

# *New Member's Guide to SCA Activities*

*by Alyessa Oaktree*

This guide describes the different types of S.C.A. gatherings. Each has different purposes, and the level of involvement of the public and participants vary. Some are medieval re-creations and you are expected to show up "in garb" (in costume) and behave in "persona" (in character) to a certain extent. Others are less formal and are "out of persona", where modern clothes and conversation are expected.

"Events" are a sub-set of "activities" which receive official sanction by the corporation, and are required to be published in the Kingdom newsletter. Another way to tell the difference is if there is an "Autocrat" (see below). The difference is mainly one of advertising, accessibility to the general membership and insurance coverage, but it also affects the level of formality, organization, planning, and whether members are in persona.

## *What are the different types of S.C.A. Activities?*

**Practice** - a training in an activity in preparation for events. For instance, Fighter Practice, Fencing Practice, Dance Practice, etc. Normally no garb is required, but tools or equipment may be (like armor and weapons for Fighter Practice). Watching is usually permissible or actively encouraged. Out of persona.

**Commons** - general membership, multi-purpose business meeting, out of persona. Members discuss upcoming events, request volunteers, give out information on local classes and meetings. People from out of their area are welcome at a commons, so feel free to travel! Bring portable projects (ie: handsewing, spinning, embroidery, etc.), and a pot-luck dish, paper and pen.

**Workshop** - informal space to practice, learn and get hands-on experience with companionship and guidance from people who know something about the topic, or who give informal demonstrations and explanations. Typically out of persona. Bring a notebook and pen, money in case of materials fees, or your own supplies (call ahead!), and a pot-luck dish.

**Class** - Formal instruction, often lecture-based, regarding an art, science, or a topic of research. A notebook is almost always helpful and sometimes there are handouts. Usually out of persona.

**Demo** - showcase or string of lectures on Medieval subjects. May be given at museums, to inform the general public, or at schools for students of history. There may be hands-on demonstrations of arts and sciences, handouts, fighting demonstrations, etc. Members are usually strictly in persona (or pretending to have a persona if they do not) at a demo. Food and refreshments will probably not be served.

**University/Collegium/Schola** - one-day Event full of classes in a single location, usually in persona. Sometimes there is a "day board" (see below). If so, bring your own table settings.

**Feast** - one-day Event. Entertainments or tournaments during the day, and a formal dinner feast in the evening, followed by dancing, etc. Formal garbed occasions, in persona. There may be a day-board. Bring your own table settings. Bring extra money for merchant's goods.

**Camping Events** - multiple day Event, sometimes with a feast included. Bring garb and tableware, and your own bedding. If there are no cabins available, bring your own tent.

**Pennsic War** - camping Event where you can attend from (approximately) three days to 17 days. There are many tournaments and battles, courts, merchants, an ongoing "university", etc.

## *Event slang*

**autocrat** - the organizer of an event. Before the event, most questions regarding scheduled activities, directions or accessibility at the event, should be directed to the autocrat.

**babes-in-arms** - babies under 3 who are normally free at events

**damp, wet, dry** - Wet - alcoholic possession is only restricted by age. Dry - consumption of alcoholic beverages is strictly prohibited. Damp - wines, ciders, meads and beers are allowed.

**day board** - usually included in the general site fee, this is a buffet usually consisting of cheese, bread, and fruits, etc. Usually requires at least a mug or goblet.

**day tripper** - just there for the day, not camping, or will be leaving before the feast

**"discreetly damp/wet"** - all alcoholic beverage containers should be kept out of sight, out of mind. Consumption of alcohol should not be obvious to onlookers.

**feastocrat** - main cook, coordinator of the kitchen staff. The easiest person to locate if you want to help out. Speak to the Feastocrat a few weeks before an event if you have dietary requirements.

**munchkins** - the terms used for young children who may be free at some events.

**onboard, offboard, outboard** - Onboard - eating the prepared feast. Offboard - a place at a table on the fringes of the feasthall, bringing your own foods. Outboard - not eating in the main feast hall (ie: going to a local restaurant, eating in a campsite or in a cabin).

**post revel** - something to do after the event, to hang out. Ranges from pre-planned parties to spontaneous get-togethers. If you find yourself invited to one, don't miss it, they're usually loads of fun!

**royal progress** - An event where the king and queen will be officially attending, and a formal royal court session will take place (see below).

**Sanctioned SCA Event aka "Event"** - announced in the kingdom newsletter. They are usually large and elaborate affairs, but sometimes are small and homey.

