



The Privy

Barony of Terra Pomaria



The Privy

November 1st, 2010

Seneschale's Words

Greetings to the wonderful populace of the Barony of Terra Pomaria: It is an honour to serve as your seneschale. I look forward to the coming winter months, and all of the activities that are coming up. Ceilidh got off to a rousing start with a practice court and Lady Brigit teaching a large group how to pavane - to live music, no less! We were glad to see so many people turn out to our new - well, newish site at Salem Heights Hall this month, and look forward to seeing even more of you there in November.

In general, I'm heartened by how many people have turned up to the latest Mid-Willamette Valley fighter practice, Ceilidh, and A&S. It would be wonderful to see even more of you that we now only see at events (as your schedules permit, of course). We have some hard-working officers who deserve our thanks for all of their efforts to make Terra Pomaria run, and we all benefit thereby. Please consider taking on an open office, if any of them appeal to you; there's a lot of satisfaction to be found in service, and this is a great group in which to serve.

Thank you for all you do for Terra Pomaria.

In service to Crown, Kingdom & Society,

Countess Berengaria de Montfort de Carcassonne

Chronicler's Words

Greetings Everyone! As you can probably tell this is a very long issue, and there is one very large difference. There are no pictures in this issue of our wonderful Privy. Instead I have crammed some fantastic articles into it's pages. Since this will be the last privy that I put together with articles, I figured I would put many into it. Next month is my final Privy as chronicler and it will be a special one. Watch the lists for more info coming soon.

Thank you All!

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Curia

Their Royal Majesties of An Tir

Tiernan Mor Dal Cais and Miranda Faoltiarna

Their Highnesses of the Summits

Gabriel Luveday and Sumayya min Yibna

Excellencies of Terra Pomaria

Roland and Emma von Bern

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"...What a family is without a steward, a ship without a pilot, a flock without a shepherd, a body without a head, the same, I think, is a kingdom without the health and safety of a good monarch."

-Queen Elizabeth the First, to her brother King Edward c.

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*Beginning Period Woodworking*

By Master Tamlene ap Guidgen, O.L.

A Bit of Philosophy

Craftsmanship can be defined in a lot of ways. A fairly common usage includes the statement “do your best work in all tasks”. Something that is often misunderstood in this statement is the difference between doing your best and perfectionism.

Doing your best means that you must reach a compromise between your absolute best work (which takes a very long time), and work which is of good quality but still allows you to get something done. Almost everyone errs on the side of trying too hard to do perfect work, and thus getting very little done.

Perfectionism includes the work which commonly graces the covers of magazines like *Fine Woodworking*. Work like this is something to aspire to, and be inspired by. It takes a huge amount of experience to do work of *Fine Woodworking* caliber.

It is very important to include the amount of work you get done in any estimate of how close you are to “working at your best”. If you only do one piece each year, your abilities will not improve very much. Twenty shoddy pieces each year will also not improve your abilities much. Neither case is “working at your best”. You must strike a balance, and realize that medium quality work actually represents your best work in the long run.

Do not be a slave to your ruler. Measuring

things as a specific number of inches is a fairly modern concept, and can take over a project unnecessarily. What usually matters more than inches is proportion. Sometimes there is important dimensionality, but what counts is that something fits, not that it is so many inches. I often measure in hand spans. If you want accuracy, you can mark the dimension carefully on a piece of scrap. For proportion, a pair of dividers works well to pace off the work. Rulers are useful things, but please keep an open mind and avoid being compulsive about them.

Power tools are much oversold. Also oversold is sand paper. Both are extremely useful in their place, but in a home workshop their place is limited.

Hand tools are generally faster, have fewer health hazards and are much more pleasant to work with than power tools. In order to know the truth of what I am saying, you must be willing to work with a hand tool long enough to gain some proficiency with it. Only after some mistakes and slow work will you begin to see the efficiencies inherent in a given hand tool.

Power tools can speed up repetitive work. Very little of what is done at home is repetitive enough to justify the time spent setting up a power tool and cleaning up the amazing mess afterward. Also not justified is the noise and dust, and the sheer amount of space occupied by power tools. I own many, and speak from experience. I only use a few.

There is another aspect of hand tools which



Champions of Terra Pomaria



Heavy Defender: Meister Sigmund Helmschmiede

Archery: Lord William Cristofore of Devonshire

Arts & Sciences: Geoffrey Albryght

Rapier: Sean O'Sirin

Youth Champion: Al Sayyid Aziza bint Rustam

Local Gatherings

Ceilidh: 2nd Monday, October-May, 7pm, Location Salem Heights Community Hall. On the corner of Madrona and Liberty

Business Meeting: 3rd Monday, 7pm, Round Table Pizza at Keizer Station, Contact: Countess Berengaria de Montfort de Carcassonne, OR, OP tpsene-schal@gmail.com

Scribal Night: 1st Tuesday of every month from 6pm to 10pm at Dame Juliana's House. 2270 Red Oak Drive S., Salem OR.

Armoring: Contact: Roland (Heath) Sir-Rulandvonbern@hotmail.com (modern attire)

Archery Practice: TBD

Heavy Weapons / Rapier Fencing

Fighter Practice : Every Wednesday, 7:00 PM at Clear Lake Elementary in Keizer, OR.

A & S Day:

Open Castle : Open Castle is on Hold for now, and will resume again at a later date.

Bardic Music Night 1st Tuesday of Every month (Combined with Scribal), Juliana van Aardenburg

julianavana@comcast.net at 503-363-7512. @ 2270 Red Oak Drive S, Salem, OR

Legal Stuff

This is the November 2010 issue of The Privy, a publication of the Barony of Terra Pomaria of the Society for Creative Anachronism, Inc. (SCA Inc.). The Privy is not a corporate publication of SCA Inc. and does not delineate SCA Inc. policies.

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Submissions guidelines: If you wish to submit articles or notices, they are welcomed and will be published as space permits. Please understand that all submissions are subject to formatting and spelling adjustments. The chronicler reserves the right to edit any submissions for inappropriate content and may make changes to the final copy to ensure entries meet all guidelines for acceptability. Submission deadline for the upcoming month's Privy is by Business Meeting (3rd Monday of the month) and may be sent by hardcopy, disk or email to the Chronicler.



Upcoming Events

- November 13th– Fall Crown Council, Barony of Dragon’s Laire, Kitsap & N Mason Counties, WA
- November 13th– Frostbite, Shire of Southmarch, Klamath Falls, Klamath & Lake Counties, OR
- November 20th– Autumn Gathering IV, Shire of River’s Bend, Kelso & Longview-Cowlitz Counties, WA
- December 4th– Three Mountains Yule Revel and Feast, Barony of Three Mountains, Clackamas & Multnomah Counties, OR
- December 11th– Summits Winter Investiture, Shire of BriarOak, Roseburg OR
- December 11th– Yule Feast and Bardic Championship, Barony of Dragon’s Laire, Kitsap & N Mason Counties, WA
- December 18th- Yule Feast, Barony of Stromgard, Vancouver, WA
- January 1st– Hogmany, Shire of Myrtle Holt, Grants Pass, OR
- January 7th-9th– An Tir 12th Night, Barony of Adiantum, Eugene , OR

October 2010

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
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3	4	5	6	7	8	9
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17	18	19	20	21	22	23
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November 2010

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December 2010

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12	13	14	15	16	17	18
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is really nice. Hand tools give you the option of spending money to acquire them, or spending time to make them. Most any hand tool can be made for almost no monetary expense. If you don't believe me, come to Unser Hafen Blacksmithing Guild some time. We'll make you some tools.

Some tasks are repetitive enough that power tools make sense. Rip sawing (reducing the width of a long board) is really a lot of work and not terribly entertaining. Rip sawing is very sensibly done with power tools in these days of no apprentices. Surface planing of rough lumber is also sensibly done with power equipment.

Surface smoothing for finishing is not a good use for sand paper.

Most surfaces are much better attacked with a hand plane and a scraper. To make a coarsely smoothed surface very smooth takes a lot of time with sand paper (power or hand sanding). A plane and a scraper do the job quite quickly. As a surface gets more curved, or smaller, planes and scrapers make less sense and sandpaper makes more.

Hand tools make you work up more of a sweat than power tools. Would you really rather go to a health club than do wood working?

Introductory Woodworking

If you sweep the floor clean before you start, and throughout your work, it is much easier to find pieces of wood which acciden-

tally chip out that were not supposed to be removed. The piece can easily be glued back with either yellow wood glue or cyanoacrylate glue, with none the wiser.

1. Marking accurately and squarely

Making wooden joints often involves careful marking of your piece of wood. If your marks are not in the right place, you have no hope of sawing or chiseling accurately.

You rarely need to mark a specific distance on a board—rather, you may need to mark an identical distance (however long) on two boards. The tool used for this task is a marking gauge. It consists of a sharp point attached to a stick. The stick is in turn held by a block of wood (fence). The mark is made by putting the fence against the edge of the board to be marked and scoring the surface of the board with the sharp point. The distance between the fence and the sharp point is adjusted by a clamp which holds the stick to the fence.

Another type of mark you need to make is a mark perpendicular to one edge of a piece of wood. To do this, you need an accurate square (you also need a nice straight edge on the wood, discussed later). You can buy a good square, or make a cheap one accurate by adjusting it. A good test for a square (and also for your marking ability) is to draw a line around the entire circumference of a board perhaps three or four inches square. Does your line meet the starting place exactly?

*Beginning Period Woodworking cont...*

How you make a mark can also affect accuracy. A pencil line, even a fine one, has a lot more error in its width than most wooden joints will tolerate. There are two ways around this error. One is to use a knife edge to scribe a very fine line, and then work carefully to this line. The other way is to use a pencil line, and then fit two pieces to each other (and promptly mark them unambiguously as belonging to each other). Either way works well, although if you use a pencil, it should be a fine one.

2. Cutting to a line

First, start with sharp tools. You cannot cut accurately (hand or power) with dull blades. See the appendix.

Whether you are cutting with hand or power tools, watch the wood and the mark, not the blade. Making an accurate cut requires practice and attention. A saw cut needs to start straight. You cannot force the saw direction without ruining your accuracy. Cutting straight is easy when you start straight.

You can avoid cutting past your stop line if you realize that it is not necessary to cut all the way to it. You only need to cut to within one saw kerf of the stop line. When all sawing is done, clean up the tiny bit remaining in the corner with a chisel.

Starting a cut with a hand saw is sometimes a bit tricky. At first, the saw will sometimes jump and shudder everywhere except at your mark. This is typically caused by either

using too coarse of a saw for the hardness of the wood, using the wrong type of saw (crosscut vs. rip) or putting pressure on the saw. Even after a cut is started, you will get the most accurate cut if you let gravity feed the saw. If you should end up having started the cut slightly in the wrong place, instead of trying to force the saw to your will, lay the saw down almost flush with the surface and gently broaden your starting cut until you can saw in the correct place.

3. Planing a straight edge

You can plane a much better straight edge by hand than with a power jointer or router. To do this, you need the longest (sharp!) hand plane you can find. I use a No. 8 jointer plane, which is about 24 inches long. You must have some arrangement for holding the board to be planed without requiring any attention from you. Your cuts will not be true if you have to hold the board with your elbow and knee while you plane. At the start of a cut, push down on the front of the plane only. At the end of the cut, push down on the back of the plane only (at the handle). Think of your action as trying to plane a concave edge, and you will end up with a straight edge. Eyeball the edge when you are done—it should be absolutely straight after only a little practice.

If it is important to have the edge exactly at 90 degrees to the face, lay the board on its face spaced about 1/8" above the bench. Now lay the plane on its side, and plane the edge. If you do a lot of this, you should build a

*Beginning Period Woodworking cont...*

fixture for it so that you don't wear a groove in your workbench.

4. Gluing up boards

Spend a lot of time before you apply glue arranging your boards so that matching edges end up next to each other. Mark adjacent edges (and front/back) so you can find the arrangement again. If you choose and arrange your boards carefully, most people will not realize that your nice wide board is glued up from smaller ones.

To glue two edges together with no gaps, the edges both need to be absolutely straight, and at complimentary angles to each other. The edges do not need to be at 90 degrees to their faces. To joint two boards to match, lay the boards next to each other on the bench in the preferred final orientation. Now pick them up, and fold them as if there is a hinge joining them. Clamp them in your vise this way; back to back or front to front. Now joint the edge. If you're planing results in a nice straight edge which is a bit off of 90 degrees, you will still have a flat panel when gluing is done since the errors in the two boards will cancel each other.

