



# The East Kingdom Royal Foresters Guild

## New Members Guide to the Royal Foresters Guild

Welcome to the East Kingdom Royal Foresters Guild. As a new member you probably have a great many questions since submitting an application. Who knew that a group that likes to go camping, and likes spending time in the outdoors could be so complicated?

The first step in becoming a member is to submit an application. This goes into a file and is used for the membership list that can be made available to East Kingdom should they request it. Should you later receive admission to a High Order of Merit within the Guild that information too will be recorded in your membership file.

All new members must wait a 90-day probationary period before being promoted or accepted fully into the Guild. This period is to allow the guild members to get to know you and assess if you will be a good fit or are likely to burn down the forest and get us all arrested. After the probationary period applicants are given the option to take the Forester's Oath. This is a promise to obey the laws, to practice no-trace camping and to help others do the same. It is not required that you swear this oath, however. Many foresters have not made this commitment and are considered "independent members". They are much the same as sworn members but do not involve themselves in the guild's business and are not interested in being promoted through the ranks. They are simply referred to as foresters or independent foresters.

As a new member who has passed the probationary period, you may take the oath, become a sworn member of the Guild, and be considered a "Royal Forester." Upon taking the oath you are also promoted to Novice within the Guild. This rank is not an indication of skill, rather an indication of a new member within the Guild. Once a short time has passed, the guild members who see you most will inform the officers of the Guild that you are ready for your next promotion.

**Underforester:** Believe it or not there are members of the SCA who do not go to camping events, or if they do, they day trip, or stay at a hotel. While these people are able to join the Foresters it is difficult for us to promote them. There are also incidents every year of woefully unprepared SCA campers sleeping in cars and the tents of others because their camping preparations were a complete failure. It is our job to teach these people some simple skills to assist them in enjoying a better stay at the average SCA camping event. The core skill of the

Underforester is the ability to comfortably camp with modern gear at an SCA camping event for an entire weekend without needing to retreat to safer more secure accommodations. Also, the new member must prove to an officer of the Guild their ability to light and maintain a simple campfire using modern methods such as a lighter or matches. If you can do this, you will be invited to accept the promotion from Novice to Underforester.

**Forester:** To be promoted to the rank of Forester is considerably more difficult. There is a great deal of information that you will need to know. Also, there is a requirement that guild members have a full set of forester garb to wear to forest court, to special forester events, or to royal court. Foresters in ancient times were paid twice each year with fabric to make their clothing from. Lincoln or forest green in the summer and grey in the winter. Guild members should then have minimally green clothing from their time period that includes a hood and a blanket or cloak for cold weather. Grey in the winter months is optional but encouraged. Also, some attempt at period footwear is a must. Foresters set an example for the rest of the guild and so sneakers and work boots are inappropriate.

Foresters also are teachers and examples to new members who are just developing their outdoor skills. Because of this it is important that each member, before being promoted to Forester, prove their ability to make fire without matches or a lighter. The method could still be modern such as a ferro rod but must not be significantly similar to a lighter. Next those promoted forester must cook at least one group meal over the open fire. When those skill tests have been completed, the guild officers are satisfied that the member has an abundant knowledge of historical foresters and forest law, and possesses excellent forester garb, the member will be selected for promotion.

**Master Forester:** To be promoted to the rank of Master Forester should take a minimum of five years except in very special cases. Master Foresters are long time servants of the Guild and are supporters of the SCA in general. All Master Foresters will first have an interest and demonstrated ability in service, arts and sciences, martial activities, or in curia. Master Foresters know that the Guild is dependent upon the SCA, and that it must be supported. Every Master Forester has a history of service to the Guild, has been seriously involved in several ways, and is passionate about passing down the core forester skills to new members. All Master Foresters will teach classes on subjects they are passionate about.

Master Foresters have elite level garb and equipment. It does not need to look court worthy, as it can be beat up and well used, but Master Foresters are first and foremost historical reenactors and so do not display reenactorisms or non-period items (glasses etc. excluded). Master Foresters primarily identify themselves as a forester and so do not often dress as anything but. As well as having a high standard for all their garb and gear they are staunch promoters of the Guild and are enthusiastic teachers and recruiters. The Master Forester is someone that all foresters and even SCA members in general should look up to.

Lastly, Master Foresters must submit their masterwork. The masterwork was mentioned on their Underforester indenture contract as something they would complete and submit to the Guild. The masterwork is generally an arts and sciences project that is related in some way to the Foresters Guild. It is a long-term project the member has been working on and when a member feels that their masterwork is complete, they may inform the guild officers and present it to them. If the Guild is in agreement that the work is sufficiently masterful in nature, then the member will be promoted to the final rank of Master Forester.

