

Shire of Al-Sahid Newsletter

Scorpion Tales



Around the Shire

September Shire Meeting and Craft Day

This month's Shire and Craft meeting will be Sunday 9/23 at Nathan's and Holly's house. The Craft starts at noon and is "Knowne World Geography" by THL Ryan. The Shire meeting will start at 3pm.

Fighter Practice

Fighter Practice is at 6:30 pm Monday nights at Sir Killian's. For information please email kiltek@earthlink.net.



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July Officer Reports



Seneschal: We moved the Shire Thank you Dinner to Oct. or Nov. Asked the Shire to do a kingdom event next year and send kingdom 2008 and 2009

calendar requests. Discussed article in newspaper about embezzlement in non-profit groups.

Arts & Sciences: Announced upcoming Craft

Days. In January the office changes back to Caitlin.

Castellan: Not present.

Chronicler: Needs submis-

(Continued on page 3)

"All the world's a
stage,
And all the men
and women merely
players.
They have their
exits and their
entrances,
And one man in his
time plays many
parts,
His acts being
seven ages."
—Shakespeare

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Hesperia Days

Our demo will be at the Hesperia Days parade and fair of September 22. We will parade down Main St. in Hesperia followed by a Demo at Hesperia Lake Park, 7500 Arrowhead Lake Rd. Official demo times are 1pm and 4pm. This is Hesperia's 50 year celebration!

Projects

- Kingdom camp walls – on hold until after Hesperia Days.
- Business Cards – THL Caitlin is waiting on art.
- Full inventory for Kingdom Domesday — we need to present a full inventory of non-perishable items to Kingdom by Christmas. Since most of our materials are already inventories in separate lists, it should not be a huge project. Since we were going to clean out the trailer in October anyway, we'll inventory what is left.

Upcoming Kingdom Events and Anniversaries

- 9/8 — Fall Crown in Altavia
- 9/15,16 — Collegium Caidis in Lyondemere. THL Caitlin is teaching "The Dramatic Bard." If any other Shire member is

teaching, please let me know so I can publish it in *Scorpion Tales*.

- 9/29 — Angels Anniversary
- 10/2-8— Great Western War

Happenings Around the Shire

- Congratulations to THL Teka for receiving her Crescent Sword!
- And another congratulations to Sir Killian for his Lux Caidis for casting!
- And yet *another* congratulations to THL Ryan for his Crescent!

Upcoming Craft Days and Shire Meetings

All of these Craft Days will be followed by Shire meetings. This September 23 THL Ryan will teach "Knowne World Geography." October 21 will be Mead Making and a Trailer clean out at Lady Blase's and THL Ryan's. (One assumes we will all need the mead following the trailer clean-out.) Nov. 25 will be making Holiday ornaments at Lady Magdi and Randy's. December will not have a Craft Day (we will have our annual Yule party) and January will be the Persona Tea.

Excerpt from Beowulf



Beowulf is the only surviving epic poem originally written in Old English. It may have been composed as early as 700 A.D. and the author or authors are lost to history. There is only a single early manuscript that survived from 1000 A.D. — a survival that itself is rather miraculous. This copy survived both the Dissolution of the Monasteries by King Henry VIII and a terrible house fire that destroyed the library of a subsequent owner, Sir Robert Bruce Cotton. The marks of the fire can still be seen on the manuscript, which is now safely housed in the British Library in London.

There may be only one copy but there are many,

(July Officer reports, Continued from page 1)

sions as always!

Constable: Nothing to report.

Exchequer: Received monies from volunteer hours at Potrero and reported our balance.

Herald: Nothing to report.

List: Nothing to report.

Marshal: Nothing to report.

Children's: Planning a Courtesy Quest for War.

Presentations: Planned presentations for Royals.

Chirurgion: Attended Gallavalley, reported preparations for Highland War.

Webwright: Not present.

We encourage all Shire members to attend Shire meetings whenever possible, especially when we are so close to War. Please come in garb.

many translations. The most famous part of the story is the Beowulf's battle with the monster Grendel, who crawled off to die after murdering half of a kingdom's warriors. Beowulf then dived underneath the surface of a lake to kill an even worse monster — Grendel's mother! She was *really angry*.

Beowulf survived both of these confrontations and many, many more. Along with his followers who were themselves great heroes, he was an heroic kind and war leader of the first caliber.

His downfall was a dragon. The below excerpt contains the start of this epic battle between Beowulf, prince of the Geats, and the mighty dragon. Both of these two mighty combatants would die at each other's hand... and claw.

