



Society for Creative
Anachronism

SCA 101:

Newcomer's Handbook

November, 2015

Contributors

This document is the combined work of many people over the years.

We have tapped into the SCA, Inc. resources, other Kingdoms' documents, personal experience and experimental training programs. The SCA is an evolving social and educational organization. This is only a snapshot in time of the SCA in the Kingdom of the Outlands in the modern year 2015.

Directly contributing to this handbook is Mistress Brid ui Chon na Mara, Kingdom Chatelaine who has 20+ years working in various capacities with newcomers including recruiting and Sir Berold de Gilbert, knight, former landed baron and former prince is co-author. He frequently teaches SCA 101 classes and SCA history. Together with Sir Berold, Mistress Brid developed the current set of Newcomer Training Classes for the Kingdom of the Outlands.

While the classes are a segment of the training, development of this handbook allows for a training guide for the teachers and most importantly, a helpful resource to get the new members enjoying the SCA as quickly as possible.

Lady Alditha de la Tye, Deputy Kingdom Chatelaine for the North, has contributed to this document. Her experience, ideas and words have been very valuable to this project.

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I. Introduction

You have encountered the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA) in your wanderings and have been intrigued by what you've seen and now want to know how to become involved.

The SCA is a group of like-minded people who love to indulge in the atmosphere of pre-17th century Europe by recreating the arts and sciences of that time. We do this while dressed in reproductions of clothing from the Middle Ages and Renaissance time periods, and by putting on knightly fighting tournaments, royal courts, feasts, and dancing, to name a few. We also provide you the opportunity to learn and practice ancient arts and skills - calligraphy, cooking, armoring, metalworking, carpentry, and needlework (to name just a few) - within all-ages social group that promotes camaraderie and the values of Chivalry. While we do all this, we have fun and enjoy learning new skills. Probably the best thing from belonging is the wonderful friendships you make with people who share your interests. The SCA offers a million hobbies under one umbrella.

Many of the groups in the Kingdom of the Outlands, your geographical location in the SCA, may well have training classes to help you get familiar with our ways of doing things and get started on costumes (garb) and etiquette.

We have developed this handbook to assist you in addition to any classes you may attend and as a supplement to those classes or in place of classes if they are not available. We want you to feel welcome and comfortable as you venture into a time and place we call "The Dream".

Enter the Known World of the Society for Creative Anachronism and be welcome, friend...

II. Society for Creative Anachronism: The Basics

Overview: It always helps to understand the beginnings of an organization you are thinking of joining.

The SCA began in 1966 in Berkeley, California. Some graduate students planned a farewell party for a fellow student who was joining the Peace Corps. They chose a theme similar to Camelot. Everyone dressed in costumes from the period, and they held tournaments and had other great adventures and activities.

In fact they had so much fun they decided to do it again and then again. When trying to reserve a park for their use, they were asked the name of the group. A member of the group, science fiction writer, Marion Zimmer Bradley, came up with the name we hold today. An anachronism is something "out of place or time." A great part of the name is the "Creative," allowing us to explore to our limits. We do our best to recreate the best of pre-1700 society without its plagues, hygiene and medical care.

When you join us, you enter into a world where we are striving to be good examples of what a chivalrous knight would hopefully have been in the time period. Over time we have evolved from a party to a sub-culture studying and teaching the arts and sciences of a former time. We have evolved to a 501.3c non-profit educational group who are often called upon to do demos at schools and public events. In fact it is part of our mission to educate others.

Membership: The SCA is now a worldwide organization of 20 kingdoms throughout the northern and southern hemispheres. While there is no requirement for membership, you avoid a \$5 non-member surcharge at each event you attend and are eligible to receive awards and do martial fighting. We encourage you to try our "game" to see if it is indeed what you are expecting and hoping for before committing to a membership.

How to get started: The Chatelaine's Office has coordination responsibility for the overall recruitment, training and retention of new people. Each group has an officer (called either a Chatelain(e), or, sometimes, a Hospitaller) who is responsible for assisting newcomers. It is best to start with them. They are your first point of contact with the SCA. They help you meet people, coordinate any programs for newcomers, loan you medieval clothing for events, and, generally, are your "go-to" point of contact for the group within which you live.

