

Live Weapons Handbook

KINGDOM OF MERIDIES

SOCIETY FOR CREATIVE ANACHRONISM

Last Updated:

September 3, 2014

Kingdom of Meridies Handbook for Live Weapons
Bow - Knife - Axe - Spear - Atlatl

Third Edition - Sept 3, 2014
Compiled by THLord Ronan MacMorton and Lord Mihalfy Miklos

Adapted from:
Second Edition compiled by Lord Peregrine Fairchylde
First Edition produced by THLord Ender of Inderwick

Disclaimer: This Handbook is a publication of the Office of the Earl Marshal of the Kingdom of Meridies. It is not an official publication of the Society for Creative Anachronism and does not delineate SCA policy. If any portion of this document conflicts with the most recently published version of the SCA rules for archery or live weapons, then the SCA rules take precedence.

Table of Contents
Introduction
Duties of the LWM
Equipment
Inspections
Range Safety
Competition
Glossary of Terms
Appendices

Introduction

If there is only one bit of knowledge that live weapons participants, marshals and spectators take from this Handbook, I hope that it is this:

Live weapons are REAL weapons! They are DANGEROUS and if proper safety precautions are not taken, they can INJURE or KILL someone!

I know that may strike some as alarmist, but it truly is the single most important thing to bear in mind at activities that include sharp flying things like knives, axes, spears and arrows. The good news is that it's fairly simple to make these activities safe, and with the sufficient application of common sense and dutiful attention to what's going on around you, live weapons can become a valuable part of any SCA event. And that's where the second important fact comes in:

Live weapons are also FUN, and with a little training just about anyone, from young children to the most ancient..., um, *experienced* SCAdian, can give it a go.

I encourage everyone who already does archery and thrown weapons to share their knowledge with others and help make these activities an everyday part of your local group's events.

In Service to Crown and Kingdom,
Lord Peregrine Fairchylde
Deputy Earl Marshal for Live Weapons
August A.S. YEAR

Chapter 1 - Duties of the Live Weapons Marshal

The job of a live weapons marshal in the Kingdom of Meridies can be summed up pretty simply:

"It is the marshal's duty to ensure that all live weapons activities are safe, fair and enjoyable for the populace."

No, really. One sentence. That's it. Of course, the *application* of that job description calls for a little elaboration.

First we will need to cover the types of live weapons marshals within Meridies. Warrants for live weapons marshals are issued only by the DEMLW or an authorization deputy appointed by the DEMLW.

Types of Marshals

1) Deputy Earl Marshal of Live Weapons (DEMLW)

Live weapons activities in Meridies are under the purview of the DEMLW, who reports to the Earl Marshal of Meridies. All live weapons marshals report to the DEMLW and he/she is your go to person if there is a problem that needs to be escalated.

Now, Deputy Earl Marshal for Live Weapons is quite the mouthful and not something you want to have to repeat over and over, but fortunately it can be shortened to the acronym DEMLW, pronounced "DEM-loo."

2) Regional Deputy Marshal

In order to extend the coverage of the DEMLW across our kingdom, he or she can appoint regional deputy marshals. These special marshals will have all of the authority of the DEMLW with regards to settling disputes, creating marshals (including authorization marshals), to suspend (but not revoke) a marshal's warrant pending review by the DEMLW, and suspend the live weapons activities of a group pending a review by the DEMLW. As a rule of thumb there should be a minimum of 200 miles between the regional deputies and up to a maximum of four regional deputies. As with the DEMLW, regional deputies must be acceptable to the Crown and the Kingdom Earl Marshal.

3) Live Weapons Authorization Marshal (ADM)

At the discretion of the DEMLW, a marshal can be appointed an authorization deputy; that person may then warrant marshals, subject to approval by the DEM. Authorization deputies must report to the DEMLW all marshals they have warranted, including their SCA and mundane name, local group, mailing address, phone number and e-mail address (if available). The DEMLW can reject the warrant of any marshal created by an authorization deputy.

4) Live Weapons Marshal (LWM)

A live weapons marshal (LWM) in Meridies supervises archery and thrown weapons alike. It is their responsibility to be familiar with how to safely run a range for any live weapon. An LWM does not necessarily have to be proficient in all types of live weapons; however, it would behoove LWMs to give all types of live weapons a try, so they can better understand them and be of more help to participants in live weapons events.

5) Live Weapons Marshal in Training (MiT)

Anyone who is interested in becoming an LWM needs to contact the DEMLW or a warranting deputy about becoming a marshal in training, or MiT.

There are a few requirements to be a MiT.

- You must have good common sense and a sense of personal responsibility.
- You must be a paid member of the SCA to be a MiT.
- You must have some experience in either archery or some kind of thrown weapon. This doesn't mean you have to be any good, but you should have a grasp of the basics and understand the rules of the line.
- You must read this manual and have a basic familiarity with its contents.
- You must attend a live weapons marshaling class or demonstrate a basic familiarity with SCA live weapons practices and safety principles to the DEMLW or a ADM.

How much experience? Ideally, the prospective MiT should have been doing archery or thrown weapons in the SCA for at least six months. Someone with less SCA experience but who has been practicing the activity at other venues may be made a MiT at the discretion of the DEMLW or warranting deputy. What is important is a clear understanding of safety issues and the necessary personal responsibility.

The training structure for an MIT in Meridies is fairly, well, unstructured. It can be completed fairly quickly, if the candidate is well-versed in the rules and shows good common sense. The training of an MIT should be undertaken by a marshal who has held their warrant for at least one year, and such training needs to be overseen and approved by a warranting deputy. If there is not a warranting deputy in the local group, then the training marshal should provide a written report of the MIT's progress and a recommendation on whether they should be warranted to the closest warranting deputy or the DEMLW.

The first step in progressing from a MiT to a LWM is for the MiT to read and commit to memory, word for word, this entire manual. Okay. Not really. The MiT should however read this manual completely and repeatedly and be familiar with all of its contents. It is highly recommended that the MiT (and all marshals for that matter) have a copy of this manual with them at all live weapons activities so that it can be referred to if there is any doubt on specific rules.

The second step is to work a range. There are four aspects that the MiT should experience: Setting up a safe range, inspecting equipment, running the line, and closing down the range at the end of an event. This work should be done, if possible, at both an archery and a thrown weapons range. MiTs should offer their services to the marshal-in-charge when possible in order to gain as much experience as possible.

The third step is to run a live weapons activity under the supervision of a warranted marshal. This doesn't have to be all the live weapons for a single event, but it could be a Royal Round, an IKAC, a thrown weapons competition or running the line of either archery or thrown weapons at an event. The MiT should plan their activity, get approval from the marshal-in-charge for the event, run it under the supervision of a warranted marshal and complete all necessary paperwork.

Newly warranted marshals are expected to continue to work under more experienced marshals at every opportunity for at least their first six months as a LWM.

Special case marshals

1) Group Live Weapons Marshal (GLWM)

Generally within a group (Barony, Shire, Canton, etc.) there is a marshal in charge of live weapons for the group. This marshal is not necessarily in charge of live weapons at all events within that group, but they are the go to person for marshals within that group if there is a question or problem. They are also the go to person within the group if the DEMLW or other party has concerns or questions about live weapons within the group.