If you are forced to close gaps between boards with a lot of clamp pressure, something is wrong. If you have done your edging right, you should be able to apply glue to the edges, push and wring the edges together and get them to stick to each other with no clamps, just the surface tension of the glue. Try

it some time, it is a lot of fun.

Don't use an excessive amount of glue. Some books and articles will admonish you to "get the right amount of squeeze out" when you clamp. The right amount of squeeze out is none. You do need to make sure glue coats the entire edge (both pieces!), so in practice you get some squeeze out. The ideal would be to have glue just come up to the edge and no farther. When you apply glue, make sure it covers each edge completely, in as even and thin a layer as you can.

I usually space my clamps between one and two feet apart for edge gluing $\frac{3}{4}$ " thick stock. It is nice to have more clamps than you think you need in case a problem comes up when you are clamping. Alternate the clamps top and bottom to keep the surface flat. With one inch and thicker stock, you can get away with a lot in terms of clamp spacing and uneven pressure between clamps if your edges mate nicely. When edge gluing $\frac{1}{2}$ " and smaller, you must be very careful to get even clamping pressure. Tighten the clamps little by little, so that they all reach final pressure together. As you tighten, check the face for flatness, to make sure you are not introducing a cup into the panel.

Take great care in making the faces of your boards all lay in the same plane. This can save you a tremendous amount of work later. If you tighten your clamps little by little, it is much easier to adjust the edges. If you adjust the



Beginning Period Woodworking cont...

edges with the clamps too tight, you will introduce a bend in the board. If you have a hard time with this, or have a panel which must end up with a really flush surface, invest in a doweling jig, and put dowels in to align the edges.

5. Planing end grain

A block plane is specially designed to be able to plane end grain.

If your plane is very sharp, and you take a nice thin cut, end grain is fairly easy to plane. Be careful at the far end of the board, however, as it is easy to tear a huge chunk off of the edge. You can either plane both ends against the middle, or else clamp the board to be planed firmly up next to a piece of scrap to support the far edge. Sanded end grain looks nothing like planed end grain.

6. Avoiding cross grain construction

When two pieces of wood are attached rigidly to each other, and the grain on one piece is perpendicular to the grain on the other, a split will inevitably develop with time. Wood expands a lot more perpendicular to the grain than parallel to the grain.

A lot of period chests are made with cross grain construction, and have the splits to prove it. A lot of known world workmanship also has cross grain construction, and will either split or come apart at the cross grain joints in time. A common chest design in the current middle ages has grain running horizontally front and back, with grain running vertically on the end pieces

(which extend below the bottom of the chest as legs).

There are three reasons for building chests with cross grain construction—ignorance, “its period”, and expediency. I feel that only the first reason is valid. The second reason is not valid—there are many period examples of chests with no cross grain construction, including properly constructed cases and also frame and panel. The third reason is quite questionable in my mind. If you are not interested in your work lasting, then you must have quite different motives from my own.

7. Sharpening

If you want to risk your tools, you can try using a high speed motorized grinder. Several things can improve the risk:

- slow the grinder down to 1725 rpm
- get “cool” type grinding wheels
- back the blade you are sharpening with a larger piece of metal (a heat sink). Before grinding, dip the assembly in water. The water wicks up between the two pieces of metal ensuring good thermal contact.

A much better choice is a hand powered grinder—not because of any hand tool mystique, but because it is extremely difficult to overheat your tools with a hand grinder.

Either of the above methods should give you a hollow ground edge.

Use either a small square or a sharpening jig to check your edge accuracy

*Beginning Period Woodworking cont...*

Before you can sharpen the edge you rough shaped, you must polish the back of the blade. You need to gradually move to finer and finer abrasives in the polishing process. I follow any rough grinding with a fine Carborundum stone ("India" stone), followed by a Washita stone. If the tool is a particularly nice one I end up on a "Soft Arkansas" stone. There are at least two finer grades than "Soft Arkansas", but I have not found them to noticeably improve matters in general woodworking.

The back should be very flat and shiny when you are done. Only when the back is polished does it make sense to fine sharpen the edge of the blade. You only need to get the tip of the hollow ground edge sharp. Now you can proceed to sharpen the hollow ground side.

When you sharpen a blade, hold it very near the edge, and move the blade in small circles. You will have much better control of the blade angle.

8. Sanding

A lot of the time, sanding makes some sense. Surfaces which have grain pointing different directions (such as curves) can be insanely difficult to work with edged tools.

Flat surfaces are very efficient to smooth with a plane after you have some practice in its use. If you have never used a plane, get a small block plane, read about how to use it and use it for a bit on every project you

make. Using a plane without any experience and not using sandpaper at all will slow you down a lot. Get some woodworking done while you gain planing experience gradually.

Sanding is most effective if you start with a coarse enough abrasive. Your abrasive must be almost as coarse as the irregularities in the surface. Typically, start with 80 grit paper (60 grit if you are trying to remove a bunch of wood). 80 grit paper is good for removing typical power tool marks, like a machine planed surface. If you want your surface to stay flat, wrap the sand paper around a flat block rather than holding the paper in your hand. Sand all areas which need it with #80 before changing grit size.

The largest jump in grit size you should make is about 1.5 times as fine. If you started with #80, your next choice should be no finer than #120, followed with no finer than #180, etc. If you take larger steps, it will make your sanding take a lot longer. At each grade you use, be sure to sand all of the areas you sanded with the previous grit. Work in high contrast lighting, like direct sunlight, so that you can see the scratches in your work from the previous grit. Take them all out before going to a finer grade. If scratches show up after you start on a new grit and don't sand out quickly, you should consider going back to a bit coarser grit for a while.

For everyday projects, you can stop at #150 or #220. There is little point in using

*Beginning Period Woodworking cont...*

any finer grits on items you plan on taking camping with you. For surfaces you want smoother that are made of harder woods, it can make sense to go all the way up to #600.

9. Finishing

I don't know a lot about finishing, so I use a couple of easy methods, oil finish and varnish.

Oil finish brings out a lot of inherent color in the wood, and is available in 'natural' and various stains. A couple of good brands are Watco and Deft. Read the directions! I do not recommend linseed oil or dried linseed oil, as they take a lot longer to dry.

Oil finishes can be enhanced by applying a wax after they are quite dry. You need a wax intended for the purpose that is compatible with an oil finish. Watco makes a wax specially made to work with their oil. I haven't done much of this, but it can be very pretty.

Varnish provides much more protection to the wood than oil.

Varnish soaks into the wood and hardens, making the wood surface much more tolerant of abuse. Most varnishes also provide much more protection against water than an oil finish. If your wood will spend a lot of time in sunlight, get a polyurethane varnish for outdoor use.

The difficulty in using varnish lies in not getting little hardened drips of varnish at the bottom edge of your piece. Varnish also takes the patience to apply several coats. I

use Last and Last brand primarily because we have some left over from when we did our wood floors. Read the directions!

It is very important to read the directions on finishes.

ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT is the fire danger which finish saturated rags or paper towels represent. As the finish dries, a small amount of heat is generated. If the heat is confined, like in a wadded up towel in the trash can, the material can spontaneously combust hours later. I throw my finish rags in the wood stove.

I prefer a satin finish to a gloss finish. Try both, and see what you like.

Cutting dovetails

Dovetail joints are really fine things. They are both esthetically pleasing and amazingly strong at the same time. Mortise and tenon joints are strong, not much easier than dovetails, and when you are done, no one can see all of your work!

Dovetail joints have a bit of terminology associated with them. One side of the joint is called the tail, because the fan shape is reminiscent of a spread dove's tail. The other side of the joint is called the pin (why I have no idea). Be careful as some authors reverse this.

1. Stock preparation

Leave your stock long while you prepare one edge. Taking all of the pieces out of one board is a smart idea, as they will match better. Make one edge of your board absolutely

*Beginning Period Woodworking cont...*

straight with a long plane. This edge will end up as the reference edge from which all measurements and alignments are made. Leave the other edge rough so that the difference is obvious.

Using an accurate square, draw lines perpendicular to your reference edge to mark out the lengths of wood you will be using. Remember that your saw cut has width, and keep the saw in the same place in relation to your line. Either cut on one side of the line, or down the middle of the line, but does the same thing the entire length of the board.

Do not cut your stock to final size. Allow yourself some room. The pins and tails of your joints (on each end of the board) should be perhaps 1/32" extra long, so that when the joint is assembled a bit extra sticks out. This allows you to end up with a flush surface (by planing away the excess), rather than a sunken one. You should also expect to do some finish planing on the other edges, those not involved in a joint.

The edges of your boards should be cut square and even. Any wavering in the edge, especially in the end grain, must be allowed for when you mark your stock so that you don't end up with a recessed tail. If the end grain is not square to the edge you may have such misalignment that it will be impossible to assemble all four corners at once.

Check your pieces after you cut them with a square and straightedge. If the end grain is

not square to the reference edge, or if your cut wavers, it is usually a lot easier to plane the end smooth and square now. You should also compare sizes on pieces which need to match each other. I often plane two pieces at once in the vise so that they are exactly the same size. If they are not the same size, your box will be trapezoidal instead of rectangular.

Mark the orientation of your boards if it is important (mainly for appearance). You will have a hard time figuring it out later.

2. Marking

Set your marking gauge just a bit more than the thickness of the boards you are using (1/32" or so). Lightly score the boards to be dovetailed together, along the edges to be joined. I usually score face, back, and edges for each board in each joint. These marks indicate the edges of the pins and tails. The marks also show where the inside edge of the board forming the other half of the joint lies. If your marks do not end up straight lines, your finished assembly will show gaps along this edge.

3. Cutting tails

You must have very good lighting to cut dovetails. You must have light down on your bench for marking and measuring. You must also have light from the side (or below) so that you can see while sawing. Get a lamp which you can place where you need it and you will save lots of frustration and squinting.

There are a lot of sequences which work in cutting dovetails. I like to cut the tails first, but

*Beginning Period Woodworking cont...*

it also works to cut the pins first.

Begin by deciding how many dovetails you are going to put in an edge, where they will go, and how big they should be. Some of the considerations follow:

If you space your dovetails unevenly (as I almost always do), put them near the high stress points. In a box, the stress is mostly along the top and bottom, especially the top edge.

Evenly spaced dovetails, especially with pins and tails the same size, is what you get out of a dovetail template. Why try to imitate a router? This is kind of a modern argument, one that didn't occur to people in the middle ages.

At the edges of your joint, there will typically be either half of a tail or pin. Half of a pin is stronger than half of a tail, and a better choice.

I usually mark the centers of the tails first, once I have decided on a layout. In marking the tails, please note that accuracy is not critical. The pins will be sized to fit the tails by marking them from the finished tails. Whatever angles, size and spacing your tails end up with; your pins will be cut to match.

If your tails have identical spacing on two or more corners, it is a lot easier to mark the locations on a piece of scrap and transfer the marks from the scrap to both corners. This greatly reduces mistakes and speeds up the

work.

Use a pencil to mark the tails. With ring-porous woods like oak, it is easy for a knife mark to get lost in the grain. Also it is difficult to draw a straight line not quite in line with the grain using a knife blade. The grain pulls the knife off of the line you are trying to draw.

Draw the tails using a bevel gauge. I set mine to an angle of about 1:6 (1 over and 6 up). People seem to use a variety of angles, including 1:8 and 80 degrees. Draw the tails between the scribed line and the end of the board. Now go along the edge and X out all of the pieces which are to be removed (in pencil). Look carefully at what you have drawn. Did you really cross out the scrap, not the good parts? Are you tails drawn right, or are they reversed? Look carefully, this is easy to mess up!

Using a small square, extend the lines you have drawn straight down the end grain across the thickness of the board, marking each side of the tail.

Put the piece of wood in a vise, edge up. Start sawing along the mark in the end grain until you have a shallow groove. Now rotate the saw so it is pointing straight up and down and make a shallow groove along the face of the board. Now angle the saw more and more, joining the two saw marks you have made along the diagonal. Be careful not to cut beyond the scribed line on the face of the board. By working back and forth along these

*Beginning Period Woodworking cont...*

grooves, you can guarantee that the cut will be in the right place when it comes out the far side of the board. This is a good thing to practice a lot on scraps of wood, either making square or angled cutoffs. Remember not to force the saw.