### **Officers of the Guild**

The Guild is run by a number of officers that work closely with new members to assist and educate them. Most offices can be held by sworn members ranked Underforester or above. In special cases a member is allowed to carry out the office as an acting officer until they are ranked properly. High Offices are only held by experienced Master Foresters. The principal officer is the Warden of the East. This is the person in charge of reporting the guild activities to the East Kingdom and the person responsible for most of the day-to-day operations of the Guild. The High Warden is in charge of the majority of promotions and the swearing in of new members after their probationary period has ended. The Warden of the East is referred to as Honorable Warden in formal situations.

The Warden of the East is also assisted by up to four regional deputy wardens. These officers have all the same powers to promote members and govern in their region as the Warden of the East does. They collect information from their regions and pass it on to the Warden of the East for their reports to the East Kingdom. These deputy wardens are referred to as Honorable Warden in formal situations.

These Wardens are further assisted by other officers that make up The High Court of the Forest, the Guild's governing and ceremonial body. The Constable or Treasurer is responsible to make report of all the Guild's finances quarterly. The Chronicler or Secretary is responsible to keep an accurate membership list, and promotions list, as well as to see that any guild scrolls are penned. The Steward is responsible for feast seating arrangements, camping space, and crash space for all foresters, and to assist autocrats and the Guild as required. The Sheriff acts as the director of ceremonies at the High Court and directs people to the Warden and back to their seat as required. Officers are referred to as Honorable Chronicler etc. in formal situations.

The High Court of the Forest is further assisted by the named Regional Courts or local Forester Guild groups. Each of these local groups is largely independent and can be chartered or unchartered. They are run by a Keeper of the Forest who reports to the Warden all the activities and financial dealings of the local group. The Keeper of the Forest is tasked with swearing in new members but cannot promote them. The Keeper and all sworn members of a local forest

court are considered to be voting members of the High Court of the Forest. Keepers also are assisted by a Constable, a Chronicler, a Sheriff, and a Steward as well as any other officers they

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choose to appoint. The Keeper is referred to as Honorable Keeper and the officers are referred to as Constable etc. in formal situations.

### **Foresters Guild Titles**

There are only two titles within the guild held by non-officers, and they are given to Master Foresters who have acted as a Warden of the Guild. Those that act as a deputy warden for two years are granted the title of Highmaster Forester for their service to the Guild. Any member who serves two years as the Warden of the East is awarded the title of Grandmaster Forester. On formal occasions they are addressed as Honorable Highmaster and Honorable Grandmaster. Many members will refer to them as such at all times, but it is only required in formal situations. Highmasters and Grandmasters are expected to be very involved in guild affairs as teachers, advisors, and to assist the officers when needed. All Highmasters and Grandmasters retain the right to promote members when approved by the Warden of the East.

### **Houses or The High orders of Merit**

Within the East Kingdom Royal Foresters Guild are three Houses that only accept members from within the Guild. They are therefore extremely exclusive. Acceptance is not guaranteed, but for those that work hard, and have a great enthusiasm for the guild, one of the three may be attractive. They are only houses for SCA purposes however, and so do not have specific colors, heraldry, or structure. You may wonder why a guild needs such houses? Well, it does not, but it is hoped that they provide a goal for those that strive for excellence to work towards and assist members with all interests in showcasing their talents as a guild member. The Houses are really Orders of High Merit for guild members. As the East Kingdom rules concerning guilds allow for the giving of awards not sanctioned by the East Kingdom college of Heralds the "Orders" are similar to general SCA awards in general, with the exception that they may be applied for by the individual. Because the patron saints of foresters, forest workers, and hunting were selected to be the order namesakes for three distinct groups, the three groups are called The Woodwards, The Regarders, and The Rangers respectively.

While these groups are bound by the guild constitution they may run largely as they see fit, electing their own leadership, and developing their own customs. The leaders of the groups are called **Chief Ranger**, **Lord Regarder**, and **Master Woodward**. Selection of new members is done annually through an application process in all cases. Applicants to the Rangers may apply after 90 days membership, and upon swearing the Forester's Oath. Due to the rigorous nature of their challenges, Ranger applicants may fail several times and so may apply for membership much earlier than applicants to the other orders. The Regarders and Woodwards must however be ranked Forester or higher to be eligible for membership as their challenges generally do not

involve the forester core skills which must be proven prior to their application being received.

