



Historian Handbook for the Kingdom of Meridies- Revised Edition (April XXXVIII)



Every officer in the SCA at one time or another, has said that their task would be much easier if there were some book or pamphlet that lay their job in simple, easy-to-follow terms. A work that would show how reports are supposed to look and that they were supposed to contain, what to save or throw away, and the guidelines that had to be adhered to in their work. Well, for the historians of the Kingdom of Meridies, that wish has come true.... for this is "The Meridian Historian's Handbook".

Some historians, chroniclers and archivists have the gift of eloquent storytelling, while others have more of a talent of reporting the cold basic facts in a great orderly way. Whichever one you may be I hope to fill the void in explaining what the job of historian in this kingdom entails.

The desired effect of this work is to encourage the local historian or those acting in that station to become involved with the office and take an active role in the administration and smooth operation of the Kingdom of Meridies and the SCA, as a whole. It is long past time when the post of historian stopped being the position that is foisted off on the new and inexperienced to give them an office of small responsibility and work. The local historian IS NOT UNIMPORTANT!

If your predecessors have done their job well, the new Historian will find the entire SCA at their fingertips. The history of the local group bound up in flyers, articles, newsletters and reports can acquaint one with the whole story of one's group. This knowledge will increase your understanding of the way the SCA works and give you the knowledge and confidence to undertake more responsible posts later in your SCA life.

Should you find the files lacking or non-existent, it presents you with the rare opportunity to reconstruct history in the manner of a pioneering archaeologist or historian, so that you may one day look back on a job that is well done and brought new understanding to the SCA of the future "current middle ages"!

I. Guidelines and Reporting Schedules

A. The office of Historian is one of the Lesser Offices of State of the local group. It has no official authority over any other officer or any member of the populace. It is neither a badge of rank nor a form of award. The task of the office is to record the history of the local group by the collection and keeping of flyers, newsletters, news clippings, video records and reports. The ultimate task that a local historian should strive for is the compilation of a group history that can be easily comprehended, that is as objective as possible and can be continued by your successors.

B. Reports to the Kingdom Historian should come within three months of the date of the local group's last event or demonstration. Reports may also be made when the local historian wishes to notify the Kingdom Historian of change of address, changes of officers or any other item of local importance happens. At least one report should be made in the course of a year even if your group hasn't held an event or major demo in that time.

C. Reports may be in the form of a narrative report, poetry, and prose, a summary of the basic facts of the event or news clippings if the event was covered by the local mundane press. If possible, photos should be included and marked to indicate who or what is pictured along with the date and name of the event. There are different forms of reports to follow in this handbook.

D. It is expected that the truth be told about everyone and that no information will be taken out of its original context to be used in a detrimental manner. The historian is not to fantasize or speculate about what a person's intent might have been. While there is a place for creativity and humor in this office, personal biases will not be tolerated.

E. If a local group does not have a local Historian, the Seneschal is to cooperate with the Chronicler to see that the duties and the reports of the office of the Historian are correctly done. If this system is not viable in the local group, the seneschal should contact the Kingdom Historian for advice so that the problem might be alleviated.

F. History takes many forms-- old and new, personal and group-- and it is the work of the local historian to fulfill the purpose of his office. Materials that may be more related to the herald, chronicler or seneschal should be maintained even if copies are passed on to the pertinent office. This will act as both a backup system and an aid in maintaining the integrity of the historian's office. It is not recommended or suggested that the local historian attempt to maintain copies of all the other officer's files.

G. The Kingdom Historian maintains an open door policy in regards to suggestions and new ideas, but to take advantage of this policy the local historian and interested members of the populace must organize their ideas or suggestions into a written proposal. This is to insure that there is no misunderstanding on either part when the idea is discussed or acted upon. Please do not expect to just bring an idea up in casual conversation and then become furious when it is not responded to several months later.

H. Everything, report or idea, that you submit to this office becomes part of the history of the Kingdom of Meridies. If one is making a report or suggestion a matter of public record when addressing it to this office-- be clear, concise and historically minded.

I. All files maintained by local, regional and Kingdom historians are property of the Historian office, not of the individual. It is understandable that a historian would want to keep some files for their own personal files ,and it is encouraged that you do so, but keep in mind that files made using local, regional, Kingdom or Society funds are property of the group. It is to be understood that at the end of one's term as a group historian that all files be turned over to the successor. This continues the historian's legacy and makes the successor's job an easier road to travel. If you wish to keep any files for your own use and reference you should photocopy, photograph or scan the documents in question, leaving the originals in the historian files.

