

# Oskorei: New Members Guide

*Version 1.2, Steve Almond, June 2008*

Welcome to Oskorei! This guide aims to explain a little about who we are and what we do, about where you can get further information, and finishes up with a little on how to make friends and influence people: 'group etiquette' and a short section on 'child protection'.

"Oskorei" is a Scandinavian word referring to 'Odin's wild hunt', a band of warriors, led by the leader of the Norse 'gods', who rode across the world hunting men. Different cultures had different leaders for the hunt: Woden (Saxon god), Diana (Classical Greek goddess), even King Arthur of the Britains and Sir Walter Raleigh!

We portray life in and around a band of semi-professional warriors in Britain in the times of the Vikings and Anglo-Saxons. We portray soldiers, mercenaries, & raiders, and the families, craftspeople, traders, and retainers who would have accompanied them on their travels.

## Shows

Most of our 're-enacting' takes place at shows at castles, battlefield sites... and village fetes and fairs. Shows are usually two-day events, open to the public on the Saturday and Sunday during 'office hours'. We usually arrive on the Friday evening and camp on-site - often literally on the site of battlefield or inside the castle walls. Most people prefer to camp in 'authentic' tents in 'the village' but modern 'plastic' camping in 'the plasti-camp' is usually also available on a near-by field; you may well be able to take a caravan or stay in a B&B if you prefer. Every event is different: speak to the Group Leader or the Events Secretary for more information. The Events Secretary also provides a calendar of planned events.

Re-enactment is a very social hobby, and the evenings usually feature campfires, talking, drinking and singing. Please note that (large quantities of) alcohol is usually present 'after hours' and that there may be a beer tent, pub, or similar. We are aware of our responsibilities towards alcohol and minors, but cannot guarantee your children will not e.g. grab a can out of an open crate or accept a bottle of something being passed around. Cigarettes may also be present. Illegal drugs are **not** allowed under any circumstances.

Cooking and eating is often (semi-) communal over a campfire or gas stove(s) though you would usually bring your own food; again, check. The 'show' dress-code depends on the show and which period and ethnic group we are portraying: see the Kit Guides and the Authenticity Officer for more information. See the Combat Guide and the Training Officer for more information on weapons and armour, and on how to use them 'in battle'.

Each day's program normally revolves around one or more 'battles'. There's usually a Unit Leaders' meeting before the show opens, and a muster and briefing immediately before the battle. Oskorei usually fight together, either as a unit on their own or as part of a bigger unit. The battles aren't acted or rehearsed but there may be a scenario 'script' to follow and the sides may be slightly off-balance to ensure a historic battle goes as expected! Your Group Leader will tell you what unit you're in, and the Unit Leader will tell you what to do.

You will not be allowed on the field if you are, or may be, drunk or high.

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Life in the village usually stops while the battle's on; the rest of the time it's our focus for crafts, cooking, and other scenes of everyday life in early medieval times. Our Village Officer coordinates village life, so speak to them for advice or to make a suggestion. If nothing else, there's always water to fetch, veg to cut, and wood to chop!

Sunday is usually as per Saturday, except that we're free to break camp and head home as soon as the show closes.

## Training

Other than shows, our main foci are 'training' sessions. We typically hold a main weekend training session and an optional, just-for-fun session mid-week. The Training Officer can give you more detail on the 'combat training' sessions, the Village Officer can tell you about the 'craft training' sessions - or you can, again, see the Events Secretary for a calendar. We usually train near a pub or other source of refreshment, and we often stop there after a training session for a drink or two and a natter.

The group have a website at <http://www.oskorei.co.uk>, plus mailing lists for members & associates (members@), for the committee (council@), and for other short-term or special-interest groups. You should be added to the relevant list(s) when you join, otherwise our Webmaster can sort you out. All the relevant calendars, kit guides, etc are posted on the website and on the email list(s).

## Etiquette

Re-enactment is like everything else: good manners help – a lot. Please also bear these points in mind:

1\*) If you're not happy, or not sure, tell someone! Some of us have been re-enactors for decades and we tend to forget what it's like to be new to the hobby. If we know something's unclear or wrong then we'll do our best to put it right

1\*) Volunteer. Some jobs need doing and if you don't do it then they might not get done! You'll also have a better time, and make friends quicker, if you 'get stuck in'

3) Look after your stuff, so no one else has to. Metal tarnishes: keep it clean, dry, and off the ground. Bowls, cups, pans, etc need cleaning to prevent food poisoning. Fabric can stain, tear, or unravel. Flapping tent canvas tears... You get the idea

4) Look after stuff you've borrowed. Some of this stuff is expensive and you'll find it easier to borrow what you need if you return things promptly and in good condition!

5) Ask before you take anything. If someone reaches for something and it isn't there, they'll assume it's been stolen... That hollow, sick feeling isn't easily forgotten - or forgiven

6) Knock before you enter. Tents and cars are private spaces; please respect that

7) If it's empty, fill it; if it's full, empty it. This applies to water jugs & containers, wood & log piles, rubbish sacks, and almost everything else you can think of. Refilling tea mugs & mead cups is optional, but always appreciated

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8) Mistakes happen. Things break. Drink and - alas - blood gets spilt. Apologise, learn, and offer to replace - or at least offer to buy the other party a beverage!

8.1) We have a very-low-tolerance policy to repeat offenders & (apparently) deliberate damage. You may be asked to leave: be warned

8.2) Fighters are prone to accidents and have a more specific 'honour' code: see the Training Officer, or the Combat Guide (or any fighter!) for more info

## Child Protection

The law defines a 'child' as anyone under 18. This means that a lot of the people we meet at shows, at training sessions, and at other events – no matter how big, strong, mature, and/or responsible (or well-armed or scantily-clad!) – are legally children, and we have to be careful how we act towards them *and how we're seen to act*. That goes double for any blokes reading this. Please read this section and bear it in mind; if you have any questions, please see the Membership Secretary.

Child protection is, despite the rumours, mostly common sense.

- Don't be alone with a child
- Don't touch a child
- Don't flirt or talk dirty to a child
- Don't give alcohol or drugs to a child
- If anything happens, or almost happens, or appears to happen, ***tell someone ASAP***

There are exceptions:

- It's okay to share a tent with a child *with the guardian's consent*
- It's okay for a first aider to give first aid, or someone to e.g. help a child out of armour *with the guardian's consent and in public and when touching the child only as much as is absolutely necessary*

We have a particular concern over child-members who come to events without a guardian – or, rather, over guardians who might not know what we do with their child when they aren't there! That leads to the following the not-nice-but-necessary stuff:

- The Membership Secretary writes a 'parental consent form' for each event and issues it to guardians of '**unaccompanied**' child members. If the Committee doesn't receive a **signed form** for that 'child' member, that 'child' member **cannot come** to that event
- The membership form includes a section on what we do at training sessions. If an '**unaccompanied**' child member's membership form **hasn't been signed** by a guardian of theirs, they **can't come** to training sessions

Again, please contact the Membership Secretary if you have any questions.