

## The SCA Needs You – Becoming an SCA Officer

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### Why do we have officers?

#### History

- Event steward → Seneschal (interface to the mundane world), Reeve
- Tourney/combat organisers → Marshals, Lists
- Colour and pageantry → Heralds, B&Bs, Crowns
- Crafts and research → Arts & Sciences
- Growing of groups, comms etc → Hospitaller, Chronicler, Webwright, ...

#### Yes, but why do we need them all now?

- WE DO A **LOT OF DIVERSE THINGS!** Far more than most social or sporting groups.
- This requires more investment of time and planning than “meet here on Thursday” - especially if you want to keep doing things for longer than a few years
- Effective officers add structure and documented process to a group’s activities, making key tasks easier and more reliably repeatable in the long term
- Officers can and do grow the *reach* and the *range* of a group, making it far more likely to survive and prosper in a changing world than a loose social group

#### Why do officer roles turn over every two years?

(after all, this means we’re constantly advertising to fill roles, moving officers on from roles they’re doing well in – this wastes effort and also looks bad, right?)

- Avoid burnout
- Lessen the likelihood of strong clique formation and persistence – though beware of the “one step to the left” approach
- Avoid the “cold dead hands” syndrome – allowing for fresh energy and ideas
- Helps to develop skills at the individual level and across the group
- Two years is a lower bar to consider taking on than longer terms, especially for the bigger roles

#### Barriers to taking on offices

- Lack of time
- Finances (membership, transport etc)
- Lack of immediately relevant skills
- Lack of knowledge/information (see <https://seneschal.lochac.sca.org/resources> )
- Criticism and negativity bias

*Also see Appendix one – an excerpt from Katherine Kerr’s NZ Principality Discussion Document, Oct 2020*

## How to encourage and support applications from potential new officers?

- Find out what the key barriers are in your group
- Think about ways to **lower barriers** – improving your information, training, systems...
- Make an effort to **share the positives** of officer roles (to you, to the group), not just the “oh my god I’m tired/that thing!” type messaging that most of us share with our friends
- If taking on an officer role is not for you, **help find others** – think of people with special skills/interests, or who’d benefit from developing other areas
- If you’re already an officer, **take on deputies** to help them try your office on for size – even a few time-limited six-month spells can help several people get a taste
- If you’re not in a role yourself, try to **actively and visibly support those who are** – find ways to give them feedback – in public if it’s positive, privately if it isn’t
- \$ sponsorship – if you can’t take on an officer role yourself, **sponsor one or two memberships** for officers!

## To Do!

- If you’re new to holding an office, start small and easy – a deputy role, or any of Lists, Constable, Hospitaller, Webwright
- Work out where your interests and skills are, and where your gaps are – try a SWOT analysis for you and for the group (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)
- Promote and support the concept of holding offices – understand and explain the resilience-building and growth-promoting benefits of having a range of dynamic officers
- Read up! See <https://seneschal.lochac.sca.org/resources> – it has Officer Job Descriptions for all regular group roles, and a ton of other resources
- Help make your existing officers happier and more effective – chocolate is almost always welcome, kindness and consideration definitely is.

*Appendix one – an excerpt from Katherine Kerr's NZ Principality Discussion Document, October 2020*

**Perceived barriers to taking up offices, and responses**

- financial: *I can't afford SCA membership:*
  - call for/offer membership sponsorships (offered already in some groups)
  - offer as event raffle prize or other appropriate group funding
- transport: *I can't get to meetings or events*
  - have designated transport people willing to help; call for offers of assistance
  - have a deputy assigned to go/take notes etc
  - actively assess physical locations eg on public transport routes, accessibility (may be less of an issue post-COVID, with more online meeting capabilities)
- lack of information: *I don't know what is required*
  - make role descriptions publicly available, in ads and notices (now done)
  - encourage managed handovers
- workload: *I probably don't have the time or the experience*
  - identify basic requirements and time generally needed to fulfil those (well underway at Kingdom level, being rolled out to groups)
  - encourage focus and support structures
  - strengthen support for deputy or mentoring roles
  - encourage managed handovers to clearly identify responsibilities
  - develop support systems for workload management
  - support regular training sessions or role-based gatherings and develop support groups and networks especially at national level (LOTS 2 has just been undertaken, LOTS More is in early planning)
  - encourage administrative-focused Collegia classes to help up-skill, or make use of relevant local body/NGO resources, education and support services
- recognition: *What's in it for me?*
  - encourage local/Coronet recognition from simple thank-yous to formal awards
  - develop CV-appropriate descriptions covering SCA service
- criticism: *People are really mean and I'm just a volunteer*
  - active mentoring to provide support and advice, discourage incivility
  - develop coping strategies and promulgate them
  - calling out discourteous behaviour and developing training/resources on how to give/deal with criticism or challenging behaviour, as well as how to listen and act positively to criticism (some resources already completed; see <https://seneschal.lochac.sca.org/helping-make-behaviour-better> )
  - encouraging and modeling courteous interaction, particularly on social media
  - encouraging active support and appreciation of volunteer service
- negativity bias: *The whole officer thing is nothing but #@%*
  - encourage Officers (and former Officers) to recognise and mention *positive* aspects of their role in ads and job descriptions and while undertaking their activities and reports (under way)
  - remind Officers that they may be jaded or near burn-out coming to the end of their term and they need to be careful not to let that colour hand-over
  - develop recognition strategies (see above)