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edition



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# Events Calendar

## SAGA AGM

SAGA • 28 Sept

Come along for reports on how the club is doing, a long list of proposed constitution changes, and voting on next year's committee. Please note that only SAGA members can run for committee positions and vote for who gets those positions.

## Minicon III

SAGA • 07-08 Oct

Another weekend of gaming with SAGA! Non-members welcome, gold coin donation per day, members get free entry!

## Medusa: LARP convention

Hamilton • CANCELLED

Unfortunately, Medusa this year has been cancelled due to low player signups.

## Minicon IV

SAGA • 09-10 Dec

Another weekend of gaming with SAGA! Non-members welcome, gold coin donation per day, members get free entry.

## Kapcon 2018

Wellington • 20-21 Jan 2018

Kapcon is a huge gaming convention held annually in Wellington on Wellington Anniversary weekend. It is very similar in structure to Buckets of Dice, you will find a massive variety of people from all over New Zealand attending for table top, LARPs, flagships of all styles.

Find our events calendar at <http://saga.org.nz/calendar> for more details



# What Are the Committee Positions?

There are 5 positions in the executive committee – the President, Secretary, Treasurer, Quartermaster and Promotions Officer. Only SAGA members are eligible to run for committee.

## **The President**

The president is responsible for organising the activities of the society and acts as chairman at all meetings of the society. The president must be a current student of the University of Canterbury or an alumnus of the University of Canterbury.

## **The Secretary**

The Secretary is responsible for all administrative duties of the society, notably the taking of minutes, issuing of notices and conducting of club correspondence. They also tend to be in contact with the UCSA the most, booking rooms and sorting out any related issues.

## **The Treasurer**

The Treasurer is responsible for the finances and assets of the society, notably the collection of annual subscription fees and all matters dealing with society purchases. They must produce a financial report for the club at the AGM.

## **The Quartermaster**

The Quartermaster is responsible for maintenance and inventory of the society's assets. They also are the one who will tend to store the majority of SAGA's assets, and transport games to and from SAGA if they are able. They will be the one looking for new games for SAGA that the members would want to play.

## **The Promotions Officer**

The Promotions officer is responsible for promoting the club. This responsibility covers the publication of any materials for the club, advertising required for the club, and maintenance and upkeep of the club's social resources. This means keeping the website and Facebook pages up to date, producing Out of Characters throughout the year, and advertising our event, either by posting to the Looking for Group page, or going to local gaming stores and putting up posters.

# Who's Running for Committee 2018?

This list of people running for committee positions may not be a complete list. This is a copy of those who have posted blurbs to the AGM event. for more details about the event, go here: <http://bit.ly/2y5OwEw>

## **Sally Hayes – Running for President**

Hello everyone! I have been a SAGA member for the past three years, and I am running for president for 2018.

In the past year, I have helped to organise Buckets of Dice, co-DMed the flagship D&D game, co-GMed one of the smaller LARPs, written and run the quiz mixer (for the third year in a row), and run a LARP at Phoenix. I am also running two games at Minicon the Third.

My committee experience includes being the 2014 president of SciFi Soc, the 2015 vice-president in an advisory role, and the current secretary for NZLARPs South Island.

SAGA has held a strong place in my life in the last few years, and I have this club to thank for some of the most supportive relationships I have formed in my adult life. I would love the opportunity to give back to the community as your 2018 president.

## **Ethan Gullery – Running for Secretary**

Hello people

I've been a SAGA member since 2016 and in that time I've done all the things SAGA has to offer: Board Games, RPG, and LARP. Right now I'm in four on-going RPG campaigns and running one.

Part way through this year SAGA's secretary had to step down and I was voted in to succeed them. Since then I have learned the ins and outs of how SAGA functions and how the UCSA run their clubs.

I wish to continue in the role of secretary going into 2018. If elected I can utilise the knowledge and the connections I have formed with my brief turn as secretary to assist SAGA in the future.

