

Towards a More Period Text

By Baron Adhemar de Villarquemada – East Kingdom

A few constructive ramblings

First off, indulge me in a pet peeve. Please don't call them 'scrolls'. A scroll is wound up around a stick, a long piece of parchment that is read by unrolling as you go along. What we as scribes in the SCA make are not, for the most part, scrolls. What we make are documents, the equivalent of legal documents for the period. These pieces grant precedence and 'power' to the recipient, and as such are the closest thing we get to 'legal' documents for the Society. That should be borne in mind when writing any award text.

The difficulty involved in attempting to write a more period text for the document is the fact that what we, as the SCA, do in terms of awards and honors really has very little basis in historical practice. As such, it's actually fairly difficult to find a pure exemplar for an SCA based document in historical texts. There are a number of areas in which any period exemplar needs to be 'tweaked' to make it useable for the SCA. First off, unless the Queen is the reigning sovereign (such as in the cases of Johanna of Naples or Elizabeth of England) she is never mentioned in period documents, unless it somehow concerns her. Unless one is working on a scroll coming solely from the King (in the East the King's Order of Excellence, or the Kings Cypher) it is customary in the usual SCA practice to mention both the King and the Queen, and so that must be added to any period exemplar to bring it into line with general SCA practice, unless you have gotten the OK from the powers that be.

Secondly creating 'lords' in period involved granting lands, as did creating any of the higher titled peerages (Viscount, Count, Duke...). Kings usually didn't retire, especially not voluntarily, and certainly didn't receive titles for doing so. Former kings lucky enough to survive the experience were usually referred to as some form of 'that poor bugger what's lost his throne...' People were generally not raised to peerage levels for arts, or for their skill at web design or for their brewing. All of this can make it difficult to find a full exemplar to work from, and keep you searching through all sorts of old books and odd websites.

Another thing is the frequent mention of God. The SCA is a bit wiggly about this, but medieval authors constantly mentioned God in their texts. Kings were Kings by grace of God, acts were done in the name of God, dates were given against the liturgical calendar, religious imagery and reference abounded. In this you will need to know your audience, and tailor such references to them, as it would be poor form to do a text that made the recipient uncomfortable.

Listening to the medieval writer

One of the most important things you can do if you want to write a more period document text is to read the originals. As mentioned above the lack of real exemplars to work from makes it necessary to develop an ear for the style and phrasing of the medieval author, so as to be able to recreate that flow and style in your work.

Greetings

Almost every document in period, from charters to laws to personal letters opens with a statement of greetings. At the very least this will state who it is from, and will often say to whom they are writing (either a general 'all and sundry' or a specific list), and, on more official documents contain some bits of pretension and bombast, listings of titles, or delivering the opening salvo of a series of insults, such as the letter from Edward III to Philippe, who calls himself King of France...)

From the Donation of Constantine (750?)

In the name of the sacred and indivisible Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The emperor in Christ Jesus, on member of the Holy Trinity, our Savior and our Lord God, Caesar Flavius Constantine, faithful, gentle, supreme, beneficent, lord of the Alemanni, Goths, Sarmatians, Germans, Britans, Huns, pious, fortunate, victorious, triumphant and always august, wishes grace, peace, love, joy long-suffering and mercy from omnipotent God the Father, His son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit to the most holy and blessed father of fathers Sylvester, bishop of the city of Rome and pope, and to all his successors who shall ever sit on the seat of St. Peter until the end of time, and to all the most reverend and righteous catholic bishops in the world, who are subject to the sacrosanct Roman church, now and for all times to come because of this our imperial constitution.

From a charter granted to the City of York by Henry II (1100's)

Henry, King of England, Duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, and Count of Anjou, To his Archbishops, Bishops, Abbots, Earls, Barons, Justiciaries, Sheriffs, Ministers and all of his faithful subjects of England and Normandy, Greeting.

From the letter of Honorius III confirming the Dominican Order

Honorius, bishop, servant of the servants of God, to the beloved sons Dominic, prior of St. Romanus in Toulouse, and his brethren, both present and future, professed in the regular life. In perpetuum.

From the Royal Privilege for the University of Paris (1200)

In the name of the sacred and indivisible Trinity, amen. Phillip, by the grace of God, king of the French.

From the Papal Bull Parens Scientiarum 1231

Gregory, the bishop, servant of the servants of God, to his beloved sons, all the masters and students at Paris - greeting and apostolic benediction.

