

The Ostgardr Autocrat's Handbook

**Being a compilation of Advice, Helpful Hints and Divers Other Ideas
about running SCA events in the Crown Province of Ostgardr**

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Draft 6: March 21, 2011

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You want to run an event in Ostgardr? Start Thinking!

So you want to step up and run an SCA event in Ostgardr. Vivat! You are one of the people who help us all 'Live the Dream' in these Current Middle Ages. If you are up to the challenge of planning and organizing an SCA event in Ostgardr, read on.

The best thing to do if you are serious about autocrating an event in Ostgardr is to come to Commons meetings. Held usually on the third Friday of each month at various places around Ostgardr these meetings are where initial ideas for events are talked about, and where you can volunteer to help at someone else's event. Volunteering at someone else's event can help you get a better idea of how an event is run and can put you in contact with people who have either worked at events or autocrated events.

Ostgardr has a policy of having a first-time autocrat be mentored by a more experienced autocrat. You can certainly approach someone you know has run successful events in Ostgardr and ask if they would be willing to mentor you through your first experience as an autocrat. If they are, when you ask the Seneschal and the Viceregents about autocrating an event, you can tell them you are going to be working with an experienced autocrat. This counts in your favor. Make sure you can work with this person and that they are easily contactable.

For the more experienced autocrat, this handbook contains information on creating larger events, as well as handling royal progresses and kingdom level events. If you have autocrated canton level and mid-size Ostgardr events, then perhaps you are thinking about taking a step up and running something larger. Hopefully, this handbook will help you as well.

For all potential autocrats – keep in mind that the East Kingdom calendar of events is fairly full. Planning a new event means that you need to know what's already on the kingdom calendar around when you would like to run your event. When you start thinking about running an event, start watching the kingdom calendar. Take down the monthly list of events, noting events in the Southern Region and kingdom events. The list of groups that make up the southern region are in the Pikestaff and on the kingdom website, and kingdom events are usually listed first in the Pikestaff or are marked on the website.

Autocrats: please also get in contact with each canton's seneschal and find out what is being planned for the canton. Even practices and monthly gatherings can create problems for an event, and if a canton is planning an event, you need to know when and where that event will happen. Demos also should be taken into account, since public demos usually involve most of Ostgardr.

For the New Autocrat, a plethora of information

Greetings, new autocrat! You've stepped up and volunteered to run an event in Ostgardr. Whether it's a canton event or an Ostgardr event, you are about to embark on an adventure.

While you are volunteering at events, let any ideas you have about events germinate. What kind of event do YOU want to run? Think in terms of planning a really great party that you want people to come to but you don't have a set guest list. Who do you want to help you run an event? Make notes to yourself if possible, and keep them. When you think you might be ready to autocrat an event, let the Ostgardr Seneschal and the Viceregens know. You can email them directly:

- ❖ seneschal@ostgardr.org
- ❖ viceroyn@ostgardr.org
- ❖ vicereine@ostgardr.org

They can then get you the forms you will need to fill out in order to present a bid to the Ostgardr Officers' Council. These forms are included in the appendices of this book, and should also be available online at the Ostgardr website at some point as well. As you read further in this manual, there will be help in filling out these forms, as well as advice on how to deal with budgeting and other concerns that an autocrat must face.

Concerning Sites

Sites are what we need to make an event happen. A site can be as simple as part of a public park or as complex as a whole church or hall that we've rented out, or a campsite. Whatever the site, it should be part and parcel of the vision you have for an event.

New sites are always wanted. If you know of a church, school, campground, park or hall and that site will rent itself out, the SCA has information that it gives out to potential sites so that we can present ourselves to them as a group that will be trustworthy to rent their space. If you are considering autocrating an event in Ostgardr and want to use a new site, make sure you get the SCA information packet from the SCA, Inc. website –

<http://sca.org/docs/for-siteowners.pdf> This is a pretty good way to introduce the SCA to someone at a potential site.

In choosing a site that will be useful for an event you want to run, ask yourself and the potential site owners the following questions:

1. For an indoor, or autumn/winter event:
 - a. How is the parking at or near the site? *
 - b. How accessible by public transit is the site? *
 - c. How many useable rooms does the site have? What types of rooms are they? (i.e. – Can you use the rooms for things like classes, dancing, merchants or court? Are there rooms to use for changing into garb? What about Royal Rooms? Bathrooms?)
 - d. Does the site have a useable kitchen?

- e. What are the limitations of the site? Is there a cap on how many people can be in the space?
 - f. Do the owners of the site have specific times that they will or won't rent out the site?
 - g. Will the site allow heavy fighting? Fencing? Archery?
2. For an outdoor, or spring/summer event add these questions to the list:
- a. What kind of amenities does the site have? Are there showers?
 - b. Does the site allow camping? What kind? Are there cabins on the site?
 - c. Does the site allow fires? What kind? Are ground fires allowed?
 - d. Does the site have enough toilets? Are you going to have to rent port-a-sans? How much will this cost?

* This is the first question to ask, especially if you are dealing with a site that does not have its own parking lot, or the site's parking lot is small. Remember, even though some Ostgardri take public transit to events most people will be coming by car and need a place to park. If the site does not have decent parking nearby, then it may not be a site Ostgardr will want to use for events.

A question that must ALWAYS be asked is "Will the site allow the consumption of alcohol?" Schools and NYC parks generally do not allow alcohol, nor do some churches. This information MUST be included in your event announcement.

Do a site walk-through for any new site. If this is an indoor site and there will be dayboard served and/or a feast, a head cook should get to see the kitchen set up. A gatekeeper needs to see the best place for gate to be set up and define how the flow of incoming attendees should be, as well as lay out what will be needed to run a smooth gate – tables, chairs, a place to store personal items. If this is a site that has outdoor areas, you need to see them with regard to possible heavy weapons or fencing tournaments. If the site allows archery, bring an archery marshal with you to make the final determination as to the fitness for archery on the site. Some sites might say "sure, you can do archery", thinking that an empty lot next door will do. Archery requires specific amounts of space. An archery marshal is going to be able to determine this better than you might be able to.