I also see areas where SAGA can improve, such as how SAGA keeps its membership records or how much SAGA uses the resources from the UCSA and it would be my goal to fix these issues.

## Declan Lennon – Running for Treasurer

Hello SAGA peeps,

I have been a SAGA member since 2011, currently mostly through roleplaying and LARP, but I also do the board games too. For next year, I am running for the position of Treasurer, to help SAGA continue to thrive.

Currently, I am working full time as a Supply Co-ordinator for Euro Corporation Ltd.. This role, and my previous role of Operations Administrator give me a good skill set including understanding of invoicing, purchasing, and budgets; and a strong understanding of Excel that will help me as your Treasurer.

A few points I would focus on if elected would be:

- Providing a spending budget to the Quartermaster, instead of the current system of needing to get each game purchase approved.
- Reducing the balance of the club's bank account to a more reasonable level by working with the Quartermaster to provide more cool stuff for the club.
- Improving the frequency and readability of Club finance reports, so all our members can easily understand where their money is being spent.

I know that if chosen as your treasurer for 2018, I can help SAGA continue to be a great place for us to play games, and make friends.

## Summer-Rose Jolly – Running for Quartermaster

Hello members of SAGA! 😊

I may be new to the club this year, but SAGA has already become a major part of my life. The people have been extremely welcoming and made it feel like home. I have thoroughly enjoyed learning and playing new games with everyone.

I am interested in running for Quartermaster because I want to help SAGA continue to be a great place to play games and meet people, to help improve processes, and enhance our ever growing collection.

As a current student at UC, I am approachable (not scary at all) and know what the student side of SAGA wants. I work as a program manager for a children's care program, so I am used to contributing to meetings and working with others.

I can store and transport games as I have a car (yes! I do have one!) and I intend to go to SAGA on Tuesdays and Thursdays across 2018, mostly to board game. I also intend to be at all events and continue to immerse myself in every, magical aspect of SAGA.

Currently I have taken on some of the responsibilities of being the Quartermaster due to certain circumstances and have been fixing boxes or taking the games bag to Saga when required.

I will definitely take on board the suggestions of other members to make sure we get some great new assets for the club!

Thank you and I hope we will work well together next year! 😊

## **Ciarán Spencer Searle – Running for Promotions Officer**

Kia ora.

I have been involved in the club since 2012 and have spent the past two years as Quartermaster. I am now interested in trying the role of Promotions Officer as I have always been excited to share this hobby with as many people as possible.

To promote the club, I have already taken sign ups at Clubs Days, run a variety of games at Intro Nights, created the SAGA Slack group, put together our Google Calendar, created and organised the Theme Days initiative this year, posted many times as the SAGA Facebook account, written numerous articles for Out of Characters and plugged our events at North Island conventions.

As an English teacher, I am articulate and can post clear and accurate information quickly. I enjoy all the facets of SAGA (board games, role-playing and LARP) and will be able to promote each from an informed and enthusiastic perspective.

## **Jen Hay – Running for Promotions Officer**

Hey everyone!

I joined SAGA at the start of 2016, and have been your promotions officer for this year. I am once again running for the role of promotions officer.

Over the past year, I have developed the skills required for promotions officer. I am studying a diploma in web design and development which will be valuable for maintaining the SAGA website. I have also been doing the Out of Characters this year, and have a template and system sorted to streamline the process of producing the Out of Characters.

I am heavily involved in the RPG side of SAGA, and have also fallen headfirst into LARPing. I helped organize Phoenix this year, and will be helping to organize it again next year.

I have loved my time at SAGA so far, and I look forward to the opportunity to continue to use my skills to help SAGA in 2018.