2) Live Weapons Marshal-in-Charge (Marshal-in-Charge)

At any SCA event, function, or practice where live weapons are taking place, there should be a single marshal in charge of the activities. Other marshals should and are encouraged to assist with all shoots and throws, but there needs to be a single person overseeing the activities as a whole. This is the marshal-in-charge.

3) Youth Marshal in Training (Youth MiT)

Persons under the age of 18 can begin the process of becoming a live weapons marshal by becoming a Youth Marshal in Training. They can assist with inspections and run the firing line under the constant direct supervision of an adult live weapons marshal. If an adult marshal is not immediately present the Youth MiT is not permitted to carry out any marshal activities.

Responsibilities and Discipline

A LWM must be present at any official Meridian function where live weapons are going to be used. All participants in live weapons must either show assigned blue SCA membership card or sign a nonmember waiver before participating in live weapons; if this was not done to get into the event, it must be done at the range. Cards or waivers are also required for live weapons practices.

It is the responsibility of ALL warranted marshals to ensure that live weapons activities are being run safely. If a marshal sees a live weapons activity that is not being handled safely, they are AUTHORIZED and REQUIRED to intervene, stop the unsafe activity, and report it to the marshal-in-charge or, if there is no marshal-in-charge, to the autocrat and/or seneschal of the hosting group.

Once the problem is corrected, the live weapons activity may resume; however, if there was no warranted marshal-in-charge, then live weapons activities cannot resume until a LWM is available to take them over.

A detailed report of the incident must be provided to the DEMLW for Live Weapons as soon as possible after the event.

If it can be proved to the satisfaction of the DEMLOW that, beyond a reasonable doubt, an LWM has knowingly allowed unsafe live weapons activities to happen under his or her supervision, that marshal's warrant will be suspended or revoked at the discretion of the DEMLOW. Suspension will last 90 days, after which the warrant can be restored or revoked at the DEMLOW's discretion, depending on the severity of the transgression.

If a warrant is revoked, it shall be 180 days before that person can be considered for another LWM warrant. Only the DEMLOW can issue a warrant to someone who has had theirs revoked. The DEMLOW's decision in these matters can be appealed to the Earl Marshal of Meridies. Authorization deputies may not suspend, revoke or restore warrants.

A word on out-of-kingdom LWMs: If a warranted archery or thrown weapons marshal attends an event in Meridies, that person may, after providing written proof of their warrant, be allowed to assist in marshaling live weapons activities. However, there must be a marshal-in-charge who holds a Meridian warrant. The marshal-in-charge and/or the DEMLOW may decide whether or not to allow out-of-kingdom LWMs, either individually or as a class, to assist at a given event. An exception will be made for inter-kingdom events (such as Gulf Wars and Border Raids), at which warranted out-of-kingdom marshals from the co-hosting realms will always be allowed to assist, under supervision of the host kingdom marshal-in-charge; however, the marshal-in-charge or DEMLOW may still exclude individual out-of-kingdom marshals on a case-by-case basis if they have reasonable cause.

Chapter 2 - Equipment Basics

Consistent with the goal of the Society, an effort should be made by live weapons participants for equipment to have a pre-17th century appearance. However, the use of modern equipment is permitted provided it meets the equipment standards below. Also, in order to encourage newcomers who aren't sure yet if they want to invest in a hand-forged knife or a dozen wooden arrows with goose feather fletching, exceptions will be made for those who are just getting started in live weapons in Meridies, which for the purpose of this manual means six or fewer months of participation in live weapons.

Bows may be made of any material. Bows of unusual materials or construction must be approved by the DEMLOW or the marshal-in-charge before being used.

- NO compound bows are allowed, no exceptions; medieval archers didn't need training wheels, and neither do we.
- Bows may not have sights of any kind, other than marks on the limb or riser; these latter may be excluded in specific competitions.
- No modern spring/ flipper rests, plunger buttons, stabilizers, clickers or modern string releases are allowed.

Crossbows may be of any material. Crossbows of unusual materials or construction must be approved by the DEMLOW or the marshal-in-charge.

- NO compound, break-cocking or non-period, center-shot, trackless crossbows, no exceptions.
- Prods of most materials are allowed, provided they are judged safe.
- Simple rear sights are allowed; front sights are not.

If a bow or crossbow has openings that can be seen through from the side (such as a steel riser or stock with cutouts,) then these openings should be covered to help achieve a period look.

Arrows (and quarrels) should ideally be made of wood with feather, parchment, or other period fletching; however, beginning archers may use arrows of any material until they can obtain wooden arrows. Wood or like material is required for most competitions.

Children (up to age 14) may always use arrows of any material, except in individual competitions that require specific equipment, such as a period IKAC.

Bowstrings and crossbow strings may be made of modern materials.

Knives, axes and spears should be of a size and weight suitable for the user to throw them easily and safely, and the handle should be firmly attached. All thrown weapons should be free of burrs or splinters that could injure the hurler.

Knives must be single-pointed. No knives with multiple points are permitted.

Axes may have single or double blades. However, if a double bladed axe is used, one blade must be clearly marked as the scoring edge to the marshal's satisfaction.

Spears may only have a point on one end. No double-ended spears or javelins are permitted. Spears must weigh at least 1 pound, 12 ounces (800 grams) and be at least 55 inches (1.4 meters) in length. Atlatls and throwing sticks are a separate weapons category from spear. Please see Appendix 3 for details on atlatls.

Chapter 3 - Inspections

It is the responsibility of the participant in live weapons activities to ensure that his or her equipment is safe to use. However, the LWM does have the right to inspect, at any time, any piece of equipment brought to the range for use. Equipment that is deemed unsafe will be disallowed by the LWM.

It is the competitors' responsibility to make sure the equipment they have is properly cared for; that bows are not too heavy a draw weight for them to effectively use, that arrows are usable, that the edges and points of thrown weapons are sharp enough to stick in the target, and that handles are sound.

If there is a mantra when it comes to live weapons inspections, it is this: If you are unsure about a weapon, seek a second opinion from another marshal.

When in doubt, FAIL the weapon.

The marshal-in-charge is responsible for ensuring that inspections happen at all events or practices. They do not have to conduct the inspections, but they must make sure that inspections are performed by a qualified marshal.

Marshals might need a way to keep track of weapons that have been failed, either by recording the owner's name and a description of the weapon in a notebook to be left at the range, or some kind of visual mark, such as a sticker or tape of a particular color, that can be removed by the marshal once the repair is made.

For the inspecting marshal, here are some things to look for.

Senses

In all inspections, remember that you have more senses than just sight. Touch and hearing are as important as sight when inspecting equipment. Especially bows. There are flaws that can be heard or felt more easily than seen.

Participants

This is the single most important part of a marshal's inspection duty. Make sure the person who has come to the range meets basic competency standards for the activity in question. They should be able to demonstrate knowledge of their weapons and proper use thereof; if they are a novice, they should either have someone more experienced along as an instructor, or seek instruction from marshals at the range.

