

The Battered Blade

December AS XLII – January AS XLIII
(2007 - 2008 CE)



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Letter from the Editor:

The holidays are upon us! Whether you celebrate Christmas, Yule, or Festivus, remember to be kind. Event season has slowed down - there is nothing else on the Kingdom Calendar until January, but RealLife (tm) is about to kick into overdrive! The holidays are hectic with parties, friends and family, traffic, crowds, deadlines, people trying to cram in doctor's appointments before the New Year turns and new deductibles have to be met, and just general mental and physical overloads. Don't be afraid to slow down and take time for yourself. You don't have to do everything for everyone. Take care of yourself first.

And take your Vitamin C - this crazy weather is bound to get the best of us sooner or later!

YiS,
Ailleagan



Shire Schedule for December, January, and February:

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.

December 4 - business meeting

December 11 - shire holiday party at Nuala's; bring a dish and bring a gift for Dirty Santa!

No more meetings in 2007

January 1 - no meeting

January 8 - business meeting

January 15 - project night - to prepare for Winter Collegium

January 22 - class night - autocratting forum

January 29 - dance (to help prepare for the White Rose Ball at Coronation)

February 2 - Winter Collegium

February 6 - business meeting
February 13 - project night
February 20 - class night - herbs
February 27 - bardic, focusing on stories

Hope to see you all there!



Announcements:

Magna Faire, hosted by the Barony of Iron Mountain, turned out to be a very important event for Shire members!



Lord Philip of Newkirk was awarded the Guiding Hand.



Lord Dugal became The Honorable Lord Dugal when he received his Grant of Arms.



Say hello to Sir Cydrych!!



Expand Your Persona: Know Your Dog

by Lady Fionnuala inghean ui Domhnall, called Nuala

The earliest dogs were probably not hunters but scavengers and watchdogs, but by the time dogs first appear in the artistic/archaeological record, they had evolved into superb hunter/trackers.

As Europe emerged from the Dark Ages, dog keeping was much in vogue. Nobility established royal kennels under supervision of a royal court officer, the Master of the Hounds. Kings and queens would personally handle their canines. Serfs ranked about equal with dogs, or perhaps a bit lower, under the feudal system initiated and perpetrated by William in England.

The English, Irish, Scots, Welsh, and French produced special breeds for sport and breeding, and other breeds provided the working dogs required by the growing numbers of traders, shopkeepers, and craftsmen. Dog dealers and shippers sold Pointers, Setters, and Retrievers. Small terriers began to emerge to catch and destroy the rodents.

Breeds based on artistic representations are sight hounds, short-limbed hounds, Mastiffs, and mongrels. The first responsibilities of dogs were primarily as hunting companions, bed warmers, and food sources. Over the years, breeds became specialized for more complicated tasks, creating the breeds common today. During the Middle Ages, we see dogs that were used in hunting and warfare, agriculture for herding and shepherding, and finally pet dogs - small lap breeds.

The Dogs of War

The Molossian (*Canis Molossus*) dog of Epirus was the strongest known to Romans, which were specifically trained by the military for battle. However, when fought against the broad-mouthed, powerful Mastiff (*Pugnaces Britanniae*) found in Britannia, they were outmatched. The Romans exported many of this breed of Mastiff to Rome and then disseminated them over the known world. Often war dogs would be sent into battle with large protective metal collars, from which spikes and curved knives protruded at all angles, coats of chain mail. Romans had attack formations made entirely of dogs. These proved to be effective machines of war at the time.

*101 - The Romans employ one fighting dog company per legion.

*1525 - Henry VIII exports 400 Mastiffs to support Spain.

*1580 - Elizabeth I sends 800 fighting dogs to fight in the Desmond Rebellions.

The Sight Hounds

Sight hounds, also known as gazehounds as their gaze focuses on the horizon seeking game, specialize in hunting their quarry by sight rather than scent. Sight hounds have distinctive characteristics, features, and traits which are perfect for their purpose. Sight hounds have extremely good vision. They also have a long jaw and lengthy neck which assists them in sighting their quarry. Their lean muscular body, deep chest, and long powerful legs are essential assets when following any kind of fast and agile prey.

*These dogs specialize in pursuing prey, keeping it in sight, and overpowering it by their great speed and agility.

*They must be able to quickly detect motion, so they have keen vision.

*Sight hounds must be able to capture fast, agile prey such as deer and hare, so they have a very flexible back and long legs for a long stride.

The Scent Hounds

Scent hounds specialize in following the scent of smell of its quarry. It was not necessary for scent hounds to be as fast and agile and sight hounds; they do not need to keep their quarry in sight. Scent hounds are built for endurance. They can follow a scent for long distances, even across running water. Scent hounds have distinctive characteristics, features, and traits which are perfect for their purpose. They have large noses which have deep, open nostrils and their lips are loose and moist, designed to pick up scent particles and follow the trail of an animal. Their ears are long, which concentrates the scent on the nose. Their bodies are designed for endurance, an essential asset when following any scent trail.