Making Initial Decisions about Your Event

You as the autocrat should have a vision as to what type of event you want to run. A schola? A tournament of some type? A dancing event? A tavern event? Combinations of types of events (i.e. a tournament with some classes going on in another part of the site)? While you are doing your initial planning, write out your ideas, let your mind create, for you, the perfect 'medieval' day/weekend.

You also need to plan out activities for the event, and know how you are going to staff these activities. If your vision is to have a schola or collegium of some sort, you will need teachers and a teacher coordinator. If it's a tournament, you will need marshals for these activities. Knowing the people of Ostgardr and what they like to do in the SCA helps immensely in this area. Talk to people at gatherings and practices. Talk to people at Commons meetings. Tell them about your idea. See if they might be interested in helping you at your event. Start generating a list of staff: yourself, your autocrat-mentor, a gatekeeper, a head cook, marshals, etc.

Your biggest decision will be whether or not you are going to have food served at the event. If the site has a usable kitchen you may want to plan for having a feast or a dayboard or both. Remember that serving food adds expense to your budget (more on budgets soon!) so be aware of that. You can certainly decide not to serve food at the event, especially if the site you want to use does not have a usable kitchen. In this case, advertise a 'potluck' ("bring a dish to feed 4-6 people") or no food at all ("there will not be a dayboard or feast at this event, please bring your own food and please clean up after yourself.") Events like these are still quite enjoyable, and can focus on other activities.

You might also want to consider other ways to generate event income, other than event attendance fees. Having a raffle is one way to go. You can gather up items or promises of service from people and raffle them off at a \$1 per ticket. This extra income can be a boon if your event doesn't attract the amount of people you planned on. Also, some sites (i.e. New York City public parks) do not allow you to collect fees on the site, so a raffle might be a good way to generate event income.

Once you've made these initial decisions, you have to get down to the nitty-gritty of budgeting.

Budgeting an Event

Now that the "fun part" of pre-planning has been done, you need to start on a preliminary budget.

Don't PANIC. Even if you have NEVER done a budget before, you can put an event budget together. Two simple questions to ask yourself:

1. What are the fixed costs for this event?
2. What are the variable costs for this event?

Start with fixed costs. These are things like the event site rental fee and any other items that either must be purchased or rented for the event to happen (i.e. port-a-san rentals).

Okay, so, as an example, you've decided to rent an indoor site and its going to cost \$500 for a day's rental. The type of event you want to run is a schola or collegium. The hall has 6 rooms you can use for classes, plus a gymnasium you can use for fighting or fencing classes. The building will support 300 people at a time, per fire marshal's notice.

You think you might attract 100 people for the event, based on interest you've encountered while doing the pre-planning and discussion about having the event.

So, with a \$500 site fee and 100 people coming – $500 / 100 = \$5$ per person to cover site fee.

What about decorations, or site tokens? You know you can afford to spend about \$100, so add in this cost:

$\$500$ site fee + $\$100$ for site tokens and decorations = $\$600$
 $\$600 / 100$ people coming to the event = $\$6$ per person.

Okay, you've covered your basic costs. You can now break even for the event, as long as 100 people actually come.

Erm...what if only 60 people show up?

$\$600 / 60$ people showing up = $\$10$ per person.

You need to budget out both ends, and also average out. You do not know how many people will come to an event, especially if it's a new event.

So, 100 people + 60 people = 160 people / 2 possible versions = 80 people.

$\$600 / 80$ people = $\$7.50$ – rounded up to $\$8$ per person (never charge a price with change, it makes things icky at the gate – see section on gate later).

You can also advertise that it's $\$8$ for someone who pre-registers, but $\$10$ on the day of the event at the gate. An incentive to pre-register, such as a discount like this, can help push attendance up. It can also help generate income on the day of the event, like so:

You got 60 people pre-registered at $\$8$ per person, which gave you a total of $\$480$.

At the gate, you get another 25 people who 'just show up' x $\$10$ per person = $\$250$.

$\$480 + \$250 = \$730$ in income

Now, $\$730$ in income - $\$600$ in expenses = $\$130$ in profit from the event that can be used for other events in Ostgardr.

Knowing how many people might come to your event is key, and you need to at least cover your expenses and break even. Generating a little profit from an event is good too, so try and budget things that way.

We've so far talked about a mid-sized event, with about 85 people who come. What about a small event? Something at the canton level, or an event that has a very specific theme (i.e. Italian dancing). An event like this might only attract 30-40 people.

How do you budget something like this?

Well, start with the site. If your site is going to cost \$500 no matter what, you should drop spending money on something. You don't necessarily need site tokens, and you can certainly go lower on spending for decorations, or try to create decorations out of things you already have or other people have and can bring.

So, at \$500 for the site, and 40 people, you get $500 / 40 = \$12.50$ per person, rounded up to \$13.

Ouch! Is it going to be worth it for someone to come at that price? Are you going to give them their money's worth? Ask yourself that question. If so, then go ahead. If not, then try to find another site, one that costs less.

What about outdoor events? What costs are you talking about here?

With a city park, you are definitely talking a parks permit fee, and possibly use fees for any parks buildings. You might also need to arrange for port-a-sans. For a campsite, you still have a rental fee, plus possibly port-a-sans and fees for use of various buildings on the site. Knowing how many people might come to an outdoor event is your key. If your costs are \$300 (say for a parks permit and some port-a-sans) and you can expect about 70 people, then $300 / 70 =$ roughly \$4.50, rounded up to \$5. City parks do not let fees be collected on site, so your event can ask for a 'donation of \$5 to the group' at the door.

Whatever your site, be it an outdoor park or campsite or an indoor church, school or hall, you need to know what your costs and expenses are going to be, and what income you can expect from the event. Breaking even (event expenses = event income) is okay, generating a profit is cool. If the event loses money, you should know why it did, and how it might be corrected if you try and run the event again.

Having Food (or not) at an Event

We've talked a little about deciding if you want to have food served at your event. Once you make the decision that yes, you are going to have food at the event, then you have more planning, budgeting to do.

What are you planning? Let's start with planning a feast.