From the Statutes ordained by Richard of Gloucester for the College of Middleham

Richard, Duke of Gloucester great Chamberlain, Constable and Admiral of England, Lord of Glamorgan, Morgannok, Bergevenny, Richmond and Middelham, to all Christian people to whom these presents shall come, greeting in our Lord everlasting.

Pope Gregory II Commends Bishop Boniface to the Christians Of Germany (1 December 722)

Bishop Gregory, servant of the servants of God, to all the very reverend and holy brethren, fellow-bishops, religious priests and deacons, dukes, provosts, counts and all Christian men who fear God.

From a grant of arms of Edward VI

Edward the sixth by the grace of God king of England, France & Ireland defender of the faith and in land of England & Ireland the supreme head, To all & singular Nobles, gentlemen, kings of arms heralds & other officers of arms unto whom these our l'res patent shall come greeting.

From a confirmation of charters of 1297

Edward, by the grace of God, King of England, Lord of Ireland, and Duke of Aquitaine, to all those that these present letters shall hear or see, greeting.

Peace of the Land Established by Frederick Barbarossa Between 1152 and 1157 A.D.

Frederick by the grace of God emperor of the Romans, always august, to the bishops, dukes, counts, margraves and all to whom these letters shall come: sends his favour, peace, and love.

From the Letters of St. Dominic

Brother Dominic, Canon of Osma, Humble Minister of Preaching, Sends Greetings and Sincere Charity in the Lord to All of His Faithful to Whom This Letter Comes, Friar Dominic, Master of the Preachers, to the Beloved Prioress and the Entire Community of Nuns at Madrid: Health and Daily Progress.

Texts

Here are a few full texts, included to get a general feel for the style and flow of a medieval document. Take a deep breath and read them aloud, try and trace the patterns of the phrasing and sentence structure.

The Pope grants Henry II the right to conquer Ireland (1155)

Adrian, bishop and servant of the servants of God, to the most dear son in Christ, the illustrious king of England, greeting, health, and apostolical benediction: Thy greatness, as is becoming a Catholic prince, is laudably and successfully employed in thought and intention, to propagate a glorious name upon earth, and lay up in heaven the reward of a happy eternity, by extending the boundaries of the church, and making known to nations which are uninstructed, and still ignorant of the Christian faith, its truths and doctrine, by rooting up the seeds of vice from the land of the Lord and to perform this more efficaciously, thou seekest the counsel and protection of the Apostolical See, in which undertaking, the more exalted thy design will be, united with prudence, the more propitious, we

trust, will be thy progress under a benign Providence, since a happy issue and end are always the result of what has been undertaken from an ardour of faith, and a love of religion. It is not, indeed, to be doubted, that the kingdom of Ireland, and every island upon which Christ the sun of justice hath shone, and which has received the principles of the Christian faith, belong of right to St. Peter and to the holy Roman church (which they majesty likewise admits), from whence we the more fully implant in them the seed of faith, that seed which is acceptable to God, and to which we, after a minute investigation, consider that a conformity should be required by us the more rigidly. Thou, dearest son in Christ, hast likewise signified to us, that for the purpose of subjecting the people of Ireland to laws, and eradicating vice from among them, thou art desirous of entering that island; and also for paying for each house an annual tribute of one penny to St. Peter; and of preserving the privileges of the churches pure and undefiled. We, therefore, with approving and favourable views commend thy pious and laudable desire, and to aid thy undertaking, we give to thy petition our grateful and willing consent, that for the extending the boundaries of the church, and restraining the prevalence of vice, the improvement of morals, the implanting of virtue, the propagation of the Christian religion, thou enter that island, and pursue those things which shall tend to the honour of God, and salvation of his people; and that they may receive thee with honour, and revere thee as their lord; the privilege of their churches continuing pure and unrestrained, and the annual tribute of one penny from each house remaining secure to St. Peter and the holy Roman Church. If thou therefore deem what thou hast projected in mind, possible to be completed, study to instill good morals into that people, and act so that thou thyself, and such persons as thou will judge competent from their faith, words, and actions, to be instrumental in advancing the honour of the Irish church, propagate and promote religion, and the faith of Christ, to advance thereby the honour of God, and salvation of souls, that thou mayest merit an everlasting reward of happiness hereafter, and establish on earth a name of glory, which shall last for ages to come.

