

The
Duchy
Of
Wessex



His Grace, Manus Dei, Duke of Wessex

INTRODUCTION

This document is to serve as an introduction for new and returning members of Wessex. That the society of Wessex is more complex, and sometimes downright bewildering, than your run-of-the-mill gaming clan is common knowledge.

If you are a returning member, you might notice a number of changes from when you were last active.

The key reason for the restructuring is, basically, evolution. As games become more sophisticated we have the opportunity (or sometimes the necessity to update our structure. Our last big in game focus was Life is Feudal, which brought in the need for Crafting Houses. Another example is a change in title structures for the upcoming game Chronicles of Elyria (if it ever gets released).

Revision History can be found at the end of this document.

What follows is a brief overview of our community and highlights some of the important and most confusing aspects of the Duchy of Wessex. For Wessex to function effectively it is necessary for all full members to have a basic grasp of how our society functions, their place in it and opportunities for advancement.

ROYAL DEMESNE

At the pinnacle of our feudal society sits the King, His Majesty Manus Dei I, the creator and inspiration of our feudal universe. Ultimately all land within the kingdom belongs to him, called the Royal Demesne. The King will grant parcels of land to trusted followers as reward for their loyalty, military service and tax revenues.

SHIRES

A shire is the fief given to a lord. Each major clan in the kingdom would normally be a shire as recognition of the influence they wield. The number of members required to be considered a shire will vary according to the game in question.

COUNTY

Is the term used for the territory in a world in which Wessex has a significant presence. The cabinet officers will usually appoint a Bailiff to administrate it, if required. If a member holds a county specific position, rank or title it is forfeit if he changes game, unless he is specifically reappointed by the cabinet or Bailiff of his new county.

FIEFS

Are the land grants given to vassals, but we specifically use this term for the land granted to vassal knights. The administration of a fief, while delegated to the knight, will still be supervised by the ducal court especially as regards recruitment and ceremony.

The Duke and his cabinet retain the right to summarily exile any resident. Maintaining cohesion between the fiefs and the shire proper is absolutely essential.

GRAND SERJEANTY

Is a small piece of land or asset that can be granted to a common soldier for exceptional service. The recipient would usually be a Serjeant Major or First Serjeant. It is possible that other villeins might live in his domain but all of them would still swear fealty directly to the landholder that made the grant.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Wessex, and indeed the entire kingdom model, is meant to simulate a feudal society in a virtual world. As in the medieval period, members are stratified by social class. This is done for the practical RP nature of Wessex and is meant to reflect your chosen play style and responsibility within the clan.

The shires may choose their own class and title descriptors to fit with their unique clan theme as long as the terms are synonymous with the kingdom terms which are in brackets below and subsequent sections.

The basic Wessex social framework is as follows:

- Gentry (Nobiles Homines)
- Freeman (Nomines Liberi)
- Clergy (Clerici)
- Villein (Coloni)
- Serf
- Pauper

A member's job, military rank and social class in the clan is a reflection of what they do within the game and the Wessex community. Some might feel that the classes and their numerous subsets are overly complicated, but remember that these positions are only filled when a member is performing that particular role. A position might very well be vacant for long periods of time if it has no current functional use.

GENTRY

Historically, the gentry were the blue-blooded and privileged aristocracy, entitled to land ownership and the taking of bondsmen. In Wessex they are invariably senior members tasked with the leading and expanding the shire, much like any other clan, except that we add practical RP elements to provide our members with an entertaining backdrop.

With the exception of pages and esquires, all gentry are entitled to commission a personal coat-of-arms to display on the forum and, if game mechanics allow, in the actual game itself.

The responsibilities of the gentry are many. Befitting a practical RP environment, they must exhibit respect for members of higher status, especially their lord and king, by using the appropriate style of address - they must set the stage for others!

For members aspiring to attain a title of nobility it is advised to follow their example. They must adhere to and publicly support our legal framework, ducal and royal decrees. Due to their position their conduct is subject to harsh scrutiny.

Wilful or repeated failure to abide by this code of conduct will result in the attainment of their titles, privileges and heraldry. Most importantly they are the ones we can rely on to establish the Wessex banner when entering new games.

Gentry are those that hold any of the following titles:

- King (Rex)
- Lords (Nobility)
- Knights/thanes/baronets (Equites)
- Esquires/pages (Escutari)

Gentry' titles are not county specific and will stay with a member regardless of the game he or she is playing.

THE KING AND LORDS

As the leaders of the clans that make up the kingdom these great nobles wield the most power and influence. Lords have the Power of Accolade, meaning they may bestow knighthood on a worthy individual.

THE KING leads the executive branch of the government known as the Crown. He is the head of both the House of Lords and the Church. When addressing the King for the first time during a conversation it is appropriate to refer to him as "Your Majesty" after which the generic style of "my lord" is sufficient.

