

## Starting A Shire As A Newbie

I guess I should start at the beginning in my ramblings so that some people who do not know who I am can get a better perspective of why this is being written.

I was first introduced into Amtgard while living in Irving, Texas. A bunch of gamers that were gaming on Friday and Saturday all nighters told me about this new game using padded swords and the like that was going to be started right there in our city. So of course being a huge fantasy buff, I quickly decided that this not only sounded cool but, could be the one thing that I had hopped somebody who was as crazy as me, but not as lazy would get around to creating.

The shires first day was held at a horse ranch on some ones uncle or another private land. The sheriff played a griffon and the populace took him on. And from there met every week and I started enjoying the wonderful world of Amtgard. (Which btw if anyone knows what I'm talking about please get a hold of me yes I am still alive although the only amtname that sticks out in memory is Moon star from this time.)

After some time of playing here along side the woman who would later become my wife. I had to leave on personal affairs that took me all over Texas. I played as a visitor at many parks although nowadays it being so long ago I can no longer remember people I met.

I later moved way up to Michigan City Indiana as far north as a ever thought I would care to be. The limited knowledge I had of Amtgard stayed with me and I longed for my own group of foam slingers. I moved in 1993 and started a small group then. However not knowing much about the internet I only had a crappy copy of the rules of play, no copora and no idea how to build anything but a heavy camp pad foam sword and shield.

In 1996 while learning the internet I came upon the amtgard main site and was able to get an actual copy of the rules of play once again and explore the many sites their was on the different groups etc.. I was even able to obtain a copy of the contract and copora.

One thing and one thing alone kept me from attempting to bring the game to the Midwest. The weapons I was seeing on the web sites where so much smaller and things had really advanced way past my limited knowledge of the game. So feeling overwhelmed already I shelved the book and started gaming again.

Around the end of march 2000 a friend happened on the shelved dusty amtgard rulebook and started leafing through it. He was hooked and wanted to try the game out. So I pulled my very old swords outta storage and taught him the hit system. My wife seeing this pulled her own sword out and we started having spring sessions daily. Before you knew it I had others wanting to know more about this wonderful game.

So now we get to the real reason I am writing this. And everyone reading this knows my life story as far as amtgard goes.

Here I am with people wanting to play a game and looking to me to lead them and get it all set up. So I turned to the Internet to look for help. There I find that only 30 miles away exists a shire known as Crusaders Cove who is apart of A Duchy called the Rising Winds. After many times of trying to contact the names listed on the atlas and getting no actual real people to talk to I tried to go out to this park to see what I could learn. I mean why start a park if ones semi close enough to play at. I went for three weeks in a row only to find that there was no amtgard going on. (unknown to me they had changed locations and never updated anything.)

SO I decided since I could find no actual presence of amtgard anywhere close. (And I know a lot of the gaming community in the Midwest it seemed someone would have known of this game if it was being played here) I decided to go ahead and send in the contract and a letter asking the BL B.O.D. questions. (or whoever answered their mail.)

Meanwhile I had 6 people dying to start this game. So I wrote up a waiver had them all sign it and set up a weekly game at a local park. One problem we had was weapons. Knowing little about modern construction I decided to make them how I knew. So I set up an entire week where we met in the evening for a couple of hours to make weapons.

Heavy swords that stung. Throwing daggers that looked like tear gas canisters and crappy garb came out of these meetings. But I was confident that we would be ok as soon as we received answers to our questions from BL.

Around the middle to end of June 2000 I received a response finally. With this response was a letter answering some of my questions. Some I will be honest where not what I wanted to hear but others where helpful and gave me some insight as to what needed to be done. A sample sign in sheet was one of the things sent along with a more current contract for me to get notarized etc and send back of course retaining our original contract date. The excitement quickly wore off and I called the number and spoke to Dame Gwyene, I believe it was, at length concerning many more questions I had

Later that same night after the full weight of the monster I had started here started to crash around me my phone rang. It was a citizen of the shire I had attempted to contact in our neighboring city and he invited me to come check them out. Talking about timing, I jotted down the directions and also asked a bunch of questions. This was the first time I found out that other groups still held strong in the Midwest and where under the common cause of the Rising Winds. I shrugged this off and was just happy to be able to go see first hand what I needed to know and what we needed to start doing. So much was running through my mind about this visit.

The Day finally dawned and me and two others from our park went to visit. Needless to say I left with nothing except a feeling of defeat.

Two people came to our shire as visitors. I had set our park up on the atlas and it paid off right away. Squire Trevor and Man At Arms Margaret came and paid us a visit. After a few short e-mails (lengthy on my part) they brought the new lighter weapons technology and other teachings to us. Sometimes I think

about all those I asked for help and received nothing and I thank the gods for these two. Their one visit dawned the true day of our shire.

Now almost 8 months in we have been too big Rising Winds events and have not only gotten a real park put together but we are signing in almost triple our original numbers already. We are on very good standings with all of our neighbors and with the city we play in. We do demos and are constantly publicly aware doing food drives etc... or our community.

We are still a freehold although we are hoping to be apart of the Rising winds Family . Who are not only great people, but who for the most part have put a great impression on the Midwest . Combining in strength the weaker groups and giving all of us up here great big events , and awesome leadership and knowledge.

### Tips for the Newbie Sheriff

1. The internet is a great tool the mailing lists, amtgard main site are a must for all starting groups who are more detached from larger groups.
2. The Amtatlas is a great resource, don't only list your park but maintain the contact information so that others can get a hold of you.
3. Organize all your records into a file box with files. Keep waivers and a contact application on file for all members.(we have a separate file for each member)
4. Garb is essential to all begging members of a shire. Make your group look good from the start and you'll not only feel better but you'll gain in membership faster.
5. Let everyone be part of the work. A sheriff who is a founder has a huge workload to start with. Be careful not to let the park become a political power game. Ask for ready volunteers continuously and keep people feeling like they are apart of more than just the fighting.
6. Feasts are great. This binds a group more than just slinging foam. We feast at least BI monthly whether it be pot luck sandwiches to actual cooked meals. And the comradeship has improved 100% because of it. Of course this has lessened some now that our park has grown and we try to be more elaborate with it now.
7. Find the closest bigger group if available and attend one of their coronations as a park. Not only will you learn a lot but you will have a blast. Amtgardians who go to an event are usually totally hooked afterwards.
8. Funds for a starting group are terribly low. And feasts, copies etc can be expensive. Fundraisers are another great way to keep moral up, recruit and have fun. Just think a car wash in full garb.
9. Be attentive to your park feel out every person and get to know whoever possible. Welcome every person as an old friend in the begging and you'll get more newbies.
10. Is community sensitive doing some small things as a group for your community. A lot of people (especially in certain parts of the country) are wary

of people dressed as medieval warlords hitting each other in public places. The more you do the better accepted you'll be in your park.

Hopefully this has helped someone out there or at least made an interesting read. I also ask that everyone reading this keep in mind that I myself am a newbie and these are just pointers that helped get our park going. And not set modes of amtgard.

Raven The Muse  
Sheriff  
The Synging Sands  
Ramblings Of A Drunken Bard