



Shire of Al-Sahid Newsletter

Scorpion Tales

August 2006

Around the Shire

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August Shire Meeting

The next Shire meeting will be at on Sunday, August 20, 2006 at Gregor's and Lady Jane's home at 9032 Buckthorn Street in Hesperia.

The September Shire meeting was originally set for Sept. 20, but in view of the weekend-long Crown may be shifted to Sept. 10. We will keep you posted.

Fighter Practice

Fighter Practice is on Monday nights at 6:30 at Sir Killian's. For directions and more information about how to hit your friends for fun and profit, please contact Sir Killian at kiltek@earthlink.net.

A&S (Craft) Nights

Our August A&S meeting is Monday, August 14 at Sir Killian's and THL Teka's. Please do come, we will be making Highland War site

tokens and could use everyone's help. We will also be discussing the War.

Costuming Guild

The Costuming Guild usually meets on the third Monday of every month at Lady Jane's. The August meeting will be Aug. 21. Bring your ideas, fabric, pictures, patterns, books and anything else.

Dance Practice

The indefatigable
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July Officer Reports

Seneschal: Arranged for dance classes with Baroness Robyn.

Arts & Sciences: Not present.

Children: Not present.

Chatelaine: Nothing to report.

Chronicler: Not present.

Constable: Lord Fritz has agreed to become deputy constable.

Exchequer: Quarterly report is complete.

Herald: Not present.

List: Nothing to report.

Marshal: Not present.

Presentations: Made and presented Snicker Doodles (a period recipe, of course) to Her Majesty at Lyondemere Anniver-

(Report, Continued on page 6)

On FAVORS

By Donal Mac Ruiseart

(Editor's note: this article, reprinted with permission from Stefan's Florilegium, is written from Atlantia but speaks to the entire SCA.)

"My Lords," intones the herald, "Salute the Crowns of Atlantia." The fighters and the herald bow towards the thrones.

"My Lords, salute the one who inspires you this day!" The fighters turn. One bows to his wife, standing on one side of the Lists, the other raises his sword to a lady he met only an hour before, sitting on the opposite side. The wife blows a kiss; the other lady stands and nods her head.

"Salute your worthy opponent!" The fighters face each other and raise their swords in salute. The herald steps aside and the marshal delivers his charges to the fighters. At his call of "Lay on!" the Lists resound with the impact of swords on shields.

As they fight, you see that both are wearing favors. The one worn by the fighter who saluted his wife is hung over his belt. It is richly embroidered with his initials and hers in a decorative border, a symbol of their formal and ongoing devotion to each other. The other wears a ribbon tied around his arm, which the lady had pulled from her hair not long before the Lists opened. The favors differ as much as the connections between the fighters and the ladies, and are examples of two of the many forms that both can take.

The origin of the custom of favors or tokens is obscure, but there are many references to them in the litera-

ture of the Middle Ages. A lady might give a scarf, a sleeve (they were easily detached), a jewel, or some other such personal item to a knight who was riding off to battle or to a tournament. In some cases the battle or tournament was to be fought for the lady's own sake, as in the case of a judicial duel.

In the Current Middle Ages, the custom has developed of making special objects specifically called "favors" that are given to a fighter or fighters for several reasons. Though it is usually a lady who gives a favor to a lord, it can be done the other way around, especially if a lady fighter has a non-fighting lord. But there are cases of a lord and a lady wearing each other's favors in lists or battlefield. For ease of expression, though, I will use the case of the ladies being the ones giving the favors and the lords being those who receive them.

Favors take many forms, not only in their physical construction but in their significance. The general classifications of significance can be explained as follows.

"Romantic" favors are given by a lady to a fighter with whom she has an ongoing relationship, that is, her husband or lover. These are often very elaborate.

"Friendship" favors are given by a lady to one or more lords who are her friends, often members of the same household.

"Loyalty" favors are given by a lady of rank, as a Baroness, Princess,

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(Team building, Cont. from page 2)

or Queen, to those fighters who enter the field of battle in the service of her Barony, Principality, or Kingdom. These tend to be simple, since they must be made in large quantities. Fighters can often be seen lining up to receive such favors in the time before a battle.

The "Premiere Lady" of some households gives favors to all the fighters of the household, being a custom somewhere between "Friendship" and "Loyalty" favors.

Finally but not least is the most misunderstood of favors, which one might call a "for the nonce" favor. Such a favor is bestowed by a lady on a fighter she may have met only that day, and which should be returned when the tourney is over, or in any case by the end of the event. In a way, this can be the most romantic of favors, in the literary sort of sense, and is the one whose etiquette I will discuss at some length later in this article.