LORDS TEMPORAL rule a shire and their titles are associated with the large tracts of land they hold in the form of a duchy or barony. They are Peers to the king as he has taken them, or their ancestors, as personal friends upon whom he has bestowed these grants of land. They take an oath of fealty and become vassals to the king, and may in turn take knights, baronets or thanes as bondsmen to themselves.

Collectively all the lords whether a duke, earl or baron are known as "the barons". Along with the King and bishops the lords have a seat in the House of Lords.

Most lords are simply addressed as my "my lord", however, a Duke is styled as "Your Grace" when first addressing him after which "my lord" will suffice.

LORDS SPIRITUAL are the shire bishops and archbishop. For more information refer to the Bishop section under Church Hierarchy.

KNIGHTS, BARONETS AND THANES

Even though they represent the minor nobility of the kingdom, equites are some of the most powerful and influential members in their home shires. Your play style, origins and the lord to whom you have sworn fealty will determine which exact title you are eligible for. Equites may be addressed as "Sir X" or simply "sir".

While thanes are more transient, knights and baronets are wholly dedicated to the Wessex feudal system. These titles are awarded to members that grow or enhance the Wessex community, and such honors are recorded in the Cathedral of St. Germain.

If an equite disappears without contact for an extended period of time the Duke may put into abeyance his title and heraldry.

Upon his return they will only be restored if there is a need for additional gentry. Of the three, knighthood is probably the most complex and interesting category.

KNIGHTHOOD is conferred on those members that are the PvP heroes of the clan in addition to being an ardent supporter and student of the Wessex social structure. Historically knights were skilled in the arts of chivalry, melee combat, heavy armour and horsemanship and this will be reflected in-game if the genre and mechanics allow. Knights are granted the right to bear heraldic arms and sponsor an esquire. Children and siblings of a knight are given the courtesy title of "gentleman". Disputes between knights are settled by an appointed Lord.

KNIGHTS (VASSAL) are those that have made an oath of fealty to a secular lord, such as the Duke of Wessex or even the King, and in return received a benefice of land, called a knight's fee. This is similar to how a lord is a vassal to the King.

Alone amongst the knightly class a vassal knight is allowed to take villeins as bondsmen and maintain a retinue of yeoman. He will be responsible for ensuring that the resources entrusted to him are harvested efficiently and pay a portion thereof to the Duke. The details of this feudal contract will be recorded in Letters Patent, drawn up by the heralds.

CHURCH KNIGHTS are knights that have sworn fealty to a bishop instead of a secular lord. Becoming a Knight of the Church does not imply entry to the clergy but the very act of swearing fealty to a bishop instantly precludes him from ever receiving a benefice of land.

Similarly, if the knight already possesses land it will become forfeit and he shall have to abandon the manor and estate provided to him by his lord and escheat the territory back into the lord's possession.

Being a Church knight does not equate to holding a particular status amongst the clergy and a church knight could be a friar, a deacon or priest for example.

As a knight, you are not expected to preach, but you should still be a good role-player and possess a great understanding of the Church Dogma and a good understanding of the Church Lore.

KNIGHTS BACHELOR do not receive land, do not swear an oath of fealty to a lord and may not take bondsmen - this is because they would have no land from which to support any followers.

A knight bachelor will most likely be found leading a banner in the Wessex garrison on the field of battle, acting as a bailiff or serving in the ducal cabinet.

BARONETS are the non-martial equivalent to a knight bachelor. Baronets can take an oath of fealty to a lord which would grant him the full privileges of a vassal knight.

A baronetcy is most often bestowed by the Duke onto skilled civil servants, successful burgesses or mayors and rangers that have made significant contributions to the Wessex community. As such they may not take on an esquire.

THANES are the leaders of smaller clans that cede their political independence to Wessex in return for protection or other benefits. The thane will swear an oath of fealty to the Duke and become his vassal. His followers will in turn be bondsmen to him.

They receive the same rights and privileges as a home-grown knight, except the right to sponsor an esquire.

As a vassal to the Duke a thane is eligible to receive a grant of land.

ESQUIRES AND PAGES

These are the lowest branches of the gentry and may be revoked by the Duke or his cabinet at any time if the candidate is considered unsuitable or inactive for a period longer than two weeks.

ESQUIRES may be sponsored by knights from among any of the full members of their shire in order to train in the arts of chivalry. If you do not marry a knight, the quickest way to become a member of the gentry is to become an apprentice to one.

Although an esquire does not have an oath of fealty to a knight, he is sworn to his service. This means that a knight will require his esquire to carry things for him, to care for his horses, to upkeep his armour and weapons out of their own pockets etc. An esquire receives heraldic arms.

Esquire selection must be approved by the Duke. Esquires are addressed as "Mister X".

The Duke is allowed to sponsor two esquires and each knight only one esquire at a time. There is no minimum period of service before being dubbed a knight, but the advancement to knighthood is not guaranteed.

Esquires can be those members who, similar to a knight, excel at combat and in-game organization and leadership but have little interest in the wider Wessex enterprise or other duties of a fully-fledged knight.

