

## 2.0 Minimum Standards

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All Society Members must conform to sections 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3.

All Full Members must attain the Minimum Standards.

All Society Members must also have a suitable period name and personal history.

### 2.1 Costume

For more detail on approved costume, see the *Dark Ages Society General Costume Guidelines*. Help with Costume is readily available from other members of the Dark Ages Society, either ask around or see Appendix B 2.4.

#### 2.1.1 Warriors (male and female)

Essential clothing:

- Long sleeved tunic (kirtle) of wool or linen, held up by leather belt with small buckle or tie.
- Ankle length trousers of wool or linen.
- Authentic footwear
- Woollen cloak with broach or pin.

Optional extras:

- Linen undershirt (sark).
- Linen underbreeches.
- Puttees (leg-bindings) or cross-garters.
- Belt pouch.

**Note:** All of the above to be of approved design, materials and colours, without pockets, zips or buttons. They must also match your social standing and cultural group.

#### 2.1.2 Women (female only)

Essential clothing:

- Ankle length, long sleeved undershirt and appropriate over garment of wool or linen.
- Authentic footwear
- Woollen cloak with brooch or pin.
- Head covering of linen or wool (if appropriate).

Optional extras:

- Knee length or longer woollen stockings.
- Belt
- Purse or pouch.
- Comb

**Note:** All of the above to be of approved design, materials and colours, without pockets, zips or buttons. They must also match your social standing and cultural group.

#### 2.1.3 Further points to note

- No 'skimpy' tunics or those with wide sleeves.
- Arm guards (vambraces) should not be visible.
- No training shoes or modern shoes wrapped in leather etc.

- Too much fur embellishment should be avoided.
- Large or modern belt buckles are incorrect and avoid belts wider than 1.5 inches.
- Avoid trousers which are baggy below the knee.
- No 20<sup>th</sup> Century items must be visible except medical essentials.

#### 2.1.4 Domestic Gear

Essential gear:

- Eating bowl or board.
- Spoon.
- Knife.
- Drinking vessel.

Optional extras:

- Chest/box/basket to store your belongings.
- Trade goods.
- Jugs.
- Water bottles.
- Cooking vessels.
- Coins.

**Note:** All of the above to be of approved design, materials and colours. They must also match your social standing and cultural group.

## 2.2 Weaponry

All new weapons and armour (including shields) must conform to the *Dark Ages Society Weapon and Armour Guidelines*. The **only** non-standard weapons permitted in the Society are those which were made prior to the introduction of the *Dark Ages Society Weapon and Armour Guidelines* **and** have been recorded as non-standard by the Safety Officer.

For more detail on approved weapons and armour see the *Dark Ages Society Weapon and Armour Guidelines*.

### 2.2.1 Warriors (male and female)

Essential war gear:

- Round wooden shield (26"-32"/660-813mm diameter) with steel or iron boss and leather rim.
- Metal spearhead on wooden (ideally ash) shaft, not exceeding 6' 6"/1981mm in total length.
- Spear shaft diameter must be a minimum of 1"/25.4mm.

Optional extras:

- Side arm (seax).
- Leather body armour.
- Headgear of leather and/or metal and gloves (highly recommended).

**Note:** All of the above to be of approved design, materials and colours. They must also match your social standing and cultural group and fulfil all safety requirements.

## 2.2.2 Women (female only)

Essential war gear:

- Metal spearhead on wooden (ideally ash) shaft, not exceeding 6' 6"/1981mm in total length.
- Spear shaft diameter must be a minimum of 1"/25.4mm.

Optional extras:

- Side arm (seax).
- Headgear of leather and gloves (highly recommended).

**Note:** All of the above to be of approved design, materials and colours. They must also match your social standing and cultural group and fulfil all safety requirements.

## 2.3 Fighting

For details of the use of weapons in the Dark Ages Society see the following *Dark Ages Society Fighting Standards* document.<sup>1</sup>

This document is a reminder that there is no substitute for full training. Remember, the *Dark Ages Society* is something we do to enjoy - make sure you let others enjoy themselves.

