

NEW GROUPS GUIDE

GUIDELINES FOR FORMING A NEW GROUP IN THE KINGDOM OF LOCHAC



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CONTACT: SENESCHAL@LOCHAC.SCA.ORG
<http://lochac.sca.org/seneschal>

Introduction.....	3
The Governing Documents of the Society.....	4
How to Create a New Group.....	4
Step 1 – Is a New Group the Best Option?.....	4
Step 2 - What Type of Group Would be Best?	5
Step 3 – What do You Need?	7
Step 4 – The Paperwork.....	8
What else is taken into consideration?.....	9
Step 5 – Responsibilities of an Incipient Group.....	10
Responsibilities of a Sponsoring Group	14
Step 6 – Becoming a Full Status Branch of the SCA	15
Advice for Seneschals of New Groups.....	16
Recruitment and Growth	18
Running Demos and Stalls.....	19
Related Suggestions and Comments	20
Other Useful Ideas.....	20
A Guide to Heraldry for a New SCA Group.....	21
Choosing a Group Name.....	21
Submitting the Name.....	22
Choosing the Group’s Device (Coat of Arms).....	23
Submitting the Group’s Device.....	23
Further Information	24
Credits.....	25
Appendix 1: Useful Forms.....	26
Appendix 2: New Group/Sponsoring Group Discussion Checklist:.....	27
Appendix 3: Hamlets.....	28

Introduction

Congratulations on wanting to start a new SCA group, and welcome!

First piece of advice: Don't Panic! There is no need and no point, as there will always be someone to offer advice and help you out of any difficulty.

This guide should help you through the process of first scoping and then forming a new SCA group in Australia or New Zealand.

As you progress you may find you need more specific information – help will be readily available from the Kingdom Seneschal and the Seneschal of your supporting group.

To find more about Lochac or contact Kingdom officers and so on, go here:

<http://lochac.sca.org/lochac>

And importantly, please also see the **New Seneschal's Handbook** – it complements this Guide:

<http://lochac.sca.org/Seneschal/docs.htm#resources>

And finally:

Human error is common. Slackness too, sometimes. Misunderstanding is easy, especially via email (and emails can go astray or get overlooked), whereas deliberate ill-intent is actually rather rare. Therefore, quoting Napoleon Bonaparte:

“Never ascribe to malice that which is adequately explained by incompetence”

All the best, good fortune, and don't forget to enjoy yourself!

Lochac Kingdom Seneschal

Please note that until you have approval to form a shire, canton or college from the Crown of Lochac, you do not have such a group. You may not run SCA activities or events, and any meetings that group may have are not covered by SCA insurance. Furthermore, while you might set up a Facebook page, website or mailing list to communicate with potential members, you may not announce on such sites, or anywhere else, that your group is a shire, canton, college or branch of the SCA until it has such approval.

The Governing Documents of the Society

This guide explains in practical terms how to go about forming a new SCA group in the Kingdom of Lochac. But for reference you can read the Society's new-group requirements in raw form in "Corpora", the basic governing document of the Society: <http://sca.org/docs/pdf/govdocs.pdf>

You'll note these are a *framework*, providing much room for creativity and variation, so long as you maintain good and inclusive governance and keep the lines of communication and reporting clear. For a full set in priority order of all the rules which apply in the Kingdom of Lochac, including Corpora and Lochac Kingdom Law, go here: <http://lochac.sca.org/Seneschal/book-law.htm>

Because the SCA an incorporated organisation spanning many countries, and Lochac is a kingdom within it, the rules can appear complex. Actually, they *are* complex, and occasionally people get into quite convoluted arguments about interpretation. That is why there are a number of guides that have been prepared (like this document), intended to help you understand the end result of all those rules. You will find many other useful guides at <http://lochac.sca.org/seneschal/docs.htm> Just remember two things:

1. If this, or any other guide you refer to, conflicts with the Law or the Constitution, the Law wins
2. If you are having a debate that gets down to arguing the difference between the exact words in a guide, and the exact words in the Law, you are probably missing the point. This is a game. Step back and take a breath.

How to Create a New Group

Read the following and by all means seek advice from the Kingdom Seneschal when in doubt.

Step 1 – Is a New Group the Best Option?

There are many good reasons to create a new SCA group. There are also an equal number of not so good reasons, so let's take a look at Justin du Coeur's list of the most common scenarios and some suggestions regarding appropriate solutions.

Scenario 1: I'm already in a group but I mostly play with my friends and we want a group for ourselves.

Usual answer: If this is the case, then you really don't want a new group.

As a formal SCA group is geographically based, it has to include everyone who lives within its borders. If you don't want to be bound by any territorial limitation or be responsible for everyone in your local area what may suit you much better is a household.

There are few rules on the creation of households, they have no formal power but they don't have any formal paperwork either, and it is quite acceptable to form a household by invitation only. This is usually the best solution for a group of friends.

Scenario 2: Well, technically, we all live within a Barony (or Shire/Canton) but the population centre is an hour away and we feel isolated.

Usual answer: This is a borderline case and you really should go talk with the folks in the Barony (or Shire/Canton) about it.

Sometimes, nothing more is needed than improving the communication between the centre and the border areas of the group.

In other cases, when it's a group of friends who all live in one town, the right way to go may be a household (see scenario 1).

In other cases, if the group you are part of is a Barony, then the sensible course of action may be to form a Canton. Cantons allow you to still be part of the Barony but have a distinct identity for your area within it. Creating a Canton is similar to creating a Shire but generally easier, since you have ongoing help from the Barony.

And yes, sometimes, the right answer is to form a new Shire separate to the existing group.

Scenario 3: We've looked around and don't seem to be within any existing SCA group's "active" territory. (Some of the old groups claim most a state by default. If your area is more than an hour from a usual centre of activity then you may fit into this scenario.)

Usual answer: In this situation forming a new group may be the best way to proceed.

If none of these scenarios quite fits your situation, please talk to the Kingdom Seneschal. They can help you work out the best option for your situation.

Step 2 - What Type of Group Would be Best?

There are several types of group that you can start, which can be divided into "official" SCA Groups, and "less official" groups. The "official" groups are recognised with a heraldic device, may have a bank account, and run SCA events. They are required to have officers, and report regularly. Your choices are:

1. Shire. These are independent branches that report to Kingdom.
2. Canton. Cantons are sub-groups of baronies. They run their own events and have their own officers but they report through their parent barony.
3. College. College groups are based at an educational institution and their members are mostly students and staff of that institution. Strongholds and Ports are similar but are based at military bases.