PAGES, or pageboys, are the personal choice of a knight and do not require the prior approval of the Duke. This is to afford the knight the privilege of recognizing someone publicly they believe would make a good knight but for whom they cannot obtain ducal approval. This would most likely be a relative new comer to the clan.

A page serves with his knight in the military but has no authority in the clan and is to be considered everyone's "dogsbody". He may only progress to the title of esquire with the approval of the Duke.

FREEMEN

To be a freeman means you are outside the feudal contract that binds the villein and gentry social classes to each other. Freeman status can be gained for several reasons. Types of Freeman are:

- Burgess (Burgi)
- Yeoman (Praefecti)
- Royal Sheriff and Baliff
- Special Purpose Freeman

BURGESS

The burgesses are the accomplished traders and crafters of the shire. As a burgess you are still subject to the Duke but you do not owe your service and income to a liege lord. You are afforded this to stimulate the trade, services, and industry you will provide. You might pay a tax on your profits and an upkeep fee for the city and its buildings - but this is being paid collectively to yourselves and other burgesses in the Boroughs.

The position of Burgess is county specific and if a player relocates to another his position would be forfeit until such time as he can re-establish himself.

BOROUGHES are fiefs granted not to a vassal, but to a collective bunch of citizens who form a town. The Boroughs collectively contributes to the government the same way an individual knight or fief-holder with villeins serving him does.

In medieval times, there was a law on the books that said if a villein managed to escape from his liege lord to a town and avoided capture for a year and a day, then he would cease to be bound to the liege lord and would instead be listed as a member of the town.

In Wessex, we recreate that custom with the mechanic of allowing villeins who purchase a workshop, and possess sufficient crafting skills, to be considered free of their villein status.

Obviously anyone from a pauper to the Duke may be "bound" to a town, but only a burgess that has made a monetary investment in a workshop or house will be considered to be a resident.

ALDERMEN are burgesses that are elected to the town council of a Borough. Borough town councils are small, usually only a mayor and 1-2 aldermen.

Along with the mayor, aldermen decide town policies and allocate town finances where they are needed.

In the future one alderman and one mayor from every Borough will be the "two burgesses" sent to help make policy in a national legislature, and these will also be elected by the Boroughs.

MAYORS are elected by the other burgesses in the Borough. It is considered a great honour, and one that can attract attention. It is the mayor that the Duke will deal with personally as representative of the Boroughs, and who will liaise with the Treasurer and his reeves in collecting the Boroughs' taxes.

Serving a term as a mayor, especially of a large Borough like the capital city of Wessex will often earn one a baronetcy.

YEOMAN

Yeomen are the officers of the ducal court that perform the administrative and other day-to-day tasks to ensure the smooth operation of the shire. The cabinet officers direct and oversee their activities.

Any full member may take the yeoman examination to qualify. Members of the gentry may serve as an officer of the court, although they are more likely to be cabinet officers. Appointments are made subject to need and dismissals can be made on account of unannounced inactivity of more than a week in which case the yeoman will return to pauper status.

There are five types of yeoman in Wessex:

- Heralds
- Pursuivants
- Clerks
- Reeves
- Quartermasters

HERALDS are responsible for the design of coat-of-arms, forum signatures, new member orientation, recruitment, assisting members on matters of ceremony and the recording of acts of valour by our soldiers. They are directed by the Master of Heralds as head of the College of Arms. In the absence of the Master of Heralds in a county one can be designated as Herald Emcee, a role which is limited to that county.

PURSUIVANTS are heralds in training and must be sponsored by a herald. To become a full herald a member must pass the yeoman exam. It is acceptable for a pursuivant that is purely interested in art and design work to not take the exam and remain in his current position indefinitely.

CLERKS perform clerical duties such as keeping member and other lists, reviewing trial membership applications and forum title administration. Both the Chancellor and Chamberlain direct the clerks of the Ducal Chancery. The clerk position is mostly a forum administration role and not county specific.

REEVES work in the Ducal Treasury and collect taxes and carry out commercial activities on behalf of the Exchequer, Steward, bailiff or high-reeve. A reeve's position is usually county specific.

QUARTERMASTERS are yeoman within the military and appointed by the leader of each military branch to administer to that branch. As yeoman they must pass the Yeoman's Exam.

A **HIGH-REEVE** can be appointed by a Bailiff to be responsible for any and all of the following: county's treasury, mediate disputes, enact assizes against members violating the Common Law, carry out sentences or act as the principal forum moderator for that county. The high-reeve position is usually county specific and very rarely appointed.

ROYAL SHERIFF AND BALIFF

ROYAL SHERIFFS are appointed by the Royal Cabinet to represent the King within a shire and mediate intra-shire disputes. They are the King's personal officers in a shire.

They may also collect taxes on behalf of the King and settle disputes between equites, but not lords. The Duchy of Wessex happens to be a County Palatine which grants the Duke the right to appoint sheriffs himself.