# Ramblings and Advice on Running a Published Dungeons & Dragons Campaign

**By John Massie**

Several big pre-written adventures exist for Dungeons and Dragons 5e, each with a focus on a different monster type. From Dragons (Hoard of the Dragon Queen and Rise of Tiamat), to Demons and Underdark Denizens (Out of the Abyss), to an Undead Tyrannosaur with a mouth full of zombies so that when it roars it shoots zombies at you (the upcoming Tomb of Annihilation). In this article, I'm going to give some advice running one of these adventures and discuss my experiences running (the first two thirds or so of) Storm King's Thunder.

Released late last year by WotC, Storm King's Thunder follows the fallout of an act of God agitating Giants across the Forgotten Realms and leading them into conflict with the smallfolk (aka The Players). I chose to run this adventure for a couple reasons. First, it was the shiny and new thing I bought for myself at around the time I was thinking seriously about starting a new campaign. Secondly, it's bigger in scope and seemed less 'on rails' than some of the previously published adventures. Thirdly, Giants are just cool AF.

So, first things first: Get a copy of the adventure you want to run and read it from cover to cover. This'll take a while. Most of the big D&D 5e adventures are around 200 pages. But you are going to want to have read the whole thing. If you are just staying a chapter ahead of your players, or worse reading it for the first time at the table, the game is going to suffer for it. You don't need to memorise everything, but having a decent idea of everything is essential to keeping the adventure running smoothly.

Hopefully having fully read it the adventure excites you. There are set pieces you can't wait to run, NPCs you are giddy for the players to meet, descriptions and locations and themes that have set your imagination flying. At the same time, you might also now be aware of some parts of the adventure that you don't really like. And that's fine.

One thing I can't stress enough is don't be afraid to tweak the adventure to suit your tastes or to change things once the adventure gets going to take into account player choices and actions. Even Christopher Perkins, head D&D writer and main credited author of most of the published adventures, has said he has never runs a published adventure without tweaking it a little bit to better suit the players. You don't have to decide on changes before the game starts running but the earlier you know what you like and don't like about an adventure, the earlier you can start thinking about what you might want to emphasise, what you might want to tweak, and any parts you might want to replace entirely.

(Also, if you're using minis and have both a credit card and poor impulse control, the earlier you can splurge on all those minis you might need) (I haven't spent too much money on giant minis, what are you talking about?) (I can stop any time I want, I swear ... I just need to make one more Troll and Toad order)

For me, one thing I knew as I was first reading SKT was that I was going to twist the main plot to give my players access to a lot more side quests than strictly necessary. One of the main appeals to me was that SKT spanned the entire Sword Coast and provided the reader with plot threads (if not full blown scenarios) for a LOT of locations. On top of that, there are layouts for four amazing giant lair megadungeons and one far less cool but no less mega Hill Giant lair. These oversized dungeons are full of great details and so many cool moments and ... you only need to run one to complete the adventure. The other four can be totally ignored. In fact, you can run SKT without using at least half the content presented in the book. I decided to probably get a little too greedy and make sure all the main megadungeons were adequately set up and the players adequately motivated to visit them.

Another thing I decided was that I was going to be more lenient with the flow of information than the book indicated was necessary. Some of the turns the main plot takes either kind of come out of nowhere OR require everything to be put on pause for an exposition-dump. Neither approach really appealed to me, so I've consciously let certain NPCs be more knowledgeable than they were written as and let that extra knowledge slip to the players.

So, at this point, you know what you're running and to some extent how you are going to run it. You could get a group together and just dive in, but if you have the time I recommend that you go do some more reading. Look up notable monsters, magics, locations, established NPCs, and anything else that seems important. Read the Monster Manual entries for notable bosses and think about how the fight in the location suggested will actually play out. Is there any additional foreshadowing or cool regional effects you could add? Get your hands on a Sword Coast Adventurer's Guide and a Volo's Guide to Monsters (so, so much awesome giant lore) and read any relevant chapters. Google stuff and dig into all the older edition Forgotten Realms lore that just floats around online.

Of course, this extra reading can be done later, but again the earlier you read up on this stuff the more thought you can put into how you'll actually run it when it comes up in the game. Or, the more time you have to make up replacements for anything you want to change.