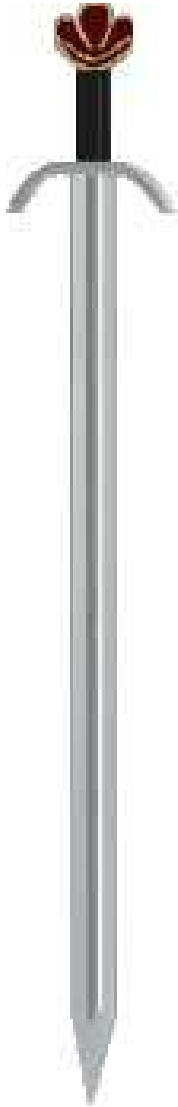
From Beowulf

He saw by the cave,
he who had many virtues,
he who had survived many times
the battle flashes
when troops rush together,
a stream running
from the stone arch--
a stream of fire.

He could not enter
for the dragon's flame.

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Seneschal's Corner (September)



Lady Jane de Sealynn

I know this newsletter was going to be late due to us all getting ready for War. It is over and by all the remarks from participants it was fun for all like it has been in the past.

Hesperia Days is happening on September 22. I hope everyone can come and walk in the parade down Main St. Plus help at the demos at Hesperia lake park, the times for the demo are 1:00 pm and 4:00 pm.

I requested that we set up 30 minutes before the first demo and that would be just a shade for us and that we set up an Eric for crowd control. So far I haven't heard back one way or another. I will let everyone know the plans as soon as Hesperia Parks lets me know.

Our new prince and princess are Duke Edric Aaron Hartwood and Countess Faizeh al-arqa.

Don't forget to get in your registration for GWW X. I will be asking for a head count at the meeting. I will be able to land grab for those who have pre-reg., I don't know about people coming in that haven't. But I can try.

It will be a very busy month or months to come. I look at the calendar and it is full of events full of fun. Hope to see you at them.

In service to a dream,

Jane

Jane de Sealynn

Recipe Corner: Comfits



By Lady Hauviette d'Anjou

Excerpted from "Sweets and Treats of the 14c" in Stefan's Florilegium

From these detailed instructions I have worked out a recipe and technique to create comfits, candied orange rind and candied nuts.

A Recreated Recipe

- 1 cup/6 ounces granulated white sugar (very finely ground in a food processor or mortar) or fruit sugar or castor sugar (10X sugar)
- @ 1/2 cup/ 3/4 ounce coriander seeds (or any other suitable seed or nut i.e. anise, caraway, fennel, pine nuts, almonds are the most commonly mentioned in period)
- food colouring (optional)
- 1/2 cup hot water

Equipment:

- heavy bottomed saucepan (I used a small cast iron skillet)
- metal soup spoon
- small fork
- Bowl
- baking sheet

Using a heavy pan, over low heat, combine sugar and water. Stir frequently until sugar melts. You must monitor the sugar carefully. If it overboils it will simply dehydrate and crystallize and you will need to add water

and begin again. The setting I used ranged from 1-3 on an electric stove. Your appliance may have a different level, so you may need to work with the syrup a bit to get the right heat. Note that you will need to adjust the temperature to keep the syrup hot, but not caramelizing or boiling for too long.

As the syrup heats up, you will begin to notice that it becomes clear, this is the beginning stage of it being ready to use. You will also see fine crystals on the spoon when you dip it into the syrup and let it run. When the crystals disappear, you are nearer to the syrup being ready. In addition, you will notice that when allowing a spoonful to pour back into the pan, it will remain as a stream from the spoon about 5-6 inches in the air to the pan. Finally, the syrup will be ready when you can put drops into a glass of cold water and the sugar doesn't dissipate, it will clump up (this is known as the soft ball stage), you can also put a drop on a cool plate, if it does not run it is also at softball stage.

Having your seeds in a bowl (I used a small stainless steel round bottomed bowl), take half a soup spoon full of syrup and pour it into the seeds, shaking the bowl with your right hand as you do so.

Now for the fun part. Working
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"I am constant as
the northern star,
Of whose true-
fix'd and resting
quality
There is no fellow
in the firmament."

—from *Julius
Caesar*

(Mousse, Continued from page 5)

quickly, begin to stir the seeds using the small fork, (think scraping the side of the bowl or beating eggs) with your left hand while holding the bowl in your right (or vice versa if you are naturally left handed). As the seeds separate, (you may need to help them along with the fork), they will begin to roll, continue this fast stirring until the seeds are separate and appear somewhat white. This will require some effort and should be done with some speed. The first few coats will seem almost inconsequential, but as you continue you will see them increase in size.

