

The Ethos of the All Fronts Re-enactment Association (known as AFRA)

This Association has been brought into being as a result of many attempts to unify WWII re-enactors and Living Historians in the past. Most have succeeded only partially and failed in part due to the entrenched attitudes, infighting and rivalry endemic within the hobby.

This is a new attempt to bring harmony and unity whilst eliminating the opportunity for rivalry and self interest to destroy the goals we all strive for.

The Association is designed so that ALL persons qualifying as eligible may join. There is no bar on gender, colour, standard or portrayal. It is recognised that all people achieve different levels and having done so may be happy with where they are. For others to look down upon or across at them and pass comment is unwarranted and unfair. However we conduct ourselves in this hobby we must first and foremost ensure we are legal, safe and secure.

One of the ways in which we do this is to obtain valid insurance to cover our activities. Groups find this relatively easy whilst individuals can find it impossible due to cost. The Association provides the necessary structure for people to be able to enjoy the benefits of comprehensive, relevant and valid insurance at an affordable cost.

The hobby is largely self regulating and this need not fundamentally change. Whilst some groups have rules and regulations as well as Constitutions of differing complexity, many individuals and smaller groups do not. By joining the Association, the time consuming and often baffling task of doing this is taken care of. Whether the individual belongs to a group or is solo, membership of the Association gives them a set of rules and regulations as well as a Constitution that they can conduct their activities within.

Once people decide to come together under a common set of guidelines (for that is all rules etc. can ever be) then they begin to achieve some uniformity and a common bond. The great destroyer within WWII re-enactment is group interest and infighting. Couple this with rivalry and personal prejudices and issues and the mix becomes quite rank. This Association aims to dispense with that in a quite novel way.

Many groups will not work with others. So getting them to sit at a table and discuss issues is nigh impossible. Certain sets of people dislike either individuals or other sets of people. Again – they refuse to co-operate or work with them. So progress is stifled. Groups that have run their own affairs quite well for years, even decades are reticent to give that independence up in favour of joining something they feel will dictate to them.... This is understandable so the Association does not have any dealings with a group, its workings or hierarchy.

A group wishing to enter the Association does so by first canvassing its members and gaining a consensus. Once this is done, the individual members of the group apply for

membership of AFRA. When this is complete the group can apply to **Affiliate** to AFRA. Effectively, its members are the members of AFRA. The group can choose if it wishes to maintain its own insurance etc. but this is largely pointless extra expense as AFRA covers the members of the group subject to its conditions.

A group affiliated to AFRA continues to run its own affairs. It continues to arrange its own shows, take its own revenue (if it has any) and work with whoever it chooses. AFRA does not place any restrictions on this. The difficulty could arise if a group engages in an activity beyond the scope of the AFRA Constitution, rules or regulations. But this is unlikely due to the generality of the AFRA documentation. If this were the case, the group needs refer to its AFRA documentation to ensure it remains within safe and legal guidelines. The members of an Affiliate group are also members of AFRA and so it is their individual responsibility to take steps and remain within the guidelines governing their insurance etc.

If a group were to fall foul of AFRA guidelines, then the individuals contained therein could possibly be outside the cover provided by the Association. In effect this could be seen as a restriction but not one that impacts directly on the running of a group. There is no direct interference by AFRA.

Individuals without a group benefit because they can attend events, remaining within AFRA guidelines, and enjoy valid insurance and a legitimacy not before possible. Again – AFRA will not directly interfere with the conduct or enjoyment these individuals derive from their hobby but should they step outside the bounds placed there by the Association they lose the benefits to be gained.

AFRA is about responsibility, choice and self awareness. A person chooses to join. That person therefore chooses whether or not they take an active part. The same person can choose if he/she wishes to be insured. They choose to abide by the rules or not. 9 times out of 10 a member will naturally stay within the bounds we all naturally respect. 1 out of 10 they may step outside that. The odds of anything happening may be slim but on the off chance something does – it's down to personal self discipline and the desire to be part of the community. No one from the Association will encourage anyone to act recklessly but they will not condone it if they do and it transpires to cause harm.

AFRA aims to provide an easily accessible and dedicated forum specifically for re-enactment and Living History matters, information and discussion. Groups and individuals will be able to log in and pass on dates, information, organise joint ventures, ask questions and carry on the focussed part of the hobby away from the show grounds. Public forums will be the place for chit chat. The AFRA forum already carries groups forwards. Allows them to communicate and forge alliances. It also allows individuals to contact these groups and either work with them, obtain information or even in some cases join.

AFRA has a web portal which allows a member to register a username, enter in their basic details and access a unique risk assessment system. Once logged in, the user has several options. One of these is to click on an event they wish to attend. From here they are taken to a multi option form. This form is a Risk Assessment form. It has options covering all the aspects to be found at shows. The user selects the set of activities they

are likely to be undertaking and they check the boxes. This then compiles a bespoke Risk Assessment fitted to the information they give. When the completion button is clicked, a copy of the Risk Assessment is emailed to the user and another to the AFRA team. This has the result that the user has proof they carried out a risk assessment. The team has proof the user carried out the Risk Assessment and in the event of an incident, the Insurer has proof. AFRA doesn't pay lip service –it actually does what it says on the tin.

A very important point is to be made here – When the user completes the Risk Assessment he/she is not actually booking in to the show – This must be done by the individual separately. All they are doing is notifying the Association of their intention to attend and what they intend to do at the show.

AFRA can, by arrangement supply a list (subject to the Data Protection Act) compiled from the Risk Assessment facility which gives members attending, their vehicle details if necessary and contact numbers if required. This facility is to help organisers when making passes and wristbands etc. available. Group leaders within AFRA could make use of this facility when booking their people in to major events. It saves time and effort and is relatively easy to police. It places responsibility on the individual to complete the Risk Assessment thereby registering their presence on the event calendar. A quick check by a group leader will reveal who has and who hasn't booked themselves in. He/She then can chase up latecomers and use the list to send for passes.

In the pipeline for the 2008 season is Personal Accident Cover for members. This will be offered as part of the standard membership already offered. This has been offered to us as a per head insurance and it is felt this is the best way to proceed.

AFRA is also presenting itself to Govt. And the Home Office as well as Police Authorities as a new Association representing your interests. It aims to gain credibility mainly through your support. If AFRA can show that it has the support of the troops on the ground, it **can** gain that credibility and a voice for you. AFRA aims also to work alongside established bodies in this field such as NaRES, SBG, WWIILHA and anyone else who is making positive inroads in our sphere of interest.