You can only form an institutional branch (college, stronghold, port) if it really is based at that institution. For other areas, you must choose between canton and shire. Cantons can only exist within a barony so you will need to find a barony with an adjoining border that you would like to be part of and that is willing to have you. You will report through that barony and will remain somewhat under their control but you can also expect more support (financial, loaner gear, training) in the long term. You can also expect to have Baronial courts, Baronial awards and the Baron and Baroness on your high tables. If there is no handy barony, or if you want more independence, or you don't want awards or court then a shire may be the right option.

Baronies, principalities and kingdoms grow out of existing groups. Forming them is a complex matter outside the scope of this handbook.

There are the "less official" type of group. These are hamlets and households. These groups are not branches of the SCA, and cannot hold events in their own names, or open SCA bank accounts. They can register badges with the College of Heraldry, but those badges won't bear the laurel wreath of an "official" group.

4. Hamlet. A hamlet is a stepping stone towards forming a canton or shire. Like those groups, you need a minimum of five adult members of the SCA, and you must go through many of the same steps to create the group – identify the area that will form the hamlet's territory, poll the members, petition the Kingdom Seneschal and the Crown, and come up with a name and badge (coat of arms). Just like a shire or a canton, any member who lives within that territory can declare themselves to be a citizen of the hamlet, once it is established. The advantage is that a hamlet is not required to have officers, or to provide regular reports. But hamlets cannot sponsor SCA events or activities (like fighter practices), they cannot have an SCA bank account, and their members are only covered by SCA insurance at SCA events (not at any hamlet-only gatherings, events or practices). If your hamlet wants to run SCA events or activities they will have to be stewarded by a member of the hamlet (not the hamlet itself), they will have to be approved and sponsored by an SCA branch in its name (not the hamlet's), and any money made will go into the sponsoring group's bank account (not the hamlet). Hamlets are described in more detail in Appendix 3. If you have any questions about the difference between a hamlet and an SCA group and what each can and cannot do, please ask the Kingdom Seneschal. If the people in your area want a collective label for the location, but you don't have enough keen and capable players to fill the mandatory officer positions for a shire or canton, this could be the answer.
5. Household. If all of this seems like more than you bargained for then, as suggested in some of the scenarios above, you can form a household. Households, which may also be known by other names such as ships or clans, are not SCA groups like cantons, colleges, shires or even hamlets. They don't have officers or paperwork or rules. You don't need anyone's permission to start one or to close one, nor are you limited to any geographical area. You can start one on your own or with your family or with your friends. You can invite or refuse admission to anyone you like. You can limit yourselves to any time or place and you can camp

together at events. But if you want to run an SCA event, you will need to follow the same steps as you would if you were a hamlet.

What's the difference between a hamlet and a household? Effectively, a hamlet is a collection of households. A household usually "belongs" to one person or family – they will have registered the name and device, and if they leave town or stop participating, they can ask the remaining members to stop using the name. The members of the household can choose who else joins them. A hamlet is registered by the Crown or surrounding Barony, and the name and badge belong to Lochac once it is created. The people living in that area may move on and be replaced by others, but the name persists. And any member living in the area can declare themselves a member of the hamlet.

Step 3 – What do You Need?

1. To become a shire, canton, college or hamlet, you need 5 adult members of SCA Ltd (if your group will be in Australia) or SCANZ (if you are in New Zealand). This is the minimum number. To be robust and healthy a group should have at least 10 – 15 active people, and once again, more is always better.
2. For a shire or canton, 3 officers. You are required to have a Seneschal, a Reeve, and one of Herald, Arts & Sciences Minister or Group Marshal.

Your group may choose to fill more offices but you don't need to have them all to begin with, especially if you are short on volunteers.

Be aware that the Seneschal and the Reeve cannot live at the same abode, and that if you intend to run any fighting activities then you must have a Group Marshal.

3. A proposed name for your group. You will need to have a name registered with the SCA's College of Arms before your group gets final approval but you will want something to use for now. You may also choose to register a group device (coat of arms) but that is not required.
4. An established group – Barony or Shire – that will be both willing and able to sponsor your proposed group and that is acceptable to the Kingdom Seneschal for this purpose.

A proposed shire, canton or college cannot run events and the like on its own. It needs an existing group to agree to sponsor, or take responsibility for, its events (just like a hamlet or household). Potential colleges should be sponsored by the barony or shire within whose boundaries they fall. Potential cantons should be sponsored by their parent barony. Potential shires may be able to be sponsored by any of their neighbouring baronies or well-established shires, and should discuss their options with the Kingdom Seneschal who will ensure that the group chosen is sufficiently well resourced to accept the added burden of supporting a new group and sufficiently well run to be able to provide the necessary training for the new group's officers.

Your group officers will also be deputies of the sponsoring group officers until you achieve full status and they will be required to report to them (as well as the Kingdom Officers in case of a proposed Shire).

While a Kingdom or Principality can be the sponsor of a new group, the incipient status period is intended to give your group a training period and this will work best if the officers of your sponsoring group are handy to offer support and guidance.

5. Land. SCA groups (except institutional branches) and hamlets are geographically based. In Australia their territory is defined by post codes. In New Zealand it is defined by telephone area codes. The postcodes must form one contiguous area. Postcodes may not be split between groups. Try to find an area that makes sense on a map and is easy to describe.

The area should be large enough to sustain a reasonable group. If in doubt, for a shire or canton try to encompass an area with a population of approximately 200,000 – most local government organisations publish this sort of data on their websites or it can be gained from a simple phone call. If you are establishing a hamlet that you hope will grow to be a shire or canton, the target is the same. If you are just establishing the hamlet so that you will have an SCA name for the mundane town you live in, it will be smaller.

You will need the support of the current SCA members living within the proposed area, and you will need to negotiate with group(s) to which that area is currently assigned to have them agree to release their lands to your group.

Be aware that you may have to proceed carefully as people tend to get defensive or protective about any territory the group already has a claim to. Open discussion early on will usually resolve these issues with a minimum of fuss.

Step 4 – The Paperwork

Up to this point your group has been just an idea, with no recognition from the SCA. Now it's time to get serious. If you have not done so already, now would be a very good time to contact the Kingdom Seneschal and let them know what you're planning, and the baronial seneschal if you are thinking of establishing a canton or hamlet within an existing barony (don't go straight to the Kingdom Seneschal without talking to anyone in the barony first – that would be rude!). It's best to know that you will get the "i"'s dotted and the "t"'s crossed on the first attempt and not have your group delayed by a minor oversight.

