

Newcomer Event Ideas

By Barwn James Llewellyn ap Gruffydd, OP
Updated August 2004

Editor's Note: The following questions were sent to the An Tir Autocrat's discussion list in August of 2004. This article is based on a response by Barwn James to the list and is published with his permission.

I'm looking for autocrat's advice from those of you who have experience with autocrating sca demos and newcomer related events. What has worked for you in dealing with Mr. and Mrs. John Public? As an autocrat what additional measures have you went through to make sure the event is a success? What site fees have you set, as in, is it different for the newcomers if it is their first function? So you have classes during the event? What do you cover if you do have classes?

We toyed with multiple newcomer's formats before finding what worked best for us.

Two formats are used:

1) At our normal major events we have our Newcomer's Daycare.

At site open, usually about 9 or 10 am for day events, we hold a Newcomer's gathering. Experienced SCA people come in and drop their newcomers with us. During the next hour, the veterans help set up the event. Meanwhile, their newcomers receive basic "welcome to the SCA" lessons. This includes basic behaviour, how to, and recognition, all done in the company of other newcomers, so they feel less threatened. If possible, we hold it in a convenient location near the site entrance, so we can point out prominent people and ranks as they arrive. It is our intention to again hold this at our next year's Daffodil Tournament

2) For a newcomers event we tried several formats. The problem was always that newcomers felt patronized. Instead, we hold a showcase event.

- ❖ Every activity we could hold was held at this event: rapier, rattan, archery, A&S, bardic.
- ❖ Nothing was concurrent. Everything flowed from one to the other. The experienced people came out and competed in the tourneys. The newbies got to see everything.
- ❖ Veterans brought out their hand-me-downs. It was a good excuse to clean out our closets; we ended up with HUGE boxes of stuff. Each newcomer, defined as having been to no more than three events, was given a raffle ticket at the gate. During the day, numbers were drawn and the newcomers got to pick from the spoils. We had so much stuff that every new person was able to pick twice. People went away from their first event fully clothed in garb and accoutrements.
- ❖ We held a potluck in the evening and introduced everyone. At court every newcomer was recognized.

It ended up being a smashing success.