BAILIFFS are appointed to administrate a county. The Bailiff will often be gentry or a cabinet officer. By default the Bailiff inherits all the administrative duties from the cabinet as it relates that particular world, except for those cabinet positions already appointed by His Majesty for that county. This rare occurrence happens only with no active Nobility or Ducal Court members.

Other yeoman and gentry may be appointed to the Bailiff's court to deal with specific tasks such as the treasury, garrison, recruitment etc. Ducal cabinet officers retain overall approval and accountability for these appointments..

Even though a Bailiff's primary duty is in-game leadership he is also responsible for nurturing the appreciation of Wessex lore and traditions in the minds of the members under his care and to identify and encourage suitable candidates to assume yeoman duties in the ducal court.

SPECIAL PURPOSE FREEMEN

The previously mentioned freemen are the most numerous; however, there are two special types of freemen that you might encounter. Both the following two positions are County specific.

SINECURE YEOMEN are the absolute masters in their field and lead a Crafting House of a particular crafting discipline. Occasionally they find themselves approached by noblemen with an offer to take up a sinecure yeoman position in a noble court such as "house weapon smith", "house painter", etc.

FRANKLINS might be created if there are small plots of buildable land which would not be able to support a vassal knight and a full complement of villeins and soldiers. A villein could purchase this plot but would not be considered a burgess. The type of establishment they could run might, for example, be the typical wayside inn along a remote road or a farmstead outside a town area.

VILLEINS, SERFS AND PAUPERS

VILLEINS are the backbone of our society and will regularly be the most numerous. Misconceptions arose in the past regarding their “lack of freedom”. A villein is free to enlist in the garrison, trade, craft or join the clergy. Your choice of play style will determine where you end up.

If you prefer a crafting profession, you can become a burgess once you purchase a building in a Borough. If you are PvP oriented you can enlist in the Wessex garrison. Those of you that wish to serve the clan in an administrative function can attain yeoman status in the ducal court.

Casual players that would just like a friendly community to take part in are welcome to remain as a villein for as long as they wish. Villeins have no responsibilities other than paying whatever minimum tax is levied by the Duke.

A villein remains a villein no matter to which county he travels.

When a trial member joins he is considered a villein bonded to the Duke of Wessex. Trial membership lasts a minimum of one month but during this time they are eligible to enlist in the garrison as part of the militia.

SERFS are the beginning social level for players who join the Duchy of Wessex, unless the new member is a family member of an existing villein, or the new member is granted a special exception from His Grace or his appointed representatives. New member applications can be approved by the Chancellor, the Chamberlain, a Knight, or any member of the Nobility.

The period of time a serf must remain at this social stage is typically one month. It may be extended if the player has not been active enough within the guild, or even shortened if the player's contribution has been exceptional.

PAUPERS do not possess the feudal bond of villeins nor even the holdings of freemen. Paupers are drifters outside the feudal system with no home or permanent employment.

They are most often those members that have abandoned their duties and disappeared without notice to their lord or employer. At the discretion of his former liege such a member may renew his oath of fealty to once again enter into a feudal contract.

The separation between Villeins and Paupers will vary depending on game mechanics, but every effort will be made to clearly distinguish the value of maintaining ones oath. As an example, a villein would be allowed to use the various appliances and tools within a holding, while a pauper would not. Nor would a pauper be allowed to ‘bind’ to a holding.

In essence, a villein contributes to the good of the Duchy, and receives benefits for doing so. A pauper does not.



CLERGY

The clergy is a holy society separate from the rest of the shire with its own structures and laws. Clergy may not pursue crafting skills or commercial trade for personal profit. They may serve as either ministers or officers of the court, but will not be allowed to accept payment unless it is a donation to the church. They may not hold any land or secular titles. However, the church may hold land in the form of temporalities given to bishops or spiritual orders. Clergy members are subject to a bishop as opposed to a secular lord such as the Duke of Wessex.

THE CHURCH HIERARCHY

When a member undertakes holy vows they enter an entirely new social class with its own rankings. The position you held in secular life will affect at which position you enter the clergy, although a member may give up a higher rank if they so wish.

FRIARS are villeins that have joined the church. Their form of address is "Brother" or "Sister". Friars will become part of a mendicant or military order and will be governed by its Rule.

The role of a friar will be heavily influenced by the rule of the Order that they are a member of but, in essence, a friar is to the church what a villein is to the secular society. As long as a friar follows the orders rules and does not break their holy vows they will find that they can pursue almost any avenue.

A friar may join the garrison, serve as a minister or officer of the court, pursue crafts or hobbies, spread the faith, or take up arms in a crusade. As long as they act in God's name, a friar has great freedom.

Friars will serve the spiritual needs of the community by reminding people of our faith and warning those who are straying from the path. Members who wish to focus on being healers will be encouraged to become friars.

DEACONS are gentry and freeman who wish to join the church; upon passing a verbal interview and paying for their schooling. A deacon is a candidate for priesthood. The form of address is "Deacon/Deaconess" and in full correspondence as "The Reverend Mister".