**site fee** - entrance fees, fees to get onto the event site, paid by reservation check or at troll.

**token** - received when fees are paid and you check in at troll. Your receipt, usually it is worn in plain view during the event, and

becomes a keepsake after the event.

**troll** - the office of collection for entrance fees and giving out tokens (see below). We call it "The Troll" regardless of the numbers of people there are at the "Troll Booth".

### *Courts*

Courtesy note: Conversation should be kept to a minimum so that everyone can hear. The paths should be kept clear for people to walk by, and the isle directly before the dais should only be passed through as quickly as possible, only if it is necessary.

**baronial** - (including provincial) handle business on a fairly local level, and usually are used to handle business, local awards, and prizes for the days activities.

**royal** - presided over by the ruling king and queen, these are a forum for kingdom awards to be presented, and similar business which the king and queen must publicly attend to. If there is a crown prince & princess, they will possibly also be present.

## *What to bring to Events*

**garb** - your medieval costume, Undergarb (bras, underwear, chemisa, undertunic, socks, etc.). Garb (Tunic, surcoat, tabard, leggings, stockings, pants, gown, etc.). Overgarb (cloak, wrap, etc.). Accessories (shoes, hats, scarves, belts, jewelry, knives, etc.)

**feast gear** - table setting (plate, bowl, mug, fork, spoon, sharp knife, napkin, tablecloth, candles, candleholder, matches). You may borrow some in advance from Gold Key (call your local Chatelaine). Usually wood, pewter, silver-coated, etc.

**money** for your entrance fees, public phone calls, transportation, merchants, and emergencies. Some merchants take checks and credit cards.

**directions, maps** and anything else you might need to help you get to the event

**food & beverage** - for camping or off board, a cooler full of your foodstuff. Remove food and drink from non-period containers at your table, or keep soda containers under the table and discreetly fill your vessel from it.

For **overnight events**, bring sleeping bags, toiletries, portable alarm clock, garbage bags, etc.

For **camping events**, also bring a tent (modern nylon tents are fine), a tarpulan or ground cloth, extra blankets, pads or air mattress if desired, extra garbage bags to protect gear from rain.

You may want to bring extra snacks and drinks or dishwashing soap to clean your feast gear.

A note about knife behavior: never wave your knife about, whether or not it is in the sheath. Not only is this simply rude, it might get someone hurt, and it might get the SCA thrown off of a site. Normally, knives and swords are required to be peace-knotted to prevent accidents (tied into the sheath so as not to slip out or be plucked out by a child, etc.), however you may well be using a dagger to cut your roast beef at table, so please be careful where you point it, and keep it out of the reach of little hands.

## *What to expect at Events*

Even if you have pre-registered, you must "Seek out the Troll" to check-in, get information on where activities will take place, where to set up your camp, or which cabin you are sleeping in, etc. Make sure you get your token. Troll is usually found in an area between the parking lot and the main gathering areas (park, then pay), or "on the way" when you are driving to the parking lot (pay, then park). If you are On- or Off-Board, be sure to inquire about seating in the feast hall while you are at troll.

Then you will want to find an appropriate place to change, or unpack and set up your gear before changing. Once you are settled and in garb, try to get an idea of the schedule and locations of events, so you won't miss out on anything you consider important.

In the later afternoon, people will start preparing for the feast or court. If there is a feast seating chart, you are expected to write yourself into it well before the feast is served. Hopefully someone thought of you and wrote you in already, so check for your name first. When the hall is opened for preparations, set up your place setting and wait for the lights to be turned down before lighting your candles.

Feasts are served in courses called "removes" which usually have both sweet and savory dishes in them. Pace yourself, there is usually an enormous amount of food at a feast. If you are still hungry after, inquire for that favorite dish at the kitchen, there are often leftovers that you can fill up on.

Conversations during the day and through the feast will probably be on medieval topics. You may want to avoid modern topics such as computers and television. Ask after people's SCA interests, such as brewing or cooking, and avoid asking after their normal means of employment. This is their vacation time.

Of course this does not mean you should avoid asking questions! Ask away! Don't forget to ask for their phone number or email address to keep in touch with them or ask questions later.

After the feast, there is usually some dancing, often with lessons. If you don't feel comfortable participating, feel free to watch.

At camping events, there is often merriment at campfires, including Bardic Circles, drumming and dancing. Listen for the merry-makers. As for permission before approaching if it looks like a private camp or festivity.

Always clean up after yourself on the event site. If you camp or stay in a cabin, take your garbage out with you. Always try to leave the site cleaner than when you arrived so we will be invited back.