You must complete the following:

1. Proposal for a new SCA Group within Australia/New Zealand
2. Agreement between Supporting Group and Proposed Group
3. Petition of Support – Members
4. Petition of Support – Non-members

5. A list of your group's proposed officers including the SCA name, real name, membership number and which office that person will fill (you don't need to do this if you are establishing a hamlet).

You'll find links to the first four forms in Appendix 1. These will need to be sent to the Kingdom Seneschal, with copies to the supporting group – and make sure you keep copies for your own files.

The Agreement must be signed by the officers of your supporting (sponsoring) group.

The purpose of the petitions is to show that there is general acceptance of your plan. Most weight will be given to the wishes of members who live in the area where the group will form. This will be checked against the registry listing to confirm membership and address. Non-members may give further indication of support for the group, but cannot overrule members. Members from outside the group may give a useful indication of the support the proposed group will enjoy from outside but, again, they cannot overrule members in the group's area. These petitions are not a vote, and on rare occasions there may be reasons to not proceed that can overrule any number of signatures.

All of the forms must be submitted to the Kingdom Seneschal. The Kingdom Seneschal will follow up with any members in the affected area who have not signed the petitions and will ask for feedback on the proposal from any other affected groups, including the sponsoring group. They must be convinced that the new group will be in the best interests of the SCA and will not adversely affect any of its neighbours.

What else is taken into consideration?

The decision to support a proposal for a new group is not simply a matter of five members putting forward a proposal, and there being no objections from the neighbouring areas. Attempting to become an official group too soon, and failing, can be traumatic for those involved, and we want to be as sure as we can be that each new group has the best possible chance of succeeding. This may mean telling you that you're not ready yet.

The Kingdom Seneschal may consult with a number of parties to get a feel for the chances of the group's success, including the officers of neighbouring groups, the Crown, nearby Barons and Baronesses, the Board, or Peers with local knowledge.

Every group's situation will be different, and this is not a mathematical equation – but there are three questions you can ask yourself, which are good tests of your readiness:

1. Has the group moved beyond being one household? If there is anyone in your group (a person or a couple) who are so central to everything that you do that the group would collapse if they left... then you are really still operating as a household. If there is one person (or couple) who is the obvious and natural leader, who could override the seneschal whenever they disagreed with them, then you are still a household. A group needs some social diversity.
2. Do you have the resources? Do you have enough people with the time, capabilities and interests to fill the minimum officer positions, and do a good

- enough job to grow the group? Do the people with the skills have the time, and do the people with the time have the skills? And will other people enjoy following where they lead?
3. Do you have depth of field? Is there more than one person who can be seneschal or reeve, if the first person in the job steps down from their office for any reason? If you only have a very small number of members, your succession plan is probably for everyone to move sideways into the next job. That is almost inevitable when the group first starts up, but are you realistically optimistic that you can move beyond that, so that members can take a break from being officers?

Please note that if there is significant opposition shown at this stage, you will not be able to apply again for two years without the permission of the Kingdom Seneschal, which is only granted in exceptional circumstances.

Once the Kingdom Seneschal is satisfied that the group is a good idea, they will advise the SCA Ltd Board (for Australian groups) or the SCANZ Committee (for New Zealand groups) and pass the recommendation onto the Crown, who may then announce that the group is now incipient (for a shire, canton or college). For a hamlet, there is no incipency requirement, and as soon as the Crown chooses to grant the petition, it is established.

Step 5 – Responsibilities of an Incipient Group

You now get to demonstrate that you can function as an SCA group by running activities and events, meeting the necessary reporting and membership requirements, playing nice with the neighbours and generally showing some stability and purpose.

The process from first discussions to full status is not meant to be overly hasty and nor should it be. It will take at least 12 to 18 months and taking up to 2 years is not unheard of. These time-frames ensure that the group is stable and carrying on as an SCA group should, which in turn ensures that you will continue to flourish.

At this point, you should be prepared to haggle with the Kingdom Seneschal over the terms of your probation. Agree on clear targets, because it is very possible that the end of this period will fall during the warrant of a new Kingdom Seneschal, a new group seneschal, or both. Your successors need to know what you determined as reasonable proof of your success. Think about these things, as a minimum:

- Membership numbers – how much do you hope to grow, in what time?
- Activity levels – how often do you hope to meet informally for fighter practice, or arts and sciences workshops? How many garbed events do you think you are likely to run each year?
- Financial stability – do you hope to build up a reserve (bearing in mind that we are a non-profit organisation)?

- **Reporting reliability.** You need to prove your officers can be trusted to report on time, and accurately. But nobody is perfect, and sometimes Life Happens. So think about terms and conditions for exceptions. What are acceptable terms to ask for an extension?

Don't set yourself impossible targets to show how enthusiastic you are! Ask other shires and cantons about their experiences, and talk to the baronial or Kingdom Seneschal. This is about proving you are alive and well, and ready to stand on your own feet – not that you are the fastest growing shire in the history of the kingdom.

Try not to see this time-frame as any kind of a hindrance or a negative – you are able to do a lot in the proposed and incipient stages and mostly it will just mean dealing with a little more oversight. The sponsoring group is there to assist you, not hinder you.

If your officers are organised, keep good records, communicate well with each other (and the rest of your group), and develop a good understanding of Kingdom Law and the Governing Documents (such as Corpora), you will find the progress through the required steps is fairly smooth sailing.

Membership

You need to maintain, and preferably grow, your membership numbers. While you may be given proposed/incipient status with minimum numbers, you are unlikely to be given full status without at least double that.

Officers

You will need to manage your offices. You must maintain at least the minimum required officers and be able to replace them as needed and you must show that they know and can competently perform the duties of those offices.

The officers of the incipient group are effectively deputies to the corresponding officers in their sponsoring group. They report to them quarterly in January, April, July and October (end of the month for seneschals and reeves, 15th of the month for all other officers). The Reeve must also report to the Kingdom Exchequer. If the group is planning to be a shire then the officers must also copy in the relevant Kingdom Officers.

The handbooks and forms necessary for each office should be found on the website for the corresponding Kingdom Officer. Each officer will be expected to have read them.

The sponsoring group officer should be able to answer most questions and should be able to provide training and support as needed. Please be aware that these officers are all volunteers with limited time and money. If you want training, you should be prepared to go to the officer who can provide it, or to offer them petrol money to come to you. If required, the Kingdom Officers are also usually happy to answer questions and offer support.