However, every person the SCA is capable of helping someone new find resources. If you tend to the shy side, greeting someone new by asking a question about something surrounding you and identifying yourself as a newcomer is a great way to start getting involved. Volunteering to help if you see a need is also a quick way to get acquainted.

You can use electronic resources. The overall Society has a website (SCA.org) with a welcome site specifically to help newcomers (welcome.SCA.org). In addition, each kingdom has its own website with links to their local groups' websites. There are also other social media groups like Facebook, Yahoo Groups and Google Groups established for a groups casual or informational purpose. Your Chatelaine will be able to give you the best contact information system used by your individual group.

SCA, Inc., also has a published "Known World Handbook" available through the SCA Marketplace at SCA.org. For a nominal cost, and it is about 1" thick with everything you need, even including a way to start your own group if your area doesn't have one!

III. Heraldry and Persona

The SCA is based on a model of Western Europe during the Middle Ages. As we evolved, we chose to use the model of the British College of Arms for our rules for heraldry.

Everyone in the SCA is entitled to a heraldic device, later known as a Coat-of-Arms after receiving his or her Award of Arms. This is a unique design to tell everyone by symbols and color who you are. Team sports use their colors in their uniforms and their logos to identify the opponents. In fact, this technique was derived from the need to identify friend from foe during battles in the Middle Ages.

No one will have the same exact device. There is a process set up by the College of Arms to insure that your device does not match anyone else's in the SCA. This one registered device is yours for a lifetime; no one else may use it. New members often wonder when working to achieve their name or device why it takes so long. This is because the process to insure individuality is handled by volunteers in the organization, and it moves up to the Society-wide level to confirm no conflicts throughout the world-wide SCA.

Likewise, when picking a name for you, it must be unique within the SCA. It cannot be the same as a famous person in history. It must be a name that could have existed during your particular time period. The registration process may seem time consuming, but the result is a unique name only you possess in the SCA.

The Herald is your group's officer who helps you achieve both a name and device that is to go to get registered to you. They help by knowing the rules and by offering suggestions once they have an idea of what time period or part of the world you wish to have as your *persona*.

Persona: A persona is the identity you choose to live out in the SCA. It includes a minimum of a place and time in the Middle Ages. It can be fully developed until you can talk on topics this person would have known in that time period as if you were from that time. Clothing, accessories, headwear, place in society are all part of the persona. The depth of your research is what enriches your persona over time.

Awards (underline) It was common in the Middle Ages to have the King and Queen bestow on subjects who gained their attention. In our Society, we also

have a hierarchy of awards given at the pleasure of the Crown or sometimes the Baron and Baroness.

The first award given to a new member is the Award of Arms (AoA). This is given by the Crown for a subjective assessment of how much you have enriched the Society by your presence. The award gives you the right to be known as Lord or Lady rather than m' lord or m' lady and to develop your device and now call it your coat-of-arms. How the Crown learns about you will be covered shortly.

The next level of awards is for service, fighting arts, or arts and sciences. If you don't have an award of Arms, you will usually get one with these awards. They are called Stag's Heart for service; Stag's Blood for fighting arts, or Argent Heart for the arts and sciences. If you are in a shire you can receive from the Crown a Trefoil for one of these three areas. The Crown can also give the Golden Pheon for archery and the Silver Tyne for rapier.

After considerable above and beyond effort in these three areas, the Crown may choose to give you a Grant of Arms (GoA) where you will henceforth be known as Your Lordship or Your Ladyship. The Stag is the GoA for service, the Thane for fighting arts and the Flower for arts and sciences. There is also the Sharp Arrow for archery and the White Scarf for rapier combat.

The above awards are Kingdom awards.

The Patent of Arms (PoA) is a Society-wide award granted for both extraordinary achievement in the areas of service, arts and sciences, heavy weapons fighting or rapier fighting and for possessing a set of behaviors defined as Peer-like qualities. These people serve as the Role Models for the entire Society and are consultants to the Crown and Society as requested.

The Pelican for Service, the Laurel for Arts and Sciences, the Order of Defense for Rapier, and the Knighthood for heavy combat are all Peers. The Knights are addressed as Sir while the other three orders are addressed as Master or Mistress.