For a feast, you need to know how many people your feasting hall or area can sit. This is your cut-off number, and for a feast, you count pre-registrations plus a few. Cut off date for pre-registration for an event with a feast should be about 2 weeks before the event.

For instance: your hall seats 100. You've sold 75 seats by the 2 week before mark. Tell your head cook to plan on cooking for 80 people. This way, you will have plenty of food and have the option to sell 5 more seats on the day of the event.

So, you have a feast for 80 people. You've said you will allot \$6 per person for food. This gives a total feast budget of \$480.

Fixed costs are still \$600. Add in \$480 for the feast, and your costs are now \$1,080. You need to have at least 80 people come.

$600 / 80 = \$7.50$ (round to \$8)

$480 / 80 = \$6$ per person (as planned)

Total event fee is now \$14 per person.

Check: $\$14 \times 80 = \$1,120$. Okay, expenses are \$1,080. Your event can make a profit of \$40, and that's just adding the extra 50 cents into the original fixed costs.

What about offering a dayboard?

Argh. Cooks can have issues with doing a dayboard. You don't really know how many people are going to show up, and using your pre-reservations as a guideline doesn't always help. Budgeting for a dayboard has to start with your estimations of how many will show up, and allotting an amount per person.

For instance: You have 40 people pre-registered. You may get another 40 at the gate, you may get only 20. With a dayboard, you need to over-compensate.

You tell your head cook you will allot \$1.50 per person for food for a dayboard and you are estimating 80 people. $80 \times \$1.50 = \120 allotted to spend on dayboard food.

And what if you get more people? Or less people? More people and obviously you underestimated. Less people and you have extra food. A good SCA cook can do a decent dayboard that will feed everyone reasonably, but this part of the budget is a variable cost, and you have to be able to tweak it if necessary.

For instance: at 2 weeks before the event, with 30 reservations in you tell your head cook to plan on a dayboard for 60 people. At \$1.50 per person that means a dayboard budget of \$90. In the next 2 days you get another 20 reservations. Now you have 50 people pre registered. You need to tell your head cook to plan on a dayboard for 100 people, doubling the number of pre-reservations. At \$1.50 per person you are now looking at a dayboard budget of \$150.

In order to help defray costs that oscillate, you should plan on charging more for people who 'just show up' (see example page 4). Doing this can save a world of problems with going over your budget and not generating enough income from the event.

Note: when planning a feast, you need to know how many tables there are at the site, and how many people each table will hold. If you have 8 person tables, then you need to plan on feeding 8 people per table. Work with your head cook on this issue.

Gate (Troll)

[Note: The title of this section is 'Gate (Troll)'. Some people call checking in at an event 'the gate', some will call it 'the troll' or 'the troll-booth'. Using this term comes from the time when the SCA had leanings into fantasy and myth. Trolls were the mythical guardians of the bridge in the story "The Three Billy Goats Gruff", and charged money to cross. Other stories mention trolls as money collectors as well. Whatever YOU decide to call it, its still where one checks in at an event, and it is a WHOLLY mundane transaction.]

The best advice I can give about doing gate is K-I-S-S (Keep It Short and Simple). Don't let the gatekeeper or anyone who works at the gate make deals for people (i.e. "okay, you are just going to be here for the feast, and will stay overnight, but your friends are coming for the day and leaving before feast, so you can pay this amount, not the advertised price). Set prices are set prices, and the simpler the fee structure is the better.

You will need the following information to appear on a master gate sheet:

1. Mundane name
2. SCA member number
3. Expiration date of membership
4. Whether the membership card is blue or white (this matters because a blue member card has a signed waiver on file, a white member card does not).
5. What the reservation is for – i.e. day with feast, day only, more than one person.
6. How the payment was made – i.e. cash, check or money order (with these last two you should have the check or money order number recorded).
7. If the person reserving is not currently an SCA member, the non-member surcharge needs to be included in the total, and recorded separately as well.
8. Date the reservation was received.
9. A total amount paid.

The best way to set up a master gate sheet is to use MS Excel. It is an easy program to use, and has features that will let you not only create your master gate sheet, but pull out the feast reservations when you need to do so.

Below is a reduced-size version of a possible master gate sheet (landscape style works best):

Name: Last, First	SCA MEMBER #	Exp date	Blue/White Card	W/ FEAST	DAY- ONLY	NMS	\$, CK, M/O	Date Rec'd	TOTAL
Jones, Ann	123456	01/01/11	Blue	X			Ck # 1234	1/2/09	\$20
Smith, Jim	234567	02/28/2011	Blue	X			Ck # 2344	1/4/09	\$40
Smith, Jane	234588	02/28/2011	White	X					
Cabot, Rick			N/A		X	\$3(5)	Cash	1/8/09	\$15

Notice how the Smiths are listed with one person slightly indented. This indicates that one person has paid for the other. You can certainly do this with couples whose last names are different as well (Smith, Ann might pay for Jones, Tim) With this style of gate sheet, you make it easy to tell who has paid for whom, by simply listing the payer first and the persons paid for beneath. Sometimes a person will pay for several people at once, so this becomes a quick way to tell, especially on the day of the event, if a person has been paid for. Sometimes a person will simply say "Here's \$XX amount, I am bringing 2 guests." Also note that the NMS is listed as \$3(5). The SCA, Inc. has said that the NMS amount will go up to \$5 soon.

With this type of reservation, list the people this way:

Name: Last, First	SCA MEMBER #	Exp date	Blue/White Card	W/ FEAST	DAY- ONLY	NMS	\$, CK, M/O	Date Rec'd	TOTAL
Jones, Ron	345678	12/31/2011	Blue	X			Cash	2/3/09	\$60
Jones, Guest 1				X					
Jones, Guest 2				X					
Tyrone, Jan	456789	4/30/2012	White	X			Ck # 2340	2/8/09	\$ 20

This way, you have at least some idea of who has paid. You will need to tell the payer that he/she needs to tell their guests that, when they get to the event, they will need to tell the gate staff "I'm the guest of so-and-so." This way you get to check off that the guest has shown up. When this type of reservation occurs, you will need to do something on the day of the event that doesn't get done with other reservations. You will need to find out if the person has an SCA membership and get that information at the gate. If the person does not have a paid membership, or the membership has lapsed, you will need to collect the NMS charge right then and there.