The charter establishing the Duchy of Austria (1156)

In the name of the holy and indivisible Trinity. Frederick, by favour of the divine mercy, august emperor of the Romans. Although a transfer of property may remain valid from the actual act of performing such transfer, and those things which are lawfully possessed can not be wrested away by any act of force: it is, however, the duty of our imperial authority to intervene lest there can be any doubt of the transaction. Be it known, therefore, to the present age and to future generations of our subjects, that we, aided by the grace of Him who sent peace for men from Heaven to earth, have, in the general court of Regensburg which was held on the nativity of St. Mary the Virgin, in the presence of many of the clergy and the catholic princes, terminated the struggle and controversy concerning the duchy of Bavaria, which has long been carried on between our most beloved uncle, Henry duke of Austria, and our most dear nephew, Henry duke of Saxony. And it has been done in this way: that the duke of Austria has resigned to us the duchy of Bavaria, which we have straightway granted as a fief to the duke of Saxony. But the duke of Bavaria has resigned to us the march of Austria, with all its jurisdictions and with all the fiefs which the former margrave Leopold held from the duchy of Bavaria. Moreover, lest by this act the honour and glory of our most beloved uncle may seem in any way to be diminished, -by the counsel and judgment of the princes, Vladislav, the illustrious duke of Bohemia, proclaiming the decision, and all the princes approving, -we have changed the march of Austria into a duchy, and have granted that duchy with all its jurisdictions to our aforesaid uncle Henry and his most noble wife Theodora as a fief; decreeing by a perpetual law that they and their children alike, whether sons or daughters, shall, by hereditary right, hold and possess that same duchy of Austria from the empire. But if the aforesaid duke of Austria, our uncle, and his wife should die without children, they shall have the privilege of leaving that duchy to whomever they wish. We decree, further, that no person, small or great, may presume to exercise any jurisdiction in the governing of that duchy without the consent or permission of the duke. The duke of Austria, moreover, shall not owe any other service to the empire from his duchy, except that, when he is summoned, he shall come to the courts which the emperor shall announce in Bavaria. And he shall be bound to go on no military expedition, unless the emperor ordain one against the countries or provinces adjoining Austria. For the rest, in order that this our imperial decree may, for all ages, remain valid and unshaken, we have ordered the present charter to be written and to be sealed with the impress of our seal, suitable witnesses to be called in whose names are as follows: Pilgrim, patriarch of Aquileija, etc. etc.

Statute of Edward I Concerning the Buying and Selling of Land (Quia Emptores): 1290.

Forasmuch as purchasers of lands and tenements of the fees of magnates and others, have many times previously entered into their fees to the prejudice of the same (lords) since to them (the purchasers) the free tenants of these same magnates and others have sold their lands and tenements to be held in fee for themselves and their heirs from the subinfeudators and not from the lords in chief of the fees, whereby the same lords in chief have often lost the escheats, marriages and wardships of lands and tenements belonging to their fees, which thing indeed seemed very hard and extreme to the magnates and other lords, and moreover, in this case, manifest disinheritance; the lord king in his parliament at Westminster after Easter in the 18th year of his reign, viz., in the Quinzime of St. John the Baptist, at the instance of his magnates, did grant, provide and decree that henceforth it shall be lawful for any free man to sell at will his lands or tenements or a part of them; in such manner, however, that the infeudated person shall hold that land or tenement from the same lord in chief and by the same services and customs by which his infeudator previously held them. And if he shall have sold to any one any part of those his lands or tenements, the infeudated person shall hold that (part) directly of the lord in chief, and shall straightway be charged with as much service as pertains or ought to pertain to that lord for that parcel, according to the quantity of the land or tenement sold; and so in this case there shall fall away from the lord in chief that part of the service which is to be performed by the hand of the infeudator, from the time when the infeudated person ought to be attendant and answerable to that same lord in chief, according to the quantity of the land or tenement sold, for that parcel of service thus due. And it must be known that by the said sales or purchases of lands or tenements, or any part of them, those lands or tenements in part or in whole, may not come into mortmain, by art or by wile, contrary to the statute recently issued on this point. And it is to be known that that statute concerning lands sold holds good only for those holding in fee simple, etc.; and that it extends to future time; and it shall begin to take effect at the feast of St. Andrew next coming.