People who have served as King or Queen are called Royal Peers. If they served once they are called Count or Countess, addressed as Your Excellency and if more than once, Duke or Duchess and addressed as Your Grace.

Individuals who serve as a King or Queen are called Your Majesty. Individuals who serve as landed Barons and Baronesses are referred to as Your Excellency. Barons and Baronesses who were in charge of a geographic area are called Your Honor after they step down and receive a Court Barony award.

People deemed worthy to the Crown for service to them or the kingdom are given special recognition called a Court Barony. They are addressed as Your Excellency.

There are no corresponding awards for the Corporate-type officers when they finish their terms of office. However, serving the Kingdom brings them to the attention of the Crown, and they often receive one of these awards from the Crown for their work for the kingdom.

How does the Crown learn about people deserving of awards Because it would be impossible for the Crown (current King and Queen) to know of the activities of all Their subjects, an Award Recommendation form was developed for *ANYONE* to send to the Crown about anyone in the Kingdom they deem worthy of recognition. They can state what the person has done to enhance the shire, barony, kingdom or other group and suggest an award or they can simply leave the choice of award up to the Crown after pointing out the person's assets. Therefore, it is important that all members understand that they have an important role in the giving of recognition and awards.

Actively campaigning for awards, however, is not advised since Chivalry would imply that you do the work for joy and not for reward. Aspiring to Peerage quality behavior is admirable, but campaigning for Peerage can prove a serious stumbling block.

IV. Fitting In and Getting Acquainted

The etiquette of the Society includes behavior at camping events, at feast, at court and during any get together in general. Honor, chivalry and courtesy are the pillars upon which our Society is based. They will be used as examples in explaining many of our rules and customs. Manners and hospitality will be discussed.

The people of the SCA strive to live to a code of conduct that is defined as Courtesy, Chivalry and Honor. This is hopefully demonstrated in all our activities.

An example of Courtesy is that if one is unsure of the correct forms of address for different people, newcomers can always address anyone, no matter their rank (including the king and queen) as m' lord or m' lady without causing any kind insult whatsoever.

An example of Chivalrous behavior would be a willingness to cheerfully lend assistance by helping carry and haul, help set up things for our events and activities or stay to help clean up after an event.

A form of Honor is always remembering to "leave a place cleaner than you found it." This applies whether or not you made the mess. It is an important issue as we rely on public churches, schools and parks for our event sites. We want to be welcomed back.

Something new to learn is that Courtesy extends to entering another pavilion, camp or group by first asking permission. Those places are equivalent to our houses, cars and workspaces and deserve being respected as such.

There are so many interesting and different items around an event site but Courtesy requires always asking before handling other people's accouterments and personal effects (particularly their knives and swords.)

If you really have a question for someone but they appear involved in another conversation, the Courteous thing to do after greeting them is to ask to speak with them when they are free to talk.

Honor in the SCA requires hospitality to be offered as a gift but *not* an entitlement. If you forget to bring water, a chair or feast gear, no one "owes" it to you. Most people are willing to help out the occasional forgetfulness. An

example of Courtesy is failing to bring your own chair and sitting in others without asking permission.

Therefore, plan to always bring to every event your own chair, drinking vessel and water to avoid abusing the hospitality of others.

Loaner garb (clothing) is frequently not available at an event. Arrange ahead of time to borrow from the group's supply. If you expect to be outfitted at an event in fancy style, you are going to be disappointed. Loaner items of clothing are donated for many newcomers' use and should be arranged both in advance and returned promptly, cleaned in whatever manner requested. The only rule of the Society is that you make an attempt at pre-1700 clothing. We will offer the best we have available.

There are certain items of regalia that are reserved for the use of specific award recipients. The most obvious is the white belt, spurs, and unadorned chain worn by our Knights (highest rank for fighting). Their squires (students) by custom wear a red belt with their Knight's arms on the tip.

A Pelican (highest rank for service) has the right to wear a medallion of a pelican in her piety. Their students can wear a yellow belt with the arms of the Pelican on the tip.

A Laurel (highest rank for arts and sciences) wears a medallion with a laurel wreath and any student of the laurel is often identified with a green belt with the Laurel's arms on the tip.

It is recommended that a question would go a long way in avoiding any unintentional misuse of reserved choices in your wardrobe.