All but one of the official WotC D&D 5e adventures is set in the Sword Coast region of the Forgotten Realms. Did your eyes just glaze a little bit at the end of that last sentence? Did it read as "place I haven't heard of" in "setting I'm not familiar with"? You're not alone. I put a lot of thought into before starting SKT was exactly how deep into 'proper' Forgotten Realms Lore I was going to go. Because the more I stuck to the 'Official' Lore, the more homework I was going to have to do. Even worse, it was possible I might end up accidentally assigning homework to my players in order to understand what was going on. Reading up on the history of a fictional world isn't fun to some people (and should never become a barrier to having fun), and I wanted to be careful about not forcing my players to do so.

I ultimately ended up deciding to stick pretty close to 'official' lore. There was just too much cool details I didn't want to skip over or have to put the energy into replacing. Even though I've occasionally had to put a couple hours into somewhat dull reading or deep google dives, the end result has been (I feel) a more vibrant, varied world.

At the same time, I needed to decide how I wanted to parcel this information out to my players. I didn't want to bore them before we started playing with an hour-long lecture about the geography and history of the Forgotten Realms because again that's not fun, neither for them to have to sit through and for me

having to write and present it. I decided to have a little bit of a history lesson during Session Zero but to bring up most of the Lore as it becomes relevant in-game. A few recurring details seemed like potential backstory material so I quickly described the role of the main factions (Harpers, Zhentarim, etc) as well as the recent War of the Silver Marches and then we moved on.

(In fact, all the usual Session Zero advice probably applies doubly so for a published adventure. Getting everyone on the same page before you start playing is super important)

And now the game's off and running. Again, the two things that I feel are the most important once you get going are to keep a decent idea of where the plot is expected to go to keep everything running smoothly but also to stay open to changing things up to make player decisions matter. A smaller (yet no less important) piece of advice is when you're doing prep for a session be aware of where the book is leaving gaps in its information. They won't always point out a dangling plot thread they've left up to your discretion to resolve (or not) but more than likely your players will want to pull at it. Look for them and be prepared.

There are also a few smaller things I've learnt running SKT, so I'll use the rest of this article to discuss a couple ways running SKT has changed my GM style. Obviously, I've learnt more about general GM stuff like pacing dungeons, encounter balancing, when and how to tweak monsters, and the 'expected' flow of magic items. You know, stuff that you're always slightly improving upon the more experience you get. Just reading an official adventure, even if you don't end up running it, can help you hone those GM muscles.

The biggest change in how I prep a game since starting SKT has seen me learn to stop worrying and love NPC stat blocks. You know, the generic, archetypal stat blocks in Appendix B of the Monster Manual? I used to pretty much never use them. I thought they were dull and boring and there was definitely a lot of prep time I wasted building NPCs that closely followed player class options. But then reading SKT and seeing that most NPCs were this Stat Block or that Stat Block with a minor adjustment, made me decide to give them a go. I wasn't sure but after just a few sessions of using them I was a convert. I love the NPC stat blocks now. They save so much time and really just let the GM get out their own way and focus on what's important: the NPC's relationship with the characters.

The other major change to how I GM was the direct result of an early set piece where the players got secondary NPCs to play as alongside their main PCs. I put a lot of thought into how that session would actually work and it did end up requiring a lot more planning than most other sessions. But then it ended up being one of my favourite sessions of the campaign so far. Being able to bring in more viewpoints for a large-scale set piece really let me explore the scale and destruction of the giant's assault. It really got me thinking about how giving players access to other viewpoints can really flesh out the story. (The fact I killed one of the NPCs almost immediately and therefore set the stakes for the session helped as well)

It's a concept I've since played around with a bit. When two players were away one week, I had the attending players play as Storm Giants and ran them through the Hill Giant Lair. This both allowed me let me set up a lot of NPCs before they were meant to show up in the third act and gave those players an idea of exactly how powerful Storm Giants are. As an added bonus, the way they played their Storm Giants has changed a lot of how I was planning to portray them.

