

THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR SOCIETY LTD

CODE OF CONDUCT – SOCIAL MEDIA, THE PRESS & ACWS MEMBERS

Social media – such as online discussion forums, blogs, and social networking sites like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter etc. etc. are popular ways of keeping in touch and sharing news, interests and experiences. Sometimes The Press and Television Media are also in contact with ACWS Re-enactments and their Members.

This Board guidance helps you use social media professionally or privately by ensuring you are aware of the risks, and understand American Civil War Society Ltd (ACWS) interests and expected standards of conduct and behaviour.

ACWS Members

As a member of ACWS you must avoid any conduct or behaviour that would reflect poorly on you or discredit you and/or the ACWS.

Postings on the Internet are rarely truly anonymous, and once something is posted on the Internet it may be difficult or impossible to remove, alter or correct.

Some postings on social media can be inaccurate and also cause offence, upset or embarrassment to other people. Like speaking to the press or other media, it is, in effect, a ‘public utterance’. These postings can reflect badly on you and potentially on ACWS and sometimes also re-enacting generally.

What you need to consider

- Follow the same standards of conduct and behaviour as would be expected to elsewhere.
- Think before you post or publish anything associated with ACWS. Information in your postings might be both commercially sensitive and upsetting to others.
- Careful about the information you share about yourself or your friends. The more you reveal about yourself on these sites, the greater the risk. Remember, uttering on Social Media and/or the Press is, in effect, “going public”.
- Think about your reputation and that of your friends and ACWS. Avoid damaging or discrediting yourself, friends or ACWS.
- Laws of libel apply to social networks and blogs.

ACWS has no intention of limiting sensible, personal, private use of social media or curtailing free speech. However, before operating either mouth or keyboard, please engage your brain: what you say can be broadcast anywhere, given how modern social media work!

Privacy and Security

However, if you are posting information on the web for personal purposes, you have certain obligations to ACWS and your friends and colleagues.

Participating in social media presents a threat to your privacy, your personal information and, potentially, your personal security and that of your friends and colleagues and ACWS.

Remember:

- Everything you share on a social networking site could potentially end up in the worldwide public domain and be seen or used by someone you did not intend, even if it appears to be ‘private’ or is on a closed profile or group.

- Some websites and social media accounts are set up for malicious purposes. People online may not be who they appear to be.
- Posting your personal details and whereabouts can leave you or your property vulnerable.

What you need to do:

- Protect personal information from open publication; for example, your full name, place and date of birth, home address, phone numbers, email addresses and National Insurance or passport details etc. etc. Be very circumspect.
- Do not give out information that would let someone else access your online accounts, such as password, memorable phrases or security questions. Keep your passwords difficult to guess and change them periodically.
- Be careful about the information you share online, and with whom. Choose your online friends carefully. Choose even more carefully what you say and to whom.
- Be careful about disclosing information about your friends. Respect their privacy and protect their security. Are they happy for you to publish that embarrassing photograph? Always remove material relating to them from your profile if they ask.
- Never disclose names or contact details of a Powder Officer, or black powder store on any open public forum. Likewise be wary of discussing any holding or storage of firearms on an open public forum.
- Make sure you understand the privacy policy of each site you use, and take note of any changes to the user agreement. The default option for many sites is that everyone can share everything you put on – not just your friends; so understand your security settings and consciously apply them, and check the impact of any changes that are announced.
- Take time to revisit the social networking sites you have joined to review what you have included in your profile, and that your privacy settings are still what you had previously selected.

The Press and other Public Media

Obviously ACWS wants the best “press” possible and to encourage new members and events and to encourage re-enacting generally. Where necessary ACWS will designate a Press Officer or person to talk to any media outlet contact – done by the Board and usually the Chairman or the Events Director, but it could be anybody chosen for a particular task.

ACWS members need to remember the same structures apply, as set out before, about Social Media, to the Press & Television. By all means be friendly, helpful, polite and constructive but also be secure and respectful of confidentiality. Matters of ACWS Policy are for the Board to deal with, so be careful not to be drawn ‘out of your depth’ or into potentially dangerous areas or topics. Because of hidden agendas. Do not stray beyond your remit or comment gratuitously upon matters upon which you are not fully informed or competent to talk about. Take care not to be drawn onto ‘thin ice’ and be aware that others in the Press and Television may well have other agendas they want to pursue. Don’t let them either use you or put words in your mouth you did not want to say, infer or imply. Be as circumspect and aware as you can be when dealing with these forms of media where ACWS or re-enacting is involved, and avoid falling into any traps they may lay for you. If in doubt, refer them back to the relevant Board member.

Finally, when dealing with all forms of media, and in relation to ACWS matters particularly, follow the age-old tried-and-tested formula “if in doubt, say nowt”. Always tell your Commanding Officer and/or a Board member regarding any odd or intrusive enquiries or anything strange going off or being communicated. Always be alert, aware and watchful.