*These dogs specialize in following a smell or scent.

*Most of these breeds have long, drooping ears. One theory says that this trait helps to collect scent from the air and keep it near the dog's face and nose.

*They also have large nasal cavities, the better to process scent. Their typically loose, moist lips are said to assist in trapping scent particles.

Working Dog Breeds

Dogs in the working group were developed to perform a wide variety of tasks, such as herding, droving, pulling, hauling, herding, hunting, rescuing, and guarding. They very nature

of many of these tasks requires, a big, strong dog. Working dogs have always been viewed as real assets to their owners and have worked with man replacing animals such as horses when no such animals were available.

All herding behavior is modified predatory behavior. Most herding breeds have physical characteristics that help them with their work, including speed and endurance. Shorter breeds, such as Welsh Corgis, were bred to that they would be out of the way when cattle, their primary charges, kicked at them.

During late periods in towns, Dog Carts were used to transport children and goods, such as milk water, and meat, for peddlers.

Terrier Dog Breeds

Dogs in the terrier group were developed to hunt and kill vermin. The vermin included rats, mice, and other predatory animals such as foxes that might raid a farmer's produce and livestock. The very nature of these tasks required an energetic, tenacious, brave, and determined dog. Most terrier breeds were developed in the British Isles. They were used to control rats, rabbits, and foxes both over and under the ground.

Toy Dog Breeds

The toy dogs were initially owned by the wealthy and were viewed by others as status symbols - a luxury item with little apparent purpose. The trend continues to this day.

In the 1300s, Italian sailors rediscovered little dogs, such as the Bichon Frise, on their voyages, and are credited with returning them to the continent, where they became great favorites of Italian nobility.

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**How to Prepare for a Knighting: A Study in Subterfuge
aka "Don't look him in the eyes. . . he'll know!"**

by Lady Ailleagan nas Seolta

How do you hide the elevation of a friend from a larger group of friends, but still get them to show up at Court? That's easy. . . You lie. . . A lot.

Fortunately or unfortunately, depending on how you look at it, we had three things happening at this event. The most secret, of course, was the Knighting. The second, but only slightly less secret was this: Dugal's GoA. The third, and most public, was the 17th wedding anniversary of the Prince and Princess.

Their Royal Highnesses were kind enough to let us use their anniversary as an excuse to set up a large pavilion outside the main hall, under the guise of having a big party for them that evening. (That was a relief, because I had no idea how I was going to explain that I was making food for an event, Magna Faire, that I had no part in organizing.)

We began telling people that we were having a party for Their Highnesses, and that they should stay through Court, since the party was after Feast, which was after Court. A couple of them bought it, and that was good. Others didn't buy it, and that wasn't good..

"OK, don't say anything, but Dugal is getting his Grant of Arms at Court. You should stay and see it." A few more agreed to it. Others still didn't.

I was fortunate: I could use "entourage duty" as an excuse to get Dugal there. And given how well the éclairs had gone over during feast at Unchained Doom, preparing food for the "anniversary party" was not a problem. Dugal even offered to make something for the "anniversary party"!

After a couple of weeks, it was all I could do to not use "air quotes" every time I said "anniversary party".

Mistress Alys had been cleaning out her house to prepare for their move, and she had given me things at two or three household luncheons. This fact came in handy when I forgot to cover up the bags of blue, white, and silver party supplies and decorations she had entrusted to me.

"What's that?" Dugal asked.

I panicked inwardly, but outwardly I just shrugged. "Just more stuff Alys gave me. . ." I quietly cursed myself blue at that point!

"Oh, OK."

Whew!

The days slowly ticked by, and everyone in House Silver Thistle was eventually given tasks to help pull off the ceremony and party. The fun part was that we hadn't been permitted to tell our spouses, so these projects had to be completed on the sly.

A week or so before the event, Cydrych's father told Alys that he wanted to be there for the elevation. How do you sneak someone's father into court, someone who has never been to an SCA event in his life?!?! Bless Mistress Alys's heart for figuring that one out.

Four days before the event, Alys told Dugal about the elevation (insert my personal sigh of relief), and asked him to carve a fighting belt with Cydrych's Knightly lineage: Cydrych's device, Sir Shaltar's device, and Sir Harald's device. He agreed, and had the tooling done by lunch the next day. Quite a feat, when you realize that each device was less than 1 1/2" tall!



This photo was taken after Mistress Alys painted the devices; you can see the work involved!

I called Alys and said I needed to drop by their house so I could have her sign an herb book that she had given me; it had been given to her by Sir Robert Hightower, so I was going to make it an heirloom / lineage book. That was my story, and I was sticking to it.

She came out to sign the book, then she walked me to my car. Cydrych was watching tv, so we knew we were safe. Dugal handed her the box with the belt inside, and for some reason, at that exact moment, Cydrych chose to come outside! She dropped the box into the floor at my feet. Cydrych came over to say hi, and I tried desperately not to laugh out of nervous terror.

We mumbled "Gotta go. . . dinner with parents" excuses.

Cydrych continued to joke with the kids in the back seat.

"JUST GO THE HELL INSIDE ALREADY!!" I screamed inside my head.

I *just knew* he was suspicious of us! He turned and went toward the house, but he wouldn't go inside. He was hanging around the garage, fiddling with stuff! Ack!!!

Back at the car, we were all not-too-silently willing him to go inside the house, laughing at the ridiculous-ness of the situation. We stared at the back of his head, trying to force him inside with our minds. After three-and-a-half hours (which, in actuality, was only about 90 seconds) he went inside and we finally made the drop.

Three days to go! I had no plans to see anyone before the event, so I didn't have to worry about being secretive at this point. All I had to do now was cook.

The day before the event, I set about my culinary tasks: éclairs with chocolate sauce and chicken-bacon egg rolls. Simple enough, right? Well, I had some bananas going black, so I made a banana-chocolate chip cake. I took a pie out of the freezer and packed it for our personal food. We had some leftover cherry-rosemary ham and potato-bacon stovies from Thanksgiving, so I chopped them up and made calzones. Later that afternoon, I helped Dugal make some stuffed dates. I think there was something else, but I can't remember what it was for the life of me! When I laid it all out to be packed, it looked like enough food to feed the Meridian Army!

Once Nuala and Dugal and I had arrived safely at Magna Faire on Saturday morning, we set up the pavilion. Very conveniently, it was to be used during the day as a staging point for an Embroiderer's Guild display. For most of the rest of the day, we all took turns tending to the Prince and Princess, doing general eventy stuff.

Then Alys came up to me and practically hissed, "Someone told Cydrych congratulations! I have to do damage control . . ." Yikes!

Apparently someone who knew someone who knew someone who knew someone who was serving in Iraq forgot there was this thing called e-mail, which allows you to instantaneously communicate back around the globe, spilled the beans. *sigh* The jig was up.

Or so we thought. Fortunately, Baroness Katerina was walking with Cydrych when it happened, and she totally played it off and gave him that blank "some people are nutsy-cuckoo" look. He bought it! Yessss!

Finally, it came time for Court. Mistress Bianca cleared the Guild items out of the tent, and we hung the walls so we could sneak in the food and set up the decorations.

I walked out to help Mistress Alys garb up Cydrych's father, who had arrived perfectly on time. It was then my task to sneak him in the back of the hall and find him a seat. I failed. All the seats in the back of the room were taken! The only place left for him was TWO ROWS IN FRONT OF CYDRYCH!!! He kept his hood on for the duration of what seemed (to

us) to be the longest Court in the history of Courts, and my heart was pounding for a solid three hours. If Cydrych leaned over too far, if his father turned to talk to Lord Phillip, if any of a dozen tiny little things had happened, our cover would probably be blown. Ack!! Nuala, sitting two chairs over from me, was equally concerned. And we couldn't talk about it because Lord Robert, who knew nothing about the Knighting, was sitting between us! Double Ack!!

Lord Philip of Newkirk received a Guiding Hand, and then-Lord Dugal did receive a Grant of Arms. There were many other awards given, both in Royal and Baronial courts, but the blood rushing through my ears made it impossible to hear what was happening.

The subterfuge even extended to the King and Queen. Cydrych was called up and told he was going to be removed from the ranks of the Legion of the Bear. Given this news, Cydrych laughed, for he knew they were joking. His Majesty Maximillian, a consummate thespian, looked him sternly in the eyes and said, "This is not a laughing matter, Baron Cydrych."

The smile dissolved from Cydrych's face.

That's when Prince Caspar suggested that he be allowed to face his accusers, and Master Alexander called forth the Order of the Chivalry. In that instant, the crowd erupted. Also in that instant, Cydrych's face went from fear and concern to shock and amazement to unbridled joy. His squire's chain flew from his neck, his outstretched hand toward His Majesty. At that moment, Cydrych realized the chain was not His Majesty's property, but Sir Shaltar's, so he sheepishly put it back on.

In the end, it was quite wonderful. Master Salih spoke for the Pelicans, Mistress Bianca spoke for the Laurels, Sir Ulrich spoke for the Chivalry, and Prince Caspar spoke for the Royal Peers. Sir Griffin caught Cydrych after the King's Buffet that we all seemed to feel. It was quite a thudder. And there were apparently a few other buffets from other Knights as he greeted his new peers. But he never let them see him wince! Huzzah!



We all cried, but we could all finally breathe easier.

Later that night, Sir Shaltar gave Sir Cydrych his first fight as a Knight. At one point, it - of course - resulted in a double-kill.



After the fighting, there was much rejoicing, much noshing, and many cream puffs going home with Sir Cydrych and Mistress Alys.

I don't know if I ever want to know about anyone's elevation ever again.

I'm kidding, of course. . .