More recently, the party acquired a band of dwarven guards (which they will be controlling alongside their main PCs) as backup for the Fire Giant Megadungeon. Rather than simply have the dwarves spout exposition about why they were joining the party, I ran a two-session story where the players played as the dwarves, ran afoul of the Fire Giant's allies, and learnt important information the players needed to know. In both cases, temporarily shifting the viewpoint acted as a way of showing not telling the players about the world and (I hope) investing them more in the related plot elements.

# MiniCon III

Our third weekend of semi-structured gaming is next week, and already several amazing looking games have been offered. Go to <http://bit.ly/2fMwL2o> to sign up for games.

The following are still looking for players:

## **Test of Optimised Character Building for 5<sup>th</sup> Ed D&D** **- Chris Relling**

I'm considering running a game of 5E D&D where players are encouraged to try for the title of "Most Broken" character, highest "Hitpoints in one round" or "Big Cheese". I will buy some cheap trophies and get the titles engraved. Players would be required to generate their own character or two of about 11th level and take part in a published module designed for characters of about 15th level. Players can use resources from any Wizards of the coast D&D 5E material including UA material.

I'd like to eliminate some of the obvious overpowered builds to encourage creative character design. Initial house rules:

- No Mystics, I can't be bothered reading 28 pages of rules.
- Great Weapon Master becomes -3/+6 adjustment for to-hit and to-damage
- Sharpshooter becomes -3/+6 adjustment for to-hit and to-damage.

Once your character wins an award, you need to retire that character and play on with another character to give others a chance to shine.

For 'Big Cheese' I'm thinking. "Most gross abuse of verisimilitude of a medieval fantasy world."

For 'Most Broken' I was thinking along the lines of character that breaks the game and makes it unworkable.

## **Longest Night (LARP)** **-Quentin Bourne**

Longest Night is a short LARP in which a psychic tries to help four ghosts resolve their unfinished business with the aid of four living people.

## **The Rautt Síld Fortune (LARP)** **-Jen Hay**

Well known detectives, law enforcement officials and some psychics across the globe have received a mysterious message "Come to the Rautt Síld Manor in the Louisiana Bayou, prove yourself the best detective in the world and receive 10 million dollars and Find out what happened to Scarlet Rautt Síld the heir to the Rautt Síld fortune"

# **Dread – A Horror Game Where a Jenga Tower Is Used In Place of Dice**

**-John Massie**

From Wikipedia: Dread is a horror RPG published by The Impossible Dream. The game uses a Jenga tower for action resolution and was winner of the 2006 ENNIE Award for Innovation as well as being nominated for Best Game and Best Rule.

Due to a recent binge watch of 'Sagas of Sundry: Dread', I'm pretty excited to run a game or two. I'm looking for 3 or 4 players Saturday Morning and/or Saturday Afternoon.

## **Fiasco News Channel 6**

**-Ciarán Spencer Searle**

I'm offering a Sunday afternoon game of Fiasco, using the playset News Channel Six:

"Times are tough at Action Six News. We're last place in an already small market and losing ground all the time. It's not like much news-worthy stuff happens in this crappy little town anyway, and those bastards over at Action News Eleven always seem to be one step ahead of us! With advertising revenue drying up and people turning more and more to that blasted internet, sometimes you've got to get a little creative in reporting the news. The Action Six News team could be from any small city around the United States, filled with people who desperately seek notoriety, fame or—just occasionally—a better world."

## **Cane Hill**

**-Ciarán Spencer Searle**

Cane Hill was once a cutting edge psychiatric hospital in London but, after closing down in 1991, the site was left mostly untouched. It is now 2005, the year YouTube first started, and a couple of brave teens have decided to explore the ruined halls. There they will have to contend with the monstrous youths who have made the abandoned asylum their home and the monster within themselves.

