So you're thinking about designing a charter for the kingdom? That's great! The kingdom can always use new designs for award "scrolls" that are given out in court and the people who paint them will be happy to have new designs to paint! This article is intended to help you design a charter that will be beautiful, enjoyable to paint, pleasing to the recipient, and appreciated by the College of Heralds.

If you are interested in both calligraphy and illumination, your design work will be easier. However you may feel that though you can scratch out little calligraphy, your strength is in illumination; or that though you find calligraphy enjoyable and fun, you couldn't draw to save your life.

Take heart: you may still be able to do both. Because you will be working with photocopies, you can cut and paste all sorts of things together, and the final product will still look good. This means that you can write a word or a line several times until you like one of them, paste it in the appropriate position, and then do the same with the next group. You can rework less satisfactory positions of the illumination on another piece of paper, paste it over the original until you like the way it looks. This is a much easier than doing beautiful original work that has to look good the first time!

If you still find the "other half' of designing the charter too daunting, you can collaborate with another person. Much beautiful work has been done this way. If you do this, there is something to be aware of: if a calligrapher collaborates with an illuminator, the resulting work will generally be thought of as the work of the illuminator, even by people who know it was a collaboration. I don't know exactly why this is, people just tend to categorize these things according to the pretty pictures. To counteract this, calligraphers, please sign your calligraphy! And illuminators, if you hear the piece referred to as "your" work, please gently remind the speaker that Lord or Lady 'X' did the calligraphy. If you do this consistently, it will help people to appreciate calligraphy. And everyone can enjoy the benefits of having beautiful work distributed and admired throughout the kingdom.

Hereafter I will be writing as though the calligrapher and illuminator are the same person. Also, please bear in mind that these are just the methods that I and a few other scribes use in producing charters. You may develop techniques that produce results that are just as pleasing.

Here is a list of materials you will need:

Paper-for drawing the illumination and laying out the elements of the charter - Any sturdy white paper will do; at least 7" x 10" for an Award of Arms level or non-amigerous award, and 9" x 12" for a Grant level award. Use 'Non-Repro Blue Graph Paper' for writing out the calligraphy. Most graph paper that is printed with blue lines on white paper is non-repro blue. If you're not sure, try photocopying a piece. If the lines show up, you can try lightening the copy, or try a different machine; as come copy machines can be overly sensitive.

Pencil

Eraser - a good brand is Magic Rub

Tack-a-Note- similar to a glue stick, it turns paper into the equivalent of a post-it note. I use it to position the paper on which I have written calligraphy onto the paper with the illumination.

White-out or White Paint - to cover small mistakes and stray marks

Ruler- I like the clear plastic kind with red graph lines drawn on them. They make it much easier to, for example, draw a parallel line one inch away from another line.

Pens- if you can afford them, buy a set of technical pens in different widths. (Look for sales at Christmas time.) They need to be cleaned often, but are wonderful for laying down a consistent dark black line. If you can't afford technical pens, look for disposable technical pens, or fine marking pens that will write a consistent line.

Calligraphy supplies- calligraphy pen, black ink, blotting paper, and paper towels-whatever you normally use for calligraphy

Kingdom scroll texts- this is the list of approved wordings for each of the kingdom awards. It is

available from the Star Signet (address in the Kingdom newsletter: Black Star) or one of the

Signet's regional deputies. It is important to have a current copy of this before you begin. If you take old text from an old charter, the Star Principal Herald may ask you to update it. If there is different wording that you would like to use, ask the Star Principal Herald to approve it first.

Resource material for the calligraphy and illumination- I will discuss this in more detail later in this article.

First, take your white paper and pencil, and mark off your actual working area. I like to use plain white paper to draw the illumination, and graph paper to write the calligraphy. Graph paper tends to give a false sense of everything being accurate and even. You draw your design on non-repro graph paper; it looks terrific; then you take it to the copy machine and copy it. All the little blue lines disappear and then all the places where the drawing went past the lines, or didn't quite make it to the lines, show up and dance in your face. On the other hand, my calligraphy is my weak point, so I am willing to write it on graph paper because I need all the help keeping it straight that I can get. It will still look better on the graph paper than it will when the lines disappear.