The deacon's role in the church is to study the lore of the Church and it is also their duty to support the priest to which they are assigned. Their responsibilities are much the same as those of a Friar.

PRIESTS are friars or deacons that have passed the sacerdotal examination or by demonstrating that they have the knowledge and capability to act as a fixture of the faith within the community. They must be ordained by a bishop. The form of address for a priest is "Reverend Father" or "Reverend Mother".

The priests main role is to oversee the mental and physical health of all those who follow the faith and they should spread the word wherever they go, and offer guidance to those who seek it. As such the position of priest can be quite role play intensive. You must know how to address members of the clergy and also secular society with the correct titles, be able to offer guidance and help in matters of Dogma and Lore to the friars and deacons and be ready to lead people in worship.

THE BISHOP (prelate), or **Lord Spiritual**, leads the faithful in his diocese, and oversees all matters religious in nature. A diocese roughly equates to the territory controlled by the bishop's shire.

Bishops have seats in both the House of Lords and the Ecumenical Council. Bishops are allowed to own property in the form of a temporality. It's like a fief, only given to the Bishops of the Church. Collectively the Bishops act as land owning agents on behalf of the Church.

The Bishop is a lord of society and is addressed as "His Excellency" at first and "my lord" thereafter.

The **ECUMENICAL COUNCIL** determines the dogma, lore and laws of the church by two-thirds majority vote. Bishops from other kingdoms or nations that share our religion would also sit on this council. The council must have a quorum of one half plus one, or the written approval of His Grace, Manus Dei for official changes to existing church law or doctrine. The council also grants the charter for Spiritual Orders.

From amongst their number they will nominate a candidate for archbishop whose ordainment must be approved by the King. The archbishop is a minister in the Royal Cabinet and has a vote in the House of Lords. An archbishop's vote carries the power of veto. The archbishop is addressed as "your Grace" at first and "my lord" thereafter.

CLERICAL TITLES

Here's a quick description of the subset classes that clergy members can have. This has no effect on your rank as it is simply a descriptor for the work you do. The various positions are there to assist the bishop with the administration of the church lands and buildings.

ABBOTS are the Masters of an Order of Friars that has been granted an Abbey. The Order holds it as a temporality, administrated by the Abbot. His form of address is "the Right Reverend".

CLERICS are members who have a position in the ducal cabinet. They may be priests, deacons or friars.

CHAPLAINS are priests and deacons who serve in a military position by either being in a military order, or joining a secular army for a campaign.

MASTER OF THE ORDER are friars that choose to form a spiritual order, and elect from among their members a "leader", or the Bishop may found an order and assign someone to lead it. This person then becomes the Master of the Order.

The Master may be a priest, deacon or a friar but must be ordained upon founding the order. If the Order is granted or conquers land the Master would also assume the position of Abbot or Prior depending on the size of the holding.

PARSONS are members of the clergy who serve as the head of the church in a county. They are styled "the Reverend Father". This person answers only to the Bishop and must be ordained as a Priest.

PRIORS are members of the clergy who have been granted a priory to run or members who have been assigned by an Abbot to help them run their Abbey. They may be friars, deacons, or priests. Addressed as "the Very Reverend".

RECTORS are members of the clergy assigned to teach deacons. They may only be priests and are styled "the Very Reverend Father".

VICARS are members who serve as the second in command to the Bishop. There is only one per diocese, and he answers only to the Bishop. If a bishop becomes an archbishop the vicar will assume full responsibility of the shire while the archbishop serves in the Royal Cabinet. They may only be a priest and are styled "the Very Reverend".

SPIRITUAL ORDERS

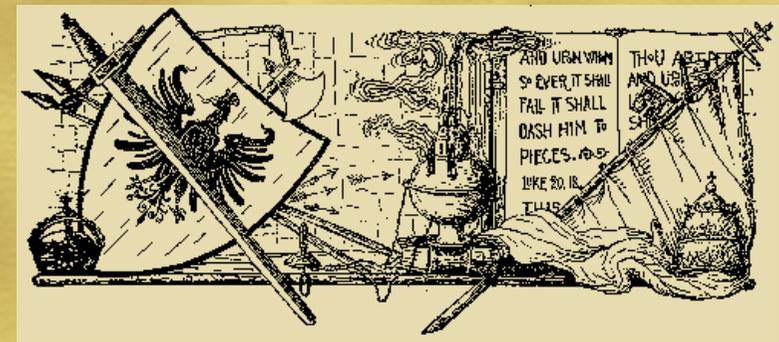
All clergy belong to an Order depending on their role. Members are allowed to transfer from one type of Order to another. All Orders must be granted a charter, adopt a Rule and pledge allegiance to the church. There are three types of spiritual orders:

MILITARY ORDERS are made up of warrior monks and knights who serve the church. Sometimes a Military Order will have an obligation of obedience to the king (or in our case, the various lords) as they will more than likely be dependent on operating on land which belongs to them. It is possible for a military order to become a shire itself if it grows large enough in both manpower and territory.