A Letter from the Devil to John the Fearless, Duke of Burgundy

Lucifer, emperor of the deep Acheron, king of Hell, duke of Erebus Chaos, prince of the Shadows, marquis of and of Pluto, count of Gehanna, master, regent, guardian and governor of all the devils in hell and of all those mortal men alive in the world who prefer to oppose the will and commandment of our adversary Jesus Christ, to our dearest and well beloved lieutenant and protector-general in the West, John of Burgundy.... We pray and request, indeed we order and command, you to persevere, as you have begun, in obeying and carrying out the wishes of Satan. Ever since you were old enough to carry arms we have given - and we do give you by these presents - full power and irrevocable authority, and we are very well informed of your evil enterprises, which we shall help you to accomplish. Rest assured that we shall keep the promises that we have made to you... through the... grand proctor of our court, Satan, inviolably and without fault. Furthermore we wish you to know that our court is completely devoid of devils in our service, they having all entered the hearts of your trusted people, accomplices and allies... It is true that the greatest joy and pleasure we can have is in the destruction... of churches, cathedrals... abbeys, monasteries, chapels, oratories and all buildings dedicated to our adversary Jesus Christ, and you deserve praise for the good start you have made with this. After you have carried out our orders in the area of our commission... we shall help you to cross the sea... and then we shall cause you to be crowned king of Turkey, emperor of Constantinople... king of Jerusalem, Babylon and Carthage and of several other kingdoms, both Christian and pagan... In witness whereof we have sealed these presents with our very horrible signet, present several troops of devils, in our most dismal consistory, in the year of our doleful reign six thousand, six hundred and six."

John of Toul's Homage to the Count of Champagne - 13th Century

I, John of Toul, make known that I am the liege man of the lady Beatrice, countess of Troyes, and of her son, Theobald, count of Champagne, against every creature, living or dead, saving my allegiance to lord Enjorand of Coucy, lord John of Arcis, and the count of Grandpré. If it should happen that the count of Grandpré should be at war with the countess and count of Champagne on his own quarrel, I will aid the count of Grandpré in my own person, and will send to the count and the countess of Champagne the knights whose service I owe to them for the fief which I hold of them. But if the count of Grandpré shall make war on the countess and the count of Champagne on behalf of his friends and not in his own quarrel, I will aid in my own person the countess and count of

Champagne, and will send one knight to the count of Grandpré for the service which I owe him for the fief which I hold of him, but I will not go myself into the territory of the count of Grandpré to make war on him.

Closings and Dates

Notes on Dates:

There is a blindingly complex array of dating options and specialized calendar terminology to choose from. Note that the more important the date was regarded to be the more it would be specified to fix it properly. Thus on a simple document I might say done on the feast of St. Bobo the Magnificent, Anno Societatis 36, on a major scroll I might say Done on the Nones of August, being the feast of St. Bobo the Magnificent, this Thursday in the Octave of the Feast of all Cats, Anno Societatis 36, being the ninth year of the Indiction, and the two thousand and second year of the Incarnation.

- The Kalends is the first day of any given month.
- The Nones are nine days before the Ides.
- The Ides are the 15th of any month that has 31 days, and the 13th of any month having only 30.
- The Octave of a date is seven days after if you start counting the day after, or 8 days after, if you start counting the day of. That is, the Octave of All Saints (Nov. 1st) is November 8th. You can also date things with in that time period, i.e. the Tuesday within the Octave of All Saints. This is usually reserved for major feast days.
- The Indiction is a series of 15-year periods, beginning in 312. They were originally used for Roman financial dealings, but later used as a general date. The indiction itself is not numbered, only the year of the indiction. Currently it is the tenth year of the indiction (indicto decem). It changes on Sept. 24
- The Vigil is the day before a major feast (unless that day before is a Sunday, or a major feast in it's own right) i.e., Christmas Eve is the Vigil of the Nativity of our Lord.
- Four times a year are a group of "Ember Days". They are the Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday next following 1) The First Sunday in Lent, 2) Whitsunday, 3) Holy Cross Day (September 14), and 4) St. Lucy's Day (December 13). They are designated as being "in Lent", "in Whitsuntide", "in September", and "in Advent" These never override a feast of any importance, either major feast or significant local observance.

From the Donation of Constantine

Given at Rome, on the third day before the Kalends of April, in the fourth consulship of our master the august Flavius Constantine, and in that of Gallicanus, both very illustrious men

From three disputes involving the Cathedral Chapter of Notre-Dame of Chartres. 1215-1224

As memory of this decision, we caused the present letters to be sealed with our seal. Done at Melun, in the year of the lord 1215, in the month of July.