If you plan to attend an event that includes food, it is *always* wise if you wish to eat to bring your own, plate, bowl, mug, knife, fork and spoon and possibly cloth napkin (referred to collectively as "feast gear") as it is extremely rare that any eating utensils will be provided. Prepare yourself a feast basket containing those items that can be easily acquired from thrift stores or garage sales. There may be spare feast gear around to borrow, but not always.

Offering Hospitality and receiving Hospitality within the SCA is very much an SCA behavior. While most people will go out of their way to help you with needed loans of equipment and supplies, continually requiring that type assistance is an abuse of their hospitality. In turn, you're offering water, a seat, or other service is your way of being hospitable within your means and is chivalric.

These above topics are IDEALS we strive to obtain. Since we are very human, we don't always succeed. Leaders and Peers don't always role model ideal behaviors and others around you may have rude moments. Remember, we STRIVE to live the Chivalric life and look only to our own actions for our successfulness. Chivalry, Honor and Courtesy are individual goals. You only compete with yourself.

V. Who's Who in the Society

Anyone coming into the SCA for the first time enters as a person believed to be gently born. You can, should you find it more fun, chose to be a peasant, merchant or guild member.

Your reputation is pristine. We don't care about your non-SCA life or role. Your behavior in the SCA will be noticed, so it is best to try to put your best foot forward.

Hierarchies: Since we are based on Western Europe in the Middle Ages, we operate with both the Monarchy and Feudalism. In history the King and Queen ruled their subjects. Helping them in the geographic territories were Barons. They held land and income based on providing soldiers and tithe to their Crown. The land grants given by the Crown to nobles were worked by the peasants. The landowners were in fealty to the king and at his command, would provide military forces and supplies to his needs.

Our Society is structured as both a Monarchy and in the real world as a Corporation.

In the SCA, we have geographical divisions into Kingdoms. Those kingdoms have a King and Queen. Sometimes the geographical area is so large, there is a Principality made with a Prince and Princess to rule, while in fealty to the King and Queen.

We further break down our geography into Baronies, Shires, Cantons, Schools and Colleges, depending on size and stability. The Barony is ruled by the Baron and Baroness who is selected by the King and Queen. They usually serve a minimum of 2 years.

The Shires are smaller groups without Nobles. They report directly to the Crown of the Kingdom.

Cantons are smaller groups near a large barony that are independent but in fealty to the Baron and Baroness. Schools and Colleges are also under the supervision of a Baron and Baroness.

Together these groups comprise a Kingdom, a group of subjects to the King and Queen during their reign. The Outlands believes in the Monarchy and the Crown is Ruler.

Because we live in the 21st century, the Corporate needs must be met. Each group is required to have a Seneschal or group president who is the legal representative of the group in the 21st century. This person signs contracts and reports to a superior.

Because of our non-profit status, we also must have an Exchequer, or treasurer who ensures we follow the IRS rules and regulations.

Other officers are created to cover the various aspects of our game which includes Arts and Sciences, Marshal of weapons forms, Chatelaine for newcomers, Chronicler for newsletters and Heralds for registering names and devices and making public announcements as requested. Other officers may be created as the group's needs dictate. They all report to their kingdom superiors. The parallel kingdom officers report to their Society superiors who then assemble information for informing the Board of Directors of the SCA.

On the medieval side, the kingdom has a King and Queen as absolute rulers within the medieval world. The SCA is based on the presumption of a western European monarchy. The king was often both monarch of the people and representative of God. As such, we show them the same deference as would have been shown and expected to a "real" King and/or Queen of the Middle Ages. Our Crowns serve with joint and equal authority. We are grateful for their willingness to provide us the theater of a medieval court environment.

They are considered so important that a ten-foot rule of Royal Presence exists to insure no one intrudes upon their space without permission. If their thrones are in front of the public, it is respectful to bow or courtesy even to an empty throne. One doesn't enter their Presence without asking permission.

The Crown is a six-month position with a 2-month learning time as Crown Prince and Princess. Every six months, fighters with their consort apply by letter of intent to the Crown to fight in the upcoming Crown Tournament. They have to be a member of the SCA and have a name and device in submission to the Heralds Office. They must swear an oath that they fight with every intention of winning and serving out their reign. In addition, the Crown must find them acceptable candidates to fight in Crown Tournament. A reign as Crown can be cost prohibitive to many candidates due to the travel, gifts and wardrobes needed.