No guild member can belong to more than one House, so members must choose wisely which group they wish to be affiliated with. House members still look to the Warden of the East for

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leadership, as they ultimately command the Houses of the Guild. However, the Warden also will only belong to one House, if any, within the Guild. The Houses are equal in status within the Guild and report their activities to the Warden of the East quarterly. The leadership of the three Houses collectively is referred to unofficially as the “Triumvirate” but they do not wield any power, they simply report the Houses’ various activities to the Warden.

While there are different challenges and conditions for membership in each group, Rangers, Regarders, and Woodwards; their trials are roughly equal in difficulty. Rangers focus on medieval survival and the use of medieval reproduction equipment. Regarders focus on martial skill and forester battle tactics. Woodwards focus on forester administration, service, and industry.

It is worth noting that the Foresters guild is a meritocracy and so there is no political process that must be strictly adhered to join the orders. It is designed to be available to everyone regardless of your interests. The skills needed and the challenges required are not always published but they are clearly defined, and no one is ever refused once they meet the criteria for membership.

**The Rangers:** The Order of St. Hubert is for those more interested in the Arts and Sciences of the outdoors and living in it, than in courts and business meetings. The Rangers are the elite members of the Foresters Guild but are not considered to be a separate rank. They are instead members who enjoy medieval camping, primitive camping and outdoor activities, outside of the usual SCA camping events and who organize trips and expeditions other than SCA camping events. Would be Rangers are tested in a special Ranger Trial where they must be able to conduct themselves upon a journey over land or by inland waterway in period fashion without use of modern items and will face several trials of flood, fires, and foes. If successful they are given the opportunity to be accepted as Royal Rangers after a lengthy time of reflection. Rangers wear a badge of arrows bound by a belt and have demanding garb and gear standards always dressing as and identifying as a Forester. Their garb and gear are often not pretty but it is tested and works. They operate as a closely knit house under SCA rules and swear a separate oath. Rangers stubbornly resist all attempts at further organization and often adapt as required to the situation.

**The Regarders:** The Order of St. Eustace, or the Regarders, are members who chiefly identify their persona as a forester and regularly practice the SCA martial arts while dressed as and portraying a forester. Regarders wear a crown badge to identify themselves and must always dress as a forester and have impeccably high standards as such. They must have a developed Forester persona and maintain it. Also, they must be skilled at, and excel in traditional SCA

martial activities, but need not be officially recognized at it. If all Forester Guild conditions are met, and the member is an enthusiastic supporter of the Guild on the field at archery, armored combat, fencing, or thrown weapons, then they are eligible to apply for membership to the Regarders. Unofficially, anyone that achieves squire status or a silver or gold ranking in a martial

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pursuit who is first and foremost a forester will be eligible to apply for membership, but this is not a rule. All Regarders undergo a martial challenge in their discipline where they are tested in a special Regarder Trial where they face adversity, inclemency and vicissitude.

**The Woodwards:** The Order of St. John Gaulbert, or the Woodwards, are members who chiefly identify as a forester and dress as such with impeccable standards for both garb and persona. Above all else Woodwards excel at service and traditional arts and sciences. They are enthusiastic promoters of the Guild through their work and are instrumental in teaching and assisting others. Woodwards enjoy more relaxed house rules being non-martial and are typically the artisans and organizers that keep the Guild running. Woodwards apply to be members after years of excellent service or the quality of guild members individual Masterwork. Woodwards wear a distinctive fede ring badge to identify themselves. Typically, a member will apply for membership as a Woodward about the time they present their masterwork to the Guild. An applicant must hold the rank of Forester to apply. A member may also apply after organizing a regional guild chapter or after autocrating several official SCA Forester events. The Woodward Trial is often more individual than the other orders and less formally structured. All Woodward applicants however face the trials of helping, aiding, and assisting others.

### Apprenticeships

There are no formal apprenticeships within the Guild. No one will come to you and offer you a belt and formal instruction. Largely it will be dependent upon you the individual to communicate with your fellow guild members to see who is able to assist you with your questions and learning needs. Also, you are largely on your own to shine and show interest up until you sign your Underforester indenture contract. Upon this document, a guild Warden swears to see that you obtain the necessary instruction to better yourself at the forester arts and sciences. As an Underforester ranked member you may call upon the wardens of the Guild to assist you in finding more information about your interests. The wardens however may call upon you to organize a training day where interested members meet and practice foresters core skills. New members are encouraged to sit down next to the long-time members immediately and strike up a conversation and learn. Showing interest in this way repeatedly is the best way to be noticed by those that love to teach what they know.