This game will use the Monsterhearts 2 system, from Avery Alder on Saturday at around 2pm. We will be building on some of the ideas from the "Dungeonhearts" supplement and accessing the Second Skins playbooks in addition to the core skins.

## **Massive Darkness (Boardgame)**

**-Robbie Brown**

Game is on Sunday 1:30pm

It will take around 3 hours to play through, one spot left! message below to reserve it.

The game is a lighter dungeon crawl game, basically its Zombicide Black Plague with the focus being getting through a dungeon filled with a huge variety of enemies.

Quick and easy to learn if you've played any dungeon crawler before, still an easy game to learn if it's your first. BGG Link: <https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/197070/massive-darkness>

# **Pathfinder/D&D 5e Game**

## **-Daniel Humpage**

Hey all! Wanting to run a one shot set in my 5 year old world! It'd be pathfinder though I'm all good with mixing it with 5E!

Setting: high fantasy/steampunk

The Pearl Citadel has been under siege for 30 years by the Obsidian king, in those 30 years, the defenders of this bastion have held strong! However, some of the conduits holding back the creatures and monsters of the Obsidian onslaught have gone dark in the wastes beyond the walls.

You must travel outward, work your way around the near eternal battle at the gates and re-ignite the beacons of light to keep the defence effort strong!

It'll be cold, so bring your snow gear!

I'm looking for 4 to 6 players!

Roleplay is strongly advised! I'll be voice acting my butt off so it's always good to have players to bounce off in that regard.

# **MiniCon Games on Demand**

## **-Starky**

I'm not a fan of signing up to games at minicon before minicon, so I'm going to bring a bunch of games on the day.

What I will possibly bring:

-A PBTA game based on Dreamworks 'How To Train Your Dragon'

-'Dragonhunters' A DnD5 adventure where a bunch of Dragonborn go off to kill a dragon

-Masks, a PBTA supers game

-the Xcom board game

-An Xcom Rpg based on shadowrun 4e

-a folder full of PBTA.

See you humans there

# Handy links and interesting things

## Find us online

Our website: <http://saga.org.nz>

Facebook Page: [www.facebook.com/sagainc](http://www.facebook.com/sagainc)

Trello: <https://trello.com/b/zs9KCAIE/the-saga-bag>

Slack: <https://sagainc.slack.com>

## Looking for group

If you want to organise a game or see who is going to be there on a specific evening “SAGA Inc. – Looking for Group” on Facebook is where you want to go. It’s great for organising both one-off games and long term campaigns, as well as grabbing people for larger board games that require some organisation.

[Tinyurl.com/z46pzs](http://Tinyurl.com/z46pzs)

## Have your say

Do you have a controversial opinion, a game you want to review? Are you looking for players and want to advertise in the next edition of Out of Character?

We are looking for articles, game reviews, short stories about amusing in-game moments or heart wrenching tales of heroic sacrifice for the next publication of Out of Character. If you want to submit anything, please send your submission to [promotions@saga.org.nz](mailto:promotions@saga.org.nz) or send us a message on Facebook.

And now a word from our sponsors:



The wonderful folks at Seriously Board are offering a 10% discount to SAGA members. We have a discount code available on request, but remember, this is for SAGA members only. If you share this with non-SAGA members you risk losing the discount for everyone.

Check out their website

<https://seriouslyboard.co.nz/>



Our friends at Comics Compulsion are offering a 5% discount to SAGA members.

If you are in store and are buying anything from Comics Compulsion, simply show them your SAGA membership card and ask about the discount.

Comics Compulsion has a wide range of comics, board games and war gaming supplies. They also have a growing supply of roleplaying resources. The store has recently changed hands and the updated open hours are:

Saturday – Wednesday: 10am-5.30pm

Thursday and Friday: 10am-7pm

The store is located at:

58 Main North Road, opposite Northlands Mall