### 2.3.1 General

- 2.3.1.1 Everyone in the *Dark Ages Society* is bound by these **Fighting Standards** which exist to provide a safe and enjoyable means of recreating Dark Age combat.
- 2.3.1.2 These Fighting Standards will be periodically reviewed and may be revised. All revisions will be published in the *Dark Ages Society Magazine* and incorporated in all subsequent editions. Where applicable, the date of the Officers' Meeting, where a revision has been adopted, is shown in brackets. These and other *Dark Ages Society* rules cannot be changed or waived except by a full Officers' Meeting or a full Society vote.
- 2.3.1.3 It is up to individual members to familiarise themselves with the Standards; Field Officers should ensure that they are put into practice.

### 2.3.2 Safety

- 2.3.2.1 Your actions dictate the safety of yourself, other *Dark Ages Society* members and the public.
- 2.3.2.2 All participants will be fully paid up Members of the *Dark Ages Society* or New Members. Persons who are not paid up or New Members are not covered by the insurance. There must be a public liability agreement when arranging displays.
- 2.3.2.3 Your insurance will be invalid if you are found to be fighting under the influence of alcohol, or any other substances.
- 2.3.2.4 A Safety Officer is elected on a biennial basis. They have various powers to ensure that the rules are complied with. If you are in any doubt about your, or anyone else's actions, consult your Field Officer or the Safety Officer.

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<sup>1</sup> Approved Officers' Meeting 16/02/91, published in *Dark Ages Society Magazine* Spring 1991 Number 5, Volume 2.

- 2.3.2.5 First-Aid Kits and pouches have been provided to all units, cost provided by central funds<sup>2</sup>. Officers should ensure that these are carried, and used responsibly.
- 2.3.2.6 Unit Officers should notify the Safety Officer of any qualified First-Aiders in their unit<sup>3</sup>.
- 2.3.2.7 Anyone whose medical condition is in question is to be referred to the Handbook, section 1.2.4.9 All Members of the Dark Ages Society, in particular point 5: " Where a question arises over the health, and ability to fight, of a member of the Dark Ages Society, it is the responsibility of the Member to provide a letter from their doctor, on request from the Safety Officer, clearing them for involvement in Dark Ages Society combat. The Member may **not** participate until this has been provided."
- 2.3.2.8 To ensure observation of the Standards is maintained, all accidents should be entered in the Accident Book (held by the Safety Officer) so that patterns can be established with a view to possible improvements<sup>4</sup>. Members should report **all** accidents, even those which are not serious (eg. requiring hospital treatment) to the Safety Officer or, in their absence, another Officer<sup>5</sup>.

### 2.3.3 Weapons

- 2.3.3.1 Members must ensure that their equipment complies with the *Weapons and Armour Guidelines*<sup>6</sup>. Non standard weapons, other than those registered with the Safety Officer, will **not** be used.
- 2.3.3.2 Each *Dark Ages Society* member's equipment should match their 9<sup>th</sup> Century social status. This is an important consideration, constantly to be reviewed. All members should consult their officer before acquiring new weapons or armour<sup>7</sup>.
- 2.3.3.3 Members are responsible for the safety of their weapons and equipment. Take extra care in public places. Weapons must **not** be stuck in the ground due to the increased risk of nicked blades and possible infection to wounds.
- 2.3.3.4 Weapons checks will be made before any fighting begins. A short practice on the field will be held before the script commences. No weapon may be used until it has been checked and approved by the Safety Officer or representative.
- 2.3.3.5 **NO** sharp weapons or knives to be taken on to the field.
- 2.3.3.6 Every Unit should carry a double-sided File (course and fine)<sup>8</sup>.
- 2.3.3.7 Never pick up a weapon you have not been cleared to use.

### 2.3.4 Training

- 2.3.4.1 People without training will not be allowed to fight or bear arms<sup>9</sup>.
- 2.3.4.2 New Members should receive combat training before their first weekend. At the weekend they will have a training session. The Officer in charge of this session determines whether the member should be allowed to fight on the field<sup>10</sup>. All first time fighters are required to have, as a bare minimum, instruction by an

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<sup>2</sup> 21/02/89

<sup>3</sup> 21/02/89

<sup>4</sup> 10/10/87

<sup>5</sup> 21/01/89

<sup>6</sup> 21/01/89

<sup>7</sup> 04/04/88 & 10/10/87

<sup>8</sup> 02/02/85

<sup>9</sup> 27/10/84

<sup>10</sup> 21/10/89

experienced fighter, not in the member's unit, before a weekend's fighting. For the first half day, the member should refrain from fighting and merely observe<sup>11</sup> unless signed off by 2 Officers outside their own Unit to say they are safe to fight<sup>12</sup>.