Events

Incipient groups need to have their events sponsored by a full status branch of the SCA. This can be a little tedious, but it's not really that hard, and better than finding you've missed something important and are now getting sued.

“Events” means any feast, tournament, business meeting, fighter practice, A&S night or any other activity run in the name of the SCA or using a venue hired in the name of the SCA.

Anything that is not approved as an SCA event is a private party – SCA rules do not apply, SCA insurance will not apply, and they may not be advertised in any way that would make people think they are an SCA event.

The process for approving one-off events is simple. The steward decides what they want to do and submits a proposal with all the relevant details to their group's business meeting. Once it has approval from the group's Seneschal the steward should submit the online event form - <http://lochac.sca.org/seneschal/database/event/new>. This will allow the Seneschal of the sponsoring group to approve the event and get it published. The whole process is over in no time and everyone knows exactly what's been decided on.

TIP: Potential stewards should be advised to look at the online event form when they first think about running an event. The information required on this form is an excellent guide to what should be in an event proposal. The only thing missing is an event budget, which you may have to send to the Seneschal of your sponsoring group before they will approve the event.

Regular activities (weekly training, monthly A&S nights, etc) must also be approved by the Seneschal of your sponsoring group. It is not necessary to get every week's activity approved individually but you do need to have your sponsoring group's approval to run, for example, fighter practice on the second and fourth Wednesday of every month from 7-9pm. Get this in writing (email counts). These events must be approved by the incipient group seneschal before getting approval from the sponsoring group seneschal. They must then be advertised to the members of the group.

Before you run any SCA events, please talk to your sponsoring group's seneschal about how you should manage the required paperwork, indemnities and event memberships for all SCA activities. The requirements are very different between Australia and New Zealand. This is one area that could get you and your group into real legal trouble if you get it wrong.

Finances

Funding events can be challenging for new groups. There are many venues that can be found for free or little cost. It's often good to run some regular meetings at members' houses. Rotating through houses can be a great way of encouraging lots of people to buy into the group. Eventually though you may want to try a larger event at a more expensive venue. You may be able to appeal to your sponsoring group to float the event. You will be expected to repay them, and they are under no obligation to do this, but most are happy to help.

The best advice here is to be sure to price your events so that you never make a loss. Nothing is free, and trying to run events at break-even will not help you build up enough cash that you can afford a \$2,000 site bond or some fancy gear for the group. On the other hand, actively trying to make a profit may make your events poorer value for money. Simply budget for the worst case attendance and you'll do fine.

To begin with, you should be using your sponsoring group's bank account. With electronic transfers this is not too inconvenient these days. Discuss how this will work with the reeve of your sponsoring group. They can tell you how to deposit and how to get money. Once your group has a registered name, you can ask the Board or Committee for permission to open a bank account for your new group.

Management

It's a good idea to get into the habit of having regular meetings. It can seem a bit pointless when there are only 5 of you and you hang out together all the time but you should be planning for when there are 25 of you scattered around your town. Set a regular meeting time each month and discuss your plans. They say that groups never plan to fail, but many fail to plan. Don't be one of them.

Keep notes of what you decide at meetings. They don't need to record all of the conversation, just the decisions made. Once you get a website up, publish your meeting minutes on the website. There's nothing like open and transparent management to inspire confidence.

Registering a Group Name

As with many of the things that affect the group, this should be a whole-group decision, or at least have their majority support. And don't forget to consult with experienced heralds about it – earlier is better than later, to avoid disappointment.

You should also be looking for something that will maintain its appeal and have some decorum or dignity. It is not a good idea to get too attached to the first choice, as the process of registration with the College of Heraldry involves making sure it is medieval in style and that it doesn't conflict with something already registered, so it may take a couple of attempts to succeed. Having some back up names just in case might be a good idea

If you don't have an experienced herald handy, try asking Rocket Herald if they can recommend someone you can talk to, to help you get your name ready to submit and read through *A Guide to Heraldry for a New SCA Group* later in this Guide.

Websites and Mailing Lists

Groups are entitled to a website and a mailing list hosted on the Lochac server. They will be invaluable to your group's recruiting and communication. Please ask the Masonry Team – masonry@lochac.sca.org – to help you set them up as soon as you become a proposed group.

Relationship with Your Sponsoring Group

Your sponsoring group also has responsibilities and it will pay you to understand their side of the equation. Talk to your sponsoring group, early and often. 99% of problems with incipient groups happen because they didn't talk to their sponsoring group enough. Before you enter into an agreement with your sponsoring group, please go through the Discussion Checklist in Appendix 2 with the officers of the sponsoring group.

Visit your sponsoring group. Visit other groups. Take everyone in your group with you. There is nothing like getting out to give you an education in the SCA.

Respect your sponsoring group. It's as normal for incipient groups to resent their parent group as it is for teenagers to resent their parents. But your sponsoring group is the single biggest source of help and support you have and without them, you will not exist.

Responsibilities of a Sponsoring Group

Sponsoring a new group is a wonderful thing but it is not to be taken lightly. It is work and it is a drain on the sponsoring group.

Communication

The biggest cause of problems between incipient and sponsoring groups is mismatched expectations. The best way to avoid this is to communicate early and often. Before entering into a sponsoring group agreement please go through the Discussion Checklist in Appendix 2 with the officers of the new group.

Officers

Your officers will have a new set of down-lines. They will be expected to read and respond to the reports from those down-lines, and perhaps to chase them up if they are late. They will be responsible for appointing new officers for the group if any change while the group is still under their sponsorship (and once it gains full status in the case of cantons and colleges). They will be expected to answer a myriad of questions from people who may have no prior experience in the SCA. They will be expected to keep an eye on their down-lines to make sure that they know what they are doing and that they are doing it. They may have to step in if things are going wrong and they may be expected to provide training and support. They are never required to drop everything or acquiesce to every request from the new group but they will be expected to help out where they can.

Events

You will have to sponsor the events of the new group until they achieve full status and show they can do it for themselves. You should discuss the process that will be used at the beginning so that it runs smoothly and everyone knows what to expect. It is reasonable that the first few times you may want to discuss the event bid with the full council but it is not reasonable to delay the new group's proposed bids unnecessarily.

You may want to discuss your group's calendar with the new group and discuss the policy for conflicting events. It helps to establish at the outset that the sponsoring group will be very miffed if the incipient group tries to run an event against their signature event. On the other hand, it's only fair to also agree to respect certain of the incipient

group's events. Incipient shires will eventually be free to schedule events as they wish but they should respect their sponsoring group's calendar while they are incipient. Before the incipient group runs any SCA events, please make sure that they are fully aware of how to manage the paperwork, indemnities and event memberships for those activities.