Do not use a lot of syrup the first few coats, you do not want to let the seeds cool down before you can mostly separate them, this will result in a mass of seeds, not really useable as confits. As you finish, allow the seeds to cool before adding more syrup. If the seeds seem unwilling to separate, sometimes allowing a little time to cool will coax them along. Check to make sure your sugar is ready (i.e. the soft-ball stage) and not crystallizing.

The technique requires some practice, but once you get used to it, you'll be surprised how easy it really is.

Nuts were used in combination with sweets such as sugar and honey in other ways as well. In a German recipe in "Daz Buch von Guter Spise" (1345 to 1354) From an original in the University Library of Munich, Translation by Alia Atlas. Found in "A Collection of Medieval and Renaissance Cookbooks", 7th Edition, almonds are ground and blended with honey to make a tasty treat.

Heathen Peas

- 4 cups whole almonds*
- 1 cup honey
- 2-3 tsp. ground cinnamon

In a food processor, coarse grind 3 cups of almonds. On a baking sheet, place the almonds into a 400 degree oven for 5 minutes**. Finely grind 1 cup of the almonds and add to the roasted almonds. Mix in cinnamon. Warm the honey and add to the almonds, stirring well.

Keeping a bowl of warm water near by (to rinse your hands occasionally), take a generous pinch of the honey/nut mixture and roll into a 1 inch ball. Continue until all of the mixture is used. Keeps well in a cool place, sealed container. Makes approximately 90- 1 inch balls.

The original recipe calls for a 3 to 1 ratio of almonds to honey. In my trials I have found that this results in a meal that is a little too loose to roll properly. I have reduced the ratio to 4 to 1 and am much happier with the end result. This effect could be accounted for in the original recipe as the cook using approximations which might be off slightly.

**Although this recipe does not call for roasting the ground nuts at all, I have found that this extra step eliminates the sometimes harsh taste of the oil in the almonds. If you feel you would like to stick to the letter of the recipe, I would simply suggest you avoid that step.

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Beowulf was angry,
the lord of the Geats,
he who stormed in battle.
He yelled into the cave.

The hoard-keeper perceived
a man's voice and
didn't plan to ask
for friendship.
Flames shot out
from among the stones,
hot battle-sweat.
The ground dinned.

The hero raised his shield
against the dreadful stranger.
Then the coiled thing
sought battle.
The war king drew his sword,
an ancient heirloom
with edges unblunt.
Each of them intended
horror to the other.

Stouthearted stood that war-prince
with his shield upraised,
waited in his war-gear.
The dragon coiled together,
went forth burning,
gliding toward his fate.
His shield protected
life and body
for a shorter time
than the prince had hoped.
That was the first day
he was not granted glory in battle.
The lord of the Geats raised his arm,
struck the horrible thing
with his ancestral sword,
but the edge gave way:
that bright sword
bit less on the bone
than the war-king needed...

— *Tr. by Dr. David Breeden*

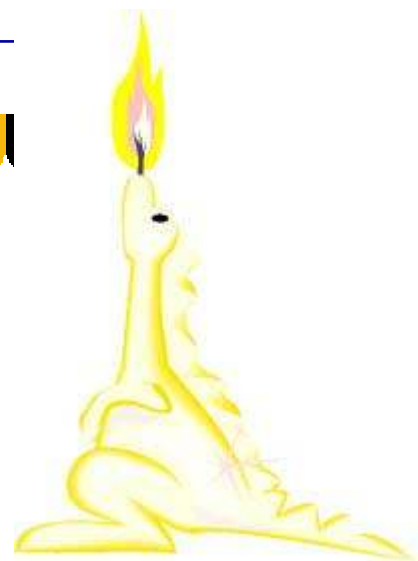
Shire Birthdays



*From the Chronicler: quick note on
birthdays.*

*If I've got your birthday wrong or not at
all — which is not surprising given my
level of organizational skills —
PLEASE let me know! You can reach
me at chrislynnnet@gmail.com.*

Happy birthday!!



Odysseus and the Sirens



By THL Caitlin Christiana Wintour

Note: this article is my documentation for a spoken/sung piece.

When you find the cobbler who stitched up Aiolos' bag of winds, you will discover the course of Odysseus' wanderings.

— Eratosthenes (Strabo, Geography I, 2.15)

The magical islands of Odysseus' long voyage lie beyond the known world. There were several of these utopian islands including four divine islands discovered by Odysseus: the island of Aiolos, Kirke, the Sirens, and the Sun (Helios).