Their job is a very rewarding one, but also quite demanding. They travel throughout their kingdom during the six months as well as to outlying kingdoms for wars and special events. They *are* The Outlands during their reign. There is

much work in the preparation of each visit and many decisions to be made. It can be challenging.

Other groups exist within the kingdom. We have non-official groups such as guilds and households

A *household* tends to be started by a like-minded group of friends and acquaintances. The formality of its structure varies from one group to another. Each group comes with its own variation of entrance requirements and expectations of service to the group. It is wise for newcomers to wait at least a year before deciding to join a group so newcomers can be certain of what they are joining before committing.

Guilds are formed for special interests such as leather working, weaving, cooking, furniture making, etc. Likewise, Guilds can be very formal or informal. Be sure you understand what is required of you before you get involved.

VI. Arts and Sciences

The SCA studies period culture and technology and methods for producing historically accurate artifacts and performances. The possibilities for newcomers to explore the Arts and Sciences in the Society are almost endless. Where to begin becomes a an issue more than what since there are a million hobbies under one umbrella during the pre-17th century known world.

Photos and details about our activities can be found at the [SCA Newcomers' Portal](http://newcomers.sca.org), <http://newcomers.sca.org>.

To study and learn is our goal. The ability to teach others is an important result of that goal. To encourage the study of the arts and sciences, awards have been created for developing knowledge and skill in one or several areas of study.

Discovering the talent of the individuals in our kingdom is done through arts and sciences competitions held around the kingdom. The artists get to display their increasing skill levels through their project(s) and provide documentation to prove their knowledge. When skilled enough, they teach others how to do what they do so the knowledge can be expanded beyond their study.

Each group has an Arts and Sciences Officer whose role it is to encourage others to participate. This is often done with classes or workshops and any other method they can dream up. Some groups hold special events and invite teachers to do classes for a day or a weekend. Some bring in a specialist in an area for a one-time workshop such as a class on a specific type of dancing.

The people who display both extensive skill in some arts or sciences area and also display ability to role model all the SCA values, can often achieve a Peerage for the Arts called a Laurel. They are encouraged to take Apprentices to help those students grow in their arts capacity.

Today, compared to 1966, we have much in the way of technology to take us from the sources available then of libraries, museums and books. Today the Web has made access to people and information from around the world easily available. Facebook has SCA groups that are focused on minute arts and sciences studies. Just some of what we do is mentioned below.

Our scribes create scrolls resembling an illuminate medieval manuscript page with calligraphy. These are made for awards to fellow members for their achievements.

Our brewers create a wide range of beverages used during the middle ages. They have competitions and often share their goods at camping events.

Our metal workers make jewelry, circlets, coronets and crowns as well as belt fittings and hardware. What they do creates so much beauty recovered from the Middle Ages.

Our textile workers venture into all areas of textiles including making tents, clothing, shoes and other necessary items.

Our embroiderers do decorative stitching for everything from the kneeling cushions at court to decorations on clothing.

Our weavers weave fabric, trim, cording used in making our clothing and other uses.

Our armorers make all armor and accessories. Our fighters couldn't fight without them.

Our blacksmiths create equipment we need to camp or do equestrian activities from tent stakes to cooking gear to buckles.

Our furniture makers make beds, chairs, tables, lanterns, benches and stools in the medieval ways to make our events look ever so much more real and believable.

Our cooks study the medieval foods, cooking styles and recipes from various time periods and have competitions or recreate an entire feast at an event.

For virtually every art and science in the SCA, someone has made a study of the area. From medicine to apothecary, someone is seeking knowledge. We even have those specialize in studying history and documenting it.

You can study them all or focus your energies in one area. These choices are always yours to make.

VII. Combat & Martial Endeavors

One of the first activities usually seen of the SCA is our combat activity. We do armored combat fighting (rattan weapons), rapier (fencing), cut and thrust, target archery, combat archery and use siege weapons. People are drawn to watch when seeing us in medieval clothing and armor doing these combat activities.