II. Anno Societatus: The Years of the Society

A.S.I	May 1, 1966 TO April 30, 1967
A.S.II	May 1, 1967 TO April 30, 1968
A.S.III	May 1, 1968 TO April 30, 1969
A.S.IV	May 1, 1969 TO April 30, 1970
A.S.V	May 1, 1970 TO April 30, 1971
A.S.VI	May 1, 1971 TO April 30, 1972
A.S.VII	May 1, 1972 TO April 30, 1973
A.S.VIII	May 1, 1973 TO April 30, 1974
A.S.IX	May 1, 1974 TO April 30, 1975
A.S.X	May 1, 1975 TO April 30, 1976
A.S.XI	May 1, 1976 TO April 30, 1977
A.S.XII	May 1, 1977 TO April 30, 1978
A.S.XIII	May 1, 1978 TO April 30, 1979
A.S.XIV	May 1, 1979 TO April 30, 1980
A.S.XV	May 1, 1980 TO April 30, 1981
A.S.XVI	May 1, 1981 TO April 30, 1982
A.S.XVII	May 1, 1982 TO April 30, 1983
A.S.XVIII	May 1, 1983 TO April 30, 1984
A.S.XIX	May 1, 1984 TO April 30, 1985
A.S.XX	May 1, 1985 TO April 30, 1986
A.S.XXI	May 1, 1986 TO April 30, 1987
A.S.XXII	May 1, 1987 TO April 30, 1988
A.S.XXIII	May 1, 1988 TO April 30, 1989
A.SXXIV.	May 1, 1989 TO April 30, 1990
A.S.XXV	May 1, 1990 TO April 30, 1991
A.S.XXVI	May 1, 1991 TO April 30, 1992
A.S.XXVII	May 1, 1992 TO April 30, 1993
A.S.XXVIII	May 1, 1993 TO April 30, 1994
A.S.XXIX	May 1, 1994 TO April 30, 1995
A.S.XXX	May 1, 1995 TO April 30, 1996
A.S.XXXI	May 1, 1996 TO April 30, 1997
A.S.XXXII	May 1, 1997 TO April 30, 1998
A.S.XXXIII	May 1, 1998 TO April 30, 1999
A.S.XXXIV	May 1, 1999 TO April 30, 2000
A.S.XXXV	May 1, 2000 TO April 30, 2001
A.S.XXXVI	May 1, 2001 TO April 30, 2002
A.S.XXXVII	May 1, 2002 TO April 30, 2003
A.S.XXXVIII	May 1, 2003 TO April 30, 2004
A.S.XXXIX	May 1, 2004 TO April 30, 2005
A.S.XL	May 1, 2005 TO April 30, 2006
A.S.XLI	May 1, 2006 TO April 30, 2007
A.S.XLII	May 1, 2007 TO April 30, 2008
A.S.XLIII	May 1, 2008 TO April 30, 2009
A.S.XLIV	May 1, 2009 TO April 30, 2010
A.S.XLV	May 1, 2010 TO April 30, 2011
A.S.XLVI	May 1, 2011 TO April 30, 2012
A.S.XLVII	May 1, 2012 TO April 30, 2013
A.S.XLVIII	May 1, 2013 TO April 30, 2014
A.S.XLIX	May 1, 2014 TO April 30, 2015
A.S.L	May 1, 2015 TO April 30, 2016

III. Guidelines for Oral Interviewing

A. Before the Interview:

1. Call or write the respondent well before the time you would like to conduct the interview. Explain your plan and purpose, solicit the person's interest in your project and set a time for an interview.

2. Gather as much background information about the subject as possible.

EXAMPLE: If interviewing a founding member of your local group borrows the original seneschal notes, early newsletters or news clippings.

3. Outline the main points of interest for your interview; To avoid being trapped in a rigid format, it is best not to write out specific questions but to jot down short phrases around which you can readily build questions.

4. If using a tape recorder, make sure you know the complete operation. Practice with someone before the interview. Make sure you have your notes, interview outline, pen and pencils, a notebook, and extra tapes.

B To start the interview:

1. Situate yourself and the respondent in comfortable positions with the tape recorder in an inconspicuous location. Try to avoid the main hall or the fighting field.

2. Record identifying information before the interview: your name, respondent's name, date, place, and subject of the interview.

3. Allow a minimum of thirty minutes or longer to a side of tape, so you will not be constantly checking it. Keep a watch of clock handy.

C. During the interview:

1. Do not dominate the conversation with your knowledge of the subject.

2. Avoid asking questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no. Useful leads include: "What led up to....?" "Tell me about...?" "I would like to hear about.....?"