An archer or hurler should be able to focus on the activity and follow the marshal's instructions. Participants who, in the marshal's judgment, are intoxicated or otherwise chemically impaired, or who are too angry/agitated/distracted to participate safely, should be barred from participation. There are NO exceptions to this rule, because this can affect the safety of others at the range, and safety is paramount. If the participant objects, send them up the chain of command: The marshal-in-charge, a warranting deputy, the DEMLW, the Earl Marshal.

Also advise the participant of any clothing or accoutrements that could pose a problem or hazard: Floppy garb or baggy sleeves, dangling jewelry, long hair worn loose, obtrusive cloak pins, tripping-length hemlines, and the like.

Advise the participant on what they might need to do to ensure a safe and enjoyable activity.

Participants with physical disabilities are allowed certain leeway in live weapons participation, as noted in the Society rules; for example, someone may cock their crossbow for them, string their bow, hand them arrows, and retrieve their various missiles. If someone makes a reasonable request for assistance, the marshal should do his or her best to fulfill it. In the case of competitions, such assistance should only be what is necessary for the participant to take part, not enough to give them an advantage. Also, accessibility should be kept in mind when a range is setup.

Handbows

With the bow unstrung, inspect it for cracks; if the archer arrives with the bow strung, it is not necessary for them to unstring it, but request that they bring the bow in unstrung next time. In laminated bows (such as most modern recurves), look along the side of the limbs and the tips for separation between the laminations or layers. Sight down the limbs to see if they are warped. Ask if they have shot that particular bow before; if they have not, ask if they have shot at all before. This is just to ascertain if they will be in need of any instruction or assistance at the line.

For wooden bows, look for cracks and splintering along the limbs and handle. With fiberglass bows, look for glass fibers pulling away from the bow.

Some styles of bow, including many varieties of horse bow (such as Turkish or Mongolian), traditionally have fabric or leather covering on the limbs. If faced with one of these, running fingers carefully along all surfaces may help determine if there is serious damage beneath the covering. The next step will be even more important when inspecting this style of bow.

Have the archer string the bow. If they do not know how to string their own bow, or cannot string it because it is too stout for them, the LWM should advise them that they might look into using a different bow; however, if they have shot that particular bow before, that shouldn't be an issue. Marshals may not string a bow for an archer (except in the case of physical disability), but the loan of a bow-stringer to help fend off use of the dreaded, limb-warping, step-through method is justified (and earns karma points).

Now inspect the strung bow again for cracks and warping. Then, standing off to the side and clear of any other person, have the archer draw the bow, hold it at full draw for a few seconds, then gradually relax the bow without actually releasing the string. Make sure that before you have the archer do this, you tell them "Do NOT to release the string, under any circumstances." This is dry-firing and can destroy a bow.

While it is drawn, look for signs of warping or inappropriate bending in the limbs, and see if the archer is straining to hold the bowstring at full draw. If the bow is obviously too heavy, or if it's being overdrawn (in general, string angle at the nocking point is greater than 90 degrees, but that varies with each bow), for the archer to shoot safely, the LWM will disallow use of the bow.

Check the brace height of the strung bow. If it's too low, a Flemish string can be twisted (if it only needs a little adjustment) to shorten it, but not a modern string. If a few twists don't do it for the Flemish string, or if the string is a modern one, it should be replaced with a shorter one. If the brace height is too high, then the string should be replaced with a longer one, because the bow limbs will be under too much stress. For a very general, approximate measure of proper brace height, use the fist rule: The archer's closed fist is rested on the belly side of the strung bow at the arrow shelf, and the thumb is extended. The string should be very near the tip of the thumb.

At all stages of the inspection, listen to the bow. Some flaws in a bow may not be immediately visible, but can be heard. A slight creaking sound as the string rubs against the bow as it is drawn is fine. Any popping or pinging type noise is cause for immediate concern. It may indicate that the bow is starting to delaminate or crack internally. If these sounds are heard then the bow should be inspected further in great detail.

Bowstrings

Inspect the servings (areas where the string is wrapped with thread, usually at the nocking point and the loops at each end). Look for signs of loosening or unwinding. A slightly frayed serving is not necessarily reason to disqualify a bowstring, but inform the archer it should be repaired or replaced at the earliest opportunity.

Check to see if the string has been waxed recently; separation of strands or a dry look may indicate lax waxing. If it needs it, find some wax for the archer.

While it is the archer's choice to nock above or below a nocking point, or between two closely set points, marshals are not to allow strings with multiple points that would allow an arrow to be nocked at a different location for different ranges, or which can be used as aiming sights, or which serve as kisser buttons; arrows should be nocked at the same point on the string each time.

Certain types of bowstrings, such as Flemish twists, usually do not have servings on the loops. However, they do need to be waxed, so make sure the archer has wax, or find some they can use. Also make sure they do not have loose strands showing, which could indicate a break within one of the twists. Note that loose ends often show just below the loops on a Flemish string, where the end has been braided over; these are not cause to fail a string unless they show signs of unraveling entirely.

Any string with a knot along its length (other than a bowstring knot used to secure the string to the bow) will AUTOMATICALLY be failed; knots dramatically lower the breaking point of a string. The archery may NOT untie the knot and use the bowstring. It should be discarded and a new string acquired.

On a lightweight child's bow (up to 15 lbs.), metal clips may be used to secure the nocking loops. However, no adult may use a bowstring with such metal clips.

Crossbows

Much of what applies to handbow inspection also applies with crossbows, which are less common in Meridies. Visually inspect the stock of the crossbow for cracks or other signs of damage. Make sure it is not warped. Make sure the rails are adequately greased.

Check to see if the prod is secure in the stock; if it is loose and can be slid side-to-side by hand, fail the weapon unless it can be safely remedied. If it is a laminated prod, look for cracks or separation, as with a laminated bow.

Make sure that moving parts, such as triggers, cocking mechanisms and rolling nuts, are in good working order.

Make sure the string and the servings are in good condition.

Arrows and Quarrels

Examine at least two randomly chosen arrows; if the archer has several different types of arrows, inspect some from each type. Sight down the arrows to see if they are warped.

Check to see that the fletching is in good shape; a few missing veins in a feather or slight damage isn't reason to disqualify an arrow, but inform the archer it can affect accuracy.

Make sure the points and nocks are secure. If a quarrel is fitted with butt caps, make sure they are securely attached.

Make sure the arrows or quarrels adhere to the material standards for the type of shoot being held.

Knives

Look for signs of cracking in the metal or handle material. Minor cracks in the handle are not cause to fail a knife.

Knives should be free of burrs or splinters that could injure the hurler. These may be filed away and the knife reinspected.

Make sure knives are not bent or too dull to reliably stick in the target face.

If the hurler intends to hold the blade while throwing, make sure the edge is not too sharp for them to safely do so.

Axes

Inspect wooden handles to make sure they are not split or cracked. If the handle is wrapped in tape, find out why; duct tape is NOT an acceptable repair for anything other than keeping a splinter down or covering a minor crack. Cracks that run lengthwise along the handle are less worrisome than those running across the handle. If a handle is completely covered in anything other than air and cannot be visually inspected, and the hurler can't or won't remove the material for inspection, FAIL it.