As testimony of this matter, and at the petition of the said major and his brothers and sisters, we caused these letters to be drawn up and to be strengthened by the character of our seal. Given in the year of the lord 1221, in the month of July.

Done in the year of the Lord 1224, in the month of May, on the octave of the Ascension of the Lord.

From the Royal Privilege for the University of Paris (1200)

And that these decrees may be valid forever we have ordered this document to be confirmed by the authority of our seal, and by the character of the Royal name, signed below. Done near Betisi in the 1200th year of the incarnation of Our Lord, in the 12th year of our reign, those being present in our palace whose names and signs are placed below.

From a petition of the Weavers of Oxford

Given under our privy seal at our manor of Sheene.

From a confirmation of charters of 1297

In witness of which things we have caused to be made these our letters patent. Given at Ghent the fifth day of November in the twenty-fifth year of our reign.

From the charter establishing the Duchy of Austria (1156)

For the rest, in order that this our imperial decree may, for all ages, remain valid and unshaken, we have ordered the present charter to be written and to be sealed with the impress of our seal, suitable witnesses to be called in whose names are as follows: Pilgrim, patriarch of Aquileija, etc. etc.

From the Charter of Gelnhausen

And wishing this to remain valid for them unto all their posterity, we forbid by an imperial edict that any one, with rash daring, infringe it or in any way attempt to violate it; and we validly corroborate this our decree by the present privilege, signed by the golden seal of our Highness, the witnesses being written down who were present at this deed. They are as follows: etc. etc.

From the Statute of Mortmain (1279)

And therefore we command you to cause the aforesaid statute to be read before you, and from henceforth to be firmly kept and observed. Witness myself at Westminster, the 15th day of November, the 7th year of our reign.

From the Treaty at Aix Between Louis II and Charles the Bald Concerning the Division of the Kingdom of Lothar II A.D. 870.

In the year of the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ 870, on the day before the Nones of March, in the 32nd year of the most glorious king Charles, in the palace at Aix, this agreement was made between him and his brother king Louis.

Emulating the medieval writer

Basic concepts

So, now that you're read some period examples, and sharpened up both your wits and your pen, what do you do next?

For starters, abandon all thoughts of brevity. The Orders may hate you, the heralds curse you, and kings threaten your very life, but there is no way around the fact that most medieval writers were not striving for conciseness of wording. Repetition is a big tool, either as a formulaic ritual repetition of a given phrase or as a refining of the concept.

Also, dig out your dictionary and thesaurus, or find a good on-line one. Another thing you find amongst scribes of the period is a delight of big words and technical terms. Learn to be comfortable with 4-5 syllable words that are going to give the heralds fits.

Engage in hyperbole. There is very little in most medieval documents that can be referred to as understated. That which is good is the very best that has ever, or will ever happen, and that which is bad is an evil upon the world of magnitude comparable with the devil himself. Accept no middle ground, do not damn anything by faint praise, or praise it by light damnation.

All of that being said, have a care not to overdo it. It's actually easy to go so far over the top as to become a parody of what you are trying to achieve, and that's not good. Read it aloud to yourself, get a feel for the flow and process of the words, make sure it can be read gracefully.

Personal Examples

These are, for the most part, peerage documents, as that's where I usually pull out all the stops.

Laurel for Roderic of Basing

This was constructed by myself and Mistress Eloise of Coulter out of two separate documents, one a grant of arms from about the same period as Master Roderic's persona, and another having to do with, as I recall, the creation of someone as Earl Marshal of England.

