

# **SCA Recruitment Part IV**

## **“Retaining SCA Newcomers and Members”**

*by Syr Kyppyn Kirkcaldy*

Today, the living history community is more popular than 10-15 years ago. Every time period you can imagine has its own living history group, from the pioneers to WWII. In recent years, medieval living history groups have expanded to live steel, renaissance festivals, and other SCA type organizations. We now compete with these other groups for the same population of people for members. In previous articles, we cover how the demos should be carried out and ways to communicate to newcomers to gain their interest. We have even covered newcomer packets and what should be discussed in that first class. Now we need to hold their interest and provide support to increase their interest and hopefully their participation.

Providing a set of structured classes for newcomers and mentoring programs for new and current members will go a long way in educating new members about the SCA and support their ability to be productive members of our organization. The SCA, like all hobbies, can be a time consuming and fiscally taxing hobby. If your members are not happy and do not feel supported the odds that they will stay drastically decreases.

### Newcomer classes

Having a series of newcomer classes is essential to a potential newcomer participating and staying in your group. The following are a series of classes that will help educate your newcomers. I am sure that this list can be expounded on, depending on your resources:

#### Costume 101

Everyone wants to look the part. Simple T-Tunics and pants help a lot. Add a surcoat and the ladies have a quick and easy period-esqe outfit. Today, we have many online merchants that newcomers can buy their first outfits, but a good basic costume class on the time periods we cover and some of the more popular SCA cultures is always a winner.

#### Persona

Most newcomers have an idea of who they want to be, but not always. Having a class about choosing a persona and name is very important in the SCA. Make sure to provide sources for many cultures, not just English and Irish. Our Society encompasses many different cultures and time periods. Make them available.

#### Heraldry

Our Society places a lot of emphasis on pageantry and heraldic display. While we should not put pressure on our newcomer to create a device too early, we do need to explain the principles we follow and its place in our culture.

#### Protocol and Kingdom/Society Awards

The SCA has a lot of specific nomenclature that is confusing to newcomers. As we do reward our citizenry with Awards and our Peers and past Royalty do wear specific regalia, this is an important part of the newcomer's education. Protocol

for Royalty, past Royalty, and even the average Lord and Lady should be covered.

### SCA events

SCA events can be exciting and overwhelming. Providing your newcomer with some guidance will help give them the greatest opportunity to enjoy their first events. Give them a basic outline of how the event will run. Explain feast and what items they will need, if they choose to eat feast. Remember they are used to restaurants (plates are provided). Describe court and the protocols of when to bow and when to stand up. Describe some of the activities from Heavy combat, Rapier, Archery, and Arts and Sciences. Describe the sign in process and what may be required at Troll. Give them a list of items to bring. (A basic list is located in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tier newcomer packet- customize it for your local event)

### History of the SCA/Your Local Group

As a Society, we study history. As a group of historians we should also be interested in our own history. Share with your newcomer the origins of the SCA and how its development lead to your local group. Communicate your own group history and bring your newcomer one step closer to being a part of your history.

### Mentoring programs

Mentoring programs are important to assure that new members learn the skills needed to fill positions and roles left pen by established members who want to make a change or take a break. These programs are designed to educate the newcomer, give the newcomer a role to belong, and provide your group with stability. Mentoring programs are win-win situations for everyone.

Talk to your newcomers about the different positions that your group officers hold. Find out what their interest is. If they are not interested in being an officer, maybe they would like to feastcrat or autocrat, or be a Marshal or authorize in a martial activity. Create an environment where your newcomer can discover their interests and succeed.

Putting these procedures in place for welcoming new people cannot guarantee new members will stay, but will greatly increase the probability that their first impression of the SCA will be a positive experience. Your efforts in recruiting new members or supporting current members may result in the next group officer, Laurel, Pelican, or Knight. You may be the person responsible for bringing in a future King or Queen of the Middle Kingdom.

If you have any questions about this article or general recruiting in the SCA please contact Kyppyn Kirkcaldy, KSCA, Deputy to the Kingdom Seneschal's Office for Recruitment at [syrkyppyn@fastmail.fm](mailto:syrkyppyn@fastmail.fm)