In your event announcement, make sure you tell every possible attendee that sending in all the pertinent information with their reservation guarantees a quick pass through the gate. ALL PERTINENT INFORMATION INCLUDES mundane name, member #, expiration date and whether the member card is blue or white. If a member has a blue card, they will not need to sign the waiver at the gate. If a member has a white card they will need to sign the waiver, and of course, if a person is not a member they will need to sign the waiver. This is why you include the column for blue or white card in your gate sheet.

If your event is going to have a tournament, or include merchants, you will need to include other columns in your gate sheet, such as a column for "Merchant", "Tournament Participant" You might also want to include a "Notes" column. I find this helpful if you don't want to have separate columns for the above mentioned. You can use a notes column to record "This person is staff", "This person is kitchen staff" "This person is a merchant-\$5 table fee paid/owed", "Problem with payment amt-call autocrat to gate when arrives", "Tourney Participant-needs list-field token". Such notes help the gatekeepers and the autocrat maintain a level of sanity when things aren't as clear by just the "pertinent information".

Merchants

If your site will permit the event to host merchants, you will need a 'merchant liaison'. This person should be part of your primary event staff and go with you to look at the site. What they are looking for is

1. What are the dimensions of the space you are planning to use for the merchants? Can we get a chart made of the space so that table placing can be thought out?
2. Are tables and chairs available at the site or will merchants have to bring their own?
3. Is the space going to be just for merchants or will it be used for something else later in the day? If so, what time frame for set up and take-down of merchant tables are planned?

Having merchants at an event can be fun, and if done in a medieval way, can add a note of "a market day" to an event. You can also plan on charging a nominal fee for a merchant's table – say \$1 or \$2 per table. This extra income can be helpful as well.

Bid Forms, getting your event accepted, etc.

This handbook includes the forms that Ostgardr uses to vet bids for events. These forms are fairly self-explanatory. Each form is geared towards what type of event you are planning: one day (indoor), outdoor (camping) and small one day event. If you have done your planning and budgeting, filling these out should be fairly easy. Only fill out the needed information for your event – for instance: if your event is only going to have fencing as a martial activity, don't fill out the information for a heavy weapons marshal or an equestrian marshal. If you aren't going to have food served at your event, don't fill out the information for a head cook and food costs.

Your event announcement draft can also be included with your bid forms. To write an event announcement, look at event announcements in the Pikestaff or on the East Kingdom website. See what information is needed there. Start with needed information then jazz it up. Remember, you are SELLING the event. Make it sound like this will be the grandest thing to come along this year. "We are having a fencing tournament" is good, but "our back-alley fencing combat scenario will feature marshal's choice of weapons" is guaranteed to make fencers think about attending the event.

Once you have the description of the event written, think about a date or dates that would be available on the East Kingdom calendar, preferably a date about 6 to 9 months away so that you have time to organize your event to the fullest. Also check with our neighboring Baronies of An Dubhaigheann and Settmour Swamp, and the Shire of the Rusted Woodlands to see if they are planning anything around the time or times you are thinking of. These 3 other SCA groups will draw people away from an Ostgardr event. Contact your tentative sites and find out about availability on the dates you have chosen. Make sure you are clear about not booking the site until everything is okayed and finalized about the event. Some sites will go ahead and create a booking and expect payment right away. Payment for a site rental CANNOT be made by Ostgardr until everything about the event is finalized.

Now, plan on attending an Ostgardr Commons meeting and giving your filled out bid forms to the Viceregents and the Ostgardr seneschal and exchequer. Once they have vetted your bid and okayed your budget, you're good to go!

Once you have the go ahead from Ostgardr, you need to post the event AS SOON AS POSSIBLE on the East Kingdom website. Using the GINGER system is fairly easy, and it should only take about 15 minutes to get the event posted. When the event is posted you will receive an email from the East Kingdom site with an access code for the event listing. KEEP THIS!!! I usually set up a separate folder in my email account just for the event and this email is the first one I put in there. The code you receive will allow you to edit the event announcement, and this may be crucial as you finalize things around the event. If something changes that needs to be reflected in the event announcement, such as a change of event staff or contact information for event staff, this needs to be done by the autocrat ASAP.

Just before you post the event on the EK website, you MUST book the date with the site, and arrange for the site payment. As soon as you receive the 'yes' from Ostgardr (and if it's at the Commons meeting, do this then) speak to the Provincial Exchequer about having Ostgardr write a check for the site payment or deposit. You should make sure that this step is completed within a few days of the okay being given. Even if you have a good relationship with the site you've chosen, things can go awry. You may have asked for only one possible date, and when you go to actually book the site, the date is closed. Make sure you have several possible dates!

This way you have some leeway if one date is closed. In your proposal you should have had several possible dates listed, so when you have a final from the site, make sure you let the Viceregents, Seneschal and Exchequer know. Also make sure you give the event information to the Ostgardr Chronicler and Web-Minister so that the event will be listed in the Seahorse and on the Ostgardr calendar.

The Scheduling Calendar for Your Event

Now that the event is on the calendar, you should have schedule you can use to check off what needs doing leading up to your event. If you've planned well, you will get the event onto the East Kingdom calendar about 6 months before the event is to happen. If you've been delayed, it might be 3-4 months away. Whatever the time frame, make sure you are clear as to scheduling.

This handbook includes a Ostgardr Event Planning Sheet, which you can certainly use or modify to your own needs. Having a schedule of things to do written out helps immensely with organizing an SCA event.

You will need to be in charge of gathering volunteers for set up and take down/cleaning. Put out the word, and keep a list of whose hand goes up to volunteer. As the event draws near, you can contact these people and let them know what jobs they might need to fill. "John, I need you on site early so you can help me decorate the hall. What is the

earliest time you can be there?” “Susie, please stay late to help me clean the main hall. Is it possible for you to come later to do this?” You can also conscript people on the day of the event, but having at least a few people in place is good. My choice for day-of conscripting is to have an announcement made near the end of the feast, or near the end of the day if there is to be no feast, something to the tune of “Everyone still on site after the official end of the event is automatically clean-up staff. Please see the autocrat for jobs.”