2.3.4.3 A group of respected fighters - 'Training Officers' - has been picked to provide concentrated training for any members who could benefit from it. Consult the Safety Officer for advice<sup>13</sup>.

2.3.4.4 All fighting members must have been trained against all classes of potential adversary (ie. spear/shield; spear alone; sword/shield; scramasaex; axe/shield, where applicable).

2.3.4.5 Enjoy your fighting. Take your time. Make dying well a skill.

### 2.3.5 Basic Moves

2.3.5.1 Keep well balanced when fighting, keeping weapons safe and in control at all times.

2.3.5.2 Always take your time, give your opponent time to react and always react to their blows. Initially alternate your blows. (See individual weapons sections.)

2.3.5.3 Make alternating attacks, thrust spear side then shield side, outside the line of the shield. The parry should make contact with the thrust.

2.3.5.4 Overhead: Always bring your weapon vertically over the head in an exaggerated movement on to your opponent's raised shield. Pull the blow, all weight is acted. Always call overheads, **never** feint overheads.

2.3.5.5 Kills: Too soft is better than too hard. Target area is the belt buckle, don't aim for wounds. If you are touched by a weapon, go down, take a wound and act it out to a good death. Most thrusts that make contact could have been harder.

2.3.5.6 Dying: Lay down when dead and stay down until the engagement is over. If killed in a potentially hazardous place clearly act seriously wounded and move to lie down in a safer place.

2.3.5.7 Back cuts: Let your opponent know you are there, preferably by shouting loudly. Use the flat of your spear or sword against their back, gently, **never** use a point against someone's back (they may suddenly step backwards into it).

2.3.5.8 Never throw anything except in a scripted display.

2.3.5.9 Don't get too physical. Rugby tackles etc are out.

### 2.3.6 Shields

2.3.6.1 All warriors in the line must have a shield. Do not fight in the body of the line without a shield and spear.

2.3.6.2 All shields must conform to the *Weapons and Armour Guidelines*. They must be intact enough to provide effective protection<sup>14</sup>.

2.3.6.3 The shield is **not** the target area, aim past the shield's edge. The defender should **always** parry the blow with the shield<sup>15</sup>. There is no purpose in poking shields however, you will hit shields accidentally.

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<sup>11</sup> 21/01/89

<sup>12</sup> 18/10/97, 21/02/98 & 20/10/01

<sup>13</sup> 17/02/90, 04/06/83

<sup>14</sup> 27/01/84

<sup>15</sup> 02/06/84

- 2.3.6.4 Shield Push: Balance the weight used by your opponent, do not get carried away. The defender makes it look good. Be aware of the danger of your own shield rim, keep your head well back.
- 2.3.6.5 Shield Clash and Spin: Charge, (spears up) clash shields and both spin 180° anticlockwise to make room to fight.
- 2.3.6.6 Never use the rim of the shield as a weapon.
- 2.3.6.7 Do not discard your shield unless circumstances dictate (ie. shield arm wound). Un-shielded warriors should expect to die or run away.

### 2.3.7 Spears

- 2.3.7.1 The spear is the main *Dark Ages Society* weapon. All warriors must be proficient in the use of the spear and shield.
- 2.3.7.2 Spears must conform to the *Weapons and Armour Guidelines*.
- 2.3.7.3 Practice the technique of 'locking' the spear at target (belt buckle) level. A spear should **never** be pointed at face level or thrust at the legs.
- 2.3.7.4 Never 'slip' a spear through your hand; keep a firm grip.
- 2.3.7.5 Always be aware of the length of a spear, both in and out of combat. Be wary of spear butts, including your own.
- 2.3.7.6 Spears alone: Women (dressed as women) may use spears without a shield.
  - Hold the spear two handed, point angled downwards and parry thrusts outwards.
  - Before thrusting, move the spearpoint to a belt level and keep a good grip.
  - Use movement as your defence. Don't expect too many kills, often your presence will allow a fellow warrior to hit your distracted opponent.

