

How to Host an SCA Event

A Stewards Handbook

Barony of Caer Anterth Mawr Kingdom of Northshield

As prepared by: Baroness Kateryn of Cornwall
Edited by: THL Arnbjor Karlsson, Lady Genevieve de Belleval, Mistress Tatiana Marana
Melville and Baron Alasdair Calum Montgomery
Including information gathered by Mistress Idonia Tait

How to Host an SCA Event

A Stewards Handbook

STARTING OUT:

Determine the purpose of the event and what areas of interest it will cover.

Determine or establish a theme for your event. If it is a Coronation or Crown, you may be required to wait to finalize this until the appropriate royalty can let you know their wishes. Sometimes they will go with your thoughts, others they may have something specific they want to do. Otherwise, it is good to do this at the outset as it gives your event a direction.

Develop a fairly firm proposal in advance just as if you were writing a bid to host a Kingdom event (unless of course you are required to write a bid – in that case – just do the bid).

Set a date. You will need to involve the Curia to make sure this is a workable date. There are many dates that activities may be happening that are not on the Kingdom calendar so it is always best to check first. Watch for when Kingdom events are scheduled and what weekends are absolutely out with your populace. At this point your group should decide if you will be going ahead with the event or not. This handbook assumes you are indeed going to hold the event.

Find a site and reserve it. If there is a contract that needs to be signed (and there should be) the Seneschal is the person that will need to sign off on it. The Event Steward is a Deputy to the Seneschal, but the Seneschal is the legal SCA representative for the mundane world as far as contracts are concerned, so for this Barony, we prefer that the Seneschal sign all contracts. Remember to take into account price, deposit policy, cancellation policy and any limits such as whether the site is dry, do they allow campfires, what is the parking lot size (will it fit the needs of the event), kitchen limitations, if fighting and fighting inside – will the floors take the punishment of dropping to knees and dropping of armor, is the ceiling high enough for a tall fighter with a polearm, classrooms, table and chair needs, and any other requirements you may need for your event.

Some or all of this may have already been done for you if this is a “traditional” event (Such as Pennsic or Gulf Wars or Boar’s Head).

STAFF:

Start asking people to volunteer to help. Below is a list of possible positions you may want to consider including. Make sure that your staff is asking for assistance from the group as a whole for those areas that need additional assistance (kitchen, troll, clean-up, etc.) Throughout this process it is a good idea to send updates to the Seneschal, Baron and Baroness. If you have any questions or concerns they should be able to help you or at least point you in the right direction. By keeping them updated, they are aware of your plans, what is going on, and should they be questioned, will be able to give intelligent answers, thereby further promoting your event in the best way possible.

The main staff positions for any event are:

- Event Steward
- Pre-registration/Troll/Porter coordinator (Curia recommends this be the same person, not two people – makes things run smoother)
- Feast Steward
- Royalty Liaison

Other positions that you might want to include could be:

- A& S Coordinator
- Bardic Coordinator
- Children's Activity Coordinator
- Class Coordinator
- Crash space/hotel coordinator
- Head server
- Herald
- Kitchen Clean-up Coordinator (If your doing a feast this position is an absolute must, many Feast Stewards don't think about clean-up. If you don't have a clean-up coordinator, make sure the Feast Steward knows they are responsible for cleaning the kitchen afterwards.)
- Marshals – in – Charge (Heavy, Rapier, archery)
- Merchant Coordinator
- Security Coordinator
- Site Clean-up Coordinator

OFFICERS:

The local officers are an excellent resource for event stewards. You can approach them to either serve in staff positions or can help you find people to fill staff positions. They can answer questions about Society and Kingdom requirements for event activities (arts martial, financial policy, Chirurgeon needs, etc...). Finally, some officers may even have event oversight responsibilities. For example, the Exchequer must approve the event porter, as that position is De Facto Deputy of the Exchequer. Please see the website below for further information:

<http://www.northshield.org/Posts/Display.aspx?ID=877>

If your event includes merchants, make sure to check your state regulations or have the Merchant Steward do this. In the State of Wisconsin, each merchant must complete a Wisconsin Temporary Event form which must be turned into the Merchant Steward BEFORE the merchant is allowed to do any selling. This is State LAW and this procedure MUST be followed. The Merchant Steward must then fill out the spreadsheet for that form and send that to the State of Wisconsin and the Kingdom Exchequer within 10 days of the event. As Event Steward, it is also your responsibility to verify this has been done.