The song of the Sirens is a murderous one: no man who hears it wants to return home, since their wife and children mean nothing to them anymore. (Book 12). Thus the shore of the Sirens' island is covered with the rotting corpses of sailors who heard the Sirens' song and were compelled to sail onto the island's traitorous shore. In Greek mythology, only two heroes and their parties did not sail to their deaths upon hearing the song: Odysseus' crew stuffed their ears with hot wax and tied their lord to the mast at his request, and Jason and the Argonauts had the pleasure of hearing Orpheus sing, which was even better than the song of the Sirens.

The Sirens were more than simple singers, however. The daughters of the river god Achelous and the Muse Melpomene, their songs held real power. Not only could they charm men and draw them inexorably to their deadly shores, but they also knew the past of all who passed by their island. Presumably they knew the future as well, but since everyone's future ended right then they did probably did not bother with that part.

Obeying the will of the gods who wanted to save Odysseus' life, Circe had warned the hero about the Sirens.

"First you will come to the Sirens who enchant all who come near them. If any one unwarily draws in too close and hears the singing of the Sirens, his wife and children will never welcome him home again, for they sit in a green field and warble him to death with the sweetness of their song. There is a great heap of dead men's bones lying all around, with the flesh still rotting off them. Therefore pass these Sirens by, and stop your men's ears with wax that none of them may hear; but if you like you can listen yourself, for you may get the men to bind you as you stand upright on a cross-piece half way up the mast, and they must lash the rope's ends to the mast itself, that you may have the pleasure of listening. If you beg and pray the men to unloose you, then they must bind you faster."

-- Homer's *Odyssey*, trans. by Samuel Butler

The Odyssey was written about 800 B.C., before the SCA's commonly accepted beginning time period of 400 A.D. However, we know that the Greek epic was translated into Italian in the 15th century thanks to displaced Byzantines. Classical Greek had fallen into widespread disuse in Western Europe by the 15th century and knowledge of the Homeric works had fallen along with it. But by 1400, educated Byzantines (and uneducated ones too) were fleeing Constantinople to Venice and other Italian city states in advance of the encroaching Ottoman Empire. With their knowledge of classical Greek and of the Homeric works, they introduced Odysseus to the Renaissance.

For example, Demetrius Trivolis copied *Odyssey*

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(Story, Continued from page 8)

for Cardinal Bessarion in Rome in 1469. By 1488 both *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were printed by the Miscomini printing house. A copy exists today in the Bodman Collection at the Claremont Colleges.

Other printing houses took up the cause such as the celebrated Aldine Press in Venice. Aldine was known for its innovative typography and for printing popular and affordable editions of the classics. Aldine printed Homeric works, including *The Odyssey*, in 1504 and 1517. The tale has it that the Protestant reformer Philip Melancthon gifted his friend Martin Luther with a copy.

The Siren's Song

Although the Siren's Song is often translated as prose, Robert Fitzgerald translated it as a lyrical poem. Preferring to sing the piece, I looked for a period melody to set the words to. I discovered "Palastinleid" by Walther von der Vogelweide, which was a popular 15th century tune celebrating the Crusades. You might expect such a song to be stirringly martial, but the melody is haunting. I thought that the music suited two beautiful creatures whose motivation was, after all, to kill.

Text of the Siren's Song (sung to tune "Palastinleid")

*This way, oh turn your bows,
Achaia's glory,
As all the world allows—
Moor and be merry.*

*Sweet coupled airs we sing,
No lonely seafarer*

*Holds clear of entering
Our green mirror.*

*Pleased by each purling note
Like honey twining
From her throat and my throat,
Who lies a-pining?*

*Sea rovers here take joy
Voyaging onward,
As from our song of Troy
Greybeard and rower-boy
Goeth more learned.*

*All feats on that great field
In the long warfare,
Dark days the bright gods willed,
Wounds you bore there,*

*Argos' old soldiery
On Troy's beach teeming
Charmed out of time we see.
No life on earth can be
Hid from our dreaming.*

Bibliography

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Homer. *The Odyssey*. Translated by Robert Fitzgerald. Farrar Straus Giroux (New York). 1963.

"Classics: Special Collections at the Libraries of The Claremont Colleges." Unattributed. Description of rare book collections including a 15th century copy of Homer's *The Odyssey*. <http://voxlbris.claremont.edu/resources/researchyour-topic/doc.asp?doc=139&guide=16>, visited March 2007.