Saw carefully along the pencil lines, on whichever side you choose, not quite up to the scribe line. Once the cut is deep enough that the saw is self guiding, bring the saw horizontal and saw down almost to the scribe line. Check both sides of the board as you approach the scribe line so that you don't unknowingly saw past the line on one side of the board.

Since you are going to use the tails to mark the lines for cutting the pins, the size of each tail is not critical. This is, however, an excellent chance to practice your sawing to a line.

Now you need to remove the waste from between your saw cuts.

Before you start, once again examine your X's marking the waste pieces to be removed. Are you sure they are in the right place?

You can use either a fine turning saw or a chisel for rough stock removal. I use a mortising chisel.

The type of chisel you use for rough stock removal is not critical, as long as it is narrow enough so it doesn't score the inside edges of the tails. Your chisel must also be tough enough to deal with rough stock removal. Many bevel edge chisels will chip if you use them for chop-

ping.

Each time you start work in a new spot, ask yourself if that spot is really waste material. Every time you pick up the board you are chiseling on, you must clean the area underneath it. A small chunk of wood can make a nasty dent in the surface.

First remove most, but not all of the waste. Leave a bit of waste, maybe 1/16" in front of the scribe line. Chisel down onto a piece of scrap on your workbench so that you don't cut into your bench. Chop down, and then chip out the part you have cut through (from the end grain). Proceed like this at least halfway through the wood, and then turn the board over and finish the cut from the other side.

Now move your chisel to the scribed line. For this cut you might want to sharpen your mortise chisel or use a bevel chisel. Tap the chisel gently with a mallet to set it in the line, and then tap a bit harder until you are about halfway through. Do the same thing from the other side and you are done removing the waste.

Your chisel needs to be either exactly perpendicular to the board, or at an angle which will give you more clearance in the middle of the cut, not less clearance. When the joint is assembled, you will not be able to tell if you have undercut the middle part of the tail. Waste left in the middle results in unsightly gaps after assembly.

Take the time now to trim up the sawn

*Beginning Period Woodworking cont...*

edges of your tails with a chisel. The edges don't need to be perfectly smooth, but they should be pretty straight. A fine saw or a knife can also be useful. If any of your tails ended up with wavering edges, straighten them up now.

4. Cutting pins

When you cut the tails, you were cutting at an angle to the grain in the wood. Cutting the pins is directly along the grain. This can be a problem, especially if you are using one of the very fine Japanese pull saws. To see why, you need to understand the difference between rip saws and crosscut saws.

When you are cutting across the grain, the smoothest cut will be had with a saw whose teeth are shaped like tiny knives. This type of saw will cleanly sever the wood fibers. Crosscut saws have teeth shaped like knives.

When you are cutting with the grain, a different shaped tooth is needed. . If your saw teeth are knife shaped (crosscut), the saw is going to follow the wood fibers. To allow the saw to be guided, a chisel shaped tooth works best. Saws with chisel shaped teeth are called rip saws. When you cut the pins, you are cutting in the same general direction as the grain, but probably not exactly the same.

Japanese back saws have teeth which are extremely knife shaped.

This makes them very difficult to guide in cutting pins. (There is a type of Japanese saw intended for ripping, but it is not very com-

mon.) Small European style back saws have teeth which are sort of a hybrid between rip and crosscut. European style back saws work well either crosscutting or ripping. If you are unsure of your saw, try cutting a scrap of hardwood along a line just slightly off of the grain direction and see how well it works.

Finally you can start on the pins. First you need to mark them on the piece of wood you are working on. The marking is done using the mating piece of wood as a template. There are a lot of ways of doing the marking. I will describe the approach I use, which works well for me.

Clamp the piece of wood which is getting the pins cut into it in the vise, pin edge up. Raise the wood a small amount (1/16") above the bench surface. Lay the mating piece of wood on top, aligning the reference edges. Try to put the bottoms of the tails (end grain) just over the inside edge of the pin board (did you check to make sure you know which is inside and which is outside?). You can judge the edge location by using a knife blade as a sort of feeler gauge. Alignment is very critical. Now place a large weight on top of the tail piece of wood. It is critical that neither piece of wood moves during the marking. Check your alignment again.

Using a very sharp pencil or a sharp knife, mark the pins using the holes in the tail piece as a template. You must be careful to put the mark at the very edge of the tail holes, but you

*Beginning Period Woodworking cont...*

must also be careful not to push the tail board and move it. A knife works well here as you are marking in end grain, but you must be careful not to shave off the bottom corners of the tails!

Another thing which you must be very careful about is how you mark the pins out on the opposite end of the board you are working on. There is only one right orientation for the two ends. You want to end up with a box, not a zigzag of boards. Pay close attention to which face is inside vs. outside and make the inside face the same for both ends of the board.

Once you have marked all of the pins, slide the tail piece of wood away from the pin piece. Immediately mark both edges to indicate that these two and no others go together, and also indicate which face is inside and which face is outside. I often make cut marks with a narrow chisel inside the pins and tails. You can easily make a line, a cross, a star, and a hatch mark (1, 2, 3, 4 cuts). Put the marks where they won't show in the finished work, but not in the waste. While the two boards are in close proximity, cross out the waste portions of the pin board. It is much easier to mark the waste correctly if the tails are sitting right next door.

Now put the tail board out of the way, and raise the pin board high enough in the vise to mark the face and to saw. Using a square, extend the lines you drew on the end grain

down one face to the scribe line. A pencil works best here since you are drawing with the grain.

Now saw the pins. Your saw must not cut inside the lines.

Cut so that the saw kerf is entirely in the waste. If you come inside the lines into the pin, you will have a gap. How close you come to the line depends on how good you are at marking and sawing. The closer you can come to the line (i.e. The more practice you have), the quicker and easier dovetailing will be for you.

As with the tails, saw starting on the end grain to make a shallow groove, and then angle the saw around to make a groove part way down the face. Work the cut down to just a saw kerf above the scribe lines on both sides of the board. Once you have all of the cuts down to the scribe lines, you remove the waste with a chisel just like when you cut the tails. Be careful of the fact that the pins are wider on one face than the other.

5. Fitting

Fitting is difficult at first. Your goal is to shave away at the places on the pins where there is too much thickness, until they exactly fit the holes between the tails. You should take your time, making fine shavings with a sharp chisel, and frequently checking the mating pieces against each other. If you prefer a file or rasp, by all means use it. Shave the tails as a last resort, as I find shaving the tails is a

*Beginning Period Woodworking cont...*

good way to make a mistake. The more dovetails along a corner, the more difficult the fitting.

The ideal fit that you strive for is one which you can assemble and disassemble without using a mallet (just barely). It is terribly easy to damage your wood surface with a mallet. The fit I usually end up with needs light mallet work to assemble and disassemble. If you experience any resistance to assembly, try coating one side of the joint with chalk on the rubbing surfaces. Partially assemble the joint, and the chalk will mark the high spots you need to work on. You can also look for shiny spots on the pins (compressed areas) to indicate high spots.

Some books will recommend a tighter ideal fit, on the assumption that the pins and tails will slightly crush each other on assembly and fit each other better as a result. I have used this approach with good success in soft woods like pine and cedar. I would not recommend using an approach in hard woods, as it is too easy to split something. Cherry in particular is a bit brittle and you must be careful not to have too tight a fit.

6. Gluing

Before you glue, take time to think about how you are going to finish your boards. You probably want to fine sand the inside pieces before assembly and you may want to finish the insides of the boards before assembly, depending on how you are planning on finishing

your wood. I usually do not finish before assembly, but I am less picky than a lot of people.

Before you glue, clear your bench top. Place within easy reach a square, all of the clamps you own, cardboard to pad the clamp jaws, towels, a mallet and a scrap block of soft wood to shield your mallet blows. It is probably a good idea to get someone to help you the first time you glue up a box. I usually use yellow (aliphatic resin) wood glue. If you have a complex assembly or have not put many joints together before, use white glue. White glue is not as strong as yellow glue, but it takes longer to set up.

If you are making a box, you must glue up all of the corners at once to make sure everything is aligned. Apply glue to all of the hidden surfaces of one joint on at least one piece of wood. Some books recommend applying glue to both pieces, but I worry about the extra time taken allowing the glue to start setting up before assembly is done. This can be pretty messy, and you must be careful not to get glue where it doesn't belong. Work efficiently, and try not to panic. Assemble each joint before applying glue to the next one.

If you should still be assembling your corners when the glue starts to set, please don't panic. Glue which is just starting to set is really not a problem if you deal with it in the right manner. Do not use your mallet to persuade a joint which is setting. Glue which is beginning to set



responds best to steady pressure, not impulsive pounding.

After all of your corners have been glued and assembled, check your corners for squareness. Put pipe clamps around the outside of the joints to snug up any remaining gaps in the dovetails. Watch where you put the clamp jaws as your pins and tails should stand just a bit proud of the surface. Adjust the tension on the clamps gradually to square up the box. Your box will probably not be perfectly square; reach a compromise between the wood and your pride. Let the glue set overnight.

The next day remove all of the clamps. The protruding ends of the pins and tails can best be made flush with a block plane. Now is also a good time to work carefully with a plane to make the edges of adjacent pieces of wood meet exactly. Set your plane really fine and be careful not to tear up the opposite piece.

Break all edges of your assembly with a block plane or fine sand paper. You will never see the difference, and your work will be much more comfortable to hold. If you use a plane, be careful to work both ends against the middle. Now is a really bad time to tear out part of an edge.

Miscellaneous Comments

When you are making a box, you must decide how to attach the bottom at the beginning. One method is to cut a groove the same size as the bottom thickness on the four sides of the

box, so that the bottom is raised from the lower edge of the sides. If you are making conventional through dovetails, the groove must stop before it reaches the edge of the board or it will show on the outside. Cutting a stopped groove is difficult with hand tools. A better solution is to cut the groove all the way to the edge of each board and put a mitered dovetail over it. Look at a picture of this joint in a book to see how it is done. It is not too hard, but takes a little practice. The grooves should allow the bottom some room side to side for expansion and contraction.

Be sure that the grooves on each of the four sides all line up with each other when you fit the dovetails together!

Assembling a box with a grooved bottom is only a little bit trickier than a dovetailed frame with no bottom. Assemble two of the corners, then slide in the bottom and assemble the last two corners. Do not glue your bottom in place. Gluing this joint would result in cross grain construction. Leave the bottom floating so it can expand and contract without stressing your joints.

A very elegant addition to a box is a shaped footing. This is really very easy to do if you use the right sequence. Cut a groove for the bottom a couple of inches above the edge of the boards. After the groove is finished, draw a pretty curve on the couple of inches of each board below the bottom and saw out your footing.



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You can make the footing a separate frame (from the main box frame). This short frame needs to be larger than the box, and has a groove cut around the top edge just large enough for the box to drop into. The two end up getting glued together. If you make the groove around the top edge of the footing tall enough, you don't need to stop the groove you cut in the box to hold the bottom. Run the bottom groove all the way to the edge of the board, and let the footing cover it.

There is another way to attach the bottom with a separate footing piece. Assemble and glue the four sides of your box. Cut a bottom board the same size as the outside edge of the box. Make a small four sided frame (dovetailed, of course), larger than the outside edge of the first box. This will turn into a footing. Cut curves in the edges to decorate. Before you assemble the footing frame, cut a groove along the top edge deep enough for both the bottom and the main box to drop in. The bottom will be supported by the frame, and the box will sit on top of the bottom. Both the bottom and a piece of the box need to drop into the groove. Remember not to put glue on the bottom or you will end up with cross grain construction. The frame needs to fit the box fairly well. You may want to cut the groove with two steps, so that the bottom sits in one, and the box sits above the bottom in the other step. This will help in keeping glue away from the bottom.

A very nice way of assembling the legs of

a small table with a central pillar is to install the legs with sliding dovetails. These are pretty tricky to do right. Fitting is much easier if you cut your dovetails at a steeper angle than normal.

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I strongly recommend all of Roy Underhill's books if you are at all interested in working wood with hand tools.

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 The Woodwright's Companion
 The Woodwright's Workbook
 The Woodwright's Eclectic Workshop
 all by Roy Underhill, University of North Carolina Press

Other useful books include:

Woodworking with Your Kids, by Richard Starr.
 A good book for adults to start learning about hand tools.