The Master of a military order would be a church knight, as would his senior lieutenants if they have distinguished themselves militarily, however, only the Master would be ordained and be guaranteed to hold the rank of priest. However, not all members of a military order are knights. In fact, most of them are friars. To join as a friar the member must pass the friar examination.

MENDICANT ORDERS are what friars in the church belong to by default. If there are significant numbers of friars they may be granted a monastery. The monastery could either be an abbey or priory. Abbeys will oft time have more friars and control larger landholdings, potentially encompassing a village, whereas a Priory would be much smaller or dependent on an abbey.

CANONICAL ORDERS are basically the staff of people who oversee a particular church building. Such an Order will fall under the direction of a vicar or priest and friars, deacons would be members.



MILITARY

The military body of Wessex is divided into three branches, the Garrison, the Rangers, and the Navy. Any trial or full member may enlist in the garrison, while only villeins and freeman may enlist in the other two. In the Duchy of Wessex everyone is expected to defend the lands of His Grace using any available means possible, even at the risk of loss of items being carried.

The RANGERS are responsible for policing the territory outside the cities, towns and roadways to provide our people with early warning of hostiles as well as managing the Duchy's forests and wild game populations. During armed conflict they also serve as advanced scouts or ranged skirmishing units. They report directly to the Warden.

The NAVY protects the Duchy from invading armies traveling by ship, raiders, and sea pirates, organized around fleets and individual war ships. The Navy is led by the ducal cabinet position of Admiral.

The GARRISON protects the cities and towns within the duchy, as well as the roads and forts within its borders under the Constable and is organized into a Lance. A Lance consists of a pavisier, a pikeman, and a bowman and is most often lead by a serjeant, but sometimes by an officer instead.

A Twenty is made up of 3 to 6 lances and is normally led by an officer or first serjeant. A Company is made up of multiple twenties and led by the highest available officer with junior officers moved to leading each lance. Should there be a need, multiple companies can be organized into Battalions, which would then be led by the highest available officer.

Available militia serve in separate units under command of the garrison.

FOOTMEN and SAILORS are villeins or freemen that have enlisted in the garrison and have passed basic training. Serfs may join the garrison only as a footman, but do so as militia.

Footmen may be promoted by the Constable, or approved officers after demonstrating that they can follow orders, have an understanding of the Wessex military structure, know what 'coms discipline' means and are competent fighters.

The Constable may implement additional requirements to determine promotion to armsman or serjeant as long as the basic tenants of discipline and player skill are maintained.

ARMSMAN, SCOUTS and SEAMAN are professional soldiers of the shire from amongst the villein and freemen social classes. They are the backbone of each branch and are experienced, capable fighters with sufficiently developed characters.

SERJEANTS, RANGERS and MIDSHIPMAN are exceptional in combat and demonstrate the consistent leadership qualities that separate them from the normal armsman. They typically lead a lance.

FIRST SERJEANTS and the SERJEANT MAJOR are the elite from amongst the serjeants and would lead a Twenty, Company, or possible a Battalion as a non-commissioned officer should no officer be available. These titles are consistent across each branch and both are granted the freeman status. Both can be elevated to knighthood directly by the Duke without going through the squirage process.

MILITIA. When un-enlisted serfs, villeins or freemen join the garrison in battle they will be classed as militia, which are combat ready civilians. This means they have the gear to fight in a battle, but little training. A militia unit is typically lead by a lieutenant.

OFFICERS

Officers provide leadership and are directly responsible for all activity by each member in the military. The highest military authority in the shire is the Duke and his second-in-command is the Constable.

The chain of command is thus: The Duke, Constable, Warden/Admiral, Commander/Commodore, Captain, Marshal/Forester/First-Mate, lieutenant/mate, Serjeant Major, First Serjeant, Serjeants, and Armsman.

CAVALIERS are by default any member of the gentry not officially enlisted in a military branch or who is visiting another county and thus has no military rank within that county.

LIEUTENANTS and MATES are thanes, baronets or esquires that have been designated as a second or a stand-in for the Constable or Captain in a county. This person will most often be the favorite of a certain lord. The rank of lieutenant or mate is only applicable in the county in which it was granted.

MARSHALS, FORESTERS and FIRST MATES are specially designated lieutenants assigned by the appropriate branch leader and have a 'half rank' above a lieutenant and mate so that they can carry out the assigned duties of the Constable, Warden or Admiral.

CAPTAINS are knights most often seen leading a Twenty or Company, though they can also lead a Lance or Battalion when needed.

COMMANDERS and COMMODORES are nobility who lead battalions or fleets for His Grace under the command of the Constable, Forester, or Admiral. Typically these positions are not filled unless there is great need. A Lord who has other knights sworn in fealty to them may also be given this title.

CONSTABLE, WARDEN, and ADMIRAL are appointed by His Grace to the Ducal Court and lead each of the three Wessex military branches.