When you step back into the current middle ages from the 21st century, one learns the destination is not as important as the journey. On the field of combat no one judges you but yourself on the blows you receive. No referee, judge, or any person may tell you how to judge a blow you have received. It is up to the individual and his or her honor to truthfully and honestly rate the blows received on the field. Winning is not important. What is important is participating in a chivalrous manner.

Safety and Marshaling: First and foremost with all our combat activities is the safety factor. We don't want our fun spoiled by injuries. We want neither our fighters nor equipment to injure anyone, player or spectator. To insure this is a safe activity, we train Marshals in the particular fighting style to be the monitors of safety for the spectators, fighters and equipment. No fighting can occur without a trained, authorized marshal present to observe. Fighters learn the rules and how to fight at separate practices put on by the various groups.

Combat Tournaments: The society utilizes 3 types of weapon styles for combat tournaments. These are heavy weapons with armor, light weapons or fencing with protective clothing and cut and thrust, a combination of the first two fighting styles. Tournaments can be fought using a multitude of weapons styles and tournament formats. Melees are group competitions utilizing the same styles and rules listed above.

Heavy Weapons Combat: This is our most noticeable martial art. Fighters can be between the ages of 16-18 with parental attendance and waivers, or men and women over 18. They must be outfitted in the appropriate armor to protect them from blows from rattan weapons structured to be similar to medieval weapons in weight and impact. They must be "authorized" in each combat weapon form they use and must follow all armor standards in the *SCA Marshal's Handbook* and the *Outlands' Armored Combat Handbook*, both available on line.

Many groups have loaner armor to help you find out if this activity is for you. After a reasonable amount of time, you are expected to begin making or buying your own armor. Check locally for information from your Knight Marshal of your group on the best way in your area to go about this.

Light Weapons Fighting: Unlike heavy weapons combat, light weapons fighting can be practiced without the use of heavy armor. Light weapons utilize rapier and schlagger blades and can be referred to as fencing.

Cut and Thrust Combat: The last martial art practiced in the society is called Cut and Thrust. This type of combat utilizes aspects of heavy weapons and fencing. If an individual does not wish to wear a full suit of armor nor participate with the miniscule amount of armor to fence, Cut and Thrust combat meets in the middle.

Target Archery: Archery is practiced in the society. The most common form is target archery, where period and non-period bows may be utilized and the use of period bows, projectiles and materials is encouraged.

Combat Archery: Combat archery is utilized on the heavy weapons field during melees. Individuals who participate in combat archery must be authorized and wear armor for this pursuit.

Thrown weapons: Not having to utilize armor of any kind, the throwing of spears, axes and knives can be done at targets. This martial endeavor has its own set of rules and equipment and is popular with all age groups

Equestrian: If you are lucky enough to own a horse, the society has activities for you and that horse. Dressage and the Quintain are two of the various activities practiced in the equestrian arts. No person-to-person combat is practiced on horseback.

Siege Weapons: To operate siege weapons such as catapults and ballistas, a participant must be authorized in a heavy weapon combat form. This type of martial art is utilized in large melees and is very popular with crowds.

VIII. Basics to Get Started

The only rule the SCA has is to make an attempt at pre-17th century clothing at any SCA event. What's listed below is a basic starter kit and some handy tips that will help the newcomer navigate their first few events.

Basic Tunic – a basic tunic can be as basic as a scrub top or a non-ornate bathrobe

Sun Hat and Sunscreen – straw and fabric are the best choices for coolness. Many of our events are held outdoors.

Belt – Should not be white so not to be mistaken as a knight, as that color is reserved for knights only. Any plain one, preferably brown or black is fine and can often be found in thrift stores.

Cloak –can be as simple as a plain or plaid colored blanket

Pants – Preferably no jeans but plain colored sweats work

Shoes

- No tennis shoes if possible
- Boots okay
- Sandals okay

Feast gear: It is suggested that when you attend a feast that you have a basic set of feast gear. This includes a plate, bowl, knife fork spoon and drinking vessel of some kind. Also a tablecloth, napkins and candles with holders might be useful.

As your society experience broadens, you may wish to add these items to your basic kit: a chair or stool or two since you might make a friend at an event. Or perhaps a blanket if you prefer the ground.

Water is very important and one should always carry a good supply of it to events and for events.

And to carry all of your things, a handy carry basket is highly advised. Mundane (modern) bags should be concealed by a throw.