3. Ask only one question at a time. Avoid running questions together in a confusing manner.

4. Keep your questions brief and to the point.

5. Start with non-controversial matter, saving more delicate ones until good rapport has been established.

6. Listen.

7. Do not interrupt a good story simply because another question has occurred to you or because the respondent has wandered from the original plan of the interview. Try to find gentle ways and the right time to guide the person back on track.

8. Try to establish the role a person played in a particular period of event.

Determine whether they were an active or a passive witness to the event.

9. Avoid off-the-record commentary.

10. Remember that the respondent is likely to give more interesting and more vigorous responses to questions or statements that imply uncertainty on your part than to ones that suggest that you are merely after their agreement. A phrase like "I'm not sure I understand" or "This can be confusing to someone who wasn't there" may elicit information.

11. Avoid turning the machine off and on unless the respondent becomes unduly agitated or uncommunicative.

12. At the end of the interview, repeat the identifying information.

D. After the interview:

1. Secure the written permission of the respondent to use the tape and transcription.

IV. Chronicle and/or Chronology

After the fall of the Roman Empire in the West, the recording of the histories fell into the hands of the Church. Most of these early histories were chronicles of the major events that had occurred in the year that the clerk or monk was writing about. Such a chronicle would be an excellent beginning from which to write your local history; as you could easily record the founding of the group, major events, and occurrences that affected the group. For some good examples of chronicles the Kingdom Historian recommends any good edition of The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle or the appendices in the third volume of J.R.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Ring. In an effort to provide an example, below you will find a factious chronicle for the Shire of Hart's Breeze. Using this format as a base of record keeping you can easily begin and maintain a record of your local group's history.

The Chronicle of the Shire of Hart's Breeze

2 Jan XXIII: Rolf the Rabid (Jim Jones) moves from the Barony of Southern Comfort to the lands of mundane Anyplace, Tennessee.

5 May XXIV: Rolf the Rabid, Elaine the Quiet(Jody Olo), Ragnar Hornhelm (Dan Doyle), Denis of France (Dennis French), Paul the Pagan (Jake Gogger), and Brother Hugh (Hec Lensey) hold the first meeting of the Shire of Hart's Breeze. Rolf is named Seneschal, Paul the Pagan as Knight Marshal, and Brother Hugh as Herald.

12 Jun XXIV: Rolf, Ragnar and Paul march with the fighters of the Barony of Nyther'what against the fell host of the Middle Kingdom. Meridies is the victor.

10 Oct XXIV: Rolf the Rabid passes the seneschalte to Denis of France.

1 Jan XXIV: Alice McGregor (Trudy Sims) joins the shire. Elaine the Quiet becomes Minister of Arts and Sciences.

5 Mar XXIV: Shire of Hart's Breeze hosts a one day event. The Baron of Nyther'what attends and at feast presents Rolf the Rabid with a dagger. An alliance of friendship is declared between the two groups.

8 Apr XXIV: oronation of TRM Richard and Ellawain in the Barony of Bryn Madoc. Rolf, Elaine, Alice, and Paul attend. Rolf and Elaine are presented with their Awards of Arms. The Shire makes a gift of 20 silver orlandos to TRM.

6 May XXV: Spring Crown List is held in the Shire of An Dun Teine. Lord Rolf carries Lady Elaine's token into the lists but is defeated in the third round. At court, the Incipient Shire of Hart's Breeze is declared an official shire of Meridies.

17 May XXV: Denis of France is called to mundane military service and passes seneschalate to Ragnar Hornhelm. The shire observes the wedding of Lord Rolf and Lady Elaine.

V. Reports: Styles and Examples

Reports can take many forms. You should use the type that fits your skills and talents as a historian. All reports must have one thing in common and that is to report the details of an event or happening in a format that can be understood easily with all the facts needed for a full report.

Reports should have all of the following: Name of event, date, location, Autocrat, Feastcrat (if any), number of people attending, general review of event, Royalty in Attendance and Court business (if any).

Here follows an example of an Event report. It was written for Forest Wars V, in 1996, by Lady Barbara Sterling.

Event/Demo Report

Name of Event: Forest Wars V
Date: April 19-21, 1996
Hosting Group: The Shire of Blackmoor Keep
Site & Location: Woodman of the World Camp, Forest Hill, Louisiana
Autocrat: Lady Anastasia Byestewode and Lord William De Marmoutier
Feastcrat: Shire of Loch Na Bas, Connor the Black & Rovena
Breakfastcrat: Robert Hogan

Kingdom, Regional or Local: A local event attended by eighty-eight gentles.