What form do these favors take? It is limited only by the imagination and skill of the bestower, but most commonly a favor takes the form of a rectangle of fabric with some decoration identifying the bestower, and sometimes, especially in the case of "Romantic" favors, the one wearing it as well. Usually worn tucked into a belt or strap, they will often have a loop at the top for extra security. It is no fun to lose one. I once combed the field where a Pennsic battle was fought, thinking I had lost my

Lady's favor there. It later turned up in camp, to my relief and the amusement of many others - including my Lady! Favors given by Queens on the eve of battle are often no more than strips of ribbon printed with the Queen's badge. I have worn favors in the form of knots or braids of yarn or cord, and one that was a small square of leather stamped with the cognizance of a Crown Princess of the East. Lacking a prepared favor, a lady might improvise. She might give the fighter a bit of ribbon from her hair or a sleeve (not a whole sleeve, please, ladies, the chance of damage is too great!), a scarf, or some other thing that would not itself be at risk or place the wearer at risk. For that reason, a piece of jewelry in not a good choice.

As I noted earlier, the least understood of favors is the "for the nonce" favor. The meaning of long-term favors is easily understood, as is the meaning of "loyalty" favors. However, if a fighter seeks to honor a lady by asking to carry her favor in the Lists (though in fact it is she who honors him), he must realize that what he is doing is paying her a formalized compliment, and that by bestowing such a favor the lady is paying him a similar and greater compliment, and nothing more. Bestowing a favor on a fighter for the day's tourney or battle does not obligate the lady to anything. She need not sit with him at the feast, or accompany him to a post-revel, or anything of the kind ... In fact, she is not even obligated to allow him to wear the favor for the

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duration of the day, for if he displeases her in some way during the day she has every right to demand its return. And a fighter who loses a favor that way ought indeed to be ashamed.

Let us assume that there is a fighter at a tourney who has no lady, or perhaps whose lady is not at the event. (As I said earlier, this can work either way. My lords, keep in mind that a lady fighter may approach you in this way someday!) Wishing to keep in the spirit of things, he looks about him for a lady to compliment by asking her for a favor. He ought to look for a lady who appears to have no lord there. He goes to her and salutes her.

"Good day to you, m'lady," he might say, "I am Marco diGiardino."

"And a good day to you, m'lord," she may reply, "I am Anne De La Marche." If she extends her hand, he ought to bow over it and kiss it (hand kissing is a gentle thing. He ought

barely to brush her hand with his lips.).

At this point he ought to kneel. "Lady Anne, it is my intent to fight in this day's tourney, and I wonder if you would honor me by allowing me to carry your favor in the Lists this day."

Now, she may decline to give a favor, and she may or may not tell him why. It matters not, though. If a lady declines to give you a favor, always assume that it is because she has a lord, or that she just doesn't give "for the nonce" favors, or she just doesn't understand, or maybe she doesn't like to watch tourneys or has plans to do something else during the tourney. Do not haggle or cajole. If you do, you've spoiled the gallantry of it! Simply rise, bow, and say something to the effect of "As you wish, m'lady," then bow again and take your leave. Even if your feelings are hurt, keep a lid on it!

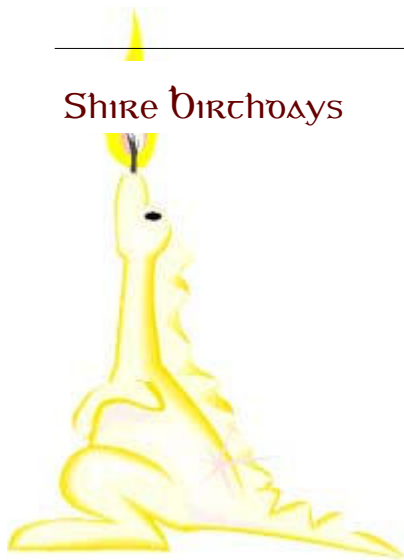
Her answer may be that she will be delighted to be so honored (Note that each one maintains that the

Shire Birthdays

*(Ed. Note: Only one
this month that I know of!)*

Gregory 9/12

Happy
birthday!!



other is the one doing the honoring ... of such is courtesy made), and if she has a favor prepared, she would hand it to him. If she is so inclined but has no prepared favor, she may improvise with ribbon, yarn, or any other suitable item. If you approach a lady in this way and she is at a loss as to what to offer, my lords, be prepared to suggest something. If she does bestow the favor, he should take it and tuck it with great care into his belt, or some other suitable place if he is already in armor. Then he should rise and say something to the effect that he will make every effort to be worthy of the honor she has bestowed upon him. He might ask her where she is most likely to be during the tourney, that he may know where to salute. Then he should rise, bow, and take his leave of her.