Lucan the Fifth, by grace of God king of the East, defender of the faith and hammer of the Mid-Realm, in earth of the East the supreme head, and likewise Marike II by grace our Queen, to all and singular nobles, gentlemen, kings of arms, heralds and other officers of arms unto whom these our letters patent shall come, greetings. Forasmuch as anciently and from the beginning it hath been devised and ordained that the valiant and virtuous acts of excellent persons should be notoriously commended to the world with sundry monuments and remembrances of their good desserts, among the which one of the chiefest and most visual hath been the bearing of signs and tokens in shields called arms, the which are none other things than evidences and demonstrations of prowess and valor diversely distributed according to the qualities and deserts of the persons, that such signs and tokens of the diligent, pithful and courageous might appear before the negligent coward and ignorant subjects and be an efficient cause to move, stir and kindle the hearts of me to the imitation of virtue and nobleness. We, not minding the derogation or taking away of any part of the authority of so ancient an order, but rather tending the maintenance thereof to the intent, that such that have done commendable service to their prince and country, either in war or in peace, may receive due honor in their lives, we are contented and pleased upon consideration of our right trusty and well beloved Roderic Hawkins of Basing, Captain of Artillery. And so is he called to the place of honor, for his worthy and commendable scholarship, intending to have the same notified by signs and tokens of nobility set forth in due order. And therefore by the douce and good report of our right trusty and entirely beloved councilors, advisors and peers of the realm of the East, and of the order of the Laurel, we have given, granted, confirmed ratified and established and by these presents do give, grant, confirm, ratify and establish unto our said right trusty and well beloved Roderic Hawkins of Basing, Captain of Artillery these same signs and tokens in shields called arms, with their appurtenances which he heretofore had received of one of our kings of arms in grant and do thus raise said same to the Office, Name, Style, State, Authority, Jurisdiction, Dignity and Honor of a companion of our Order of the Laurel, his arms and crest in manner as to hereafter follows, that is to say, Azure, a fess gules fimbriated or, and in canton a cross crosslet of the third. And to the crest upon the helm a wolfs head sable swallowing a child, upon a wreath argent and azure, mantled of the same. Which arms and crest, in consideration aforesaid, we have given, granted, confirmed ratified and established unto and for the said Roderic Hawkins of Basing, Captain of Artillery the arms and crest aforesaid, with the appurtenances, to use, bear, and show forevermore in shield, coat armor or otherwise, and therein to be invested, at his liberty and pleasure, without any impediment, let or interruption. In witness whereof we have caused these our letters to be made patent, witness ourselves at Windsor, the 8th day of April, the 34th Anno Sociatatis.

Kings Order of Excellence for Rhys of Harlech

The greeting for this was inspired by parts of the one in the Donation of Constantine, and the body of the text was made up whole cloth in a period style. I am particularly pleased with the fact that it describes what the recipient is getting it for (period and persona accuracy) without actually saying that.

Lucan, by right of arms overlord of Ruantallen, Beyond the Mountains, Bridge, Carolingia, Dragonship Haven, Bhakail, Carillion, Ostgardr, Stonemarche, Bergental, Concordia, An Dubhaigeain and Settmour Swamp, gracious and beneficent, Hammer of the Mid-Realm and Sovereign King of the East, unto any and all persons to whom these presents do or may come, greetings. For a kingdom to maintain such might as has always been the case in this ancient realm of the East it is necessary for the warriors of the realm to constantly be on their guard, forever vigilant, and mindful of their skills. To this end the art of the tourney has always been much respected within our realm, practiced with both fervor and zeal and those who promote it and excel in its grace given all due praise and respect. We would by these letters give high honor one who has done great and mighty works in this art, both in his noteworthy skill and for his deep and detailed researches into the most ancient forms, for these matters are held dear to our heart and it well pleases us that our people hold them in like regard. Therefore for these skills and knowledges, as well as in recognition of the most noble and gracious manner in which he maintains himself and his house, and of the high standard which he keeps for himself and presents to this our realm, we would honor the right honorable and most worthy Rhys of Harlech as a great and true benefactor of our realm. Thus do we by our sovereign right and with this solemn pageantry praise him with great praise, and create him a Companion of our Kings Order of Excellence, from this day forward, with all the rights responsibilities, duties and

privileges attendant to that most estimable order. Done by this our Sign-Manual, on this 5th day of April, A.S. XXXI, in our fair Barony of Bergental.

Pelican for Gwendolyn of Basing

The first part of this is of my own making, but the second part (from the Be it known...) owes a great deal to the Donation of Constantine and several others.