Even a small event is going to need volunteers to help out with things, mostly pre-event set up and post-event clean up. A pre-set clean up crew can save both time and hair-pulling at the end of a long day. An early-arriving set-up crew can make the place look great for when the other attendees start showing up. Putting up banners, setting up chairs and tables, putting up signs to show where certain things are taking place, setting up an EZ up in an outdoor space for things like water and Gatorade for fighters and fencers, and a list field tourney sign-in table, or for an archery tournament – all these things should be done by the time the gate opens. Having volunteers to come and help is a big part of being an autocrat – remember – you only have 2 arms and 2 legs and you can't be in every place at once. Delegating tasks is your best bet.

If you are going to have a site token for the event you need to start putting them together. Having a site token for an event is neat, and a way for the attendees to remember your wonderful event, but it is not needed.

Site tokens can be as simple as a twist of different colored ribbons on a safety pin, or as elaborate as a pewter-cast medallion on a leather or silk cord. Whatever you decide, the token should reflect the theme of the event. A favorite token of mine is a green glass castle on a ribbon, which was a token for a Mudthaw I went to some years ago. Another token favorite is a simple 3-beads-on-a-safety-pin, which was a token for a canton event in Lions End.

Having a tournament of any type means you should at least consider having prizes for the winners. Sometimes you can't afford it, sometimes you can.

If you can afford to have prizes, even little ones, do so. Calling up a tournament winner in viceregal court and presenting a prize and hearing the “Vivats!” is part of the medieval atmosphere. One Agincourt that Ostgardr ran had each tournament winner come away with a handful blue and red jelly-belly jelly beans in blue and red cellophane baggies tied up with blue and red ribbons. Blue represented France, red represented England. The prizes cost about \$25 all told, and each winner not only came away with a neat prize, but one they could also eat!

Any “SCA This Way” Signs need to be gathered and ready to put up. If you can get them put up the night before the event – great! If not, make sure someone is able to do so early in the morning. To help attendees find your event, especially if it's in a new site, you will want to have signs posted along the preferred traveling route(s) to the event. Start about 2 miles away, and post signs where turns need to be made. Having these signs out on the route goes a long way back in the SCA, and makes people coming from outside the local area feel better about getting to the site.

You should also schedule a final staff meeting for the event to include the Ostgardr viceregals, the Ostgardr exchequer and the Ostgardr seneschal for sometime during the 4 weeks before your event, the closer to the 2 week mark the better. At this meeting you need to get all the last bits in order. You should know when your staff is arriving. You should have a list of tasks to be done on the day of the event started. Your gatekeeper should have all the final numbers for you, as well as a preliminary list of possible problems that have not been resolved.

The viceregals will need to be at this meeting for a couple of reasons. They need to start thinking about viceregal court. What awards do they want to give out? Do they have announcements for the populace? Do they have sea-stars to give out for previous events or demos? Are they going to need to recognize tournament winners? Are there liable to be other bits of business at court? How long a court do they think they will need? If there's going to be a feast – who will be sitting high table with them? (you can give them a list of pre-reserved so that they can start to make decisions). Even if they don't have all the answers for you, they at least can get back to you soonest with their answers.

The Ostgardr exchequer and seneschal should attend this meeting too, in order to do a couple of things. First, you need to hand off any monies collected so far to the exchequer and get the Ostgardr cash box, as well as set up for gate seed money. The best way to do this is to take about \$100 in cash from the monies collected (if possible) and go to a bank and get singles and fives for change. About \$70 in singles and \$30 in fives is good for a small event. Larger events might need about \$150, with the divide being \$100 in singles and \$50 in fives. If you don't have the cash from reservations, you can ask the Ostgardr exchequer to advance the \$100 or \$150 to the gate, which will be deducted from the take later.

At this point you will also need to make sure that any newcomers who need 'gold key' (loaner garb) are directed to contact the chatelaine or whomever is holding the gold key locally. Or you can contact the chatelaine and set up gold key for an event. Ostgardr, unlike other areas, does not always bring gold key to an event. If you have newcomers, please make sure you contact the chatelaine or gold-key holder so that loaner garb (and if needed, feast gear) is available.

Sometime during the last 2 weeks before an event, you should contact the site and make sure all the bits are in place. Has the site payment been made? Does it need to be made the day of the event? If the site is looking for payment on the day of the event, contact the Ostgardr exchequer and make sure you have a check written from the Ostgardr checking account made out to the site that you can bring with you. Any insurance certificates that are needed by the site should either be there or be sent to them ASAP.

If this is a completely outdoor site and there will be overnight camping involved, you need to check the site for campsite readiness. Does the site's grass need cutting? Are there mosquitoes? How are the site's facilities? Do the bathrooms look clean? Are there shower facilities? You should be walking through, making notes on what needs to be done by the SCA on the day of the event, and what the site might need to do.

Speak to your site contact and ask about what the site is planning to do before the day of the event. If the site is planning to make any changes, or there are changes to the site that have taken place during the time between booking and now, make sure you have ways to deal with it.

For example: indoor site: you booked the site thinking you would have access to 2 sets of bathrooms and a room that people can use for classes. When you do the walk-through, you find that one of the women's bathrooms is being worked on and the room you wanted for classes is being used as the workmen's staging area. You then have to see if you can use another room for classes, and make sure that you have signs up at gate on the day of detailing the work area so people don't hurt themselves or try to use a bathroom or room that isn't useable. If this necessitates changes to the site rental amount, make notes and call the Ostgardr seneschal, exchequer and viceregals ASAP to tell them.

For example: outdoor site: you booked the site without really seeing the bathrooms available. When you do your walk-through, you see that the bathrooms are filthy and the site tells you they cannot supply extra TP. *This is unacceptable for the SCA.* You will need to arrange to get to the site either very early the day of the event or the day before the event with a cleaning crew and clean the bathrooms as best you can. You will also need to bring extra TP to the event to put in the bathrooms. Save the receipt for the TP as this is now part of event expenses.