If double-bitted axes (two heads) are allowed in the throw, make sure the axe isn't too heavy; it will eat up a target quickly and make for a shorter day for everyone. If the axe is light enough, have the participant mark one head as the scoring head; all strikes with the other head score no points.

Make sure the metal head shows no cracks or other signs of damage, and that it is not bent. Make sure it is not too dull to reliably stick in the target face.

Make sure that all axe heads are firmly attached to the handles and cannot slip off. For period handles, this means that the head cannot slip off the end of the handle opposite of the grip. The heads may slip down the handles and come off the grip end; to secure them, tap the head end on a hard surface to seat the handle. During a throw, the rotation of the axe will keep the head from sliding down the handle end.

Spears

Make sure the shafts are not cracked or split. As with axes, duct tape is NOT an acceptable repair for anything other than minor splinters or cracks; likewise, cracks that run lengthwise along the handle are less worrisome than those running across the handle, provided they are not too long. Handles that cannot be inspected because they are covered will be FAILED.

Make sure the spear point is firmly attached to the handle, and that it is not too dull to reliably stick in the target face.

Make sure there is nothing at the tail end of the handle that will act as a vane or fletching. If there is and it cannot be removed, FAIL the weapon.

Chapter 4 - Range Safety

Whether considering a site for an archery or thrown weapons range, the requirements are much the same. It must have adequate space, both downrange and to the sides, for safety zones. The marshal and participants must be able to see clearly from the line to the targets and beyond. There must be no human or vehicle activity going on anywhere that an arrow, knife, axe or spear can come into contact with it.

Beyond that, everything else is a bonus: Shade, a water supply, electricity, perfectly flat ground, a hillside for a backstop. If you have access to any of these at your range, it will make it that much more appealing to participants.

Live weapon ranges should be readily identifiable at all times. They should be marked by signs, rope, flag lines, caution tape or some other readily noticeable method. The entry point should be clearly marked.

From the point at which the participants stand to shoot or throw — “the line,” for future reference — the range should ideally extend beyond the farthest target by at least 40 yards OR half the distance to the farthest target, whichever is greater. In other words, if your farthest target is 40 yards, the back of the range should be at least 80 yards from the line. Anyone who thinks that’s too far doesn’t have a clear idea of just how far an arrow or spear can fly or slide after it misses the target.

The safety zone to the sides of the targets should extend out from the line at a 30 to 45 degree angle all the way to the furthest target, then straight to the back of the range. Anyone who thinks that’s too wide has never seen just how far off the mark a warped arrow or poorly thrown axe can fly or slide.

These areas must be clearly visible to the marshal at the line. With this in mind, night shoots are not permitted.

The closest a target should be to the line is 15 feet for thrown weapons or 10 yards for archery. The closest that spectators should be allowed to the line is 10 feet behind the competitors. This is particularly important for spear throwing; when a spear hits the target in just the right way, it can rebound and fly POINT FIRST almost all the way back to the line. It’s an impressive sight, and one known to cause ulcers in surgeons and make the Society’s lawyers swoon.

For certain types of specialty shoots, such as clout and flight shoots, the safety zones are different. These shoots require huge tracts of land to be effectively run, and are not going to be found at most local events. Guidelines for establishing safe ranges for these can be found in the SCA target archery rules.

The target backstops can be made of a variety of materials. For thrown weapons, the best option is pine or another soft wood (try to find wood that has not been pressure treated), including the flat faces of stumps or cross sections of logs.

One possible design for a lumber target is as follows:

Cut four-by-four inch posts into 40-inch lengths. Make six of these, and lay them side-by-side. Then take two-by-fours and, using four-inch lag screws, make a “Z-brace” on the posts: One two-by-four across the top, one across the bottom, and one diagonally between them. Put at least one screw into every post through these braces! Then take additional two-by-fours, about six feet long, and screw them flat, one onto each side of the backstop, for legs. Take two more and attach them by one end with a single lag screw near the top of those legs, and slant them out toward the back until the target is steady and the top is a little more than five-and-a-half feet off the ground; then add a second screw to secure them in place. Paint, glue, or tape the scoring face onto the front of the four-by-fours.

For spears, soft targets such as foam, straw bales or objects stuffed with cotton or polyfil can be used; these are generally not suitable for knives or axes.

Backstops for archery must be of a material arrows can easily penetrate; solid wood is NOT an acceptable material. Bales of straw, foam and cardboard are all commonly used, as are stuffed objects. There must be a way to affix or paint a target face on the backstop.

The standard archery target used in the SCA for Royal Rounds and IKAC shoots is the FITA 60-centimeter, five-color "Olympic face." These are available from many archery supply houses; some are made from paper reinforced with artificial fibers and these seem to stand up to a lot more use than a plain paper target. Of course, they cost a little more, too.

Distances and Details

For any Meridian archery or thrown weapons activity that is to be scored for kingdom ranking, IKAC, war point or the like, the distances on the range MUST be measured, not estimated (and pacing it off counts as estimating).

When a live weapons activity is being held just for show or for fun, this is not necessary. No live weapons activity may take place unless an LWM is present.

Once the range is set up and the targets positioned, the LWM must be sure all participants are familiar with the commands of the line.

As with many SCA activities, the most important command at the LWM's disposal is "HOLD!" Make sure everyone who comes to the range, both participants and spectators, understands exactly what it means: If a HOLD is called at any point, all persons at the line should IMMEDIATELY take arrows off the string, lower their weapons, and step back from the line. Archers with crossbows that are cocked and loaded should be given the option by the LWM of either firing their quarrel into the ground a few feet in front of themselves; or removing the quarrel by hand, then placing the bow in cocking position and grasping the string with both hands while someone else gently squeezes the tickler, or trigger.

The marshal will instruct the participants when to approach and straddle the line, and no arrow may be nocked, or weapon raised for throwing, unless that person is on the line. The LWM will call "Clear downrange!" loud enough for anyone behind targets to hear. If there is no one downrange, the marshal will announce "The range is clear" and instruct participants to approach the line. If there are any special instructions to be given — the nature of the competition, how many shots or throws are allowed, etc. — they are given now.

The LWM will ask if everyone is ready, then proclaim "Fire at will" or "Proceed" or another appropriate command.

If it is a timed shoot, the LWM should give participants a countdown (usually five seconds) before calling "Loose!" The remaining time can be called off at intervals, if desired. A five-second countdown is also usually called out before "Hold!" Note that in Meridies, as soon as "Hold!" is called, time is up; arrows shot during or after the announcement of "Hold!" are late. This is not the same in all kingdoms, so please make sure out-of-kingdom participants understand this.

Once an archer or hurler is finished, they should step back from the line to indicate this; at the LWM's discretion, another person may fill in their spot at the line. When everyone is done, the LWM will order "Bows down" or "Weapons down," and declare in a loud voice "The range is closed." Then they will instruct the participants to approach the targets and retrieve arrows or weapons. An LWM should accompany the participants and be the last person to return to the line.