### 2.3.8 Swords

- 2.3.8.1 Swords may be owned and worn by Vikings and Saxons of appropriate status, provided the rest of their clothing and equipment reflects their standing. The langsaex is of lower status but a much rarer weapon. For the *Dark Ages Society* training purposes, it is to be regarded as a sword<sup>16</sup>.
- 2.3.8.2 In order to carry a sword and use it in free fighting, a member must have been in the *Dark Ages Society* for two years; have their Officer's support; have their application to use a sword submitted to an Officers' Meeting; be confirmed annually<sup>17</sup>.
- 2.3.8.3 All swords and langseaxs must conform to the *Weapons and Armour Guidelines*.
- 2.3.8.4 Sword blows are slashes, not stabs.
- 2.3.8.5 There are seven sword cuts, see diagram.

### 2.3.9 Axes

- 2.3.9.1 The axe is not a primary weapon, it is potentially the most dangerous *Dark Ages Society* weapon.

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<sup>16</sup> 09/04/88

<sup>17</sup> 03/02/07

- 2.3.9.2 A prospective axe bearer must fulfil the same criteria as a member wishing to use a sword, as a separate test.
- 2.3.9.3 Axes are primarily for show, threats, etc.
- 2.3.9.4 There are four custs, see diagram.
- 2.3.9.5 **Never** use an axe against someone running away.
- 2.3.9.6 Axes must conform to the *Weapons and Armour Guidelines*.

### **2.3.10 Seaxes**

- 2.3.10.1 The seax is a weapon of last resort. If you only have a seax against a spear or sword etc., expect to lose.
- 2.3.10.2 The weapon should be held overhand (ie. blade extending up from thumb and forefinger) and should be used to cut, **not** stab. The allowed range of cuts is as for swords.
- 2.3.10.3 Primary target is the torso (belt buckle), arms and legs are secondary targets. Do **not** attack over or around an opponent's shield.
- 2.3.10.4 'Cutting throats' should not be attempted in combat. It may be performed for dramatic effect to finish-off disabled or captured opponents. Always be wary of nicks in the blade as they may result in real injuries. If in doubt, don't do it.
- 2.3.10.5 Avoid attacking opponents shields or parrying blows as the seax has no guard and injuries sustained in this way will always be considered self inflicted. Also it may leave nicks in the blade which would make the 'throat cut' move very dangerous.
- 2.3.10.6 Sword and seax are not a realistic combination and should be avoided. If you do use them either be defensive or expect to lose.
- 2.3.10.7 If possible, the blow should be with the flat of the blade.

### **2.3.11 Women** - Everyone should read this section.

- 2.3.11.1 Some women will fight as full warriors
- 2.3.11.2 Women fighting as women with spear and seax only. Work on the flanks and behind your line. Harry warriors, dodge in behind your line, run away, do not stand toe to toe.
- 2.3.11.3 Units are limited to four women fighting at any one time. The number of warriors should exceed the number of spear using women in a unit.

### **2.3.12 Non-combatants**

- 2.3.12.1 All *Dark Ages society* Members on the field should be familiar with these standards including those not fighting.
- 2.3.12.2 Non-Combatants must wear white headgear for identification purposes<sup>18</sup> and are not to be attacked, but should be treated in character, eg. taken prisoner etc.
- 2.3.12.3 Non-Combatants may act as lookouts, drag wounded out of battle, finish off and loot enemy, etc. Warriors must work to give them the opportunity to do these things.

### **2.3.13 Miscellaneous**

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<sup>18</sup> 18/10/03

- 2.3.13.1 Children and dogs on fighting sites only under the control of an adult and not with a fighting unit at any time. The designated person attached to the child/dog must comply with any reasonable request made by any member of the Society. If any Member has a problem with the children or dogs and does not wish to make a direct approach, they should go through their officer. Should reasonable control not be exercised, the Officers present may require the person and child/animal to leave immediately<sup>19</sup>.
- 2.3.13.2 Event organisers should check with the Safety Officer to ensure that all requirements for safety, insurance etc. are complied with.

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<sup>19</sup> 17/02/96