At the beginning of each match in which he fights, he should make an effort to locate her so that when the call to "salute the one who inspires you this day" is given, he will know which way to bow. The lady should pay attention and respond with a wave, a nod, some indication that she is interested (whether she really is or not!). After each match he should go to her and say something to the effect that he hopes he has pleased her with his performance.

Now, this does not hinge on whether he won or lost! Did he conduct himself with courtesy? Did he carry himself with grace? Did he look good out there? If he lost, did he take it in stride? If so, then by all means she ought to be pleased! If on

the other hand he acted like a churl, used foul language, was disrespectful of the Crown or the marshal or his opponent or suchlike, she should tell him of that. If he is contrite and promises to amend his ways, she might give him another chance. Everyone has lapses. It is a serious thing to demand that a favor be returned before the wearer is done fighting. She should do that only if he has done something really bad or continues whatever displeases her after she has told him of it.

I hate to have to address this, but if a lady does demand the early return of a favor and the fighter refuses, this is a very serious breach of courtesy. She should take her complaint to the Baroness, Princess, or Queen; or if none of those are present, to the Marshal in charge of the event. In my opinion, such a one ought to be removed from the Lists, but it is the option of the one in charge to act on it.

Assuming all goes well, when the fighting is over, he should return to the lady, kneel, and offer to return the favor, again with the hope that he has been worthy of it. If it is an elimination tourney and the fighter is eliminated, he ought to offer to return the favor at that point. If there is to be more fighting, and he wishes to continue to wear the favor, he should ask her permission to do so. He should kneel and hand the favor back to her, repeating his hope that he has pleased her by wearing it. Chances are it might have been stained or damaged, but there is no dishonor in that! If there is damage,

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"Iron rusts from disuse; stagnant water loses its purity and in cold weather becomes frozen; even so does inaction sap the vigor of the mind."

—Leonardo da Vinci

(Around the Shire, Continued from page 1)

Baroness Robyn of Dreiburgen has kindly consented to teach a dance class at Lord Blase's and Lady Ryan's house. Accompanied by her lord husband Baron Malcolm, Her Excellency will begin the class at 6:30 pm on August 16. The address is 15188 Nokomis Rd., Apple Valley.

PROJECTS AND PLANS

Lady Blase will be teaching a chainmail class at Great Western.

It was suggested that the seneschal write a brief description of the job for the Scorpion Tales, and have each of his deputies that are interested in the job write a "letter of intent" stating their ideas/plans/qualifications for the next issues of the Scorpion Tales. We would announce candidates at the Yule meeting and vote at the January meeting. Please see the "Seneschal's Corner" for more details.

We still need to get together to coat the Dragonwing poles (low priority) and replace Dragonwing ropes (medium to high priority).

Pentachlon

Keep working on and researching your projects! Remember that it's easier to research an entry first rather than create something and then try to find documentation for it.

Great Western War

As you have no doubt heard by now, GWW is in great disarray following an electrical meltdown at Prado Park. We will definitely not be having it at Prado this year, although the autocrats are feverishly trying to locate a new site. Until then, all pre-registrations are in limbo.

Hesperia Days Demo

Remember the Sept. 23, 2006 date for our demo, and that Lady Jane is sponsoring the Truck and Trailer decoration contest for best theme for full size truck and trailer decoration (including easy assembly and teardown).

Among other displays, we are planning on an armor stand complete with a chain mail shirt display.

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sary. It is unknown if Her Majesty had to fight off His Majesty to take possessions of the treats.

Waterbearer: Not present.

Webwright: Needs to update the Shire's Order of Precedence.

"Justice is the constant and perpetual wish to render every one his due."

-- Emperor Justinian in Institutes

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the lady might say something to the effect that though the fabric of the favor was damaged or stained, there was no stain to its honor.

It ends there. The fighter, having returned the favor at the end of the day's fighting, has no more claim on the lady's time. This does not prevent him from inviting her to sit with him at the feast, or continuing to flirt with her, nor does it prevent her from inviting him to stay and chat with her . . . but I repeat very strongly, that bestowing a favor for the nonce does not obligate a lady to anything else! I have heard of cases where a fighter assumes that receiving a lady's favor implies that he will receive her favors. That is not so! One who is chivalrous never makes such assumptions.