Finances

New groups should use their sponsoring group's bank account where possible. This helps to keep our accounting straight and provides good oversight from the sponsoring group reeve. The reeve should discuss with the incipient group how they can deposit money and get money as needed. Once the group has a registered name, they should apply to the Board or Committee for their own group account.

Where the sponsoring group can afford it, it is good to float events for the incipient group, within reason. Hall bonds are often \$2,000 and that's more than most new groups can come up with before they take bookings. You may choose to float the bond and expect the group to cover the rest, you may be able to float hall hire as well and let the group pay for food out of bookings, discuss it with your officers and with the incipient group so that everyone knows what they can expect. No sponsoring group is expected to do more than it can afford or to put its own events at risk by sponsoring other group's.

Other Support

Sponsoring groups often have 20 years of accumulated gear to make events better. If possible, consider sharing some of that with incipient groups. If their events can be better, they stand to encourage more people to join and we end up with bigger events and more successful groups. Again, discuss this with the incipient group so everyone knows what to expect. Will the group lend its old stuff? Will it lend its new stuff? Who will be responsible for collecting and returning the gear? What happens if something is lost or damaged?

Try to get people from the sponsoring group to show up to incipient group events and activities. The sponsoring group is responsible for these events and activities and it pays to keep an eye on them.

Respect your incipient group. It will bring youth and enthusiasm and new perspective that you just might like and it will grow the SCA for all of us.

Step 6 – Becoming a Full Status Branch of the SCA

Eventually you will have a registered name, a solid membership base, effective officers and regular well-run events and activities. This takes time. You will not be given full status in less than a year and it is more likely to take twice that long.

When you are confident that the group is ready then you will need to complete the following:

1. Application to Become an Official SCA Branch
2. Petition of Support – Members

3. Petition of Support – Non-members

Links to these are in Appendix 1. The petitions are the same forms you used last time. Submit them to the Kingdom Seneschal. The Kingdom Seneschal will ask your sponsoring group for their opinion on your readiness for full status and may want to see copies of your officers' quarterly reports and evidence that your name has been registered with the College of Arms.

Once the Kingdom Seneschal is satisfied that it is in the best interests of the SCA to grant your group full status, the application will go to the Crown who may then formally announce the recognition of your group as a formal Branch of the SCA in court.

Congratulations! You are now an official branch of the SCA.

Changing Group Type or Status

Changing the status or type of an established group (e.g. shire to barony or canton to shire) is a complex process that is outside the scope of this document and varies considerably with the specific circumstances. Please contact the Kingdom Seneschal for advice if your group is considering such a change.

Advice for Seneschals of New Groups

This section is guidelines rather than actual rules and you should find it helpful.

Get lots of information about the SCA. You should already have read the Known World Handbook which is available from the US. Now look at Corpora, Kingdom Law and the Seneschals Handbook. These are all available on the Kingdom Seneschal's website. They make for dry reading but they will give you a good overview of the rules our game is played by. You don't need to be able to quote these documents but you should have a good idea of what they contain and where to find the relevant rules when questions come up.

The Seneschal's website has other useful resources for groups and officers. You may also want to start looking at the websites for the other Kingdom Officers. The Hospitaller's website may be particularly useful as most new groups need to recruit more members. Your group's officers will be expected to look over the website for their office and to read the relevant handbooks.

If you need help then start with the relevant officer in your sponsoring group. If they can't help you then try their Kingdom equivalent. Your officers should be on the relevant mailing list for their office and the other people on those lists are a wealth of information. The only really stupid question is the one you didn't ask.

This does not mean you have to imitate the groups around you or be a carbon copy of any other group in the Kingdom. It just means you may need to be mindful of the broader SCA rules, customs and culture so that your group and the members therein can more easily mesh into the Kingdom proper – especially when they go visiting.

Consider the sponsoring officers and those assisting you as guides: they get to show you all the well-trodden paths and readily available sources of information and material that your group needs. They will also provide advice on whether what you want to do will fit into the SCA parameters we all have to observe. They are not there to tell you exactly what you should do or exactly how you should do it, but rather give you a heads-up on any existing rules, laws and guidelines that are pertinent to what you want to do or achieve. A good habit to get into is to ask those helping you why something is the way it is – if nothing else it will help you sort out the actual requirements from the good opinions. (Everyone has opinions – many of them are right, but feel free to seek a second opinion if it isn't adequately backed up by a quote from the rules).

Of course you not only need to be concerned with setting up the new group, but also keeping it going. Working with your existing membership and officers, you will need to be looking at events and/or activities to keep people enthused and give them a reason to be active. These activities and such will also play a big part in giving new members something to do, and if your schedule includes some public activities or demos there will be new members as well.

With new members, try to remember that they will want to get involved as much as the people who were there at the first meeting. So as Seneschal, one of your roles is ensuring there is always space for them to participate and contribute as much as anyone else. The best way to get someone committed to your group is to give them something useful to do!

A website and a mailing list are standard and effective ways for new groups to communicate and become accessible to a greater number of people. Once your existence is recognised by the SCA you are welcome to a group website and mailing list hosted on the Lochac server. The Masonry Team – masonry@lochac.sca.org can help you with this.

As Seneschal, you will need to work closely with your group officers to ensure they are meeting the requirements of their offices: these requirements can be as important to your group's elevation or advancement as all the paperwork and petitions combined. Regular (e.g. monthly) meetings to discuss the group's business are a good way to involve all officers as well as any of the populace who are interested or otherwise want to contribute.

Make sure you keep a good record of just about everything, and encourage all officers to do the same. Getting copies of their reports helps to keep a record, and many groups table them at their regular business or officer meetings.

If your group is not ready to go to full status after two years, without good cause, it may be appropriate to call a meeting about what you want to do. Subject to any outcomes of that meeting, you should enter into a discussion with the sponsoring group Seneschal and the Kingdom Seneschal about the best way forward.

One more important thing: It's all about the group, and how well it works to set and achieve its goals. Aim to build something that you can one day let go of and see it work successfully without you. If you manage that, you will have accomplished a remarkably rewarding and satisfying task.

Finally: always check and double check what is required at every stage and make sure it is done in a timely manner. Remember there are no dumb questions, and attention to detail is your friend.

Since this advice applies to the Seneschals of *all* groups, whether new or established, please refer to the **New Seneschal's Handbook** available from here:

<http://lochac.sca.org/seneschal/docs.htm#resources>

There's a *lot* of good and necessary information there — don't overlook it!

