade bal-

cony opening into many guest-bedrooms, and lit by a sea of floating, flickering scented torches.

Herald's Holdfast: The abode of Old Night lies a day's journey west of Silvermoon, in a dell north of the River Rauvin. It is an ancient, squat stone tower that stands hard against a cliff. It is so overgrown with mosses and clinging vines that it is likely to be found only by those who know just where to look for it.

The tower's door does not lock, and it opens into the Chamber of Man, a huge, high room that fills the entire hollow interior of the tower. Lit by a soft blue continual faerie fire, this room displays weapons and armor from every age of human civilization on the walls. The rafters are carved into the likenesses of heroes and heroines of the past, and from them hang the banners and arms of forgotten kingdoms, interspersed with tapestries depicting important scenes from human history. Strong preservative magic keeps the tower safe against the ravages of time and against almost all spells (which are snuffed out as soon as they are cast).

Other magic defends a wooden door in the Chamber that leads on into a subterranean complex carved out of the cliff. This magic also warns folk inside that intruders have come into the tower.

From the door, a corridor leads into the rock of the hill, lined with domed chambers, one devoted to each of the intelligent races (demi-human, humanoid, giantkind, and even races usually ignored, such as centaurs, satyrs, and korred). All resemble the Chamber of Man in contents.

The corridor ends in a formal dining room containing a huge, round, rune-covered table. Old Night's rooms, a kitchen, and guest apartments open off this room to either side, but if one travels on in the direction the corridor ran, a door in the dining room opens into a vast library—the greatest library of the North, its high walls lined with countless volumes. Many tables, stacked high with more books, fill the center of this room; a magical glowing globe light hovers over a reading-desk in one corner, kept clear for the uses of the moment.