James Krenov's books. A mixture of philosophy and methods.

Old Ways of Working Wood, by Alex Bealer (out of print)

Custom Tools for Woodworkers, by J. Petrovich, Stackpole Books

Make a Chair from a Tree: An Introduction to Working Green Wood, by John Alexander, Jr., Taunton Press

Fine Woodworking Magazine

*Arthur - Fact and Fiction*

by **Baron Hrolf Herjolfssen**

Each culture, everywhere in the world, has its hero figures. These are the people who have created the early history of their nation. Some of these are familiar to us as fairly reliable history, such as Charlemagne, and others as myth. Most of these myths have some basis in historical reality although some, such as Roland, have been very distorted. Some of these distortions are so bad that we have to look very hard to find the truth in them. In our Anglo-Celtic culture, one of the most popular folk tales is of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. It is a tale of heroic struggle and victory over the invader of the homeland. It contains brave deeds but is ultimately a tragedy in that treachery (of some sort) causes the ultimate end of "Camelot". What I have tried to do here is to present a summary of the present state of what we know about Arthur, presenting not every theory in existence, but what I regard as the most likely compilation of facts with the fewest loose ends.

Various writers have contributed to our current views of Arthur. Some have given us fact and others have made up their stories using only enough fact to make themselves convincing. In summary these are;

Gildas the Wise; *"The Destruction of Britain"*

pre 545. A contemporary of Arthur and the first to write of Arthur's exploits although Arthur is not mentioned by name. Some accounts say that Arthur killed Gildas' brother. The book was written as an attack upon the moral laxity of the Britons of his day and not as a history. He said that he wanted to show how the decline in morals led to the destruction of Britain so he minimises British successes. He is the only annalist who was actually a Romano-Briton.

The Welsh Annals; written from circa 600 onwards and added to annually.

The Venerable Bede; *"The Ecclesiastical History of the English People"* Born near Weymouth in Northumbria about 673, he wrote his history in about 720. He had good contemporary Romano-British sources, not just Gildas, but writes from a very anti-British point of view (does not mention Arthur by name).

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles; Probably started in the 891-2 it specifically tells the story from the Saxon view. It makes no mention of Arthur, Mt Badon or much to do with British successes.

Nennius; *"The History of the Britons"* 858 drew on earlier Romano-British sources, not just Gildas. He places Arthur's exploits firmly in the Kingdom of Strathclyde (the Scots border country) and gives details of Arthur's twelve great battles against the Saxons.

The Mabinogion; This is a collection of Welsh tales that started to be written down around the 1100s. It emphasises the events (such as battles and isolated events) in Arthur's story that took place in or near Wales while totally ignoring otherwise well documented ones that took place elsewhere.



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Geoffrey of Monmouth; "*History of the Kings of Britain*" 1138 This is basically a novel based (loosely) on Gildas, Nennius, Bede and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles. For instance, Shakespear's "Lear" was invented in this book. Geoffrey was a Welshman who wished to boost the past glory of his race. Located Arthur's adventures in the West Country to please his patron, Robert of Gloucester.

William of Malmesbury; "*The History of the Kings of England*" Wrote pre 1142, very careful and accurate (unlike Geoffrey). He had other material that he worked from and supports the historical nature of Arthur and his father. Gives good support to the idea that Arthur fought about a thousand Saxons at Mt Badon. This was a Norman who could afford to be generous to the British.

Wace; He wrote "*Roman de Brut*" in 1155. The first to mention a "round table", he drew on some of the missing texts and eyewitness accounts of existing buildings etc.

Chrètien de Troyes; He wrote five Arthurian tales around 1160-90 and was the first of the Continental writers to spread these tales through Europe. The stories were written as romances in the developing troubadour style.

Wolfram von Essanback; "*Parzival*" was written around 1200. He seems to have visited the areas he talks about and consulted some local records in what is otherwise a romance. Cistercians - The Vulgate Cycle; Written 1215-35 it consisted of "*The Matter of Rome*", "*The Matter of France*" and "*The Matter of Britain*". These were "edifying tales" based on Arthur and other historical persons and events.

Sir Thomas Malory; "*Le Morte d'Arthur*" Written in 1485 this is the book that caught the romantic Victorian imagination and gave us most of the ideas of Arthur that we have today. Most of the sources were lost (permanently or temporarily) by this time and he drew on the, by then well accepted, histories of Geoffrey of Monmouth, von Essanback and the Cistercians even though we now know that these are largely inaccurate.

Tennyson; The "*Idylls of the King*", written 1830-34. These followed the basic story lines of Malory and the Mabinogion but more inventive. He used the story as a vehicle to express his feelings on the relations of the sexes and show a Victorian view. Despite this, his verse was regarded as "suggestive" and not entirely proper by many critics. Despite (or because of) this the first edition sold ten thousand copies in three weeks at a very high price for the time.

T. H. White; "*The Sword in the Stone*". This is the base for many of our current conceptions of Arthur. Walt Disney, in particular, heavily used this cleaned up and popularised version of Malory.

Arthur of the Britons; A British television attempt to provide a historical perspective on Arthur. Whilst it is fairly accurate on many details regarding the Saxon way of life, it lacks much accurate detail about the Romano-British and portrays them also as being uncivilised and more later Celtic rather than Romano-British. Its story line is loosely made up from likely incidents from tales and sagas.

Excalibur; This movie version, which received much criticism when it came out, is possibly less inaccurate, in its basic story line, than most of the things written this millenium. The armour, accomodation and dress portrayed are a



concession to Hollywood's conceptions of Arthur and owe very little to reality.

Each successive writer has taken the current myths about Arthur and then given him the attitudes and armour of the writer's time. Thus Malory has credited him with being a paragon of high chivalry and in "Excalibur" they all wear stainless steel and are very amoral. Neither much resembles the historical figure. The point of the story, the successful battles against impossible odds, followed by the tragedy of the treachery of friends and relations remains in all versions that are long enough to have a story line. The story of Arthur was so interesting that each author, from the turn of the millennium onwards placed his own interpretation on the story. They moved his location around to suit their local patrons. It is very interesting that Arthur's enemies liked the story so much that they ignored the fact that he was their most bitter foe and took him to heart (although the Normans, who also oppressed the Saxons, became his greatest fans). But most of the elements of the myth have some provable or probable basis in fact.

There are certain elements that are common to most of the stories. Looking carefully at each one, we can try to work out what is truth, what is mistranslation and what is made up. We have all played the game where everyone sits in a circle and a message is whispered from person to person. The message that comes back is never the one that starts out. Translating and hand-copying of texts often gives the same result.

Excalibur; At the time that the tales of Arthur were happening and being written down, the swords of famous men were given names by the skalds or bards. Arthur's sword seems to

have been called Caliban. After much translation between languages this has become Excalibur.

The Knights; It is known that Rome sent over 15,000 auxiliaries recruited from among the Sarmatians (semi-nomads North and West of the Black Sea) to England, and in particular to the Northern walls. Often Roman auxiliaries became soldier settlers, their armour and weapons being handed down to their sons as heirlooms. An auxiliary's son could enlist with his father's weapons. These horsemen were called *kataphractoi* and were very heavily armoured in full mail or scale armour, riding on horses that were armoured with horn or bronze scale. They were extensively used in the Eastern Empire. It is likely that Arthur, who had experience in the East, would have recruited such men as his followers. Such warriors were more heavily armoured and better armed than mediæval knights and would have had a devastating effect against lightly armoured and ill-equipped Saxons. Their usual equipment consisted of lance, mace, sword, bow and darts. The devices and heraldry that is often associated with them appears only in the thirteenth century when arms were attributed to all the gentles of the past.

The Holy Grail; which only the pure can approach is the result of a mistranslation in *Parzival* from "*lapsit exillis*", a "stone from heaven". It is likely that it was a portable altar stone (such as St Patrick's) which he returned with from the Eastern Empire. There is mention of a stone called "the anvil", made of marble, kept at Grail Castle. Unfortunately we do not know which castle this is, but there is a strong possibility that this is the same stone known to history as the Stone of Scone whose mystic provenance is otherwise un-



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known. If it is a stone altar, "the anvil" being referred to, then the drawing of the sword from the stone (or anvil) in the churchyard (in modern versions like White) would be referring to the consecration of the blade to the service of the Lord on the altar prior to battle against the pagan Saxons.

The Round Table; There was, until it was demolished by a nineteenth century developer, a stone building of a beehive-like shape one mile north of the Antonine wall near today's town of Falkirk. This shape was a popular one for buildings holding the relics of saints in the Eastern Empire of the time of Arthur. When Wace (who wrote in Norman French) was translated into Anglo-Saxon by the scribe Layamon he wrote "First Arthur built a wooden (later round) table". This is the whole basis for the round table stories. We still have the original and it actually translates as "First Arthur built a tabled rotunda" and continues "all were seated within the circle and no-one was placed outside". This is not possible if it were actually like the famous Winchester Round Table (which possibly dates from Edward I's time but was repainted in the Tudor period) but easy if the building were a circular shrine.

Caerleon (or at least South Wales) as Camelot; At this time Isca, the old city of the Roman Second Legion in South Wales, was the seat of the major Metropolitan (Archbishop) in the island. From this point, and the monasteries, missionaries were (and would continue to be) sent out to re-convert the Franks and to convert the pagan Dutch, South Germans and eventually even the Western Slavs. The Celtic Church was more active in its missionary work before the millenium than the Roman or even

the Eastern Churches. It is important to note that the mutual loathing with the Saxons was such that little or no attempt was made to convert them. This was one of Bede's major criticisms of the Arthurian period Church. The town thus had many holy associations including being, probably during Arthur's lifetime, the seat of St David who was to become patron saint of Wales.

Glastonbury; "The oldest church ... in England" (William of Malmesbury) It possibly dates to apostolic, and certainly to Roman times. There is no reference in any of the early sources, who had the means to know, of Arthur or his tomb. The first archaeological mention was the coincidental find, during a visit from Henry II (1154-89), of Arthur and Guinivere's tomb. Guinivere, despite being a Briton, had long golden hair that was still intact after 600 years.

Lancelot; This knight, often regarded as a fable has a name that can be readily traced from L'Ançelot in Norman French to Anguselus in Latin to the Brittonic Aonghas who was well documented as the Pictish sub-King of Alba (between the Rivers Tay and Don).

Guinivere; Similarly can be traced to Guanhumara the Pict chieftain who is noted as bringing under her control British lands down to the Tyne. The Picts traced inheritance through the matrilineal line and she would have inherited, and passed on, any British lands she gained from Arthur on his death. The Picts also had the rare custom of polyandry, one woman having several husbands, so her "affair" with Lancelot may have been with her second husband.

Mordred; The treachery of his nephew is quite

*Arthur - Fact and Fiction cont...*

possible. Gildas was writing at this time that the fratricidal squabbling of The Romano-British (and their degenerate habits) were the main reasons why the Saxons were winning over the British. The idea of the pagan hordes as "the Hammer of God" to punish the wicked backsliders was applied by the Pope, only a few years before Gildas wrote, to the ravages of Attila the Hun.

Arthur himself; It is likely that he was never a King although it is probable that he succeeded his father, Ambrosius, as a *Dux Bellorum* or "war Duke". He is also talked of as *Comes Britanorum* or Count of Britain and as "Count of the Saxon Shore" (This is the north-east coast). Today we would call him a general. He fought a battle in 516 or 517 at Mount Badonicus that so decisively defeated the Saxons that their advance was halted for at least 50 years. We know that he was killed in the battle of Camlann (probably in Gloucestershire) with Medraut in 537. We also know that a person called Merlin became insane in 573 and that this was notable enough to record in a journal that gave only one line to each year. We also have information that Arthur was not a "chivalrous" man but indeed "bloodthirsty from his boyhood".

It is probable that he was a Romano-British war leader, probably with inherited land of his own to pass to his wife. He was selected to lead the British resistance over a number of years. He probably had under his command a small group of very well equipped men. In open battle the Saxons could not compete with him. His men were probably a warrior cult of the Virgin Mary, an early version of the Templars and Hospitallers who had a sacred icon and other symbols.

In over twenty years, over the entire divide between lower and upper Britain (the east and the west) and in twelve great battles he drove back a very persistent invader. In a time when the Saxons defined an army as being more than 30 men, Arthur defeated the Saxons so comprehensively that over 600 were slain in just one battle and they lacked the power to push the British for nearly 50 years. This was the Golden Age of Camelot.