By the King, Darius of the East, and Roxanne, his queen. "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience." Thus it is written in the book of Timothy, second chapter, 10th verse and here before you is one who has taken those words to heart. From the time when mighty Frederick and his queen Nicorlyn ruled these lands with wise judgment she has been a steadfast and steady servant of the crown of the East, ever willing to take to any task that might need doing. Long did she serve with wise council and steady hand as seneschal of the Barony of Thescore, and further as chamberlain of the Barony of Dragonship Haven. She has traveled both the length and breadth of the realm of the East, from the northern reaches to the far south, ever with such patience as would best become a saint, to administer such tourneys, melees, behouards and other combats as has made the East a great realm of war. Long, well and wisely was she Mistress of Lists for the vast lands of Aethelmark, serving all those who were the princes of that land with grace and fortitude in all corners of that demesne, and further has she been a stalwart and constant aide and support to the Mistress of Lists in this realm of the East, always a calming presence and soothing voice in the midst of the chaos of tourney and war, and an invaluable officer of that worthies staff. None may doubt, nor even claim with any pretense of truth, that her works have been many, and her labors great, her patience inexhaustible and her calm indefatigable. Idleness is banished from her presence as if barred by iron, and sloth put full to flight as if pursued by mighty armies, both they and all other like vices of the indolent fearing the utter vanquishment that would be theirs should they attempt to remain, for such is her tireless effort and ceaseless labor that all must acknowledge it, and stand in all due awe, reverence and wonderment in the shadow of her most perfect and praiseworthy example. Be it known, therefore, to the present age and to future generations of our subjects that we, aided by the advice and assent of all the members of our right worthy and laudable Order of the Pelican, in the general court of the East at Pennsic on the nativity of the Feast of St Arnulf, the day following the ides of August, do herewith grant, provide and decree that Gwendolyn of Basing shall, with all august ceremony and due deference, be raised to the estate, title and position of a Peer of the Realm, and that she further be inducted, included and forever counted amongst the right worthy and well beloved companions of the Order of the Pelican, that she shall have the same advantage, distinction, power and excellence by the glory of which that most illustrious order is adorned, along with all those rights, privileges, responsibilities and duties, singular and sundry, that are attached thereto. We also grant, provide and decree that she shall bear at her will the badge of the order in standards, banners, and various other ornaments. Further do we grant provide and decree that she shall, forever and in perpetuity be the sole bearer of these arms: Or, on a bend between two trefoils in fess and another azure a roach fish argent by our letters patent. This we command to be known to all the corners of our realm, and wishing this to remain valid for her unto all her posterity, we forbid by a royal edict that anyone, with rash daring, infringe it or in any way attempt to violate it, and command that all succeeding kings, all nobles, barons, and all people in the whole world who are now, ever were or ever shall be subject to our rule are forbidden to oppose destroy or diminish in any way this privilege which, through out royal sanction has been granted to Gwendolyn of Basing, and we validly corroborate this our decree of the present privilege, signed by the golden seal of our Majesty, the witnesses being written down who were present at this deed.

County for Darius Serpentinis

This was done using a block copy method, most of it being lifted from Eusebius of Cesearia's 'Life of Constantine'. Some parts were edited; some rearranged, but for the most part I didn't write this so much as edit it into existence.

At the passing of Lucan from the throne of the East, then was Darius invested with the purple, and all the nations also under his dominion were filled with joy and inexpressible gladness at not being even for a moment deprived of the benefits of a well-ordered government, and seemed to enjoy