The giving and receiving of favors can add a wonderful aura of romance and gallantry to the Current Middle Ages. Many a lady has recounted how wonderful it was to have a fighter kneel to her and ask for her favor. And it is very much in keeping with the admonition all who were at the Coronation of Stephan and Niobe saw:

"Love ladies and maidens

And serve and honor them
In thought, word, and deed . . .
From ladies comes prowess,
Honors and dignities . . ."
Edward III

The Seneschal's Job

By Lord Ryan of Rickford

I have three deputies who have expressed an interest in becoming Seneschal next year at our Anniversary. It was suggested at the last meeting that I write a little about my experience with the job and its duties and then have those from whom we will be choosing write a little about their qualifications/ideas/plans. We will announce the candidates at Yule meeting and vote at the January meeting. So here goes...

The Seneschal is the SCA equivalent of the "president" of a local chapter of the club. The Seneschal is the legal representative for the group and is the only one who can sign agreements for the Shire. You report directly to the Kingdom Seneschal and file quarterly reports and the Doomsday report, like other offices. You need to attend and run the Shire meetings.

I was lucky to follow Lady Teka. I had no real problems to contend with when I took office. We are a volunteer organization. The Seneschal tries to resolve issues that occur before they get out of control. Otherwise it stops being fun and everyone takes their toys and goes home.

Lady Teka spent a lot of time traveling to events and mending relationships with other groups. I haven't had to build any bridges; the worst thing I had to do was explain to Starkhafn why we weren't doing Althing with them. We had pretty good relationships when I took office.

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Pennsic LARJesse: An Tir

In Honor of Amalric Blackhart and Caia Snowden, King and Queen of An Tir

A poem in the style of Anglo Saxon heroic poetry

By THL Caitlin Christiana Wintour

(Editor's note: Duchess Natalya challenged the poets of Caid to write poems honoring the Kings and Queens of the Known World. The poems were presented to Their Majesties at this summer's Pennsic. I chose the beautiful kingdom of An Tir and its King Amalric and Queen Caia. Originally from the West, King Amalric was knighted in the East and previously ruled in Atlantia.)



Lived in the West
A rampant stag
Amalric the namesake
Once ruled Jerusalem,

one who bore
in sable drawn,
of monarchs who
city of thrones.

But restless was he
Where he served king
Received there the accolade
Grace and chivalry
Fealty he owed and
But knight's heart
By the Lady of snow,
When Amalric to
Caia of Snowden

and hied him to the East
and crown proudly and well.
for courage and honor
changing never,
faithfully he served
was held fast
song's inspiration.
Atlantia went
went south to the sea.

There by right of steel
Storming the list
Atlantian shells
Sea queen's crown

did sue Amalric
for love of his lady,
shining bright
for Caia the fair.

Ruled they well and
Yet the wandering
And longed the stag
So when good leave
And freedom beckoned
Count and Countess
Breathed they gladly

wisely guided
way was ever strong
for sunset shores.
granted they were
far to the west
to the call did come.
the good air of An Tir,

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Emerald-green by the	grey winter sea.
The Count loved greatly	the greening hills
High peaks of snow	that soared to the sky.
A son adopted of	An Tir he became
No son could love his	liege-land more.
So sought he a new crown	for consort beloved.
But Viscount Sir Vic,	Avacal's prince
The golden diadem	was determined to take.
So battled the Count	upon crown field,
Blackhart and Vikingsson	for victory striving.
On that day fell	fair Avacal's son.
Noble Amalric	An Tir's true friend
Became its King	and Caia its Queen.
As from the West	An Tir was born,
So a son of the West	wins to home at last.

This form of Anglo-Saxon poetry is not rhymed, but demands syllable alliteration and a metric beat. There are (in most lines) two strong syllables. In addition, these syllables are alliterated with the first strong syllable in the following line. For example:

On **that** day **fell** **fair** Avacal's prince

Note the beats on "that," "fell" and "fair," and the alliteration on "fell" and "fair."

Another line has four alliterative beats (I got lucky):

Became its **King** and **Caia** its **Queen**.

I love to write this verse form because of its challenge, imagery, and frank heroism. *Beowulf* is the best known surviving poem of this type.

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Blase and I have, however, worked to keep the Shire known in the Kingdom. We tried to attend most of the Baronial Anniversaries and Kingdom Events, giving presentations to their Majesties and the Baronies when we went. This does take an expenditure of time and some money. And believe me, the time is more valuable.

Lady Teka has tried to teach me that the Seneschal isn't supposed to do everything. He's just supposed to make sure somebody is doing it. She kept telling me, "Delegate, delegate, delegate." And I am a slow learner, but we have a small group and we ALL work anyway.

Anyway, it's work, but it's fun. And I have gotten to know a lot of people from the other shires and baronies. So I am asking my deputies to now take the time to write down a few thoughts about what they would like to do if they were Seneschal. Send those articles to THL Caitlin so she can publish them in the *Scorpion Tales* before we vote in January.

Lord Ryan