

# **The Historian's Handbook- 2013**

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## **What is a Historian?**

This is most easily answered by looking at what a Historian is **not**. Historians are **not**:

1. Dumping grounds for the group's closets
2. Required to keep every scrap of paper generated by the group.

This being said, the Historian **should**:

1. Be selective in what they keep.
2. Be very organized.
3. Be very consistent.
4. Be very reliable.

Let's explore these concepts in greater depth.

Too often people think that every scrap of wool, shaving of wood, and every scrawl on scraps of notepaper from populace meetings are "history". This might be true for an archeologist sifting through the remains of a prehistoric village. But we can choose to be more selective and keep the "real" stuff. Believe me, if the archeologist could have the entire tunic Charlemagne wore instead of a scrap of wool, they would prefer it. You are not an archeologist trying to reconstruct a society that is lost. You are a historian who is preserving what is now for the future to learn about us. The only SCA historians who will be SCA archeologists will be our heirs if we as historians today fail to do our jobs properly.

## **How do I do my job properly?**

- First, you must be selective in what you keep. This will involve educating your populace about your office. You will need to get them to understand that while the original coronets of your group are important, the cleaning rags are not! After a time, if you are consistent, they will learn what is good to keep and what is not.
- Second, be observant and involved with your populace. Even as they learn to distinguish what is true "history" and what is not, it is not truly **their** job to spot things of historical value. Do ask for donations of pictures or artifacts. They may or may not wish to give them to you. That is ok since these are their things in the first place. But when they do donate something, be ready to do the third thing on this list.
- Third, be organized. As soon as you get the document, artifact, picture or whatever home with you, **document** it at once. Get that picture in an album or sleeve **with** labels and dates. Place that agenda from officer's or that newsletter of your group in a file folder appropriately marked. Then make sure the folder gets put in its proper place! If

someone gives you the group's charter, make plans to get it framed and matted properly. Save your receipts and get reimbursed by your group's treasurer. Make sure your group will support these expenditures. Work with your seneschal and financial committee to have a budget approved for your office. Stay within that budget and get approval first for anything that goes outside of your budget or be prepared to eat the cost yourself.

- Fourth, be consistent. Decide in advance how you will keep documentation of your group's history and then do it that way every time. If you find that your ideas need tweaking, be prepared to go back and change everything you've done up to that point to maintain the consistency of your records.
- Fifth, be very reliable. Groups do not need an on-again-off-again historian. You need to be as active with your group as you can be, going to meetings and as many of your local events as you have time for. Most importantly, when it comes time for you to give up the office, that you take the time to train your successor in how the office is run. At the very least, get them to a Historian's class like this one before they take over the office from you.

### **My group's never had a historian. What now?**

You may have to be a bit of an SCA archeologist at first. You want to try to recover as much of your group's history as you can. At the same time, you will need to be that consistent, reliable historian I've described above. It doesn't matter if your group has been active 1 year or 10 years before you became their first historian, what is happening now is just as important as what happened before you took office.

So your first and primary concern is to begin preserving your **present** history. Here's how you do that:

1. Get your chronicler to give you one extra copy of the newsletter for your files. If you are like me, I just put my own copy in the file, as I like the idea of reducing my own home clutter. But if you would want your own copies of your own newsletter when you leave office, **don't put them in the files**. Instead, get that extra copy from your chronicler. Once they are in the files, they should stay there.
  - a. Note, in this day and age of computer generated newsletters, you may or may not want to print off copies. I do suggest you at least keep an electronic file for your records.
2. Start a folder in some type of filing cabinet system (milk crate, filing box, or full-blown filing cabinet) with this year's date on it. This is where you will file away everything that happens that year.

Doing these two simple steps will get you started on keeping the group's history.

So what about everything that went on before? Here's how you can make a start on recovering what is about to be lost. Remember, you won't get it all.

1. Make folders in your filing cabinet for every year your group has been a group.
2. Start talking to people in the group and actively looking for the history to fill into those folders.
  - a. Start with the seneschal. Ask to look into their archived files. If the seneschal is reluctant, being worried about old scandals being relived, see if they will sit with you as you look at their archived files. Work **with** your seneschal, not against them. Since every group **must** have a seneschal, they should be your first and best source of the group's records. Much of what is in there will be of no interest to the historian, but there will be some. Ask for copies whenever possible. The seneschal may disagree with you. That is ok. Let it go. Remember, officers change. The next seneschal may not be as reluctant (or may be more so). That is life.
  - b. Go to the chronicler next. Ask for copies of every issue of every newsletter they have. Since the Historian's office should be under the umbrella of the chronicler's office, this should be fairly easy. You may have to educate your chronicler on this fact. If money for copies is a problem for your group, work with the financial committee of your group. If push-comes-to-shove, hold a fundraiser to get the money for your office.
  - c. Once you get the copies of the newsletter, it is a great place to look for things like the groups past champions and local awards that don't get into the order of precedence kept by the Zodiacus herald.
  - d. Start talking with the older members of your group. Make formal interviews, take notes, then write up their memories and put these in the appropriate file folder. Ask them if they have any artifacts from the past they would like to donate to your office. If they do, be sure to **document** this as detailed above.

### **I've inherited an office from someone else. How do I know its in good shape?**

Inheriting an office already in existence has some other challenges as opposed to being a group's first historian. Here is what you need to check:

1. See if all your newsletters are there. If not, get with your chronicler and get copies.
2. Look at the filing system. Is it organized, neat and easy to work with? If not, you may have to revamp it using some of the suggestions I made above.
3. If you find the records you inherited to be spotty or incomplete, you may need to become an SCA archeologist as detailed for the first time historian. What I've suggested for them, will work for you too.