You should also look at the Seneschals Handbook:

<http://www.sca.org/docs/pdf/KingdomSeneschalHandbook.pdf>

This is the Society Wide Handbook for Seneschals and it is the definitive guide to the office.

Recruitment and Growth

From day one, recruitment will be an essential part of what you do. It may be easy to get the first four or five friends involved. But thereafter, you should really be building to the 10-15 it requires to ensure survival, and preferably more for a more capable and stable group. Always remember you need to allow for people getting tired or moving away.

Recruitment succeeds if you combine the right efforts with the right atmosphere. Atmosphere *really* matters – people need to know they will be welcome, appreciated and even needed. The range of recruitment tactics you can use is legion – if you type *SCA Recruitment* into a web search, you'll get a host of ideas. But for now, start in these places:

1. The CoS mailing list archives. Recruitment is a common theme there, and you'll see ideas, reports of what worked – and also what didn't
2. The Lochac Hospitaller's website – <http://lochac.sca.org/hospitaller> – has some articles and lots of resources, and don't overlook the Hospitaller handbook there, e.g. Chapter two!
3. <http://scademo/com>

Hot ideas – ones that provide good bang for the buck:

1. Word of mouth is your single, biggest, easiest and most promising recruitment tool. Talk to friends, associates, family, work colleagues and acquaintances of existing members. Never forget this. A “we all recruit” policy and atmosphere is the best way to get them all in.
2. Introduction cards – print some and give them to *all* your folk and encourage them to use them. See examples on the Hospitaller site that can be adapted. Word of mouth can fall down if the people you talk to can't find you again.
3. Tying demos or presentations into medieval themed events run by other organisations – they'll appreciate the support, you'll get the numbers looking at what you do

4. Media exposure – see <http://sca.org.nz/media.php> for information on how to manage media folk wisely, realistically and effectively
5. A good website – see the “Luring Newcomers” article on the Hospitaller site
6. Library window displays and similar – easy to set up and move around. Make sure you have a website URL very visible in these, and *lots* of good photos.
7. Try to site your combat practices where they can be readily seen by passing members of the public. SCA combat and gear is exciting – it *will* attract people.
8. Atmosphere – recruitment is everyone’s responsibility, as is making people feel welcome, useful and engaged when they turn up.
9. Give newcomers something to do – preferably something social, like helping in the kitchen, rather than a task they have to do alone. Plug them in to the group’s regular activities, and you’re most of the way there.

Running Demos and Stalls

The most important thing is having all the paperwork there - in particular, forms for people to sign up on, and flyers for people to take away with them Try a small flyer, 1/3 of an A4 page, and double-sided. On one side have information about the SCA and the College, and on the other have the times of regular meetings and practices, and the first event(s) of the year. Have enough of these that you can give them to *everyone* - you never know who is going to go away not really enthused, but then actually read it and decide to come along!

After that, there is of course the Stuff - list ropes for the tourney area, a big range of stuff for the table - calligraphy, embroidery, garb (wear it!), armour, archery gear, feast gear, a nice leather pouch, a pretty candlestick, etc - and also a flag or banner or two - they really draw the eye and evoke a medieval feel. Arrange everything in an attractive manner, but recognise that people are going to be picking things up and having a look at them - and should feel comfortable doing so! Take care with weapons. The public should not be handling live steel (or any steel in Victoria), drawing bows or swinging rattan. These things can be dangerous and compromise our insurance cover.

Once you have all the stuff there, just make sure you have people there. 2-3 is usually quite enough. However, if more people want to help out, that's excellent. Get them to stroll around in garb, talking to people who look interested and handing out flyers. When they're talking to people, make sure there's interaction and they're not just reading off a spiel about the SCA, or overloading them. It always helps to get both men and women, and young and attractive is a plus. ;) Get everyone to put on their smiles, and tell people how awesome we are!

For the fighting demo, you will of course need the usual safety measures - list ropes in particular. If it's not too noisy, a loud and confident herald can draw interest and evoke a great medieval feel, but there's no point if nobody can hear him/her. Note that lots of people will stop and look at the fighting, but not many will want to go look at the stall - try to get people in garb wandering around talking to people who look especially interested and, again, handing out flyers.

Related Suggestions and Comments

Photos! Beg/borrow/steal a pinboard and stick up photos of everything you can't show them in person - wars-in-progress, courts, Agincourt runs, medieval encampments.

Also get photos that feature the people you've got on the ground and behind the table, so the newbies can connect the two and (perhaps) start asking questions. ("Hey, is that you? What was it like inside that massive tent...?")

Cluttered desks seem to have more appeal - the more stuff you show, the more people you attract.

Another thing that can work is a "wall of photos". Simply take about 40 or so ordinary photos (rather than large A4 prints) - arranged in a collage of overlapping pictures pinned to a felt board - all showing people actually in the group smiling, fighting, dancing, drinking, having fun. It has an ad-hoc appearance and there is no generational gap which might turn prospective members away.

Other Useful Ideas

To create a financial nest egg at the outset try a sausage sizzle. If the venue suits and you can get support from a nearby group, add a fighter auction!

To find the halls in your area try your local library, council community centre or Citizen's Advice Bureau may have a list. Or try schools, the web, etc.

See the recruitment discussion and ideas on this web page:

<http://jducoeur.org/Justin/provhand.html>

A Guide to Heraldry for a New SCA Group

With thanks to the office of Crux Australis (Lochac Kingdom Herald).

One of the more daunting activities for a New Group can be registering a name and device with the College of Heraldry. This article is designed to answer some of the more commonly-asked questions and prevent the most common mistakes that are made in the process.

New groups must register a name before they can be granted full status. They may choose to register a device as well but they do not have to at this point.

Choosing a Group Name

In order to be officially recognised as an SCA Group (Branch), you will need to register a Group name. Just like personal SCA names, Group name submissions require supporting documentation showing that the name could have been (or was) used as a real place-name in pre-1600 Europe or somewhere known to Europeans of that period. Although this is not the place to delve into the complexities of medieval place-name formation, here is some basic advice:

Look for reference books specifically on place-names.

Highly recommended are:

The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-names, by Eilert Ekwall,
A Dictionary of English Place-names, by A.D.Mills,
Place-names of Scotland, by James R. Johnston,
A Dictionary of Irish Place-names, by Adrian Room,
Dictionnaire Etymologique des Nomes de Lieux de la France, by A. & R. Dauzat.