Whatever you encounter, doing a site walk-through, even on a well-known site, is a good idea. You can also make up your lists of decorations now, and also see how you want to move stuff around to help create the medieval atmosphere in your site.

Leading Up to the Day of the Event

By 2 weeks before the event, if you are planning a feast, you need to announce that you will not be taking any more reservations. If the feast has sold out, you need to announce that there's now a waiting list. Chances are someone isn't going to show up, and you will get 1-4 people into the feast. For people who have pre-registered for feast but are on the waiting list, hold their checks or cash and use your notes column on your master gate sheet to write in "WAITING LIST". If they get into the feast, then all is well. If they do not, then you will need to arrange to refund the feast amount, if possible. You will need to contact the people on the wait list and ask them if they want to be on the wait list or not. If they do, follow the above instructions. If they do not, then you can arrange for them to bring a new check and you can switch checks. Cash can be refunded at the gate. Money orders will have to be cashed by the province and a refund check will need to be issued (make sure you call the Ostgardr exchequer and notify him about any refunds due because of feast sell out!)

Now is the time to start creating gate sheets that you will use on the day of the event from your master sheet. If you have created the master sheet in MS Excel, this will be an easy process. If this is something that your gatekeeper has been doing, you need to be there for this process.

First, make a copy of your master sheet in the same file. For pre-registered feast attendees, break them out and then alphabetize the names by mundane last name. For pre-registered day-only attendees, break them out to another sheet. Same thing with a feast waiting list, only this sheet needs to stay in “order received” so that you can see who would get the first seat available. You can also alphabetize the waiting list, and then note “1”, “2”, etc. next to the name. Examples of gate sheets in this stage are in the appendices of this book.

For the pre-reserved sheets, you need to pull out some information and add other bits of information. For instance, a gate person is not going to need the information about check numbers or dates received. A pre-reserved gate sheet should look something like this:

Name	SCA #	Exp Date	Blue/White	NMS	Notes	Arrived
A b b o t , Jane	234567	02/2010	Blue		Staff	
Burns, Jon	456789	10/2010	White		Waiver	

The arrived column is used to check off when the person arrives at the site. This is helpful for when the gate is about to close – you will need to see if someone who reserved for feast did not show up. The notes column helps sort out needs. The “staff” notation tells the gate that the person is part of the event staff and should see the autocrat when they arrive. The “waiver” note with the “white” in the Blue/White? column tells the gate person that the attendee has a white card and will need to sign the event waiver. Other notes could be “kitchen staff”, “owes \$2 for merchant table”, “refund due-overpaid”, “need to see member card” This is key if the person reserved and did not send member info. You will need to make sure the card is seen and written in. If the person cannot produce the member card, or a current Pikestaff-which is also a perfectly acceptable way to prove membership (but the person will need to sign the waiver), you will need to collect the NMS from them and they will sign the waiver.

You will also need a “day of” gate sheet to write up the people who “just show up”. There will be a few of these at least. A day-of gate sheet should include the following information:

1. Mundane name
2. SCA member number and expiration date
3. Whether the member card is blue or white, or whether the person showed a Pikestaff as proof of membership.
4. Amount paid and type of payment (cash, check)
5. If the person is not a member, a column to record the NMS collected.

Usually, day-of walk ins will be for the day only. Example:

Crown Province of Ostgardr: "MY EVENT"

Date: 03/03/2010

Name	SCA #	Exp Date	Blue/White? Pikestaff?	NMS	Total Amt Paid

You will also have to do any updates to the pre-reserved sheets and make up the final "gate use" sheets from the pre-reserved master. I like to 3-hole punch these and put them in 1/4 inch 3-ring binders and then label the binders "Pre-Reserved" "Day-Of" and "Master Lists" You can divide the "Pre-Reserved" into "Feast" and "Day Only" if needed.

Once the gate sheets are set, print them and then put them with the pile of stuff to bring. If your gatekeeper has the sheets, make sure you see the final copies. This can be sent via email for your keeping until after the event.

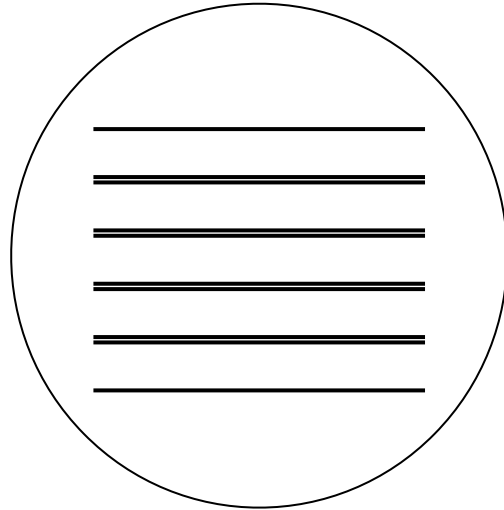
There should be a pile of stuff that you are bringing to the event as the autocrat, or your key staff members are going to bring. The gatekeeper should at least have the blank waivers (downloadable from sca.org), pens, pencils, clipboards, bowls or open boxes for the site tokens, the gate-box and the seed monies set up, if not also the gate sheets and their binders. The gatekeeper might also have the site tokens, and a blank, but set up, feast seating chart.

What's a feast seating chart?

Okay. On the day you did your final walk-through of the site, you should (or your gatekeeper should) have sketched the feast hall and the tables as they will be on the day of the event, the way you want them set up for the feast. There should be a high table, as well as however many tables the hall will hold comfortably.

A large piece of poster-board can do the job well. Draw out, using rulers or a compass (if the tables are round) the layout of the tables in the hall. Put lines, evenly spaced to denote seat divisions. For example:

The previous denotes a rectangular table able to seat 8 people. For round tables try this:



The lines denote how many can sit at the table and allows people to fill in names. A seating chart is essential to have for an event with a feast because it allows people to choose where they want to sit. Except for High Table, which should be filled out earlier, the feast seating chart should be put out for people to fill in when gate closes, usually about 4:30 pm.