The event and the event site are the ultimate responsibility of the Event Steward. If you are going to need assistance with set up prior to the event – make sure you ask for assistance in plenty of time to get volunteers to help you do this. Same thing for clean up. Some sites provide for a certain amount of clean-up, but there are always things that need to be done. You should have someone in place to take care of this. This is especially important if you are doing a feast. The Feast Steward and the feast staff will be very tired after being the kitchens all day. Make sure the Feast Steward has made arrangements for a clean up crew after feast. If they have not, then you should make sure that you have a volunteer set to coordinate this effort so that it get's done, done well and done on time. There are many sites that we are charged extra if we are not clean and out by a given time.

BUDGET AND FEES:

Set prices and a budget. *No budget should ever be in the negative.* If you can not work a budget that has a positive outcome you need to re-think what you are doing and cut costs or do not hold the event. Determine all of the costs and total it up so that you know how much you need to break even and maybe have a little left over so that the numbers stay in the black.

To come up with your fees that you will be charging you need to start by identifying all the items that will require money from event revenue. If something is to be donated, you don't need to bring that into the mix. Cost could include:

- Site rental, (are tables and chairs extra)
- Materials for each activity such as oranges and pickles for fighters, hay bales for archery, children's activities supplies, prizes, table/chair rental, etc.
- Decorations for hall, tables, field or other areas
- General supplies such as poster board for seating charts or signs, toilet paper, site tokens, etc.
- Royalty room supplies which might include drinks, food, flowers, etc.
- Site program and any other printed materials, ads, etc.

Estimate your attendance for the event. Do not forget to include any complementary and/or discounted gentles for site and feast. Guess low, it is better to underestimate and adjust your budget accordingly that to over estimate.

From here, identify the cost per (full price) person. Remember the income from the event needs to cover your expenses in your budget so that your event doesn't start off in the red. All expenses should be taken into account when trying to set your site fee (except food unless that is included in site fee).

Feasts/food should be kept separate from these numbers unless the feast is to be in the cost of the site and everyone at site will be offered feast. As with the full budget, the cost of food/feast should ***ALWAYS be less than the feast fee you charge per person.*** Servers are usually not charged for feast, this is a thank you to them for serving. Typically, any attending royalty are also not charged. The Feast Steward will need to take these numbers into account for the budget. The Feast Steward should also specifically choose head table servers, typically people with a lot of experience. (In CAM typically His Excellency, Count Valerious and His Grace, Duke Corin love doing this.)

Your Feast Steward will need to have a budget as well. You will need to know how many people will be served. How many paid feast seats? How many complimentary feast seats? All costs associated with the feast should be in that budget. Once that is decided, divide the total cost of the feast with the number of paid seats and set your feast fee.

After the event, compare your actual expenses with those you budgeted and identify any errors so that you will have a basis to work with next time. Often, notes are transferred from event steward to event steward from year to year. This way, hopefully, mistakes that were made one year will not have to be repeated.

ANNOUNCE YOUR EVENT:

Complete all of the items above and you are ready to announce your event. Submit event information to the Kingdom calendar secretary. Sometimes the Calendar Secretary will place this information on the Kingdom Website Calendar, sometimes you will have to do it. It varies from group to group. Provide all current information as listed below.

If your event is to be on the kingdom calendar and you are placing ads in the newsletters (Northwatch, Pale) the ads are due into the chronicler one month prior to publication. For example, for an event on April 15th you will want to run in the April newsletter, so your ad would need to be in by March 1st. If you want to be in a month prior to the event as well (which is a good idea for those who pre-plan a good bit in advance) your ad would need to be in on Feb. 1st. So everything should be set (as in the paragraph above) before you make the ads up for the newsletters.

Another way to get the word out about your event is to prepare flyers that members of your group can take with them to different events for the information tables.

Your event announcement should include the following information:

- Host group(s) name
- Name of the event
- Dates/times of the event (Site Open and Close should be here)
- Name and address of site
- Website URL
- Event Steward/Feast Steward name and modern contact information (include address, phone and e-mail)
- Fees (site, feast, merchant, any other meals, parking)
- Reservation information (including who to send to and complete contact information)
- Who to make checks out to
- Any reservation cut-off dates
- Activities
- Any important site information (handicap accessible, alcohol policy, etc.)
- Directions to the site.

You may also want to include information about Children's activities, will there be populace/presence space, merchants, food other than a feast available. Will there be showers available, off board seating for feast, etc.

THREE MONTHS FROM EVENT

Three months prior to the event all of your activities and your staff should be set. All of your planning should be done and you should no longer be accepting "another great idea" so that you have time to implement those you have already planned out. This of course is a suggested time line, you may decide to increase or decrease this timeframe as you see fit.

Is everything ordered that needs to be ordered? If you are using a caterer do they know what they are doing and when? If an outdoor event do you need Port-a-Johns, are they ordered? Do you need to make arrangements for showers? Do you have the list of inventory from the Quartermaster? Have you decided what you will need for your event?