Activities:

Fighting included woods, open field, and resurrection battles. Olaf Ironhearted, Sion Rhys of Badon, Jean Louis, Janos Blackheart and Etienne were the winning team. Archery and live weapons competitions were staged with Bane of Dragon's March qualifying as WeaponsMaster. Albericht Von Tannhauser was awarded "Most Memorable Death". In the Arts & Sciences competition, all entries received excellent or above ratings. In addition to an elegant pomander of red and black beads and filigree silver holding perfume amber (documented from one found in the River Thames) which won the competition, the entries were a piece of chainmail, an illumination of horse and rider, and three vintings. In the gazebo, Kerterlyn and Alyssa guided the younger guests in various activities and projects. Although few took advantage of classes by fine teachers including Thorvald, Solvejgm Jalali, Rovena, and Count Francois, we remain grateful for their good efforts. Let it be known that only Thorfinn came to speak for Bardic.

Site tokens were a rectangle of leather bearing the imprint of a leaping deer, suspended from a narrow white ribbon and topped with evergreen beads which were fashioned by Thorgrim and Gwendolen. Beads, strung argent, sable, argent upon a satin ribbon, were collected in exchange for a grand breakfast of coffee, orange juice, scrambled eggs, sausage, potatoes and French toast. The fine objects of our "Shire Shop" and a great sales staff tempted many buyers. A fine dagger in sheath, a chain mail collar, a covered bottle of spirits, and an enclosed candle holder were objects of a silent auction. Thanks to Gerard de Montbard and Lady Sterling for these donations. Raffle items were the pomander of Connor the Black (won by Lady Leah of Ansteorra) and a fine wood carving by THL John of Blackmoor Woods featuring Forest Wars V, the keep tower and trees within a circle (won by Lady Anastasia). As THL Renee, Count Francois and Duchess Jacqueline looked on, Duke Stephen drew the winners (then bid, along with Badon and Janos for John's carving).

The hall was decorated with banners and guarded at the door by an angel illumination from the Book of Kells.... "a Kells Angel".... Entertainers were Mistress Jalali of Raven's Fort, Rixende and Thorvald, Lady Elisabeth O'Brien, and Thorvald, with an unusual autopsy report. Feast consisted of saffron and sweet bread, bacon wrapped dates, meatballs(some stuffed with olives), venison stew in bread trenchers, curried chicken over seasoned rice, green beans and honey buttered carrots, bread pudding with rum sauces,

diabetic baked apples and tea. The night ended with a fire ring, drumming, dancing and happy reveling.

No Awards.

No Royalty.

This is to the best of my knowledge,

Lady Barbara Sterling Barbara Fleig

5229 Choupique Rd. Sulphur, LA 70663

318-583-4422 fax 318-583-4535 email unclejohn@camtel.net

You can use this report to go back and find out key details of what happened at that event, just what you want in a historian report.

Reports may also be in the format of a letter, as written in persona to another in persona. Reports may take the form of poetry or storytelling, as long as the facts are there and embellishment is kept to a minimum. You may, at a minimum, use the report form at the end of the book.

VI. Files Storage and Handling

Part of being a historian is maintaining files and records. For any kind of group the minimum historian file should be a notebook. This notebook should include event, demo and travel reports as well as photographs, event flyers and the group's chronicle (see section IV). If your group is very active you will quickly out grow a thin notebook. Several notebooks or binders can be used if maintained neatly and kept in a safe place. All photographs should have the names of the people written on the back as well as the date and event if possible. If you have the capability to scan your documents to save electronically it makes a very good backup to the originals, should something happen to them. Store your electronic backups in a different location as to avoid loss of all your files in fire, flood or other misfortunes. Make sure to pass on your files to your successor. If you wish to keep any files keep the backups or offer to store the backups for your successor. Make the job of historian easier for others in the future by doing a good job today.

VII. Conclusion

So now you have the information to serve your local group, and Kingdom as a historian. Begin with a chronicle of your local group's history and expand upon it with reports for events, demos and other happenings. Serve your group's future by letting them know where it all came from and why they do the traditions they practice. It's important work that often gets forgotten. We are here to remember.

Thank you, and serve well.
Lord James de Lyon of Glen Lyon
Historian, Kingdom of Meridies
April 30, A.S. XXXVIII (2004)

Many thanks to:
Their Royal Majesties Wernhaus and Lailiane
Those who have come before them.

Thanks to my predecessors:
Dame Brighde Mary MacGregor
Mistress Stephanie of Nethyrwode
THL Padruig Aoghann na Uladh, the Uncle
(I drew much of this handbook from his from A.S. XXIV)
Thanks also to those historians now and before us all.

Historian: Event / Demo Report

Event:

Hosting Group:

When:

Where:

Autocrat:

Feastcrat:

Kingdom, Regional or Local:

Number Attended:

Royalty:

Activities:

General Review:

Awards:

Historian: