

The Battered Blade

March AS XLIII

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Letter from the Editor:

War is imminent! Fighters are working on their battle tactics, taping up their swords, and readying their armor. It is the time for checking all the camping gear, planning menus, finding the cash you've squirreled away for Merchant Row, preparing your brain for the myriad of classes available, and sewing like a fiend to prepare that last-minute garb.

I've decided that I need to lighten the load and convert some of my piles of fabric into garb. I can't attend the War this year, but I'm sewing in spirit! =)

Anyway, my envious well-wishes go out to everyone winding their way to War. Be safe, be smart, and bring me a war story for the *Blade*!

YiS,
Ailleagan



Shire Schedule for March:

Unofficial fighter practices may be held on Thursdays at 5:30 at Feargus's house. Please check with him before heading over there. The schedule is subject to change for holidays, weather, and various mundane reasons. Archery practice is suspended for the off-season.

All meetings begin at 7:00 p.m. and are held in room 126 of the UAH Student Center unless otherwise noted.

March 4 - business meeting

March 11 - meeting canceled for Gulf Wars

March 18 - meeting canceled for Spring Break

March 25 - dance



Announcements:

Several offices are still in need of a deputy.

Per Lady Nuala, the Shire's seneschal:

"The Kingdom requires all officers to have an active membership. Unofficially I have requested that officers and their deputy be active in the shire. This is defined as attending at least the Business Meeting each month. We also have quarterly Officers Meetings prior to the regular Business Meeting. Since the shire has a fair number of members, I have encouraged individuals to only hold one office or deputy."

The offices in need are:

Chatelaine - The deputy must be ready and able to accept the position when Lady Aoibheann steps down in the next 12 months.

A&S - THL Moira is moving away in June (*sniff*), so Mistress Bianca needs a replacement.

Herald - There are no deputies that have an active role in the Shire, so Lord Connor is looking for someone.

Chronicler - I need a deputy.

THL Moira is also looking for someone to replace her as Scribal something-or-other. (Bad Chronicler - I didn't write it down!)

The Shire's Chirurgeon and Minister of Children (MoC) offices are also currently vacant. The MoC job requires a background check. It has also recently come to light that only current officers can apply for the background checks, so please keep that in mind.

If you have questions about any of the deputy positions, please contact the current officers. If you have questions about the Chirurgeon or MoC jobs, please contact Lady Nuala.



Coronation is coming up quickly. Here is the Populace's Oath of Fealty, in case you want to practice. Learn it, live it, love it! =)

I, (name), do swear fealty and service unto the Crown of Meridies. To speak and to be silent, to do and to let be, to come and to go, in need and in plenty, in peace and in war, in living and in dying, from this hour henceforth, until my Lord release me, or death take me, or the world end.



Congratulations to THL Dugal
on becoming Sir Cydrych's first squire!
Can't you feel the love?



Here, Sir Cydrych presents his squires, THL Dugal and Lord Killian the Black (of Iron Mountain), to the Prince, Princess, and the populace at Winter Collegium. Huzzah! That's Sir Ulrich in the back, after he lent his helping hands to Sir Cydrych as he presented a chain to Lord Killian.



Cloven Fruit: An Operator's Manual

Or... Why is this weirdo puckering up while handing me an orange?

*By Master William McNaughton, CL Barony of Thor's Mountain, Meridies mcnutt@pobox.com
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The "Cloved" or "Cloven" Fruit is an SCA tradition. It's fairly harmless, but it can be a little embarrassing if you don't know the rules. And it's essentially a kissing game. The Author (that's me) has not seen any verifiable claim to any medieval kissing game at all, and there have been numerous reports that the cloven fruit is, in fact, an SCA invention created way back in the ancient days of the 1980's.

Folk may argue that the cloven fruit isn't period, that kissing games are juvenile, or that they are unhygienic. But none of that really matters. Rare though they are in Meridies, they are going to show up, and you are going to have to deal with them. It's just an ice-breaker that allows two people to meet, and gives them something in common to talk about: namely, how awkward it is to deal with a cloven fruit.

That said, the cloven fruit is typically a citrus fruit of some type, orange, lemon, or the like. Although I have seen cucumbers and watermelons in my day. It is studded with cloves.

When presented with a cloven fruit, you have two choices, accept it or reject it. Do me a

favor: ALWAYS accept it. No matter what anyone may have told you, SCA culture, at least here in Meridies, does not put you under obligation to go tonsil-diving with every wierdo who walks up with an orange. However, many folks in the SCA are still working out how to speak to opposite-gender-type persons, and the cloven fruit give you the opportunity to interact constructively, no matter what your response. I can't speak for the ladies, but you'd go easier on me hitting me in the gut with a 2 pound ball-peen hammer than publicly rejecting a cloven fruit. It's just as embarrassing, and generates a less painful sensation in my stomach.

"But, I'm MARRIED," you say, or "My boyfriend is very jealous," or "I'm gay!" Worst of all: "This person is greasy and disgusting! I don't want to kiss that!" Well, a cloven fruit is not an invitation to get married, go steady, or even spend the night, although there may be some hope that it will lead to one or more of the above. It's a way to meet you, and a statement that you are attractive and interesting.

If you are not interested, for whatever reason, don't make excuses. Just smile and allow them to put the fruit in your hand. Remove a clove with your fingers, and firmly present your hand to be kissed. That should be all it takes. Whoever is presenting the fruit should kiss your hand. If they press farther, they are out of line. In that event, say, don't shout, firmly, "Down boy! Sit! Stay!" This will get your point across in a light-hearted manner that will minimize hurt feelings or embarrassment.

If, on the other hand, you find the presenter intriguing, remove a clove with your teeth, and present your cheek, or lips as you consider appropriate.

The Cloven Fruit is also gender-discriminatory. The Ladies are ALWAYS in the driver's seat. The relative level of the smoochies is determined by the lady involved. Gentlemen, if a lady presents you with a fruit, wait to see what part of her anatomy she wants kissed. Likewise, if you present a lady with a fruit, wait for her to present a hand, cheek or lips. Don't ever presume.

Once you have completed the ritual, you have a fruit in your hand full of cloves, minus the one you took out. Look around for someone you might like to meet, or already know and want to smooch, and pass the fruit on.



My Fabric Addiction

Or. . . She Who Dies with the Most Fabric Wins, Unless She's Buried in the Avalanche of it All.

By Lady Ailleagan nas Seolta

I've always been a firm believer in the "C" in the SCA - the creative. I'm the first one to admit that I don't always wear linen or wool. I like silk noil. I prefer to purchase my trim,

especially if it's sparkly. I do, however, draw the line at polyester and similar sweat-inducing fabrics next to my skin. And I will never, ever go to an event wearing a brown and brown floral challis particolor gown made from a princess-seamed prom dress pattern and question someone else's period-ness. I promise. (Ask me if this has ever happened to me.)

However, this doesn't mean I'm haphazard in my approach to making garb or amassing a wealth of material. Somewhat the opposite, actually. I'm a list maker. I always have at least one kind of notebook close at hand. Usually three.

If you have more fabric than you have immediate projects, you need a system to catalog it. For me, this came about when I was rearranging our work room and I found stacks of fabric that had been missing - forgotten, really - for about six years. I think. Well, at least I know it's been no more than eight years since we . . . ok, *I* . . . stored them for safekeeping. Yeah.

Everyone has their own way of cataloging. Do it however works best for you. You can group the fabrics by color, by content, by who-will-ultimately-be-wearing-this. I have all my material in Rubbermaid tubs with lids, to protect them from critters, both pets and potential not-pets. They aren't packed in any kind of order, but I do have a list of each tub's contents taped to one end so I can easily see what is in the tub without having to root around inside. If the fabric is made into something, it's just crossed off the list. Some of the descriptions are actual content - *red heavy slub-woven linen, 2 3/8 yards, 60" wide*. Some are things only comments that I understand - *blue tiny diamond, 1 3/8 yards*. I always include the yardage in case I get an idea for a fabric, but I only include the width if it's different than 45" wide. I even have a tub full of nothing but fabric I intend to dye. (Note: if you think you might want to dye fabric sometime, make absolutely certain that it isn't coated with any kind of stain-resistant substance or other junk that will prevent the color from taking properly. **Don't** ask me how I know. It's still a sensitive issue.)

I also recently made pages of fabric swatches. I stapled little pieces of each material to card stock, then wrote the descriptions (the same descriptions that I have on the tubs, so I don't get confused) and yardages out beside them. The samples don't have to be huge - I just cut little snippets from the corners, and only big enough to get a representative idea of what it looks like. The solid jade linen piece is pretty small, but the red, black, and yellow plaid swatch is a bit larger.

You can also make the swatch pages with any trim you have. I don't, because I'm terrified that I'll be exactly 1" too short when I put trim on an outfit. Call me crazy.

I do have all my trim in a clear-ish plastic set of drawers. Again, you can use your own system: color, width, metallic content, whatever. I have mine divided into trims that will be mostly used for Dugal (red, gold, yellow, and black), mostly for me (purple, green, white, and silver), and everything else (pink, blue, and the rest). Thread, bobbins, yarns, and needles have their own drawer, as do patches and buttons. Scissors, seam rippers, measuring tapes, chalk, and other tools are kept in a purple PowerPuff Girls backpack on top of the drawers.

I'm still working on a system for storing my patterns. Right now they're just in a pile. I need to graduate to at least a box. Or another PowerPuff Girls backpack. I think I'll do that before I finish this article.

There's always a question of how much fabric or trim to buy. As a general rule of thumb, for general purchases, I buy between four and five yards of fabric and five to ten yards of trim. This could be wildly different if I have a project in mind and I know what yardages I'll need. For those that are of a later-period mind, you may want to get around 10 yards of fabric if it has a pattern or nap (that fuzz on velvets and velveteens). Extant garments have shown that medieval people didn't pay attention to nap and pattern, they just made the pattern pieces fit on the fabric regardless of the direction; modern tendencies shudder at this thought.

I have an earlier-period persona, so I am quite comfy in my wardrobe of tunic dresses, super-tunics, and Viking aprons, with the occasional skirt, chemise, and bodice combination thrown in for fun.

I am also Scottish (by blood and by persona), so I love a good bargain. This, for years, had led me to be clothed in cotton. I like it. It's comfortable, it's available in a huge variety of weights and weaves, and it comes in great colors. (I also read that "Celtic women were overly fond of adornment", so the color options are a bonus.) However, with the bargains of Sir's Fabrics not so far away and a more knowledgeable eye, I have come to fall in love with linen. It is gloriously cool in hot weather, which makes it terrifically layerable in the cooler months. And if you find the real stuff at Sir's, you'll be paying less than \$4.00 per yard. Much less, if you catch it on sale, like the piece of black linen I found for \$0.88 on the remnant table, or the length of jade linen I found for \$1.49 per yard. That's even cheaper than some cottons! Woo hoo!

This past Valentine's Day, a friend called me and told me that Hancock's was selling any single red fabric - in as much as a five-yard increment - for half price. I'm married to man called The Red Giant, so how could I possibly let this opportunity pass? I think between the two of us, the two days of the sale, and the two stores in town, we made about eight different trips and loaded him up.

We even hit a big rummage sales over the weekend. I recently found a full-sized cotton bed throw in a great rustic stripey weave in a gorgeous (if slightly faded) red for \$2.00. I had planned to make a bog coat out of it, but Dugal decided it was great just as a wrap. Instagarb!

As much as I prefer natural fibers, I'm not totally appalled by the idea of a synthetic. I have a skirt made from a nice olive green stripe that isn't even remotely natural, but it looks nice. It will be great in cooler weather, or I can hike up one side and tuck it into my belt at warmer events.

One of my biggest weaknesses is the dollar table at Wal-Mart. Lately, they've mostly only had polyester and acrylic and stuff that I would only wish on my husband's ex-wife, but

occasionally they have some wonderful cottons, flannels, or plaids. Several months ago, we found some kelly green cotton knit that my middle son flipped over; Dugal insists on making knit pants for the kids so they won't get torn up so quickly, so we bought the whole bolt. That young one got a lovely green outfit - hood, tunic, and pants - for Christmas.

I also dug up some gray and navy plaid flannel that had come off the dollar table several years ago. It was way too plain for anyone in our house (which makes me wonder why I bought it in the first place), so I dyed it red. As luck would have it, some of the red knotwork trim we had matched it perfectly. It ended up as a very cool tunic for the Giant, and in no way resembled the original material. I'm hoping I can have similar success with a length of some shocking green cotton. I had bought some for the green-loving son; when I went back to the store a week or two later, they had a couple of yards left on the bolt on the sale table. I'm going to try bathing it in a teal dye to tone it down a bit.

One down side to my unfettered desire for fabric is that it takes up space, even when it is cataloged and organized. I have eight Rubbermaid tubs of fabric, three drawers of trim, a drawer of appliques and buttons, a drawer of thread, a backpack (now) stuffed with patterns, a shelf full of dyes, a shelf packed with research books, a notebook bursting at the seams with sketched ideas and swatches, an opaque projector-thing for enlarging patterns found in research books, and a partridge in a pear tree. (OK, the last one was an exaggeration. . .) And we cannot forget the seven or eight sewing machines we have scattered around the house.

A second down side is that I have been placed on a moratorium from buying fabric without a purpose until I can sew up two tubs' worth of garb. But he is letting me buy several yards of blue linen for a dress for Crown List. . .