When retrieving arrows, archers should be instructed to watch their step so as not to break someone else's arrows (often called "deadwood"). Missed arrows or thrown weapons that cannot be found in a reasonable amount of time should be left for later; LWMs should conduct a thorough search after the end of live weapons activities and try to recover all lost projectiles.

On the range, the Live Weapons Marshal's word is law, and the marshal-in-charge is the final arbiter of all disputes or questions. Participants or spectators who do not abide by the rules of the range can be expelled by an LWM. Appeals of an LWM's decisions can be made to the DEMLW for Live Weapons. The DEMLW's decisions can be appealed to the Earl Marshal.

Contingencies

There will be times when something intrudes upon your range, something you have no control over whatsoever. While the following list is not meant to be exhaustive, it should give marshals an idea of how to approach these types of situations.

Royalty: When the Crown, Heirs, or the like arrive at your range to shoot, they should naturally be accorded every courtesy, and that includes interrupting the current activity to allow them to shoot or throw. That said, it will be rare that such a drastic step will need to be taken. However, because royals almost always have many pressing engagements during an event, the

marshal-in-charge should make every effort to get them to the line quickly and allow them to have their fun before they must trudge back to the salt mines... er, attend Another Delightful Meeting.

If the Crown or their representatives wish to conduct business at the range — hold a brief court, or meet with certain archers — they should be accommodated. Assign one specific marshal to the royals for the duration of their visit (the marshal-in-charge, if possible) so they can provide the needed information or assistance as soon as it is needed.

Weather: Yes, it's very period to shoot in the rain (c.f. Agincourt). However, inclement weather can also put a damper (ha ha) on the fun, so in general the marshal-in-charge should temporarily close the range if rain starts. If in the midst of a scored shoot, make sure to note where each archer or hurler was and what ends remained. Archers or hurlers who wish to continue shooting through mist or light rain may do so if the marshal-in-charge permits.

However, if there is lightning, all live weapons activity must cease immediately. The range must remain closed and the area cleared until 30 minutes have passed since the last visible lightning. And that's any lightning, regardless of far away or anemic looking.

If it is still raining sufficiently hard after that point, the marshal-in-charge may opt to keep the range closed until they decide it's cleared up enough to shoot.

Hail, sleet and snow can also impact live weapons activities. Hail and sleet will close a range, while light snow may not pose a problem. Again, the marshal-in-charge will make the call.

Media: At certain large events or demos with public access, it is possible that members of the media will show up. This is A Good Thing, because live weapons make for good visual images both in print and on television, and that helps promote the image of the SCA as a fun activity.

If there is a designated media liaison or seneschal at your event, make sure they know to have any media who come to your range contact the marshal-in-charge before they do anything else. Members of the media must first be advised of safety issues and told they must abide by those rules while on the range. A marshal (the marshal-in-charge, if possible) should be assigned to the media for the duration of their visit, explaining what's happening, making sure they get their questions answered, and helping get names of people they interview or photograph.

Always ask if you can have a copy of the article or news footage; policies will differ from one media outlet to another, but your chatelaine will love you forever if you can obtain it.

Please note that, as of this writing, the DEMLW is the managing editor of a newspaper and will be happy to advise marshals on dealing with the media.

Modern visitors: For all practical purposes, treat them like the media: explain the safety rules, tell them what's going on and keep them out of trouble. If loaner equipment is on hand and it's not inconvenient or unsafe, the marshal-in-charge may elect to let some of them take a few shots or throws, always under the direct supervision of a warranted marshal.

However, make sure they **SIGN A WAIVER FIRST**.

Otherwise, the DEMLW will turn you over to the Society's lawyers and offer his condolences to your survivors.

Chapter 5 - Competitions

And now, the fun part!

There are a number of standard shoots and throws used in the SCA, but they are really only limited by the imagination, the size of the range, and safety requirements. The following examples are provided as merely a base from which LWMs can build, and have been gleaned from practical experience, the archery and live weapons handbooks of other Kingdoms, and sheer depravi... umm, inspiration. Feel free to develop your own shoots and throws and share them with others!

Fans of thrown weapons will note that most of these competitions are designed for archers (but see also No. 3). Do not be dismayed! With a little imagination, many of them can be modified for thrown weapons!

1. Royal Round: This is the standard SCA shoot. It consists of three untimed ends of six arrows each, one at 20 yards, one at 30 yards and one at 40 yards, plus a 30-second timed end, with unlimited arrows, at 20 yards. The standard 60-centimeter, five-ring target face is used, with scoring from 1 to 5 points per arrow, from the outside ring in. It is a familiar shoot for most archers and marshals and is very easy to set up and run. Royal Round scores are the basis for archer rankings in Meridies and many other kingdoms; see Appendix 1 for more details.

2. The Interkingdom Archery Competition (IKAC): This shoot was developed to provide a benchmark for comparison of archery skills amongst the Kingdoms. It consists of two six-arrow untimed ends at 20, 30 and 40 yards, and two 30-second timed ends at 20, 30 and 40 yards. There are open and period divisions for both bows and crossbows. Results are published in the kingdom newsletter, and the top archers at the end of each season (which runs Feb. 1 through Dec. 1) receive medallions. See <http://scores-sca.org/ikac> for full details.

Meridies has, in the past, been conspicuously absent from the IKAC listings, so any LWM who offered an IKAC would be helping to uphold the honor of Meridies among the Known World's archers. Hint, hint.

3. Thrown Weapons Interkingdom Challenge (TWIC): A thrown weapons competition modeled after the IKAC and meant to likewise provide a benchmark for comparison among the Known World's knife, axe and spearhurlers. Developed in the Kingdom of Ansteorra. See <http://scores-sca.org/twic> for full details.

4. Braid Throw: Attach a length of rope, cord or twisted paper (like you get from craft stores) to a thrown weapons backstop; the object is to stick or, even better, cut it. Especially good for axes, but challenging for knives and spears.

5. Roving Range: Instead of a static target range, create a trail through a wooded area and locate shooting/throwing stations with targets at random, unmarked distances. Give participants one shot or throw at each target (which can, themselves, run the gamut from standard to bizarre). Wicked twist: At one station, have a marshal exchange the competitor's weapon for a loaded combat bow/crossbow or boffer axe, then have an armored fighter charge them! Points if they peg the fighter before they get within five or 10 feet.

6. Heraldry Shoot: No, not shooting heralds. Draw shields on poster board and place the heraldic fields on some, the ordinaries on others. Place the targets at the closest range and have competitors make a single file line. As each competitor reaches the front of the line, the marshal calls out a field or ordinary and counts down from five; the competitor must pick out the right one and fire/throw before the marshal reaches zero. (Offering a heraldry class earlier in the day might be a good idea.)

7. Clout Shoot: A long-distance shoot simulating firing over a castle wall. Make a circular or square target 30 feet across (hay bales work well) and place a marker in the center that's 3 feet across. Place the line 75 yards or farther from the center of the clout target. Archers must fire at a high trajectory. Score points for arrows inside the bales, with bonus for arrows hitting the center marker.

8. Flight Shoot: For those marshals with the luxury of major acreage. This is, plain and simple, a distance contest. See whose bow or crossbow can launch a missile the farthest. Competitors must be prepared to do lots of walking, and possibly lose a fair number of arrows. This also works well, with a much shorter range, for spears.