pure rays of light, and to be born again into a fresh and new life. All the nations, too, as far as the limit of the western ocean, being set free from the calamities which had heretofore beset them, and gladdened by joyous festivals, ceased not to praise him as the victorious and the common benefactor: all, indeed, with one voice and one mouth, declared that Darius had appeared as a general blessing to mankind. And in his munificence he bestowed favors on the peoples and nations of his empire. So that the inhabitants of all regions, who had heard of the privileges experienced in all portions of the empire, and had blessed the fortunate recipients of them, and longed for the enjoyment of a similar lot for themselves, now with one consent proclaimed their own happiness, when they saw themselves in possession of all these blessings; and confessed that the appearance of such a monarch to the human race was indeed a marvelous event, and such as the world's history had never yet recorded. Such were their sentiments. And instructing his army in the great and valiant habits of victory he carried his arms as far as Trimaris, and the nations that dwell in the very bosom of the Western ocean. He subdued likewise the Atlantians, and the Tuchux, though they were far distant, and divided into numberless diverse and barbarous tribes. He even pushed his conquests to the Midrealm, through Aethelmarc. In short, diffusing the effulgence of his conquering hand to the ends of the whole world, even to the most distant nations dwelling on the extreme circumference of the inhabited earth, he received the submission of all the rulers, governors, and satraps of barbarous nations, who cheerfully welcomed and saluted him, sending embassies and presents, and setting the highest value on his acquaintance and friendship and Darius alone of all emperors was acknowledged and celebrated by all. And there on the field of his triumphant conquests at Pennsic XXXI the whole body of the kingdom, and others of rank and distinction in the realm, along with the whole Eastern populace, their countenances expressive of the gladness of their hearts, received him with acclamations and abounding joy; men, women, and children, with countless multitudes of servants, greeting him as deliverer, preserver, and benefactor, with incessant shouts, they hastened at once to hail their sovereign by the titles of Imperial and Worshipful Augustus, with joyful shouts. And then the armies of the realm and all the people therein did raise many and great cries, and proclaimed him Imperator. Standing, as he did, alone among them, was he accounted worthy of such honors as none can say have been attained to by any other; so that no one, whether Greek or barbarian, nay, of the ancient Romans themselves, has ever been presented to us as worthy of comparison with him. In short, as the sun, when he rises upon the earth, liberally imparts his rays of light to all, so did Darius, proceeding at early dawn from the imperial palace, and rising as it were with the heavenly luminary, impart the rays of his own beneficence to all who came into his presence. It was scarcely possible to be near him without receiving some benefit, nor did it ever happen that any who had expected to obtain his assistance were disappointed in their hope. And so when it came his time to leave the throne in accordance with those ancient rights of the East thus spoke Andraes and Isabella, King and Queen of this mighty realm to proclaim their will to the East with great boldness of testimony, saying that one who had served so well, so nobly and so graciously upon that throne of the East could not thus pass from it without due and suitable honors made to him, and therefore upon the day of their second ascendance to the throne of the East they did cause it to be that Darius Aeurelius Serpentis was proclaimed Count and Proconsul, and moreover, by loud proclamation and monumental inscriptions make known to all men the salutary action, setting up this great trophy of honor and expressly cause it to be engraved in indelible characters, that he was the safeguard of the Eastern people and of the entire realm.

Places to look for exemplars

Print resources

There are occasionally books put out with 'important' documents from history, as study guides for students, which are pretty good for going through. A couple that I have are:

- Medieval Culture and Society, David Herlihy, Ed., Harper and Row, 1968
- The Medieval World: 300-1300, Norman Cantor, Ed., Macmillan Company, 1963 (Ok, so they're wildly out of date. It's a historical organization, right?)

I'd also recommend:

- An Anthology of Chancery English, Fisher, Richardson and Fischer, Ed., University of Tennessee Press, 1984 which is a collection of the orders written to the chancery (Starting in 1417) by Henry V, amongst others.

- Kingsford's Stoner Letters and Papers, 1290-1483, Christine Carpenter, Ed, Cambridge University Press, 1996 which is a brilliant collection of documents. Mind you, they are transcriptions, not translations, so the early ones are in French and Latin.

On-line resources

Much of what's in this handout came from these sites. This is by no means a comprehensive list, just some of my favorites, that I find the most useful.

- The Internet Medieval Sourcebook (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook.html>): Just start here. I believe it is the largest collection of period documents on the web. I don't like to think of the hours I've spent trolling through here...
- ORB (<http://orb.rhodes.edu/>): The over page to the IMS, has links to an archive of it's own, and some others.
- The Avalon Project (<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/medieval/confcha.htm>): A lot of 17th century stuff dealing with the Americas, but there's some good stuff here for the medieval period as well.
- Tales from Froissart (<http://www.unipissing.ca/departement/history/froissart/tales.htm#Index>): The premier chronicler of his age, this is a great source for the flow of language.
- WWW Medieval Resources (<http://ebbs.english.vt.edu/medieval/medieval.texts.html>): A nice collection.
- Humanities Text Initiative Several historical versions of the bible:
 - (<http://www.hti.umich.edu/k/kjv/>): King James Version
 - (<http://www.hti.umich.edu/l/luther/>): Martin Luther's translation
 - (<http://www.hti.umich.edu/r/rheims/>): the 1582 Rheims New Testament
 - (<http://www.hti.umich.edu/k/koran/>): The Koran.
- Online Classical and Medieval Library (<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/OMACL/>): It looks bigger than it is, but still worth a visit.
- Luminarium (<http://www.luminarium.org/medlit/>): Mostly literary sources, but a good place to get a feel for the language of the period.
- Calendar Tables (<http://utopia.knoware.nl/users/eprebel/Calendar/Tables/index.html>): Some rather obscure calendar information.