TIME SCALE;

AD 43 Claudius conquers Britain for Rome.

380 Maximus takes the Legions of Britain to Rome to become the Emperor. He strips Britain of soldiers in his quest, Rome falls and Maximus is crowned. The Legions never return.

409 Rome falls to the Goths (its second fall)

447 Vortigern (the Romano-British ruler and possibly a grandson of Maximus) invites Hengist and Horsa (and their Saxon followers) to help him in putting down civil conflict.

516-7 Arthur defeats the West Saxons at Mt Badon; probably this is Dumbarton near Loch Lomond, possibly it is in the south.

519 Cerdic crowned as the first Saxon King in Wessex (in the South).

537 Arthur dies.



Arthur - Fact and Fiction cont...

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**By Dame Alys Katharine of Ashthorne Glen
(Elise Fleming)**

Others have written how to put on a feast, purchase food in bulk, cook for hundreds, as well as details of kitchen sanitation. I would like the cook to consider the preparation from several other points of view: documentation, cohesion, and presentation. A feast may be tasty and the food may be plentiful but feasters can feel "incomplete", not quite knowing what is missing. Tasty little meatballs, rolling around in a too-big bowl with no sauce to cover them or anything to put them on might be one reason. A special subtlety, loudly proclaimed by the herald and paraded through the hall, invisible because of weak candlelight, might be another. A Muslim Arabic dish served with roast pork and chocolate cake may be third. I would like you to consider with me some of the potential difficulties modern cooks may have in presenting a medieval or Renaissance feast to the public.

If you are new to cooking medieval foods please don't let the ideas presented here keep you from experimenting and cooking for groups. One does not become an "master medieval cook" overnight. The concepts of documentation, cohesion and presentation are meant to stretch your horizons and expand your idea of what cooking a feast can be, not to stop you until you can somehow become "perfect."

Feast cooks are, appropriately enough, concerned with the budget, the mechanics of preparation, and even the mechanics of cleaning up the feast hall to ready it for Court or dancing. Those who pay for a feast are concerned with whether they will get good value for their money and whether the food will taste

good or be "wierd." But, consider how SCA armor has progressed. It has gone from freon cans and carpet padding protection to armor and tabards that look "real". While beginning fighters may use blue plastic barrels to make their armor most fighters continue to improve their armor making it more "medieval" as they continue to improve their fighting. No one really forced this. It came as a natural consequence of fighters wanting to look more "period." SCA feasts need to leave this "freon can" stage of feasts and begin to investigate how a medieval or Renaissance feast was put together, how the tables were set, how the food was garnished and presented to the feasters. When you as a cook make some simple (or spectacular!) changes to make your feasts more "period", others will follow. Only then will this important part of our re-creation begin to mature and develop as have our armoring and arts and craft skills.

DOCUMENTATION

Cooking is a transitory art. Once the food has been cooked, it is eaten and the leftovers are disposed of...in a tummy on a later day or into the trashbin. Nothing really remains to tell us how it tasted, what variations were made in the recipe, or what changes are recommended for the next time. Whether you are preparing a feast or just a few dishes to please yourself and possibly some friends, documenting what you did and how you did it will help you the next time you want to do the same dish. Most of us make this kind of simple documentation, usually in the margins of the cookbook!

Each year it becomes easier to find books that provide modern versions of period recipes. Some cooks prefer to start by using



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someone else's adaptation rather than experimenting with a medieval recipe that may have unusual spices or few measurements. Look for books that contain the period recipe along with the modern adaptation (redaction/interpretation). Check to see how closely the modern author followed the original recipe. Did the author specify why changes were made? Are the changes logical based on your experience? What would happen if you used the original ingredients or preparation method? Once a cook gains experience it becomes easier to work from the medieval recipe.

Keep a list of the recipes you have tried and what book(s) they came from. Make notes you will be able to comprehend two years later about any changes you made, ingredient amounts you used, the results and what you might do differently the next time. This is a type of documentation.

Developing your own store of period recipes will help if you want to put on a feast. Too often people will decide to "do a feast" and then use modern recipes because they don't have a repertoire of authentic material to draw from. Or, they will give the hoary excuse, "Period recipes don't taste good."

As a cook begins to learn something about medieval and Renaissance cooking, he or she usually discovers that there is far more to learn than expected. For example, baked ham will probably be well-received at a feast. However, medieval hams bore little resemblance to today's "water-added" meat. How would it be possible to approximate what would have been available? In most European countries meat was always served with a sauce or several sauces. What kinds would have been used with a ham? Does the feast cook know enough to provide sauces or is the ham

studded with cloves and glazed with brown sugar? Delicious, certainly, but it is analogous with the "freon can" level of armoring.

Certainly SCA cooks can provide an excellent modern feast or banquet. The guests can receive excellent value for their money as well as full stomachs after a hard day of fighting, teaching classes, or just plain socializing. The problem comes with implying that what is being served is "medieval" rather than "modern" or "medievaloid." Cooks who wish to raise the consciousness level of the feasters might consider letting them know something about the meal. A simple way to do this is to prepare a list of dishes and place it on each table. For example, "First Course: Basque Chicken, Spaghetti with Moorish Sauce; Spinach with Raisins and Pinenuts." The next step up is to let the diners know that the recipes are from period sources. "Tarte of Strawberries", *The Good Huswives Jewell*, Thomas Dawson, 1596," would be an example. And, most diners will appreciate an English translation of a food such as "Comminee d'almandes (Almond Chicken Cuminade)."

If you have been planning far enough ahead you could prepare feast recipe booklets. These should include the list of foods served and the recipe you used along with any changes you made. Ideally, it should include the original recipe (for those diehards who want to check what you did with the original!). A final nice touch in the booklet would be a complete bibliography of all your sources with title, author, publisher, year, etc. Some groups have done spiral-bound feast booklets with heavy-stock covers that contain historical information about the country, the period author, or about some of the foodstuffs used in the recipes. Others contain just the



recipes photocopied on regular paper and folded in half. Your fee for the book will depend on how many pages, your printing costs, and so forth.

COHESION

Cohesion refers to the unity of the feast. It is something that usually develops after the modern cook begins to master the individual dishes. Many feasts are a mixture of dishes from several countries separated by several centuries. Usually there is no thought given to the interrelationship of the foods themselves or the final dish. Most feasters probably won't notice if an Arabic food is served alongside an English dish to be followed by an Italian Renaissance dessert. And, sometimes all the cook wants to do is prepare things to be eaten by everyone, fighters and cooking Laurels included. But, attention to presenting a unified whole can indicate that you are beginning to master the details of your chosen hobby.

Cohesion is often difficult to pin down. Imagine that you want to put on a clambake for your friends. You "automatically" know something about the foods that should be served, how they should be prepared, and something about an appropriate setting. Now imagine that you are a cook some 500 years in the future. You decide to put on a re-creation of a 20th-century clambake. You can only get a limited amount of clams since they are expensive and scarce so you stretch your meal with the more common mussels. It's a clam "bake" so you prepare them in the oven and freeze them for later use. It says to use their "liquor" so you have carefully saved and fermented the liquid from their baking. You discover from one source that corn-on-the-cob was served. You can get corn but it's not on the cob. It's in a sterile irradiated pack and comes

with a milky sauce. It should be a reasonable substitution, you decide, since you can't get the other and everyone likes it. How was the food presented? Since it deals with seafood the setting surely must be on a beach, so you have the guests, wearing bathing suits, sit on the floor on a layer of sand. While this isn't an exact analogy to what we do to medieval food there are similarities. The medieval cook already "knew" certain parameters about the food, the way it needed to be prepared, and the setting. In the SCA we tend to re-create only the individual dish, not the entire meal, the presentation, or the ambience of the setting. Therefore, at some point in the learning process the modern cook should begin to be aware that this isn't "how it was done back then" and should look at refining his or her skills. For example, your particular interest may lie with Moorish cookery. Work on being able to present a feast using the spices and dishes used in Moorish Spain or Arabic countries. Some SCA cooks have compromised by cooking each course from a different country or century. This allows them to try dishes from several different regions which would use a smaller repertoire of recipes.

Investigate how meals were presented in certain countries and centuries. For example, I believe that during most of SCA's time period England used only two, or at the most three, courses but each contained from ten to thirty or more dishes. Italy apparently used more courses and had a different arrangement of what food was presented when. In certain countries the humoral theory was prevalent. In others, the humors had ceased to be considered. To make a cohesive whole you should become aware of what foods would have been served first, which foods would not have been served with others, and



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how to modify the basic nature of a particular food so that it would not be "dangerous." While you may choose not to present a whole unified feast, your medieval counterpart would naturally have done so.

One memorably cohesive feast was served as if the hostess were in her own manor in 15th-century France. All the dishes were from that time and were served in the order that period menus suggested. We were brought basins of water to wash our hands at the appropriate times. It was one of the few times that I began to feel as if I were sharing something that I would have shared "in period." While this may be beyond the capabilities of a large feast hall certainly an enterprising cook can make adjustments. One part of the feast hall can be set aside for the "above the salt" meal and the feasters limited to what can be easily handled. Special care can be taken with the presentation and service to these few with the remaining feasters getting a standard SCA feast.

At the risk of over simplifying, many people can be good cooks and serve a tasty feast. But, if you wish to master the craft you should learn to go beyond just preparing individual dishes so that you learn how to present the food as it would have been presented "back then." The public will not demand that you educate them. They are probably unaware that the normal feast bears little resemblance to period practices. But, part of our Society is education. With care and planning you can move your already tasty feasts into something that would more closely resemble a feast in a particular country at a particular time. Informing the public through a tabletop menu (and brief explanation) will help them learn a little more about the practices you are

presenting to them either in one particular course or in the entire meal.

PRESENTATION

Presentation covers a wide area, from the physical characteristics of the hall to the final serving of a completed dish. You may not be able to do much about some of the physical characteristics of the hall but you should be aware of its limitations as soon as the site is selected and begin considering how to modify various elements. If this is not something you particularly like to do find someone who does and make him or her the Hall Steward.

The kitchen is your bailiwick. The feasters won't usually see it. However, the feast hall is another matter. How will you set out the tables? Can you approximate one of the several ways that medieval or Renaissance halls were set up? Will you need to limit the number of feasters? For much of our early period, at least in England, the halls were set up with a High Table at one end, often on a dais, and two long rows of tables down each side of the room. People sat (or stood!) at the outside of the table, leaving the inside for the servers to work. At Society feasts people are often placed at both sides of a regular table which doesn't leave much room for candles, their feast ware, and your serving dishes. What kind of physical arrangement was common given the time period and the country from which your dishes come?

Medieval feast hosts did not expect their guests to bring their own illumination. The host provided extra torches to make the hall shine brightly and to show off his wealth and power. Modern halls are often too brightly lit for our Victorian-inspired tastes.



What can your Hall Steward do to modify the lighting and still permit people to see your splendid dinner? One solution might be to carefully drape material on the ceiling to soften the harshness of fluorescent lights. Another might be to use the dimmer switch the hall may have to lower the level of light. A third might be to turn out several banks of lights but still leave one or two on. Communication with the event staff is important in this case so that someone doesn't come along and turn out all the lights which you so carefully left on. (You might want to tape over the switch and put a note on saying "Don't touch!") Another possibility is for your group to provide a number of candles for each table to augment what the individual feasters have brought. If you have access to lights that could be aimed off the ceiling, this would provide indirect lighting and still allow the diners to see their food.

While the hall's lighting isn't part of the cooking it can have a direct relationship to how people perceive your feast. One hall source was so dark that we took turns holding a flashlight so that the table volunteer could carve the chicken and not cut his fingers. The same flashlight came in handy to hold while each feaster examined a dish to see whether it was a salad or a grain dish! At a recent feast the cook had gone to great lengths to have five or six lovely subtleties made. Each represented a barony, was placed on a specially-cut board in the shape of the barony's symbol, and was topped by marzipan figures and tiny cookies hanging from a tree inserted into the cake on each board. The heralds cried an explanation and the cakes were paraded through the hall. Unfortunately, no one could see them since the only illumination was from the candles which the individual feasters had brought. People were unable to appreciate the skill of the cook.