Purchase and construct/make the event related items for your event during the several months leading up to the event. Make sure you have enough of the items you will need (serving dishes, list poles, banners, etc.).

Check in with your staff and get regular updates. Are they progressing in their areas in a timely fashion? Is there anything they need from you as Event Steward? It is best to hold monthly meetings to get updates from your staff so that all staff members know what is going on with the event and what remains to be completed. These meeting should be preset well in advance so that people know when they are and can make arrangements to attend. Announce the meeting dates and times to everyone in your group and encourage non-staff to attend. You can get great ideas from them as well as additional volunteers. Have those positions that need additional help posted that they are seeking assistance in the various media?

Have each staff member prepare and send to you information they want posted to the website for the event and get that website up as soon as possible. This is the best and longest lasting advertisement for your event. Make sure information is accurate and remind people to check back occasional as information may change.

Make sure that the proper staff people have the funds necessary to purchase items they may need (Feast Steward, Water Bearer, etc) and that the exchequer has a check cut for the troll money.

If you are using two different people for pre-registrations and troll, check with both people to verify they are all set for the hand-off of the pre-registered list. Also verify that all checks coming in are being deposited in a timely manner.

Visit the site again to make sure you know where everything is going to be set up. It is a good idea to make a site map for your program so that visitors will know where things are happening and so that they are not continually asking staff members. If you are holding a feast, you need to ensure that a feast seating chart is being made up.

Does your event site require a proof of insurance or do they need to be listed as an additional insured? If they only need proof of insurance, you can print out the certificate at:

<http://www.northshield.org/Resources/PDF/CertificateOfLiabilityInsurance.pdf>

This address is on the Seneschals web page on the Northshield under Resource Links.

If they need to be listed as additional insured you will need to have the seneschal contact corporate 45 days prior to the event and request this. There is a cost associated with being listed as additional insured which will need to come out of your event expenses.

ROYALTY:

If you will be hosting royalty for your event, there are a number of things to think about and make decisions about. It is best to have an assigned person to take care of any needs of the royals if at all possible (Royal Liaison [RL]).

If possible it is a good thing to provide a royal room for the royals to put their stuff in, to have a place to change and a place to sign scrolls (if there is to be a court). Other things to consider providing:

People to help them unload.

Place to hold court (should be enough room for heralds, champions and retainers behind)

A high table during feast

Royal room guards

RL should meet them at troll

Lunch/snacks in the royal room

Pavilion or sun shade if there are outdoor activities (they may even bring one with them that they will wish to have set up)

Many of the royalty have personal websites that include their contact information and frequently asked questions including their likes and dislikes. This is a great place to get information and some are so inclusive that the Royalty Liaison doesn't even need to contact anyone. If you do need to contact someone, it is best to start with the Chamberlain first. The Chamberlain may be able to answer your questions and not bother the royalty. Should you be hosting a Crown or Coronation, questions will probably progress to the point that your Royalty Liaison will need to converse with the Royals directly, but normally, this will not be the case. Let your RL do their duty. There should only be one person associated with your event contacting them and if that is you as Event Steward and you are not going to have a RL, that is fine, but having one will assist you greatly. One person contacting the royalty will also reduce stress and will cut confusion to a minimum. As Event Steward make sure to ask your RL if the attending Royalty will need use of a meeting room during the event.

ONE MONTH FROM EVENT

EVENT PROGRAM:

Prepare your event program. Include: host group name, event name and location, event dates, schedule of activities (this should include everything like meetings, court, fighting, classes, feast and site closing time), staff names and positions, map of site and any other pertinent information for the event (i.e. if it is a crown tourney you would want to possibly include a list of the combatants and a tree).

Once your program is set – make sure it has been proofed by a number of people including each one of your staff so that they can help to ensure that the information regarding their areas is correct. You may then have this printed. Copying may be less expensive than printing, remember to check around to get the best price.

Get your list of needs to the Quartermaster as well as dates when you will be available to pick these items up (or have someone pick them up for you). It is not the quartermaster's responsibility to get these items to and from the event. As Event Steward, you are responsible for those items you and your staff will need for your event.

If you are serving a feast, who will be making up the feast chart? Make sure that duty is assigned. Discuss this with the Feast Steward – they probably have specific ideas as to how they want things to flow. Will the feast Steward also be responsible for the table set-up and decoration or will you have someone assigned to that specific task? Will there be copies of the menu, including an ingredient list, to place on the tables? After feast will you be providing baggies for people to put their dirty dishes in? These are items you will need to discuss with your Feast Steward so that you are both aware who will be handling what parts of the Feast and if you need another volunteer involved or not.