At the Event: Closing the gate: tallying up

If you can, take the day before your event off from work, or try to arrange to leave early. Taking the day off is better, but we all know how hard it can be when you need the money mundanely. This day needs to be about doing all the little things that need doing for the event, including taking time to breathe and relax!

Sometimes, the best laid plans go awry.

The main reason to have the day before the event off from mundane work is to deal with the 'uh-ohs'. As you are making the "Do you need anything else?" calls to your key staff, you may encounter an 'uh-oh' and need to deal with it.

Suppose your fencing marshal has the flu and you have a big fencing tournament planned for the event? Does the fencing marshal have a back-up? He or she should have a back up, but if not, you will need to make some calls. Check your reservations list. Who on that list is also a fencing marshal? Do you know? Ask if you do not. Make calls! Make sure you have a fencing marshal for the tournament!

Suppose your head cook tried to make a "coffin pie" and the "coffin" didn't work and now he or she can't make another. Is there a large pot that can be used to hold the pie (or just the filling) for the dessert course?

And, just suppose you get sick. If you are not contagious or running a fever, you can take whatever over-the-counter drugs you may need and go, just make sure you have plenty of tissues and orange juice! (and stay away from as many people as possible!) If you are really sick, make sure your co-autocrat (your mentor) has all the information and can pick up anything you may have at your home so that he or she can make the event go off.

Make sure you leave plenty of time to get to the site early. You should be the first one there. If your event starts at 10 am, you need to be on-site by 8 am, tops, and 7:30 am is better if possible. If this is an indoor site where someone will need to open the doors, make sure that you get there as soon as the site can be opened. If this is an outdoor site, give yourself 3 hours leeway – a 10 am start means you need to be there at 7 am.

Have a checklist ready so that all the things you need to bring are packed. If you are driving yourself there, call your co-autocrat, the gatekeeper and the head cook when you are on your way. They should give you ETA's as to their arrivals. If you are being driven in by someone, or are taking public transit, make sure you make these calls as soon as you can.

When you get to the site, take out some notepaper and begin your pre-event punch list. What needs to be done? Decorations hung? Gate set up? Bathrooms checked for tp? The main hall set up for dancing? The dayboard and feast food unloaded and set up in the kitchen? The Ostgardr feast gear unloaded? Make sure you assign tasks to all the volunteers who show up. Help where you can but don't get in the way.

Cross off tasks as they are accomplished on your punch list and start the punch list for after the event, everything in reverse!

Get the gate set up as fast as possible and make sure all the early birds get checked in. All the staff that show up early should have reservations, so it should be a matter of checking off a name and possibly seeing a blue or white membership card, or a Pikestaff or printed membership voucher from SCA, Inc.

For an outdoor camping event you might want only the staff to show up on the Friday night (make sure it says that in the event announcement). This way the site can be set up as much as possible the night before, including the gate, and in the morning you can concentrate on things that could not be done in the evening. Setting up the list field or fields, setting up an archery range, marking off parking areas, putting out the site signs (List Field This Way →, Gate Here, Bathrooms this way →)

Garbwise, for an outdoor event, wear comfortable garb that you don't care if it gets dirty. Women, wrap your hair in a veil and wimple or a headscarf of some type; men, wear a hat. Don't worry about being dressed to the nines. You are there to work, not be gawked at! And, oh yeah, remember to eat! And hydrate! Definitely hydrate!

At the event, you are the final arbiter of what happens. The only person who can outrank you at the event is the Ostgardr seneschal, and then only if there's a mundane legal problem that needs to be solved or if you have to go offsite (don't, if you can help it!) during the day. Your word is law at the event, your common sense must come into play.

For example: the gatekeeper calls you over. There are 3 people at the gate who say they paid but their names can't be found on the gate sheets. You need to ask them "Who paid for you?" What name would have appeared on the check or who gave in the cash? When was the payment made? If after all avenues have been exhausted (including checking the master list and going through checks received but not given to the Ostgardr exchequer) the names can't be found they will simply have to pay the day-of fees, and if they balk at that, then stand firm. Someone goofed and thought they paid. Either pay at the gate or don't attend the event. Finito.

For example: the head cook calls you in. Seems that one of the ovens isn't working correctly and they can't use it for cooking the feast. The other oven is too small to do all the work. Get the site contact person ASAP. There should be someone from the organization you rented the site from there. Tell them the situation. They may have a tech who can come and help. Meanwhile, tell the head cook to use the good oven as best they can, and the stove tops. A good head cook will be able to rearrange things until the oven can be fixed. If the oven can't be fixed promptly, make sure you note that for your event report to the province, and see if you can help the head cook. Is there a way to get a grill to the site? Can someone take some of the food back to their place if it's close by to get it cooked? Whatever the decision you make, stand firm.

Try to enjoy the atmosphere and the event at least a little, but be on call if someone on staff needs you. Remember, you are responsible!

Now comes the part of the day that most autocrats absolutely hate. When the gate closes, gather your gatekeeper, yourself and, if available, the Ostgardr exchequer into a private, quiet space so you can reconcile the gate monies. Take the gate box, the gate sheets, pencils, pens and some scrap paper and get ready to figure out how much the event has taken in.

First, separate out the denominations of bills into \$20's, \$10's, \$5's and singles. Count each denomination and write that figure on a piece of paper, for example:

30 in \$20's = \$600

25 in \$10's = \$250

16 in \$5's = \$80

38 in singles = \$38.

Then count up what you got in checks at the gate.

14 checks totaling \$283

Add everything together: $\$600 + \$250 + \$80 + 38 + \$283 = \$1,251$.

Take away the gate advance monies (if necessary) - $\$100 = \$1,151$ at the gate.

Now, you need to reconcile this figure with the gate sheets.

Count the people on each sheet who paid at the gate. Break them up into adult and child. Take the advertised price for each and multiply by the number of adults and children you have listed. If you have people who paid for feast at the gate, make sure you count their price separate. If the event includes overnight camping fees, make sure you have those people listed as camping in that fee structure. Count the non member surcharges collected as a separate amount.