An AoA level award is 9" x 12". It is good to have at least one inch of margin all the way around the work, to compensate for inaccuracies in cropping the charter to size before it is given out, and to give the person framing it a little bit to play with. This means that your actual working area for an AoA level award will be 7" x 10". A non-armigerous award (Rising Star, Falcon, Queen's Rapier, etc) is 8 1 /2" x 11", so working area will be 9" x 12". Mark off your working area in pencil making sure the corners are true right angles. This will help give you a sense of the amount of space you will be using when you research your design and calligraphy.

Now you are ready to research your design. Please, please look at photographs of period documents! I cannot emphasize this too strongly! Look, really look, at examples from period. What was the exact shape of those leaves? How heavy are the outlines around motifs, and are they different in different places? How much space did they leave between the lines of writing? How close was it to the illumination? What kinds of page layout did they use? What are the proportions of the various elements on the page?

It is tempting to go to a readily available modern book of period design motifs. This is usually a book preprinted from the Victorian era, when the people would rip medieval design elements from the context of the page, redraw them (with lots of detail, which fools you into thinking it's accurate), and publish them in collections of books with titles like, "Medieval Ornament". Please don't use these! Books of motifs tell you nothing about how to make a whole page look right, and your work will probably have a thrown together look. They tell you nothing about what style of calligraphy

is appropriate to the illumination. And you will be playing telephone: a modem interpretation of a Victorian interpretation of a medieval design. Please, please, look at photographic reproductions of period work.

The best source is a design that looks very much like the kinds of designs we use on charters. One aspect of this is that the period source you are using should show that the design was actually painted. A period woodcut or pen drawing may have a period design, but may look odd when someone goes to paint it. Black and white photographs can also sometimes be misleading; a light wash of a single color may make a design look as if it had been painted the way we would paint it, but you won't know unless you look at a color version. Most people who paint charters are very persistent in wanting to completely fill all areas with an opaque layer of paint. This is, the way our painters are usually trained, and it is best to find designs that twill work well with this technique.

Most illuminated manuscripts have much more detail than we can use on a charter. If we put a border all the way around the calligraphy, for example, it will take a long time to paint. Unfortunately, we do not have enough painters to be able to afford to let them spend hours and hours painting a single charter; it is best to offer something fairly simple that they will feel comfortable painting several of. You can sometimes make up for this in including extra elements (little squiggles between Gothic leaves, or dots around Celtic elements, for example), that are intended to be painted, but will still help to add detail to the finished work.

As a general rule, a good amount of illumination for an AoA level award is something that goes down one side of the page. A good amount of illumination for a Grant level award is something that goes down one side of the page and across the top.

You may discover that a very small portion of a medieval page can be enlarged to make an effective main element of a charter. Sometimes a group of leaves, for example, can be a small part of a manuscript, but when drawn larger, look perfect going down the side of an award. Very small illuminated letters can look very attractive at a larger size. This tends to lead to designs that are elegant, but easy to paint.

If you include areas that are too small to get into with a brush, the charter painters will become frustrated. This means that, tempting as it is, it is best to avoid putting in lines to indicate shading. Hatch lines, though period, are best done in paint and not toner. (Try to paint between hatch lines and you

go blind; try to paint over them and the pant adheres poorly or inconsistently.) If your design is clear and open, like a coloring book, then it will look good both when it is painted simply, and also when someone who knows more about painting paints it in layers.

On the other hand, if you have areas that are too large, there will be a tendency for the paint to streak. (An exception may be the large area behind a large capital letter; this can often be diapered.) If you are not sure what a good size is for the painted areas, check with one or more charter painters. They will probably be delighted that someone is taking their needs into consideration.

If the award has a badge, try to include either the badge or a suggestion of it somewhere in your design. Check to see that the way you have drawn it will allow it to be painted in the heraldically correct colors. If the award does not have a badge, but has insignia, try to suggest the insignia instead.

