

## **Documentation – not as scary as it sounds**

This is a quick and dirty guide to documenting Arts and Sciences competition entries. I strongly recommend that if you are new to this and have further questions that you talk to your local A&S officer about your documentation. They will give you guidance – this is what they are there for.

### **What is documentation?**

Documentation is written and pictorial evidence that supports your entry. It documents the process that you went through to create the item.

It tells the judge:

- what the item is,
- how it was made,
- how period it is (generally our goal is to make as perfect an example of a SCA-period piece as possible, sometimes SCA items may also be acceptable e.g. SCA combat weapons)

### **Why do we have to do it?**

It is necessary because with the enormous range of history that the SCA encompasses, even an expert judge is not likely to know everything about any type of entry from any place and period that we cover. Also the processes that go into creating something are not always obvious from the final item's presentation. Therefore the item's documentation enables fairer judging.

### **How do I do it?**

Research is the foundation of any project and should always precede planning and creation of an item. Your documentation is the written record of the research and construction of your item so if you haven't done the research you will have problems doing the documentation.

Try to think of your documentation as a report, essay etc. It's really not much different. In all cases you are trying to prove a point – that your item is a period item. Keep this goal in mind and you should be OK.

Be concise and to the point. If you have done so much excellent research that you feel like writing pages and pages think about submitting that separately as a research paper.

Make sure that it is legible, especially if handwritten, and do check your spelling. Get a friend to read it over and check it for you.

### **Final words**

As with most types of written work there is no one way to write documentation – some people prefer an essay type format, others a report type format. It really doesn't matter so long as it contains the information required, is legible and is not too long. If in doubt, do ask for help. Get a friend to look over it for you.

Over the page is a short documentation template:

## ***My Documentation***

**What this item is:** Describe *what* your item is, including when and where it would have existed and if appropriate what type of person would have used/had/made it (e.g. carpenter, nobleman, priest etc). This should only take a paragraph.

**About these items in period:** This is where you present your research and this section will probably take up half the documentation.

- Point out the aspects that characterise this the items from this time and place
- Be specific: think about materials used, colours, textures, techniques etc
- If at all possible attach pictures of period versions of the item, preferably in colour.
- If you quote or refer to sources such as a book or web page make sure that you give a reference: you could print the web page, otherwise give the author, title and date as a minimum.
- Stay focused the place and period that your item is based on.

**About your item:** This is where you show us how period your version is.

- Describe it in detail: materials used, colours, techniques used etc.
- As you do so relate back to your research presented in the previous section
- Where you have done things differently, explain briefly why you chose to do it the different way (e.g. *"I sewed it on a machine because the seam is invisible and I didn't have time to do it by hand"*). The judges will make a judgement about whether your alternative was appropriate (e.g. compare the above example with – *"I hot-melt-glued it because I like the smell"*). However if you don't explain/justify your decisions they may draw their own conclusions.

**References:** Where you got your information.

- It is good practice to list all your references at the back of the document.
- Include books, articles, web sites and personal conversations that had a significant impact on your research and final item
- Include titles, authors and dates as a minimum, plus publisher and place of publication where appropriate.