Additional items to consider might include whether your group chooses to provide tablecloths for the guests or provides any decoration for the tables. Tablecloths seemed to cover all the tables and English "courtesy books" describe how they were laid. Most paintings do not show table decorations except for the trenchers, a few dishes and goblets, and an impressive "salt" at Head Table. There are references, however, to flowers strewn on the table in different time periods. And, again, customs differed from Italy to Germany to France to England.

Medieval feasts, just as many other facets of medieval life, were labor intensive. Today we do not have the luxury of having many servants available and this can make serving the feast a challenge. Servers are also a part of the "presentation" of food. The medieval server knew what to do, did it on a regular basis, and had appropriate clothes to wear which enhanced the reputation of the host. We use volunteers who need an inexpensive meal! If your group puts on events somewhat regularly you might consider enlisting group members as part of a regular servers' corps. One group's impressive servers wear special tabards, line up in the back and after Head Table has been ceremoniously presented with the food by the "majordomo" and his staff, enter marching in unison with the food held high to be placed on the feasters' tables. While this may not be feasible for every group those who can manage some degree of ceremony will add to the ambiance and the "cohesion" of the feast.

Presentation of the food most definitely falls under the cook's jurisdiction. Most of our emphasis tends to be on the cooking of the various dishes. The food is placed in bowls or



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on platters and taken out with little thought to the visual impact it may have. Those tasty meatballs rolling around in their bowl would have had a better impact if they were placed on, for example, greens or even a grain dish, with their sauces nestled snugly beside them for immediate use. Colorful greens, triangles of toast (sippets), or fancifully cut vegetables can enliven a dish and entice the diner to eat it. While most early period cookery books don't talk about the presentation touches there are mentions in cookery books from the late 1500s and beyond. As a cook, you should give consideration to what might have been done for the dish you are re-creating and then give that task to someone who will put on the finishing touches before the servers present the dish.

Besides the presentation of the individual dish you need to consider the presentation of the course and the dishes in it. This involves organizing the kitchen so that all the foods that are to be eaten together are actually sent out together. One unfortunate feast included eight small pork slices sent out, ungarnished, on a too-large platter, once slice per person. Some ten minutes later, a sauce arrived. All the meat had been eaten by that time. Some ten minutes after that came half a baked apple per person. While the meat may have been tasty it certainly lacked something, being the only food available for quite a while. And, what can the diner do with sauce and no meat to put it on?

Part of becoming a "master cook" involves learning how to manage the cooking and "serving forth" of multiple dishes. And, the best-laid plans of a modern cook can oft times go awry when the oven refuses to work or the pots have all disappeared. Modern cooks might take advantage of Chiquart's lists

of equipment needed when his master traveled away from home. Local groups, as funds are available, can stock some of these items so that the cook isn't caught short. Serving dishes and serving spoons (so the diners do not need to dip their saliva-coated spoons into the common bowl!) are particularly useful. Use the services of others to oversee various aspects of the feast rather than trying to do it all yourself. One head cook places a person in charge of presentation, putting the finishing touches on each dish, as well as a head server who doesn't actually serve the food but sees that it is sent out in a timely fashion. She has a third person in the kitchen to see that the food gets into the proper dishes. Besides relieving the head cook of specific tasks it is good preparation for those who wish to become the next feast's head cook.

As you learn more about how food was presented in various times and places you can begin to experiment with subtleties and fanciful items. Keep in mind that while the Head Cook oversaw the complexity of the entire feast preparation, he did not prepare everything himself. In the largest establishments the pastry was prepared by one specialized section to be filled by the cooks. The confections and subtleties were often prepared by a third specialized group. Subtleties, while often composed of edible parts, were not always edible and might have been constructed by the carpenters or the plasterers with assistance from painters. The presentation of these spectacular pieces would often be accompanied by musicians or dancers. The herald would read the "motto" which explained the meaning of the subtlety. A number of these have been recorded in the herald's notes from English royal feasts. Do some research to find period examples or take a cue



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from the event's theme or an honored guest and add a subtlety to highlight your meal.

CONCLUSION

While most cooks focus solely on the preparation of a dish there is certainly more to presenting a realistic re-creation of medieval food, dining, and feasting. Using historical sources rather than "medievalizing" modern food; keeping adequate records of one's experimentations with different recipes so that

successful attempts can be repeated; offering a unified "whole" with foods that would have been served in the same meal; providing a realistic atmosphere with attractively presented dishes; all are part of what we should be attempting as we experiment with medieval cookery. In this fashion SCA cookery can move from the "freon can" stage of medievaloid cooking to cookery that is increasingly a re-creation of what was actually prepared.

A Period PDA

by James Northfolke

Because I like to carry a small journal and pen around; to allow me to doodle, take notes, jot down ideas; I thought it would be interesting to see what someone like my persona (mid-late 16th-century English merchant) would use, if anything. It turns out that Hamlet gives us a pointer to a tool that was probably more popular than an iPhone: the table-book.

Remember thee?

I, thou poore Ghost, while memory holds a seate

In this distracted Globe: Remember thee?

Yea, from the Table of my Memory,
Ile wipe away all triviuall fond Records,
All sawes of Bookes, all formes, all pressures past,
That youth and obseruation coppied there;

And thy Commandment all alone shall liue

Within the Booke and Volume of my Braine,

Vnmixt with baser matter...

Here Hamlet likens his memory to a table that can be wiped clean. What is this table? Stallybrass, et. al. suggests four characteristics of the Renaissance writing tables that they hold Hamlet is alluding to:

- 1) Ubiquity: they were published and imported on a large scale.
- 2) Erasability: they contain leaves of erasable paper or parchment, the cheaper sort being bound with printed almanacs, charts, and other materials [these are described as containing information up to 24 years, with 8 to 10 blank pages for writing, including the type of information a merchant would need in import/export, conversions, and the like].
- 3) Portability: they are small enough to fit in



A Period PDA cont...

a pocket, and their durable bindings protect them when carried about.

4) Convenience: they allow a stylus to be used in situations where it would be difficult or impossible to use pen and ink.

Comenium, in his schoolbook, describes how these are to be used, "with a quill or pen (whose nib, slit, or clift is tempered or mended with a penknife) wee write in paper or in parchment: with a stile or pen for tables, in writing tables (little bookes) that it may be blotted out."

It has been suggested that lead had been used since the Middle Ages in ruling lines for script and illumination, but had proven unsatisfactory for writing. Graphite was discovered in England in the mid-16th-century and there is evidence of a graphite pencil from 1565; however, this was not in use on a broad scale until about 1630. Finally, it is argued that the use of the word pencil in period literature refers to a painters brush.

The stylus; sometimes of silver, but more often of copper or brass; was kept under the binding of the spine of the book.

While I have not, as yet, tried my hand, here is a recipe for the erasable paper:

To make white tables to write in with the pointe of a wire, fuche as come out of Germanie.

Take plafter called Gypsum, cribled or fifted, and fteepe it and temper it with Hartes glewe, or other, and give your

Parchement leafe one touche with it, and when it is drie, fcrape it, that it maie bee even and bright, and cover it euer againe with the faied plafter called Gypfum, and fcrape it as before: then take Cerufe, well maied and fifted, and fteepe it with the oile of Line seede foddren: annointe your Tables with this mixtion, and let it drie in the fhadowe, the fpace of five or fixe daies. This doen, take a cloute or Linnen clothe weate in water, where with you fhall fticke and make fmoothe the faide Tables, but the clothe muft firfte bee wroonge harde, and the water preffed out, then leaue it fo the fpace of fifteene or xx. daies, untill it be through drie, then applie it to your ufe.

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*An Investigation into the Symbolism of
Heraldry in the Legend of Tristram and Isoud*

By Craig Levin [[Pedro de Alcazar](#)]

The study of Arthurian heraldry has feet in two camps. One is the familiar field of Arthurian studies, with a huge corpus of work behind it. The other is the older, more obscure, field of heraldry, which has, for the most part, receded from the interests of many scholars.

This is unfortunate, because the coats of arms of the characters from the legends are present throughout much of the stories. Coats of arms were a common form of identification during the Middle Ages, worn by the nobility at all occasions. The characters in the stories are described as wearing coats of arms, and, in many cases, they are shown in works of art in coats of arms.

The legend of Tristram and Isoud was among the most popular legends that have become part of the Arthurian cycle. Dozens of manuscripts of several different versions of the legend were in knightly libraries all over Europe, and artists' depictions of the story are common as well. In all of them, coats of arms are either described or depicted. Interestingly, different versions of the legend attributed different coats of arms to each character, and these seem to have remained somewhat consistent throughout the years. Clearly, even though styles of clothing and armor varied, the coats of arms meant something of importance over the years, something that was clear to any mediaeval person.

Because a clear knowledge of heraldry is not as common now as it was when these books were written and these works of art were created, something is lost to us that would

have been obvious to our ancestors when we look at them. Luckily, manuals of heraldry exist from that time, and they explain many of the matters implicit and hidden in coats of arms. The goal of this paper is to make what is hidden now within the coats of arms of certain characters in the legend of Tristram and Isoud clear to the people of today, including the arms of Tristram, Palomides, and Marhaus. In order to keep clear of confusion over names, this paper will use, when applicable, the spellings used by the 1994 Modern Library edition of *Le Morte D'Arthur*.

Heraldry evolved as a science sometime during the twelfth century from a combination of symbols used for seals, banners, and other types of insignia. At first, it was used only in war and in tournaments to identify otherwise anonymous men in armor. By the end of the thirteenth century, its rules had been codified in a more or less uniform fashion all over Europe.¹ This was, in part, due to its use in the tournament, which spread almost instantly across Europe in the century before.²

Heralds developed a jargon, called blazon, which is used to accurately describe a shield, much as a programming language tells a computer precisely how to operate. In principle, a coat of arm's blazon-the jargon's word for a description-is the same, no matter how it is drawn-or emblazoned. This jargon, once introduced, will be used throughout this paper.

To begin, the basic components of a coat of arms are the background, called the field, and the objects on the shield, or charges. Places on the shield are described



Symbolism of Heraldry cont...

similarly to stage directions. Dexter is stage right, while sinister is stage left. The base is the bottom of the shield, and the chief is the top of the shield. The middle is the fess point. The top and middle are named after two charges that run through those points.

There are only seven commonly accepted colors that a field or a charge can be. They are further subdivided into two categories: metals and tinctures. Metal charges are usually placed only on tinctured fields, and vice-versa. The metals are yellow and white, or and argent in blazon. The tinctures are black, red, blue, green, and purple, which in blazon are sable, gules, azure, vert, and purple.

There are also the furs, which are special combinations of the metals and tinctures. The most common furs are vair, ermine, ermines, erminois, and pean. Vair is a combination of argent and azure that resemble bells of each color placed right side up, and then upside down. The other furs are derived from the ermine robes of the nobility and clergy, with the field charged with representations of the ermine's tail spot. Ermine has an argent field, charged with sable ermine spots, and ermines has a sable field with argent spots. Erminois has an or field, and sable spots, and pean has a sable field with or spots. Usually, they are used in the same fashion as the color of their fields. Vair and certain other special fields, like checky, bendy, and barry, which are called parted fields, are composed of a combination of metals and tinctures. They are considered neutral fields, which can take charges of either a metal or a tincture. Finally, a charge can be colored proper, or its colors in real life. Generally, a proper charge is considered to have the nature of a tincture.

The most common charges are the ordinaries and sub-ordinaries. These are purely geometric charges, formed only by straight lines and the outline of the shield itself. There are nine ordinaries, and ten subordinaries. The simplest ordinaries are the pale, the fess, the bar, the bend, the bend sinister, and the chief. The pale is a vertical band. The fess is a horizontal band running through the middle of the shield, while bars are several horizontal lines. Bends and bends sinister are diagonal bands, differing visually only by the fact that bends start in dexter chief, and run down to sinister base (\backslash), and bends sinister start in sinister chief and run down to dexter base ($/$). The chief is a horizontal band running across the entire chief, or top, of the shield. The other ordinaries are composed of two bands. The cross is self-explanatory. The saltire is a cross of Saint Andrew, an X. The chevron's name is taken from the French word for rafter, and looks like this: \wedge . The starting points for the chevron are the sinister and dexter base points, and they meet in the fess point in some forms of emblazonry, and at the chief in other forms of emblazonry. The lines defining the ordinaries can also be used to split a field into divisions by tincture or metal, and these fields are among those called parted fields.