SET-UP AND THE EVENT:

As Event Steward, you should be one of the first people on site and one of the last (if not very first and last) to leave the site **BOTH FOR SET-UP AND THE EVENT**. People will have questions or concerns for you for the entire event. Make yourself available. Walk around, ask if people are having a good time, check with your staff and see if they need anything. If they do, see that someone gets assigned to the task immediately (not you, you need to be there if other issues come up). If the cooks need ice, you find someone to go that can cover the expense and have them go for the ice and get it to the kitchen. Remind them they will need to keep the receipt and fill out the necessary paperwork to get reimbursed. Let them know that either you or the Feast Steward can sign off on the paperwork for approval.

Make sure that troll is easily accessible and well marked so that people will know where to go so that they can check in.

It is a good idea, if you have information that you want people to see (event sheets, class sign up lists, etc), to put it on a separate table that is near troll, but not part of troll. Troll has enough to take care of getting people in the door. If you really feel explanations are necessary, troll can direct people to the table and you can have another person giving out the additional information to help keep things moving.

Remember, at the event, you are there to solve problems. Wear comfortable garb and shoes and remember to eat, drink and have fun yourself. Appear calm and relaxed (or even happy) and handle things as they come your way. If you need assistance, ask. There are many people that have been in your shoes before and who will be more than willing to assist you.

MOST IMPORTANT: Remember to thank everyone. This is an all volunteer organization and no one HAS to be here working their butts off. Thanks are the best gift that you can give them. If you prefer giving tokens, here are some inexpensive ideas:

- Hand written thank you notes. If you take pictures during the event, you can slip one of them into the note.
- Home made treats
- Beeswax candles
- Packets or little bottles of spices
- Beads
- Inexpensive jewelry
- Anything SCA related (linen napkins, feast gear, cups, trim, pouches, etc)

AFTER THE EVENT:

There are a number of staff positions that must report to Kingdom after an event. Make sure those staff people include you in on these reports. If this is a Kingdom Level event, you as Event Steward will also be required to file a report with Kingdom. Most forms for these reports can be found on the Northshield website. It is best to check before the event so that you will know what information you are going to be required to provide. Ignorance is not an excuse. This is part of your job as Event Steward. At the time of publications these forms for reports could be found at:

<http://www.northshield.org/Resources/SubMenu.aspx?Events/ReportForms>

Do not forget to compare your actual expenses with those you budgeted and identify any errors so that you will have a basis to work with next time. Often, notes are transferred from event steward to event steward from year to year. This way, hopefully, mistakes that were made one year will not have to be repeated.

Have the Exchequer set a date when all receipts must be into them in order to be paid and do not deviate from this date. The Exchequer needs to complete their report within 30 days of the event and if this is a Kingdom event – so do you as Event Steward. You will need the information from the Exchequer's report to finish your report. Does the Event Steward need to approve all expenses or all expenses except feast related expenses (which of course would then mean that the Feast Steward is approving those)?

Do not forget that items taken from inventory need to be returned. They should be clean and packed away neatly ready for the next Event Stewards use. That means table cloths needs to be laundered, dishes washed, ropes coiled and tied off, etc. Make arrangements with the Quartermaster to get these items back into the inventory area. (For CAM this means the storage shed.)

MISCELLANEOUS:

Below is a list of things to think about that may or may not have been covered in the paragraphs above. It is good to run through this list occasionally as it may prompt you to think of something else you want to accomplish for your event.

What is the theme of the event?

Who will be the Feast Steward?

Who will be taking reservations and be in charge of troll?

What others staff positions do you need and do you have people in place for them?

What kind of activities would you like to have?

Do you have the correct types of marshals lined up for any arts martial activities your event will be having?

Will you be having A&S displays and activities or Artisans Row?

If you are having any kinds of competitions, do you have judges lined up?

Will there be children's activities?

Will there be merchants?

Have you mapped out how much each "merchant space" will occupy?

Are tables and chairs included in the merchant fee; are they additional or not available?

Will you have any bardic performances and is space worked out for this?

Will there be court (Baronial, Royal or both)

Will you have musicians (entertainment) for court and/or feast? Have they been contacted? Do they know what is expected? Do they know where they are on the schedule?

Have you double checked your budget so that you know site fees are set where they need to be?

Who will be making/buying the site tokens?

Will feast seating include a menu with ingredients per table or one per person? Who is making/printing?

Who will take care of decorations?

Will you be giving away any prizes? Do you have the prizes?

Have you written the event announcement and ad for the newsletters?

Have you sent in the ads?

Will you have royals? Do you have a room/tent/pavilion set aside for their use?