Books on medieval history (or translation of medieval documents) can also be suitable for documentation but it must be remembered that not all such books are as well researched as others. Often, place-names are modernised or Anglicised to make it easier for the reader, and do not reflect the actual name recorded in the primary sources. The better books usually have a note somewhere stating the approach the author(s) has taken to personal names and place-names.

If the name sounds like it came from a fantasy novel, (e.g. “Valley of the Purple Unicorn” or “Dragons’ Eyrie”) then it’s probably not medieval in style!

Do not base the Group’s name solely on the interests of the founding members - for example, just because everyone happens to be interested in brewing now, that may not necessarily be the most common interest in the group in five years’ time, in which case the name will no longer be relevant to the majority of the Group.

Do not hesitate to consult the Crux Australis Herald (and other senior heralds) early on about the name(s) the group is considering, and be prepared to make changes if advised

to do so. Note that being told “it seems OK”, by a passing herald, should NOT be taken as good evidence that the name is medieval or can be registered. On-the-spot opinions are no substitute for solid research!

Submit early. The worst thing a Group can do is choose a name assuming it will be ‘registrable’, use it for several years, then find it cannot be registered. It is also easier for a Group to change its name when it is still young and there is lots of enthusiasm, rather than later when changes become more difficult.

Have one person as the coordinator for the submission of the name and/or device – ideally this should be the group herald.

Submitting the Name

Once a name has been chosen and sufficient evidence gathered to support it, you then need to get the paperwork right so as to submit the name for registration with the SCA-wide College of Arms.

You will need to forward the following to Rocket Herald – see the College of Herald's website here for the forms and the address to which they must be sent:

<http://lochac.sca.org/herald>

1. TWO copies of the “Name Form Branch”.
2. TWO copies of all supporting documentation, including the title pages of any books used and the pages on which the evidence appears. If you have used a website, make sure the full URL and the date you viewed the page are somewhere on the page.
3. TWO copies of the “Branch evidence of support form – name”

Also, make extra copies of everything for your group's files (they should stay with your herald, if your group has one, or your Seneschal) and your supporting group's Herald's files. No payment is required - branch name submissions are always free. If possible, get an experienced herald to look over the forms before you send them to ensure that everything has been filled in correctly.

Once submitted, the name will be considered by the Lochac heralds. If it looks ‘registrable’ it will be forwarded to the SCA College of Arms. At either level, if a problem is found, the name may be returned to the group for further work, usually with suggestions as to how to resolve the problem. Once the college of Arms is satisfied with the name, it will be registered to your group and the group will be advised. You can track your name's progress through the process. Instructions can be found on the same page as the submission forms.

Choosing the Group's Device (Coat of Arms)

Devices are not necessary for new groups. However, if your group wants a device then the following points should be borne in mind.

The laurel wreath indicates that a device belongs to an SCA branch rather than an individual so your device needs to prominently feature a laurel wreath. That's a circular wreath, not a couple of crossed sticks with some leaves on them. It does not have to be green and you are not limited to just one wreath.

Don't try to display everything that everyone is interested in, e.g. a rapier, because you have fencers plus a barrel for the brewers plus a quill for the calligraphers plus. . . etc. It is impossible to combine so many elements into a design and still have it look medieval.

Choose at most three colours and three types of 'charge' (including the laurel wreath). You can choose from white (silver), yellow (gold), red, black, blue, green and purple.

Device design and registration is a complex area. Seek help from experienced device heralds early on in the process to minimise disappointment and speed up the process.

Submitting the Group's Device

You will need to forward the following to Rocket Herald (again, see the College of Herald's website for the necessary forms and submission address):

1. FOUR coloured copies of the 'Device Submission Form' – note the restrictions on what may be used to colour the form. These are listed on the website.
2. ONE outline copy, (ie. a line drawing).
3. TWO copies of the Branch evidence of support form – device.

Also, make extra copies of everything for your group's files and your supporting group's Herald's files.

No payment is required - device submissions for branches are always free.

If possible, get an experienced herald (e.g. one from your sponsoring/parent group) to look over the forms before you send them, to ensure that everything has been filled in correctly.

As with all devices, once submitted it will be considered by the Lochac heralds. If it looks 'registrable' it will be then forwarded to the SCA College of Arms. At either level, if a problem is found, it will be returned to the group for further work, usually with suggestions as to how to address the problem. Once the College of Arms is happy with the device, it will be registered to your group and the group will be advised.

Further Information

If you require any further information or assistance then do not hesitate to contact your nearest group's Herald, Crux Australis Herald, who can be reached at herald@lochac.sca.org, or Rocket (submissions) Herald – rocket@lochac.sca.org.

Credits

This handbook has been developed in Lochac over several years and includes work from:

Justin du Coeur (Mark Waks, East Kingdom – much original content, see below)
Master Delbert von Strassburg (Del Elson)
Don Emrys Tudur (Matthew Mole)
The Office of Crux Australis Herald
Mistress Finnabhair an Einigh ui Binnech
THL Artemisia da Quietto d'Arzenta (Leonie Kirchmajer)

and

Sir Peter du Gaunt Noir (Peter Fryer – most v1.1 revisions, 2009-2010)
Mistress Katherine Kerr (Vicki Hyde, who extracted much content into the New Seneschal's Handbook)
Lady Esslyt verch Edenevet (Hannah Mason – Running Demos and Stalls)
Lord Gilligan of St Bartholomew (Stephen Drane – Related Suggestions)
Sir Andre of Montsegur (Andrew Leitch – Related Suggestions)
Salah al-Alamut (Related Suggestions)
Lady Gillian Atwood (Related Suggestions)
Lady Frida of Castelburn (Vivienne Hanan – Bootstrapping ideas)
Master Bartholomew Baskin (Peter Hyde – final revisions to v1.1)
Lord Nicodemus Novello (Jeremy Gregson – v1.6)

Finally, thanks to all those who have contributed but whose efforts remain unidentified and, in particular:

We wish to express our acknowledgement and grateful thanks to Justin du Coeur (Mark Waks) on whose good works this guide and the information contained draws very heavily, if not in places duplicating outright – and whose common sense approach to SCA administration is an inspiration to any successful and well-liked Seneschal.