The orientation of the charter can be either horizontal ("landscape") or vertical ("portrait"). Vertical tends to give a little more emphasis on the illumination and a little less room for the calligraphy; horizontal tends to the reverse.

Draw your design onto the page; bearing in mind how much space you will need for the text.

If you do not draw well, there are many ways you can get design elements from a source to your charter. You can trace an element onto tracing paper. Turn the tracing paper over; go over the lines again with a soft pencil. Turn the tracing paper back over the way it was the first time; position it over your page and go over the design with a thumbnail, Popsicle stick, or similar implement. This will give you a faint, somewhat blurry outline on your page that you can then go over in pencil or pen. This also works well for repeating elements in a design (so you don't have to lose your mind drawing forty-seven sets of a spiral for leaves). You can enlarge or reduce a motif on a photocopy machine, and trace it with alterations onto your charter. You can use tracing paper, a light table, or a sunny window to trace over things you have drawn until you like the way they look. When you like the drawing you have made in pencil, go over it in ink. Bear in mind that photocopying will make the lines somewhat heavier than you drew them. Let the ink dry. Erase the pencil lines.

Lay a piece of graph paper over the work. Trace around the illumination. (If the design is difficult to see, lay both pieces against a sunny window, and trace around the design that way.) This will give you the shape of the space into which you can place your calligraphy.

If you have taken your design from a period manuscript, you will know what style of calligraphy is appropriate; otherwise, you can look up an appropriate style in a calligraphy book. Decide what period calligraphic elements you will keep, and which you will modify. (For example, you may decide that you will use long s's and short r's, and will avoid commas, but will use modem hyphenation. The choice is yours.)

You will probably need to write the text several times before you get one that has the spacing you like. Remember to leave space about "Rex" and "Regina" (or "King" and "Queen") for the Crown's signatures. Please leave long spaces for names and categories. (Redegunde of the Unspeakably Long Name who receives a thistle for Illuminated Leather Flower Arranging will still be able to read her scroll!!) Spaces for dates and places probably need to be longer than you think they do-field scribes tend to use a lot of space. Please leave out the word "of" between the spaces for the branch type and branch name. (This is so the field scribes can center "Severely Incipient Canton of Wog" in the same space that they can also write "Shire of Ten Tap Dancing Medieval Turtles".)

When you have finished your calligraphy, cut it to an appropriate shape and paste it onto the paper. I use Tack-a-note. You can use a regular glue stick, but I like the ability to reposition the calligraphy with Tack-a-note. Make sure the calligraphy is in alignment with the illumination. Make sure the edges adhere firmly.

Proofread your work! Better still, have another person, or several people, proof your work. Some words that are especially subject to error are: recognition, appertaining, responsibilities, privileges, Ansteorra and Domini.

Go over any mistakes or stray marks with white-out or white paint.

Sign the charter with your initials or maker's mark near the illumination or text. If you like, you can include the SCA year in Roman numerals.

You're ready to send your work to the Star Signet! He or she may still need to ask you to make some adjustments before your design is ready for

production. Before you sent it in, make at least one copy of it for your files and to display it at an arts & sciences display.

The Star Signet will mount the charter on a larger piece of paper (since the paper we use for blank charters is 11" x 17"). He or she will draw cutting guidelines around the edges of the charter, white-out any stray marks that show up in the photo copying, and probably include instructions to the charter painter about appropriate colors, how to paint the badge, etc. Please tell the Star Signet the source of the inspiration for your design, so that this information can be included as well. (Many charter painters want to know in what style the charter was created so they can paint it appropriately.) If you want your original artwork back, let the Star Signet know when you turn your work in; be aware it may come back with this additional work attached.

After the charter has had final approval, your work will be distributed throughout the kingdom to charter painters, back to the Sable Scroll, signed by the Crown and given out in court. You will have made some fortunate person feel a little more appreciated every time they look at your work.