ROLES

PAVISERS form the first rank of a lance and specialize in the use of shields with a one handed weapon, though if their shield breaks they may switch to a two-handed weapon.

PIKEMAN form the second rank of a lance formation using pole-weapons with both hands. This may constitute pikes, pole-axes, spears, great axes, or even two handed swords.

BOWMAN is used as a generic term for those who use either a bow or crossbow from the third rank of a lance. It does not include throwing weapons.

During combat operations the commanding officer may order each rank into different positions around the battlefield to fill a specific role.

ARMATI are light cavalry units used for rapid deployment, scouting in open terrain and sweeping into hostiles not formed into a unit.

HOBILER are heavy cavalry used to attack troops in unit formations as their mass is not easily stopped.

Note that neither Armati nor Hobiler units are weapon specific, though the Constable may group accordingly.

GYNOURS operate siege equipment, ranging from trebuchets to torches, in either the Garrison or the Navy.

QUARTERMASTERS are appointed positions and maintain the armor weapons and miscellaneous items used by members in the military. They request these items from the Chamberlain as needed.

KINGS GUARD are elite warriors assigned to guard the King and drawn from the Royal Duchy. As such they are appointed by the Constable.

DUCAL CABINET

To assist with the administration of his realm the Duke appoints cabinet officers, also called ministers. While a military officer can sit in the cabinet, a court officer is a non military title. The position does confer freeman status on the holder unless they are part of the gentry. Cabinet appointments are likely to be made from amongst serving yeoman or gentry. Unless the cabinet officer has a higher title he should be addressed "Mister X" or "Mister Chamberlain" for example.

By default the daily administrative functions relating to a county falls to a Bailiff if appointed. Cabinet officers have two primary responsibilities; firstly, they must ensure that the Wessex' social structure is adhered to within those counties and secondly, they should assist and review the quality and suitability of appointments made to a Bailiffs court.

The CHANCELLOR is second to the Duke in matters dealing with executive power and decision making. In Wessex the Chancellor also maintains the ducal seal and may conduct court and grant requests in the name of the Duke, particularly with regards to magistracy and justice.

The CHAMBERLAIN also has access to the ducal seal with the responsibility of maintaining the provisions and resources of the Duchy as well as seeing to the comforts and entertainments of the city and castle interiors. The Chamberlain also plans, approves and zones all construction within the demesne of the Duchy. The Duchy of Wessex has no provisions against the building of adulterine castles, i.e. castles built without the approval of one's liege lord, and do not require the Royal Chancery's approval before commencing with their construction.

The STEWARD OF TRADE has the duty of maintaining and opening the various trade routes necessary to the good health of the shire's commerce. This role is usually assumed by the Treasurer, bailiff or high-reeve but could be allocated to a specific individual if a county grows large enough to require a dedicated trader. The Steward of Trade position is always county specific.

The BISHOP is the head of the church in a shire and appointed by the Duke. For more information on this position please refer to the Church Hierarchy sub-section.

The CONSTABLE is responsible for seeing to the training, promotions, and proper garrisoning of the strongholds within the duchy, including all drilling and placement of those owing castle-guard service. The Constable also leads the armies of the duchy to battle in the absence of the Duke and is responsible for seeing to the physical defences of the duchy's strongholds.

When it is the King who summons the Duke of Wessex to battle, however, his feudal obligations require him to attend in person with the ordained number of knights and men-at-arms without using his constable as a second.

The WARDEN is responsible for patrolling and keeping out undesirables from the duchy's borders and wild lands. With the Constable, the Warden also may promote and assign rank to rangers and soldiers.

The TREASURER oversees all matters dealing with revenue and its collection.

The MASTER OF HERALDS oversees the house heralds, all of whom are responsible for the design and commissioning of new arms when they should be granted by the Duke, who also has the customarily royal power of Accolade. The Master Herald of Wessex reports to the King of Heralds in the capital city of the kingdom.

The ADMIRAL oversees the training, maintenance, and leadership of all vessels within the Duchy. The Admiral commands the fleets of Wessex in absence of the Duke and is responsible for the physical defenses of the duchy's harbors with power to promote and assign rank for sailors.

CRAFTING HOUSES

CRAFTING HOUSES are led by a Master Craftsman, who will oversee the house journeyman and apprentices. A House Master will organize their internal structure with administrative responsibilities for their house. While each Crafting House is independent and allowed to run themselves as they see fit, they are under the general administration of the Ducal Chamberlain, who is responsible for maintaining the proper inventory levels of items for the Duchy.

When possible sole ownership of their crafting stations will be granted to a house, as well as storage space assigned under their control. For some crafts it is possible that more than one house will exist for the same discipline.

While not the exclusive provider for the goods each house produces, it is expected that House Masters strive for the highest quality of items for use by the Duchy population. It is hoped that should multiple houses have skills that overlap they will work together to structure themselves in a similar manner so as to not cause confusion within the Duchy bureaucracy.