The subordinaries are a more motley group. The bordure is a strip around the shield's edge. The inescutcheon is a small shield within the shield, and the orle is an inescutcheon with the middle cut out, appearing almost like a shrunken bordure, and tressures are, like bars for a fess, the plural form of the orle. The quarter is literally that—a square covering a quarter of the shield, with one corner usually at the dexter chief, the canton is a smaller version, still tucked into the corner of



the shield, and the gyron is the lower half triangle of the quarter, as if it were cut by a line bendwise. The canton and the quarter also have their mirror images-the canton sinister and quarter sinister. The pile is a triangle with its base on the chief, and its point nearly at the base. The flanches are the curved flanks of a shield, like so:), and the flasques are their diminutives, much as tressures are for orles.

There are other sorts of charges, of course. Almost everything that exists or can be conceived of can be found in at least one coat of arms. Commonly, though, they are beasts, birds, or mythological monsters. The most popular creatures are the lion and the eagle. The postures usually are specified in a blazon, but, generally, they are self-evident. Also, charges can be cotised-accompanied by thin bands parallel to the main band-and fimbriated-surrounded by a concentric band of a contrasting metal or tincture.³

Other subdivisions of the science of heraldry include cadency and marshalling, and the study of augmentations and abatements of honor. The studies of cadency and marshalling basically deal with the "familial" aspects of heraldry. Cadency is the study of how one differentiates the arms of relatives, since one of the basic principles of heraldry is that only once person at a time may have the same coat of arms in a region (usually a kingdom).⁴ Marshalling is the study of how one combines arms, usually as a result of the marriage of two armigers, and how their children will bear those arms.⁵

The study of augmentations and abatements of honor, however, is a close approach to the area of heraldry, which, for scholars of literature, is very important: the study of the symbolism behind charges and colors in coats of

arms, which is called heraldic symbolism. Augmentations usually were granted to a person by his lord as a result of dedicated service. Often, this might take the shape of a change of charge, or as an additional charge atop the entire coat.⁶ Abatements act as the precise opposite: a person's arms would be symbolically defaced in some fashion-by turning them upside down (called reversing) or by putting distinctive charges over the original coat, as a sentence for a crime. Unfortunately, while one may find plenty of examples of augmentations of arms, and of the arms of faithless men being reversed, there is no record of whether any of the other abatements were used in a court of law.⁷

The study of heraldic symbolism is the final, and most interesting part of the science of heraldry for the literary scholar. Heraldry were exhorted to take the symbolic qualities of colors and charges into account, so that they could design arms that fitted the nature of the person who would receive them.⁸ Since Arthur's knights were considered the models of chivalry, their arms would be considered symbolically important representations of the best and highest that chivalry could be.

The symbolic meanings that are used in heraldry may date as far back as heraldry itself. The earliest heraldic authors associated colors with gemstones and heavenly bodies, which were assigned virtues by lapidary books like *De Gemmis*, which dates from the eleventh century, and the ancient pseudo-science of astrology, which reached its mature form in Claudius Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* in the second century.⁹ The final form of heraldic color symbolism was in place by the end of the thirteenth century, when the first extant heraldic treatise was written.¹⁰ The symbolic



Symbolism of Heraldry cont...

meanings of the animals used as charges are of equal antiquity, as they come from the bestiaries that were part and parcel of mediaeval science.¹¹

Finally, we come to the coats of arms themselves. Sir Tristram is interesting, heraldically speaking, because he has had several different arms attributed to him, deriving from versions of the Tristram legend in Italian, German, French, and Norwegian, and emblazoned in various ways, some perhaps erroneous, by artists throughout the Middle Ages. Other characters in the legend are given coats of arms as well, naturally, and they also vary from version to version.

Tristram's oldest arms come from the courtly verse tradition. Roger Loomis proved in the early part of this century that they were those arms attributed to him in the twelfth century by Thomas of Brittany and Brother Robert of Norway: Gules, a lion rampant or. It was thought by Loomis that Thomas and Brother Robert gave Tristram those arms as a way of honoring their patrons, for the former, the king of England, and for the latter, the king of Norway, both of whom have lions in their arms.¹² Lions were the kings of the beasts, and symbolized the virtues of courage with compassion and constancy, for a lion was supposedly monogamous.¹³ Or upon gules symbolized that the bearer of those arms was a person filled with the desire to conquer, which certainly befits a knight.¹⁴

These arms changed somewhat over the years. Late in the fifteenth century, a French manuscript, *La forme quon tenuit des tournoys et assemblees au temps du roy uterpendragon et du roy artus*, which was dedicated to Gaston de Viane, the son of Gaston de Foix, who was

avid in chivalric pursuits, changed these arms to: Vert, a lion rampant or.¹⁵ This device change seems to be rather odd, as or upon vert symbolize one whose life has been lived in happiness.¹⁶ No doubt, this is due to the discarding of the verse cycles, and the rise of the prose tradition, in which Tristram and Isoud spend much of their time together in Lancelot's castle of Joyous Gard, when Tristram is not out jousting or hunting. These arms may also be examples of canting arms, in which a charge calls attention to the name of the armiger. In this case, the lion might stand for Lionnes, Tristram's ancestral domain.¹⁷

On the other hand, in the Holy Roman Empire, Gottfried von Strassburg, the thirteenth century representative of the courtly verse tradition, attributed a completely different coat of arms to Tristram: Argent, a boar rampant sable.¹⁸ This attribution remained popular in the Holy Roman Empire until at least the fifteenth century, for Tristram is depicted with those arms in murals dated to that period painted on the walls of Castle Runkelstein.¹⁹ The boar was said to symbolize a skillful, but envious warrior, according to the heralds.²⁰ In the bestiaries, however, a boar symbolized not just ferocity, but also crudeness.²¹ Sable upon argent stood for one who would yield up his earthly pleasure to attain his goals.²²

Although the boar and the lion seem to have split up the heraldic territory for Tristram beyond the Alps, in Italy, another heraldic tradition was begun by the author of the *Tavola Ritonda*. He attributed azure, a bend argent cotised or, to Tristram.²³ However, the artists who seem to have used the *Tavola Ritonda* for inspiration did not directly adhere to this blazon, but gave Tristram different arms. A mural



painted in Palermo during the fourteenth century, attributed argent, three bendlets between two crescents azure to Tristram, and a contemporary embroidery from the Empire attributed barry azure and argent to him.²⁴ As odd as it may seem, the combination of azure upon argent does not symbolize the same thing as argent upon azure, because the color of the field is considered the dominant force in considering the symbolic values of a shield.²⁵ Argent upon azure symbolized one who was a diligent follower, while azure upon argent stood for a courteous and discreet man.²⁶ Naturally, the two combinations can be combined in the same person, but these devices, while they all have azure and argent, look completely different from each other.



the noble virtue of forthright bravery.²⁹ A mural with the scenes from Rusticiano's stories exists in the ruins of Castle of St. Floret, in which Tristram is twice depicted in those arms, but once in their opposite: Gules, a bend argent when he and Galahad are jousting.³⁰ This change of hue in the charge and field switches the noble virtue to an ignoble flaw: envy.³¹



Another notable exception to the rule is found in the *Livre du Cuer d'Amours*, a fantasy on love written by Rene of Anjou, the chivalrous and lettered father-in-law of Henry VI of England, and a peer of France. One would have expected so learned and knightly a man to have attributed the usual arms to Tristram, but instead, he gave Tristram these arms: Or, a bend purple.³² Purple upon or is said to symbolize one who is sage and rich, and since the *Livre* is an allegory on the travails of love, this is an apt description of Sir Tristram.³³

Another notable exception to the generalization is the Guicciardini tapestry, made for that prominent family in the thirteenth century. Unfortunately, the tapestry was not colored, but had the figures of the characters outlined in dark thread. In this tapestry, Tristram was given the Guicciardini arms of three horns in pale, that is, all in a vertical row.³⁴

Tristram is, of course, not the only male character in the legend. Meliodas, Marhaus, Palomides, and Kehydius are all belted knights, who have arms of their own. The fight scenes between Tristram and Palomides and Tristram and Marhaus were popular subjects for artists, and they created variations on the arms of the combatants, as has been seen above.

Most of the prose manuscripts, and the later mediaeval Arthurian tradition in general, adhered to one of the earlier attributed arms, when describing Tristram's war gear. Indeed, this was done to such an extent that in 1983, Pastoureau's armorial—a collection of blazons and emblazons of Arthur's knights attributed vert, a lion rampant or as Tristram's most popular attributed arms, and made a brief mention of argent a boar rampant sable, and its appearance in Germany.²⁷ However, there are several exceptions to this generalization, as one might expect in as well-liked and widespread a story as that of Tristram and Isoud.

The Italian romancer Rusticiano, best known as Marco Polo's amanuensis, is one of these exceptions. When he was writing his Arthurian romance for Edward I of England, he did not follow Thomas of Brittany in his attributions of arms, but instead gave Tristram argent, a bend gules.²⁸ These simple arms represent



Symbolism of Heraldry cont...

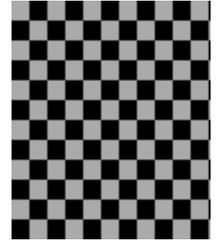
Marhaus, as a character, is as old as the legend itself. His condition in life has gone from an all but nameless savage, the brother-in-law of the king of Ireland, to a knight, even a member of the Round Table, whom the newly knighted Tristram kills in order to redeem Cornwall from a shameful human tribute. Since he has been around for a long time, he naturally has had several arms attributed to him.

The embroiderer of the Guicciardini tapestry gives Marhaus arms very reminiscent of those of the Acciaiuoli family, which had married into the Guicciardini: three fleurs-de-lis.³⁵ A fourteenth-century embroidery of the legend, found in Wienhausen, which seems to have been based on Gottfried's version, depicts Marhaus fighting with Tristram, while carrying a shield whose field changes from gules to vert, charged with a Moor's head.³⁶ However, Pastoureau's Arthurian armorial cites for Sir Marhaus barry argent and azure, a lion rampant gules, and a similar coat, bendy argent and azure, a lion rampant gules.³⁷ These would symbolize a dutiful, forthright, and fierce man, which would certainly seem to suit Marhaus well, from what little we see of him. Interestingly enough, barry argent and azure, a lion rampant gules, is also the coat of arms for the duchy of Luxembourg.³⁸



Tristram's other great adversary, at least in the prose romances, is Sir Palomides, a pagan knight who loves Isoud almost as much as Tristram himself. As such, Tristram and Palomides fight, often on the slightest of pretences, in order to settle the question of who would receive Isoud's favor. Rusticiano attributes argent a chief gules to Palomides.³⁹ This attribution, using the same colors as Tristram's

arms, implies that his virtues are the same as Tristram's, while the chief was, according to the heralds, the most honorable ordinary until the rise of Christianity, when it was replaced by the cross.⁴⁰ This hints that Palomides was, perhaps, fit for Isoud's love, but it still marked him as an outsider to most of chivalry. *La forme* attributes checky argent and sable to Palomides.⁴¹ This would symbolize one who would give up his pleasures to attain his higher goal.⁴² Palomides has also had checky argent and azure attributed to him.⁴³ This would stand for a discreet and courteous man.⁴⁴

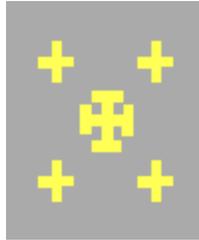


Kehydus is, like Marhaus, an old figure in the legend. However, unlike Marhaus and Palomides, who are enemies of Tristram, Kehydus is Tristram's brother in arms, and, after Tristram marries his sister, Isoud of the White hands, also his brother-in-law. This means that scenes with Kehydus in armor are practically nonexistent. He has, however, had several arms attributed to him. *La forme* and Pastoureau's armorial both attribute to him gules, three mascles (hollow lozenges-C. M. L.) or.⁴⁵ Mascles do not apparently have any special meaning attached to them, but the color combination of or upon gules supposedly stands for a desire to conquer.⁴⁶

Surprisingly enough, arms do exist for Meliodas, Tristram's father, whom we scarcely see in most of the versions of the legend, before he is killed off in the tragic prelude to the rest of the story. At one point, a copy of Rusticiano's romance made for King Louis of Naples, in the middle of the fourteenth century attributes the arms of the kingdom of Naples and the kingdom of Jerusalem to him,



which are azure, semy of fleurs-de-lis or, a label (a cadency mark- C. M. L.) gules, and argent, a cross between four crosses or.⁴⁷ A copy of *Guiron le Courtois*, written for the Duke of Berry in the early fifteenth century, has an illumination of a scene with Meliodas in it. Unfortunately, since he is a member of a group, and the members aren't labelled, it is impossible to say which coat of arms is his.⁴⁸ Finally, Brault's *Early Blazon* credits Meliodas with an uncharged shield of vert.⁴⁹ Vert, unadorned with any other color, stands for love, hope, and health, an odd combination in the case of Meliodas.⁵⁰



The other characters that interact with Tristram are the two Isouds, Gouvernail, King Mark, and an assortment of Arthur's knights. Because arms were associated with war and the tournament, women were not usually depicted in arms. Gouvernail is usually a squire, and squires, while armigerous, were of a lower status than knights, and did not fight or joust with them, being nominally knights-in-training, so Gouvernail does not have arms attributed to him, either. Although Mark was a king, his deeds and general character made him unpopular as a potential character in an Arthurian tournament. Also, most depictions of Mark show him up in a tree or at ease in his court, two places where one was not likely to be seen in armor, and hence, wearing one's coat of arms. So, no arms for Mark are listed in Pastoureaux's armorial or in *La forme*, and none can be deduced from other sources available at this point. The knights of the Round Table that Tristram meets are legion, and an examination of their coats of arms would extend this work past its stated limits.