9. Wand Shoot/Throw: Place some kind of "wand" — a stick, bamboo pole, strip of duct tape — on the target and have competitors try to hit it. Works for all live weapons.

10. Up and Down: Using a target with graduated scoring (for example: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1), give each participant a set number of shots or throws each round. The first round, they add up their score. The second round, they subtract from it. Missing the target entirely will be scored as a blow-through, three points. The goal is to get back to exactly zero without going under by the end of the last round. Can be run for any even number of rounds. Optionally: Set a TOTAL number of shots or throws over a set number of rounds (say 15 throws over five rounds), scored alternately up and down. The participants can use as many shots as they want each round provided (A) they take at least one each round and (B) they use all of the allotted shots by the last round. The goal is still to be the closest to zero without going under.

11. Called Shots: The marshal picks a color and calls it; the archer scores a point if they hit it, loses a point if they miss it. Can be used with almost any target that has some kind of differentiation.

12. Balloons: Self-explanatory. Great for thrown weapons. If someone knows how to make balloon animals, these are outstanding kids' targets.

13. William Tell: Either use a drawing of a head with an apple on top of it, or an actual mannequin head with a real apple. Points for hitting the apple, penalty for hitting the head.

14. Safari Hunt: For bows and spears. Gather a variety of stuffed animals, put them out at random distances, and go a-huntin'!

15. Robin Hood: A marshal puts an arrow (one they're not particularly attached to) into the target. All archers get one shot, the closest wins. Splitting the arrow gets extra points.

16. Tic-Tac-Toe: Draw the grid on the target face and have two archers take turns until someone wins or it's a draw. Can work with thrown weapons but you have to retrieve each throw and mark the space.

17. Advancing/Retreating Warrior: A standard Pennsic War shoot. Set up targets (a warrior silhouette if you can) at 10-yard intervals starting at 20 yards (5-foot intervals starting at 15 feet for thrown weapons). Competitors have five seconds to shoot or 10 to throw at each target, starting with the furthest (for advancing) or closest (for retreating) warrior. Score for each hit. On a silhouette, hits on the warrior's shield or weapon don't count.

18. Castle Window: Another Pennsic standard. At the 20-yard (or 15-foot) range, make a target that is 8 inches wide and 3 feet tall. This represents a castle window. Six attempts, every one that hits inside scores a point.

19. Friend or Foe: Make a target that depicts a kneeling warrior with his back to you, and a standing warrior behind him facing you. The kneeling warrior is an ally, the standing one an enemy. The object is to strike the enemy warrior without hurting your friend. Hits on his shield or weapon don't count.

20. Popinjay: Put a stuffed bird on top of a 20-foot pole. Using blunt-tipped flu-flu arrows, each archer gets three shots to try and knock it off or be eliminated. Start at 3 feet from the base and move back 3 feet each round until one archer remains.

Chapter 6 - Glossary of Terms

Live weapons people talk funny and use many specialized terms. Here's what they mean in the context of Live Weapons.

Archer: Someone who shoots a bow or crossbow.

Archery: Shooting a bow or crossbow.

Atlatl: Also called casters, spear throwers or spear holders, are rigid devices used to propel a dart towards a target.

Axe: A stick with a blade that sticks out sideways from one end.

Backstop: Something upon which the target is mounted, or behind the target, to stop the missile.

Bale: Bundled hay or straw used as an archery backstop.

Bowyer: Someone who makes bows.

Clout shoot: A long-distance shoot, usually 100 yards or so, at a large target.

Crossbow: A bow that is attached to the end of a wooden stock, and whose string is released by a trigger mechanism

Crossbowyer: Someone who shoots a crossbow.

Dart: Lightweight spears (with or without fletching) designed to be propelled by an atlatl.

DEMLW: Deputy Earl Marshal for Live Weapons. Reports to the Earl Marshal of Meridies.

Draw weight: The strength it takes to pull a bowstring, measured in pounds (for handbows) or foot-pounds (for crossbows).

Dry firing: The act of drawing a handbow, or cocking a crossbow, and firing it without an arrow or quarrel. NEVER do this, and NEVER allow it on a range. It is a great way to make a bow explode, possibly injuring the archer or a bystander. Or a marshal.

Edge: The cutting blade of a knife, axe or spear.

End: The portion of a shoot or throw defined by shooting or throwing one set of missiles at the target. As in, "A Royal Round is composed of three ends of six arrows each, plus a 30-second timed end." Also called a round.

Fletcher: Someone who makes arrows.

Fletching: Feathers, parchment or other material at the end of an arrow or quarrel, used to stabilize it during flight.

Flight shoot: Distance shooting for the purpose of determining who can launch an arrow or quarrel the farthest.

Handbow: Any bow that is grasped in one hand while its string is pulled with the other. What is commonly meant when you say "bow."

Hold: Universal SCA term for "Stop!" Also used at the end of a timed round.

Hurler: Someone who participates in thrown weapons. If you can come up with a better name, I'm listening.

IKAC: Interkingdom Archery Competition. A standardized shoot with two ends of six arrows at 20, 30 and 40 yards, plus two 30-second timed ends at 20, 30 and 40 yards.

Knife: A sharp piece of metal.

Live weapons: For the purposes of this manual, archery and thrown weapons. Can also be used to describe real hand-to-hand combat weapons (also called "livesteele").

Loose: Command commonly used at the start of a timed round.

LWM: Live Weapons Marshal, warranted by the DEMLW to oversee archery and thrown weapons activities.

MARS: Meridian Archer Ranking System.

Missile: An arrow, quarrel, axe, knife or spear.

MiT: Marshal in Training, working toward becoming an LWM.

Must: A imperative verb that indicates a complete lack of choice in the matter. Such as in this manual where it says an LWM "must do such-and-such." That doesn't mean "if the marshal feels like it" or "if the marshal wants to" or "if the marshal doesn't think the DEMLW is looking." It means "unless the marshal wants his warrant revoked" (see "revoked").

Nock: A multi-purpose word. On an arrow, the nock is the slot where the string goes. On a bowstring, the nocking point is where the arrow goes (usually identified by a metal clip or piece of string). On a bow, the nocking points are where the loops on the ends of the bowstring fit on the ends of the limbs.

Point: The business end of an arrow, quarrel, spear or knife.

Revoked: A disciplinary action taken by the DEMWL where a warrant is taken away from an LWM. The former marshal cannot be considered for a new warrant for 180 days.

Round: See "end."

Royal Round: The standard SCA archery competition, consisting of an end of six arrows at 20, 30 and 40 yards, plus a 30-second timed end at 20 yards.

Saunders mat: A round, flat mat made of woven grasses used as an archery backstop.

Shoot: The act of firing an arrow or quarrel. Also, the generic term for an archery activity, such as an IKAC.

Spear: A sharp piece of metal on the end of a long stick.

Speed end: A misnomer (see "timed end").

Spine: The stiffness of an arrow or quarrel, measured in pounds. For best performance, the spine weight of the arrow or quarrel should match the draw weight of the bow.