The position of House Master is granted the social status of Sinecure Yeoman. As such a House Master must pass the Yeoman's Exam prior to their promotion to lead a house. The exam should not be taken by journeymen or apprentices until approved to do so by their House Masters, and only at such time as a new Crafting House is needed.



LAW

Once you become familiar with our structure you will realize that Wessex was designed to be part of a multi-clan kingdom. The kingdom functions as a fulfilling meta-game in which the majority of members in the kingdom can partake if they understand the system. There are several frameworks that regulate the interaction of the individual shires and the kingdom.

All subjects of the Duchy of Wessex are answerable to the writs, laws and pronouncements of His Grace the Duke of Wessex and the Seal of the Ducal Court, as well as all legislation imposed directly or indirectly by the Carta Solis or the Royal Seal of Hyperion.

Those wishing to report a crime or grievance shall seek out an appointed Royal Sheriff. Royal Sheriffs are duly empowered by the Crown to settle disputes and preside over an assize composed of peers of the plaintiff and of the defendant.

Some Offenses Punishable by Fine and/or Public Humiliation (Common Law)

1. Let no one vandalize or rob the property or chattel of his peers.
2. Let no one molest or harass his peers.
3. Let no one rouse the ire of foreign nations.

Some Offenses Punishable by Execution and Exile

1. Should anyone kill and plunder any fellow subject, let that person be known as outlaw, save in cases of self-defense.
2. Let that person be known as outlaw who launches unprovoked attacks on the citizens of any nation we are not at war with.
3. Let anyone suspected of treason or of selling secrets to the enemy stand trial and if guilty, be known as outlaw.
4. Excessive amassment of unpaid fines will be grounds for trial and possible exile.
5. No subject of the duke shall likewise hold membership in a foreign nation without it be known by the court.

CARTA SOLIS details the organization and duties of the royal cabinet and the laws that govern intra-shire relations. When a kingdom is established in a particular game world the founding lords would first agree on the initial version. Amendments can be made to the Carta Solis via the House of Lords.

THE COMMON LAW of a shire is the law by which all members of that particular shire must abide. The Chancellor or any appointed bailiffs and high-reeves are responsible for handling assizes and disputes. You may find a copy of our Common Law on the main website.

HOUSE OF LORDS is comprised of all the kingdom's barons and bishops. They may initiate bills themselves or vote on bills passed up to them from the lower house. Contrary to popular belief the King may not arbitrarily impose new laws; however the King retains the right of veto to ensure the integrity of the feudal society.

HOUSE OF COMMONS (lower house) is where the common man is represented by two burgesses from each Borough in the kingdom and two minor gentry (knights, thanes, baronets or esquires) from each shire. They may propose bills which are passed up to the House of Lords for final approval.

TAXATION

To simulate a feudal society and provide funds for projects and the common good, it is imperative that some form of payment be made up the social ladder. All social classes, except clergy members, will be subject to taxation, albeit at different rates based on their respective responsibility within the clan. The specific tax system used will depend on game mechanics.

RP CONVENTIONS

There is no compulsory RP in Wessex. We are a practical RP clan which means by the mere act of holding a social position and playing the game in that context is role playing. There are, however, certain customs and traditions that should be followed. Some are integral to the administration of the clan such as oaths, and others are only expected from certain sections of society such as the gentry or clergy. However, all members are expected to respect the premise of the social hierarchy, especially in public.

THE CATHEDRAL OF ST-GERMAIN is a public sub-forum in which commoner and gentry alike announce their oaths, holy vows and acceptance of ducal appointments and grants. Treaties signed with foreign nations are also recorded in this forum. An appointment is only legal once a member has made the relevant post and it has been witnessed.

FORMS OF ADDRESS are how the gentry, clergy and those aspiring to be gentry should address those of higher social standing on the Wessex forum and in-game. Each sub-section on social classes or job positions will detail how those members should be addressed.

FINAL NOTE

We will endeavor to re-create the documented feudal society in-game as accurately as possible. Unfortunately we will always be limited by the mechanics and features provided to us by the developers of a game. As we obtain information about a particular game changes may have to be made when it comes to the implementation of the clan structure.

May our Lord's Radiant Light bless Wessex and our liege, His Majesty, Manus Dei, King of Hyperion.



Lord Azzerhoden Razeri
Viscount, Duchy of Wessex, Bt

Revision History

- 1.0 – Original created date unknown, Authors: unknown
- 2.0 – Original converted for editing, Sep 2014, Azzerhoden Razeri
- 2.1 – Minor updates, Oct 2014, Sir Azzerhoden Razeri
- 2.2 – Updates made to military structure, titles. Crafting Houses added. Removed Auxiliary units as they do not apply in LIF. Jan 2017, Sir Azzerhoden Razeri, Sir Kaylem Sothenic.
- 3.1 - Updated to include all material needed for Yeoman Exam. Updated beginning intro. July 2020, Azzerhoden Razeri.