For instance:

65 adults, day, at \$15 = \$975

20 children, day, at \$7 = \$140

NMS collected, 12 people at \$3 each = \$36

Total that should have been collected: \$1,151.

This is why the fee structures should be kept simple. When you as the autocrat and the gatekeeper do this reconciling at the end of the day, the simpler the fee structure, the better and easier and quicker it will be to add everything up. Complicated fee structures can create havoc at this stage, and deals made at the gate will completely discombobulate things.

These two totals should match exactly. If they don't on the first go around, do it all again, and again, and again. You, the gatekeeper and the Ostgardr exchequer, should come out even on both sides. If there's a small discrepancy, like a dollar or two, and you can't figure it out, let it go. Close is better than big gap, but a perfect match is best.

After you figure the gate take, get out the figures for the reservations, these should be on the master gate list you had. Add the two figures together. This is the total take for the event. If you know the totals for your expenses you can do the preliminary math and see if the event might have made a profit. If it did, congratulations! You've run a successful Ostgardr SCA event.

Put all the cash and checks and the gate sheets and the reconciling sheets into the Ostgardr gate box and lock it. Put the gate box in your car or give it to the Ostgardr exchequer. If the Ostgardr exchequer is not at the event, put it in your car and make sure it's hidden. You will need to get the gate box and the formal event report to the exchequer soonest.

Afterwards: reports and reporting

The event is over, conversations are punctuated by laughter. At this point, your end-of-event clean up staff should be gathered and you should make an announcement that the event will be closing soon and you would like some more volunteers for clean up. Your end-of-event punch list of to-do should come out.

Once you have all your volunteers, start assigning jobs. Tell the kitchen staff to get out and take it easy somewhere. Go home if they can or want to. Have servers or volunteers bring in all the Ostgardr feast gear still on the feast tables. Start the dishwashing volunteers to their tasks and have someone take charge of getting all the feast gear packed away. Rotate dishwashers about every half hour if you can. Get out of your garb and into mundane clothes or some very old and worn and dirty garb you don't care a thing about (I call this garb "grublies"). Assign other volunteers to cleaning up the site – vacuuming carpets, mopping floors (except the kitchen floor, this gets done last) putting furniture back into place (where you found it this morning), cleaning up bathrooms (replacing tp if you can, emptying garbage cans). Any leftover food that can be salvaged or that people want to take home can be put into sealing plastic bags or restaurant-style aluminum covered plates if you can get them. Leftovers not worth saving get filed under G (GARBAGE).

The SCA has a reputation of leaving sites cleaner than they found them. Don't do a sloppy job getting things cleaned up. Remember, we want to be able to use the site again, and if the people we rented from like our style, we will be able to have more events at the site, and maybe even get a better price for the site.

If anyone finds things left at the site as they are cleaning that are SCA – goblets, pouches, jewelry, books, garb bits, etc. – make a bag of stuff and take it home with you. As the autocrat, you will be responsible for these items until they are claimed or at least a year has passed and no one has claimed them. Then you can put them up for "free to a good home" at another event.

When all the cleaning is done, the Ostgardr feast gear is packed away and loaded into whoever is taking it back to storage in car or van, when the kitchen is spotless and all the garbage has been bagged, tied up and taken out, when everyone has gone but you and perhaps a couple of volunteers, it's over, In the immortal words of Tracey Ullman, "Go Home Already!"

The day after you've autocrated an event in Ostgardr should be a day of rest for you. If you've run a single-day event on a Saturday, your Sunday should be peacefully quiet. Go out for breakfast or have it delivered. Get the Sunday papers, do a crossword or two, read the comics. Rest.

If you've run an overnight camping event, your clean up day will be the Sunday, in which case you should plan on taking off Monday from work if you can. You should always plan a day of rest after an event. If you can't take the Monday off, make sure all the clean up on Sunday is accomplished by noon at the latest.

For outdoor sites, you will need to do a 'walk the site' with at least one other person. You are looking for any garbage tossed on the ground, items left by SCA people, making sure that any port-a-sans rented are cleaned and picked up, etc. Garbage should be bagged and put into proper receptacles, left items should be bagged and dealt with as above mentioned. Again, leave the site cleaner than you found it.

The only thing you may want to do SCA-wise the day after an event is to make a list of people to thank. List all the people who worked the event, from the volunteer who helped set up the event site to the key staff. If you have this list already prepared (you can certainly assign one of your volunteers to take names down on the day of the event), you can shoot that list off to the Viceregals for award of sea-stars at a later event and then prepare an email to go to all the local lists (the general Ostgardr list and all the canton lists) thanking all the people who worked at the event and made it fun for all who came. Thank those who came to the event (and you may want to send these thanks to the An Dubhaigeann and Rusted Woodlands lists as well). Sending out thank you's is an old and respected custom, and one we should never let slip, even if the thanks are now sent by email or texting.

Personal notes to each key staff member are also appreciated, as well as thanks to the Viceregals. These, if you can do it, should be handwritten and mailed. Simple thank-you cards can make a person's day, especially if they were in the kitchen and didn't get to really 'attend' the event.

(Need to get all the specifics of the event and NMS reports so that a summary can be written for the first-time autocrat).

The next Ostgardr Commons meeting after your event should be one you attend and can give a summary of the event as a final report. How much the event made as profit, if any; if the event broke even; if it lost money. Why these things happened, in your opinion, especially if the cause of losing money was something that can be fixed the next time that site is used. Event reports and NMS reports should be filed with kingdom and copies given to the Ostgardr seneschal, the exchequer (if you did the reports), and a copy for you. NMS monies collected should have been sent to kingdom with the NMS report. If there were lots of people paying the NMS who are new to the area or new to the SCA, give the list of names to the chatelain(e). If these people are known to him or her, it's simply a restating of new people for his or her quarterly reports. If the people who paid the NMS were people known in Ostgardr who just didn't have a member card handy, make a small announcement that people should get their memberships updated or find their member cards.

And, as a final part of your report, offer to autocrat another event, sometime in the far future...

For the More Experienced Autocrat, information you thought you knew