Suspended: A disciplinary action taken by the DEMLW against an LWM that makes them ineligible to work as a marshal for 90 days.

Throw: The act of hurling a weapon toward a target. Also, the generic term for a thrown weapons activity, such as a braid throw.

Thrown weapons: Hurling an axe, knife and spear.

Tickler: The trigger on a crossbow. Why they can't just call it a trigger, I have no idea.

Timed end: Any live weapons activity that has a set time limit, often 30 seconds, during which archers may shoot or thrown as many missiles as they want. Please note I didn't say "as many as they can." It is always better, especially when you're just starting out, to be slow and accurate rather than fast and searching the weeds for your misses.

Wand Shoot: Using some kind of narrow object like a wooden pole, piece of bamboo or strip of duct tape as the target.

Warrant: Authorization, issued by the DEMLW, that allows a paid member of the SCA to perform as a Live Weapons Marshal.

Appendix 1 - Meridian Archery Ranking System

The Kingdom of Meridies has a ranking system for its live weapon archers. Each rank is the average score for the archer's best 3 royal round scores as is used in the Inter-Kingdom Archery Competition (IKAC). Once an archer has submitted at least 3 scores to the keeper of the archery rankings, he or she is welcome to wear an archer's tassel that denotes their level according to color on their person or archery kit. The archer's average is adjusted only if a greater score is submitted and once a rank is achieved, the archer holds it for life unless they raise it to a higher level. Archers are free to make their own tassels or they can be made and presented by a group's archery marshal or the DEMLW (Deputy Earl Marshal of Live Weapons).

A Royal Round is made using a standard FITA 60cm archery target with 5 distinct colors, usually gold, red, blue, black, and white. An archer shoots at 20, 30, and 40 yards and the distance must be accurately measured. 6 arrows untimed are shot at each distance and a 30 second timed round is shot from the 20 yard distance. A full IKAC round will include sufficient ends for two complete Royal Rounds.

The archer's rank will be symbolized by a tassel, to be worn on the belt or from some piece of the archer's tackle. To determine rank, consult the following table:

Avg. Score	Archer Rank	Tassel Color
0-24	Archer	White
25-44	Bowman	Black
45-64	Marksman	Blue
65-84	Woodsman	Red
85-104	Yeoman	Gold
105+	Toxophilite	Gold and Green

Scores for submission must include the following information:

- Name (SCA and mundane) of the archer
- Archer's home group
- Location, name and date of event
- Scores for each round (20/30/40 yards and timed round) and total score
- Name (SCA and mundane) of warranted marshal and the marshal's signature.

The archer must inform the marshal before beginning the Royal Round that he or she intends to shoot for score, and make sure a score sheet of some sort is available.

Only two scores may be submitted for rank from any given event, and they should be reported within a reasonable period of time after the event (two weeks at most). If an archer is allowed to shoot more than two Royal Rounds at an event, he or she may submit the best two results. Royal Round scores may be submitted from out-of-kingdom events provided that a warranted archery marshal from that kingdom supervised the shoot and submitted the information.

Contact information for the current reporting deputy and the rankings will be published by the DEMLW or the scorekeeping deputy on the Meridies Archery webpage at <http://www.liveweapons.meridies.org/>

The title of Toxophilite is a homage to "Toxophilus," the archery manual written in 1544 by Roger Ascham, archery instructor and tutor to King Edward VI and Queen Elizabeth I of England. One can still find Toxophilite Societies — archery clubs — who adapted his book title, as well, a reflection of their desire to seek a mastery of the bow and arrow that Ascham wrote about.

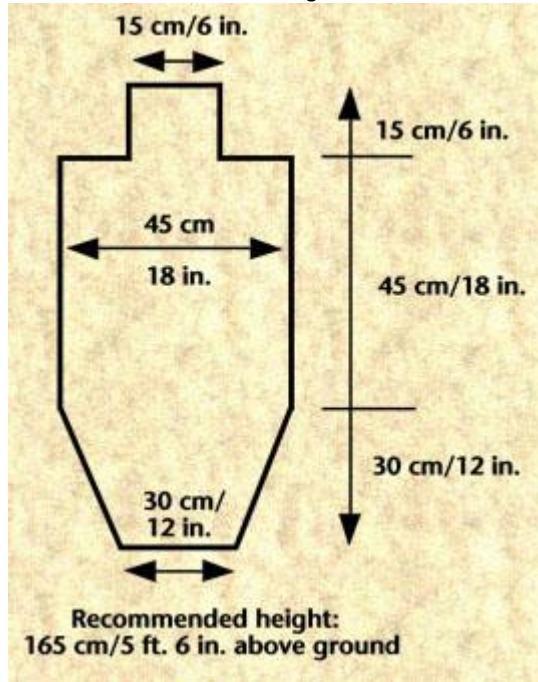
Archers who move into Meridies from another Kingdom with its own ranking system will be afforded the courtesy of the appropriate Meridian rank based upon their most recent average; however, a new average will be calculated as soon as they have submitted three Royal Round scores as a Meridian.

Tassels should be 12 inches long and made of yarn. The knot must be of the same color as the tassel itself, or alternating bands of black/white/black to reflect the archer's Meridian heritage. It is solely the archer's responsibility to obtain the proper tassel. For reference, the Meridian point system is the same as those used in Ansteorra and Caid, and is similar to those used by the Middle Kingdom and the Outlands.

Appendix 2 - Order of the Weaponsmaster, Meridies

In the interest of promoting proficiency in live weapons in the Kingdom of Meridies, there has been established an Order of Weaponsmaster, Meridies. The members of the order compete in the weapons categories of axe, knife, spear, and archery. There exists within each weapons category four levels of skill or competency. These levels are Second Class, First Class, Expert, and Master. To become a member of the Order, one must earn the qualification of at least Second Class in each weapon category, or must qualify at the Master's level in any two weapon forms. At such time as these minimal requirements have been met, the Secretary of the Order shall direct a letter to the Crown indicating the achievement of this benchmark, with the recommendation that the Crown elevate the candidate to the Order of Weaponsmasters, Meridies.

All targets for the competitions shall be scored on the standard combat silhouettes (see drawing). Axe, knife, and spear targets shall be constructed with a wooden target face; archery targets may be constructed of paper, and archery butts may be constructed of standard backings.



Scoring strikes with an axe, knife or spear shall be judged as follows: the weapons must strike and stick with either edge or point within the silhouette and remain in the target for the length of time necessary for the individual to walk to the target and retrieve the weapon. Hits on the line may be counted as long as the edge or point of the weapon penetrates the line into the area of the silhouette.

Scoring with archery follows the same guidelines, except that any arrow which cuts the line delineating the silhouette shall be counted as good.

Classification qualifications shall be as follows:

- **Second Class:**

Axe, knife and spear: 6 strikes out of 6 throws at a distance of 15 feet (4.5 meters).

Archery: 6 strikes out of 6 arrows at a distance of 20 yards (18.3 meters).

- **First Class:**

Axe, knife and spear: 5 strikes out of 6 throws at a distance of 25 feet (7.6 m).

Archery: 5 strikes out of 6 arrows at a distance of 40 yards (36.6 m).