Appendix 1: Useful Forms

Group Proposal Application Form:

<http://lochac.sca.org/Seneschal/docs/group/ProposalApplicationForm.pdf>

Agreement between Proposed Group and Supporting Group Form:

<http://lochac.sca.org/Seneschal/docs/group/AgreementBetweenGroups.pdf>

New Group Petition Forms:

<http://lochac.sca.org/Seneschal/docs/group/NewGroupsProposalPetition-Member.pdf>

<http://lochac.sca.org/Seneschal/docs/group/NewGroupsProposalPetition-NonMem.pdf>

Application to become an Official SCA Branch (Group) in Australia/New Zealand:

<http://lochac.sca.org/Seneschal/docs/group/OfficialApplicationForm.pdf>

Appendix 2: New Group/Sponsoring Group Discussion Checklist:

1. Do you all agree that this new proposed group is a great idea? Now is the time to get over any nagging doubts or quibbles you might have.
2. Can the sponsoring group officers work with their proposed downlines? There is a process for appointing officers. It doesn't really work when a new group is forming and the officers are usually most of the people in the group so it is usual (just this once) to accept the proposed officers, unless there is a good reason why the sponsoring group officer cannot work with their proposed downline.
3. Do all of the officers know and have contact details for their upline/downline?
4. Has everyone discussed the chain of command and the reporting requirements and deadlines? It's much better to tell people that a report will be due soon than to tell them they messed up after they didn't know it was due.
5. How will the event approval process work? All one-off events will be submitted via the online event form and will be approved by the sponsoring group seneschal. Will you also want to see event budgets before approving events? How will you approve regular activities like weekly training or monthly A&S nights?
6. Conflicting events. If you are large enough to have two groups, then you need to be large enough to manage to run competing events, at least some of the time. How will you handle this situation if it arises? Are there any events you really don't want conflicts with? (This goes both ways.)
7. Funding events. It's common for sponsoring groups to float events for their new groups. Few new groups can manage a \$2,000 site bond for their first feast. This money is usually returned to the sponsoring group after the event. You should discuss if the sponsoring group is willing (and able) to do this. If so, under what conditions (how much notice, how soon must it be returned, etc). The sponsoring group is under no obligation to do this.
8. Lending gear. It's normal for sponsoring groups to lend their new groups gear to help them out. Please discuss what arrangements need to be made before this can happen, how soon the gear must be returned, what happens if there is loss or damage. Again, the sponsoring group is under no obligation to lend any of its valuable and hard to replace gear.
9. Support and training and baronial visits. How many baronial visits can the new group expect and under what conditions? What sort of training and support will be expected of sponsoring group officers? Will they arrange classes, will they go to the new group, will they expect the new group officer to come to them? Can we arrange carpooling or petrol money and so on so that this is a fair exchange for everyone?

Appendix 3: Hamlets

A hamlet is a social group within the game, but is not a formal SCA entity in the same sense as a Shire, Canton or Barony. It has a minimum membership of five people. It is easiest to think of a hamlet as the next step up from a household - but it is distinct from a household because, once established, it is a recognised entity that is not tied to any one person or family. A hamlet can exist within the territory of a Barony or a Shire, but a hamlet cannot be created inside a hamlet. Hamlets are created by the Crown, under advice from the Kingdom Seneschal and, if they are within a Barony, the relevant Baron and Baroness.

The hamlet can and should register its name and badge. The badge of a hamlet does not feature a laurel wreath - it is a populace badge registered by parent territory. The members of the hamlet are advised to give consideration to how that badge would look in future, if converted to a device with a laurel wreath added. As a populace badge, the arms registered do not belong to any one individual (or household). These will be subject to the standard approval processes by the College of Heraldry.

There are no society officers required, and no formal reporting required for a hamlet. A hamlet should appoint a village leader, to act as point of contact with the parent group, but this is not subject to the same approval processes as the appointment of a seneschal. It is in the hamlet's interests to ensure that the person they select as their representative is able to work well with the parent group's seneschal, and has good relations with everyone in the group. A hamlet may not have a bank account, or hold kingdom funds (except in transit, in accordance with reeves' procedures).

Hamlets are eligible for group awards, such as Pride of Lochac.

Activities solely within a hamlet are not classed as society events. They do not attract event membership or kingdom levies, and do not have to be announced in the Lochac Calendar. They are also not protected by the Society's insurance - they are purely social gatherings among members, run at the members' own expense and risk. If the hamlet wishes to run an event which is open to people outside the hamlet, for which they need to be covered by the Society's insurance, or for which they will be charging an attendance fee, that will be an SCA event and they must be sponsored by their parent Barony or Shire. Those events must be announced in the Lochac Calendar, or through the parent group.

Territory is semi-assigned. A hamlet identifies territory that denotes the village boundaries, subject to approval by the Seneschal of the parent group, and the relevant Crown representative. Anyone living within that territory will henceforth have the option to declare themselves a villager of the hamlet. However, the formal assignment of the territory for counting membership numbers remains with the parent group. Individuals and households are not obliged to become citizens of the hamlet, and may instead announce that they effectively live on a farm or estate outside the village, continuing to be members only of the parent group.

If the group dissolves or drops below five members, the hamlet is declared deserted (probably by plague). Subsequent people playing in the same geographic area will have the option of re-using the name, as if they had moved into the deserted buildings. If the

members of a dissolving hamlet wish to have the arms struck, so that the name and device cannot be used again in future, they will need to petition the parent group to do so.

A hamlet may put themselves forward at any time to become a shire or canton. At this point the standard procedures and rules for establishment will be applied, and the selection of officers will be subject to the usual rules, including endorsement by the parent group's relevant officers. The hamlet will need to appoint officers to the minimum positions required under law, and those officers will be required to submit reports on a quarterly basis for a period to be decided by the Kingdom Seneschal and the seneschal of their parent group, typically not less than one year. Activity targets may also be agreed. During this period the members of the hamlet will have the option of referring to themselves as an incipient shire or canton, or continuing to refer to themselves as a hamlet. The responsibilities and reporting requirements of the officers will remain the same in each case, but the leader of a hamlet will continue to be referred to as a village leader (or any other title agreed within the group and with the parent group), not as a seneschal.

If a hamlet (or incipient shire or canton) has assigned officers and been set a target activity or reporting period by the parent group, this target must be met for consecutive quarters. A break in activity or reporting will restart the probation period.

A registered Canton or Shire may elect to become a hamlet by a poll of the members, and with the approval of the Kingdom Seneschal and, for Cantons, the Baron and Baroness of the parent group. The Kingdom Seneschal may elect to keep the group as a Shire or Canton in suspension, pending the appointment of officers.

A hamlet is not required to produce a regular chronicle, but nor is it entitled to its own website within the Lochac domain. Any events of note within the hamlet should be posted to the relevant parent group's journal or website. The members may elect to set up a social networking site or circulate a newsletter for their own convenience.