### **Is there anything else I need to do for this office?**

There are two tasks I am asking the local historian's to do.

1. I am asking each group that already has a local historian to make an inventory of the history they have and send it to me by the end of the present reign.
  - a. I will ask each group who installs a new historian for the first time that this historian complete their inventory by the end of whichever reign they come in on. This may be modified. For example, if a group gets their first historian 2 weeks before the end of a reign, then there will be more time given.
2. At the end of each subsequent reign, I will be expecting an updated inventory of each group's history. This can just be a list of what has been added and what has been removed.

These reports can be sent by email. I actually prefer the electronic method, but some historians may not be Internet capable. Snail Mail will always be accepted. My kingdom email account is: [historian@chronicler.ansteorra.org](mailto:historian@chronicler.ansteorra.org) . My personal email address is: [annescvb@gmail.com](mailto:annescvb@gmail.com) . My home address is: Darlene Vandever, 36802 Lower Lake Lane, Magnolia, TX, 77354. My cell phone is: 281-413-6194

I am also **strongly** encouraging every historian to have a designated drop-dead deputy. Life has a way of becoming unexpected very quickly. More than one group has lost its history because the historian had 3 days to move to a new state because of job changes. With a drop dead available, the history could have been picked up instead of being packed.

### **These are the basic requirements. I'm an over-achiever. What can I do to make mine the Uber historian's office of the kingdom?**

Here is a list of really neat things to do with your office that go beyond just the basics. Please feel free to email me with whatever neat things you do to make your office just that much more special.

1. Make file folders for your group's champions and your local awards. Go through your old newsletters and compile these into lists and keep them in the folders. Update them as new champions and awards are made.
2. Set up a page in your group's WebPages. Keep pictures and files on-line for your populace to access.
3. Write a monthly article in the group's newsletter. In this article, you can either document a recent happening like a local event or you can dig into the files and bring out something from the past. I like to call mine "This Moment in History" and I don't mind if you steal the title for your articles. But feel free to come up with some neat title yourself if you wish.

4. Bring a small piece of history with you to populace meetings. Display it for their perusal. I have made a flyer from my desktop publisher that I have framed. This I stand up next to the history to quietly proclaim its presence. I also always point it out when I give my historian's report.
5. Make sure each of your local events has provided you with an area where you can display the group's history.
6. Write up a time-line of your group's history and ask for some time in court to present it. If you are bardicly challenged, get a bard or herald (they are often the same person) to do it for you.
7. Monitor your group's email list. When someone reports about the neat feast they helped fix or the award that a group member received at some other group's event, keep a copy in your files.

### **In Conclusion:**

We have existed for 35+ years. As shown by the Argent Museum, which I directed for our 25<sup>th</sup> year celebration, we have a rich history. Over and over, I heard people say how much we have lost. Lamented was the sad state of our history, not just at the kingdom level, but at local levels, too. I learned of Baronies that have **never** had a historian!

At the conclusion of the Argent event, I was asked to become our Kingdom Historian. I served for 5 years and then Master Robert Fitzmorgan took over the history. I have returned to take this from his hand and I am grateful for the opportunity to serve again. I love this kingdom and all its wonderful history.

This handbook is a guide. Do not hesitate to call or contact me in any way should you need advice or help.

In Service,  
Mesterinde Annes Clotilde von Bamberg, Kingdom Historian

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## Historian Initial Inventory Form

*Group Name*

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Group WebPages  
address\_\_\_\_\_

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Historian \_\_\_\_\_  
Historian Mundane  
Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address

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Phone

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Email

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Newsletters- List by sets of complete years. If year sets are incomplete or missing completely, please notate this in the records. Attach additional pages if necessary.

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Artifacts-List the artifacts held by your office. This will include charters, scrolls and other physical items. Attach additional pages if necessary. This will also include photographs.

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Other records. List any other items of historical significance here. Organize this by year. Example: 1990-populace agendas, treasurer's reports, letter from the Crown. Please include a list of any local champions or awards given since your group initially formed. Notate if your records are complete or incomplete.



## Historian End-of-Reign Inventory Form

*Group Name*

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Group WebPages  
address \_\_\_\_\_

Historian \_\_\_\_\_  
Historian Mundane Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_

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Newsletters. List this year's set of newsletters. List any incomplete or missing sets of newsletters that you have been able to recover or restore in the last 6 months. Also list any newsletters which have gone missing in the last 6 months.

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Artifacts. List any artifacts added or lost in the last 6 months. List any artifacts retired for repair or retired permanently.

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Other records. List any additional records added to this year's folder. List any new champions or awards made in your group. List any records recovered or restored and for which year.

Other Activities: List other activities here such as the formation or changes to a historian's page on your group's WebPages; if your history was displayed for the populace during this reign etc.

## **How to Archive Emails**

Permission is necessary. Keep on file.

Here is what I send when I want to archive an email. You can just insert the proper information where necessary and use it yourself when you see something in your local mailing list which has historical value. This same goes for history seen on the unofficial Facebook pages. Print off the permission or copy electronically and save in your files.

### **Greetings!**

**I am Mesterinde Annes Clotilde von Bamberg, Kingdom Historian. Your attached email below (or your copied FB post) contains information that I wish to archive into the Historian's files. Please be aware that these files may be referenced and/or possibly included in a historical display in the future. May I have your permission to include this email into the Kingdom Historical files?**

**In order to cover the legal bases, click "Reply", state your wish to have this email be included in the files, and sign the answer with both your SCA name and your legal mundane name. Please do not delete any of this message nor your attached email. Thank you for considering my request.**

**Until then, I remain....**

**In Service,**

**Mesterinde Annes Clotilde von Bamberg**

**Kingdom Historian**

**MKA Darlene Burns**