- **Expert:**

Axe, knife and spear: 4 strikes out of 6 throws at a distance of 35 feet (10.7 m).

Archery: 4 strikes out of 6 arrows at a distance of 60 yards (54.9m).

- **Master (2 out of 4 weapons):**

Axe, knife and spear: 3 strikes out of 6 throws at a distance of 45feet (13.7 m).
Archery: 3 strikes out of 6 arrows at a distance of 80 yards (73.2 m).

- Grandmaster (4 out of 4 weapons):

Axe, knife and spear: 3 strikes out of 6 throws at a distance of 45feet (13.7 m).
Archery: 3 strikes out of 6 arrows at a distance of 80 yards (73.2 m).

The above qualification and competition distances are allowable only for single-pointed knives, single-bitted axes (no top/butt spikes), recurve or simple bows (no compounds, stabilizers, or sights). Spears must weigh 1 lb., 12 oz. (800 grams) or more, and be at least 55 inches (1.4 meters) in length. It must be thrown by hand; throwing sticks/atlatls are not allowed.

Qualifiers/competitors may throw at a given distance from any point at or behind the specified line.

Qualification must be attested to by a qualified witness, said witness being qualified by virtue of holding a qualified classification level at least one level below the witnessed qualification session. Example: a first class qualification session in axe may be witnessed by a holder of a second class axe classification (higher classifications can always witness the qualification of lesser levels). All qualification paperwork should be sent to the Secretary of the order.

Appendix 3 - Atlatl

These policies are in addition to society law and policy. In the case of any discrepancy, society policy takes precedence. Atlatls are a relatively new area of interest within the society and each kingdom currently handles them differently. They are in many ways a middle ground between thrown weapons and archery and do not fit neatly into either category. For our purposes, we will handle them more on the archery end of the scale for the following reasons.

Weapon Range - Thrown weapons ranges are measured in feet. Archery ranges are measured in yards. Atlatls have capabilities in the yards category.

Target Requirements - Thrown weapons 'mostly' use hard wooden targets. Archery targets tend to be softer and capable of handling the darts (bales and other common rounds handle them well). Due to the light construction and low mass of the darts, soft targets are more appropriate. Targets intended for atlatl use will need to be set up with this in mind and secured appropriately.

Method of Projection - Axes, knives, spears are thrown directly from the hand. Arrows, bolts are sent down range using a 'machine' - the bow/ crossbow. Darts are projected using a 'machine' - the atlatl, itself

That being said there will be some special considerations that differ from archery.

- No atlatl activities are to take place at an SCA event or official SCA practice unless a warranted Live Weapons Marshal is present.
- Atlatl darts without fletching, thrown without the atlatl, are allowed, but must meet the remaining requirements specified below.
- Targets for atlatl should be a minimum of 10 yards away from the throwing line.
- An archery range, when it is not being used for archery, can be considered an open range and may be used for atlatls.
- Archery and atlatl activities should not take place on the same target at the same time.

Atlatls (casters)

Atlatls also called casters, spear throwers or spear holders, are rigid devices used to propel a dart towards a target.

- The atlatl can be either a solid piece of wood, antler or bone, or made up of multiple pieces. All components must be firmly attached to one another such that pieces do not fall apart when used.
- The atlatl cannot have any burrs, gouges, or rough surfaces that can cut or give splinters to an unprotected hand when throwing.
- Weighted atlatls may be used only at the marshal's discretion. Weight stones can increase the distance a caster can throw a dart. If a weight stone is used, ensure that the weight is secured firmly to the atlatl.
- Modern atlatls (plastic) may be used at the marshal's discretion, but not for competition.

Darts

Darts are lightweight spears (with or without fletching) designed to be propelled by an atlatl.

- Darts used must be designed for use in the atlatl.
- Darts may range in length from 48 inches (4 feet) to 96 inches (8 feet).
- Darts may be fletched or un-fletched as the thrower wishes. Fletched darts shall have feathers, leaves or leather flights (pre-17th century materials).
- All shafts shall be made of wood. Self shafts are solid throughout. Footed shafts have a solid piece of wood added to the end of the shaft, normally to strengthen bamboo shafts. Wood used for footed shafts must be securely attached.
- Both self and footed shafts are allowed.

Beginner's Guide to SCA archery

Welcome to the archery range. We hope you have a great time, but first we need to talk about safety and make sure you are familiar with the rules of the range and range terminology.

IMPORTANT!

Archery done properly and with care is a safe and fun activity, but never EVER forget that the bow or crossbow in your hand is a weapon. Unlike armored combat where you carry a stick to take the place of a sword, this is the real thing. This is the same equipment that would be carried on the field of battle and you can never forget that.

Marshal – A live weapons marshal in the SCA is a person who has been trained in range and equipment safety and is considered qualified to run a range. At any practice or event there will be a marshal-in-charge. This is the marshal who is specifically in charge of the range for that day. One of the first things you need to do upon arriving on the range is to find out who this is. You will be taking your cues from this person, or other marshals that they may designate, over the course of the day.

The Line – There will be a line or lines designated by string, tape, flags, poles or some other form of marking that indicates where the archers will be standing while actively shooting.

- Do not approach within 10 feet of this line until the marshal has indicated that archers may approach the line
- Do not cross the line until the marshal has indicated that it is safe to do so
- If you are shooting and drop an arrow forward of the line, leave it there. Do not attempt to retrieve the arrow until the marshal has indicated that it is safe to cross the line.
- Once you are done shooting, step back at least 3 feet from the line to indicate that you are done.

Common line commands – There are a number of commands that you will hear the marshals use on the line. It is important that you understand what each of these means.

- **Hold!** – This is an emergency command. This is used when there is an urgent safety issue. Stop what you are doing immediately. Lower your weapon and remove the arrow or bolt from the string.
- **Bows down** – This is the non-emergency version of hold. You should remove the arrow or bolt from the string and place your weapon on the ground, stand, or rack.
- **Clear down range** – This is both a question and command. The marshal will shout this command when he or she believes everyone is behind the line and about to allow archers to shoot. If you are in front of the line and you hear this command, it means the marshal cannot see you and about to allow shooting to commence. Make your presence known loudly and immediately!
- **Archers may approach the line** - This means that you may approach and straddle the line. You may not nock an arrow or draw your bow.
- **Range is open/hot** – This means range should now be considered active and no one should cross the line for any reason.
- **Fill in the line** - This means are you are done shooting step back at least 10 feet from the line to allow other archers to shoot. If you have not shot yet, then step into empty spots on the line as they become available and take your turn.
- **Range is closed/cold** – This means that the range is now inactive. You may not shoot and you may not have an arrow on the string. You may not cross the shooting line yet.
- **You may retrieve** – This means that you are now permitted to cross the shooting line to retrieve your arrows.
- **You may nock** – This is used in some shoots where timing is a factor. It means you may place an arrow on the string, but you are not yet allowed to shoot.
- **Fire at will/Fire at your leisure/Loose!** – All of these commands mean you may now fire down range. Note that “Where’s Will?” and “Poor Will” are the classic responses to fire at will and yes it is still funny the 60th time someone says it that day.