This paper has described the terminology of heraldry, given a brief history of why and how its symbolic code came to be, and examined the arms of major and minor characters in several versions of the legend of Tristram and Isoud in the light of that symbolic code. The different versions of the legend and the different coats of arms for the knights in those versions became accepted within the area that each was native, though it is clear that the *Tavola Ritonda* and the works of Rusticiano had some circulation outside of their native Italy. It is interesting to note that Tristram's arms in Rusticiano's works and in the *Livre du Cuer d'Amours* use the same ordinary-the bend. The bend is not the most popular ordinary, though. The most popular ordinary, at least in English and French heraldry, is the chevron, which is absent from any of the arms blazoned or emblazoned in this work.⁵¹ The bend's symbolic importance was not clear in the works consulted by the author of this work, and could no doubt be a subject for deeper investigation.

The use of heraldry as a tool for literary analysis, unfortunately, still seems unclear. Much of the symbolism in mediaeval heraldic works seems reminiscent of a newspaper horoscope column. This is because of two related issues: First, the purpose of a coat of arms is to act as the representation of personal virtue, and it would not be logical to have an interpretation of a coat of arms that instead described vices. Second, it no doubt would have occurred to heralds that designing unflattering coats of arms would be impolitic, if not unhealthy. Therefore, it would have been an advantage for heralds to make a vague and complimentary-sounding symbolic code for the material of their science. This is a problem when interpreting the coats of arms



Symbolism of Heraldry cont...

of characters inimical to the protagonist, like Sir Marhaus and Sir Palomides. It will possibly be resolved as more and more research is done on mediaeval heraldry by Dr. Brault in Pennsylvania and other scholars of literature and philosophy.

Note to the Reader: The emblazons in this page were created via Blazons 1.0, a shareware program created in 1993 by Robert Bilard.

Endnotes

- 1 Rodney Dennys, *The Heraldic Imagination* (London, Barrie and Jenkins, Ltd., 1975), pp. 18-19.
- 2 Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1987), pg. 91.
- 3 Most of this information is easily discoverable in a variety of references. New basic textbooks of heraldry appear on a regular basis, but the best to date is *The Oxford Guide to Heraldry*, which is quoted below in this work.
- 4 Thomas Woodcock and John Martin Robinson, *The Oxford Guide to Heraldry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pg. 66.
- 5 Henry Gough and James Parker, *A Glossary of Terms Used in Heraldry* (Oxford: James Parker and Co., 1894), pg. 393.
- 6 Gough and Parker, pp. 25-26.
- 7 Gough and Parker, pp. 1-2.
- 8 Dennys, pp. 42, 44.
- 9 Dennys, pg. 44-45.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Woodcock and Robinson, pg. 64.
- 12 Roger Sherman Loomis, "Tristram and the House of Anjou," *Modern Language Review*, XVII (1922), pp. 24-30.
- 13 T. H. White (ed.), *The Bestiary, A Book of Beasts, Being a Translation from a Latin Bestiary of the Twelfth Century* (New York: Perigee Books, Inc. 1980), pp. 7, 9.
- 14 Gerard Leigh, *Accedence of Armorie* (London: John Jaggard, 1612), pg. 9.
- 15 Edouard Sandoz, "Tournaments in the Arthurian Tradition," *Speculum*, XIX (October, 1944), pg. 408.
- 16 Leigh, pg. 14
- 17 Gough and Parker, pp. 88-89.
- 18 Gottfried von Strassburg (translated by A. T. Hatto), *Tristan* (New York: Penguin Books USA Inc., 1990), pg. 130.
- 19 Roger Sherman Loomis and Laura Hibbard Loomis, *Arthurian Legends in Medieval Art* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1938), pp. 48-49.
- 20 Woodcock and Robinson, pg. 64.
- 21 White, pg. 76.
- 22 Leigh, pg. 7.
- 23 Loomis and Loomis, pg. 62.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Leigh, pg. 8.
- 26 Leigh, pp. 5, 9.
- 27 Michel Pastoureau, *Armorial des Chevaliers*



de la Table Ronde (Paris: Leopard d'Or Press, 1983), pg. 103.

28Loomis and Loomis, pg. 59.

29Leigh, pg. 7.

30Loomis and Loomis, pg. 60.

31Leigh, pg. 9.

32Roger S. Loomis, "A Sidelight on the 'Tristan' of Thomas," *Modern Language Review*, X (1915), pg. 308.

33Leigh, pg. 5.

34Loomis and Loomis, pg. 63.

35Ibid.

36Loomis and Loomis, pp. 51-52. See also Otfried Neubecker, *Heraldry: Sources, Symbols, and Meaning* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1976), pg. 32, for the color photograph.

37Pastoureau, pg. 92.

38Neubecker, pg. 228.

39Loomis and Loomis, pg. 60.

40Leigh, pg. 114. See also Woodcock and Robinson, pg. 58.

41Sandoz, pg. 420.

42Leigh, pg. 7.

43Pastoureau, pg. 93.

44Leigh, pg. 7.

45Sandoz, pg. 412.

46Leigh, pg. 9.

47Loomis and Loomis, pg. 114.

48Loomis and Loomis, pg. 108.

49Gerard Brault, *Early Blazon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), pg. 88.

50Neubecker, pg. 86.

51 Arthur Charles Fox-Davies, *A Complete Guide to Heraldry* (New York: Bonanza Press, 1978), pg. 122.

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Symbolism of Heraldry cont...

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Pastoureau, Michel. *Armorial des Chevaliers de la Table Ronde*. Paris: Leopard d'Or, 1983.

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Business Meeting Notes 10/18/10

Start time: 7:03

Attendance: Tassi, Melanie, Ben, Berte, Ruland, Ema, Fortune, Ayna, Juliana, Egan, Bera, Alail, Francesca, Geoffery, Finna, Michael and Lynn Edwards

Seneschal - Words Good Evening. Its finally Autumn. I am happy with the turn out at Ceilidh, A & S and Mid Wilamette.

Baron and Baroness – Thanks For coming. We want to say thank you to Juliana for such a good job with Ceilidh. Thank you to Egan for the way Practices are going. Thank you for all the hard work of all the

members of the Barony. Look forward to seeing you all at Investiture.

Officers Reports:

Chronicler-

Minutes approval

New Waiver Forms- Please fill out

Remove Open Castle from Privy

Exchequer- Balance

Our bank balance as of September 30, 2010 was \$5699.21. Our register balance, including all un-cashed checks, is \$5,196.73.

Gold Key- Nothing to report

Herald- Hello! Couple of people have their names are in process and devices are in re-processing.

Arts and Sciences- The Arts and Sciences day for October was Sunday the 10th, and the theme was "things textile" The focus for the day was provided by our own HL Brigit of Guernsey, who brought a vat of indigo, much dyeing ensued and the vat was thoroughly expended. A variety of other activities took place as well, including knitting and book-binding. More than a dozen people attended, including the arts and sciences minister of Adiantum and 3 others from our neighboring Barony.

Dame Juliana is continuing to hold a combined scribal and bardic night at her home.



Chatelaine- Interim -Seeking replacement- We need a chatelaine, Celidh was fun. We had about 20 people with 2 newcomers. Had some music and dancing, mini court, and etiquette was taught for Mattea. Themed Ceilidhs; November-Scrapbook,

Chirurgeon- Blissfully Bored

Heavy Marshal-

Fighter practice has looked up a bit. We had our biggest Mid-Willamette to date, 25 fighters in armor including about six up from Briar oak. Regular practice has been thinner, but I had a few new-to-the-SCA fighters from another reenactment group show up and express interest in both heavy and rapier.

We have the beginnings of loaner armor; Sir Alail has supplied me with a fairly clearly marked Terra Pomaria crusader helm. Some other pieces have been donated, and we should soon have at least one complete set. Sir Alail has also built a loaner shield, and is working on a loaner sword. I picked up a duffle bag at the surplus store, so we should have a loaner bag set up shortly.

DON'T INHALE BACON

This Wednesday is planned to be the first ever Golden Apple Tourney, an attempt to draw in more fighters and also give some of our newer fighters an idea of how tournament combat works. With a new trophy (ooh, ahhh, ooohhhh, ain't that smurfy) It is intended to be a round robin prize tournament, with the winner of the previous tournament providing the prize for the next. Prizes are to be kept to less than \$20, and can be anything--store bought, hand made, a song or poem or a roll of duct tape. To start things off, I am supplying a rattan dagger for the initial prize. There will also be a trophy, to be passed from one winner to the next. I intend this tourney to happen every third Wednesday, and hope it helps grow our practice.

There were no events, and no injuries were brought to my attention.

Archery Marshal- Open

Equestrian Marshal- Not a whole lot to report. Next practice at October, 30th. Went to an event College of Crane Haven Fall Equinox. Showed or Placed in every event. All of the Authorizations were turned in.

List Minister- Not much to

report for Lists. I've received all the files from Catharine and gone over the forms with her. I have a pretty good handle on what needs to happen to run lists, but my first trial-by-fire will be at the Golden Apple tourney on Wednesday.

Web Minister- Need a new webminister. Adara has moved. Ben has Volunteered.

Librarian- Contact me if you need a Officer Notebook

Grete Boke-

I have nothing to report this session. My immediate goal remains writing out a list of what "other branch" newsletters we have on file and getting the missing ones mailed out to Society Archives; Then scan/do the same with the Old Privy editions. I will bring the postage receipt to a future business meeting.

Still seeking a deputy; As I have stated before, once I wrap up these newsletter projects, I'd like to step down from the office and if no deputy is sought, as is precedence in the past, the office can be absorbed by the Chronicler until when/if a officer holder is needed or found.

Scribe- We had our regular scribal gathering. It was quite enjoyable. We didn't sing the



Business Meeting Notes Cont...

goose song. Went to Hawksguard and taught a painting class. Scribal is 1st Tuesday at Julianas house.

Dean of pages- Open

Chamberlain-

Storage Places research is ongoing: Absolute Storage, 2a/7 access, month to month min \$85; Airport Self Storage, Must pay full year in advance, Min. \$75; Budget Rent a Space 10% discount for Long term rental, Min. \$95; Northgate Storage, Discount available, Min \$97; Public Storage, Occasionally has specials, Min. \$150,.

People are talking about saving up for a trailer/ shed. Will have a weekend soon to cull the shed.

Other business:

Long and Short 2010: Not available yet

Seeking bids for Winter's End 2011 – Kenji has a Proposal. Emma is the Supervising. February 26th. Working with the Unitarian Universal Church. Intend to have a Served Feast. Have a Rapier, and A&S champion. Will have Artisan display with opportunity to display. Will have a classes available. Fortune in charge of classes. Games and musicians. Looking for a dance Master. Contest for new Officer Regalia. Berte is the feastocrat, Amlynn in charge of Lunch. T-Tunic Contest. Everybody approved except Finna. She wanted to see Ben do the Worm.

Seeking bids for Bar Gemels 2011- Fee structure has changed but the fees have

gone down. Last full weekend in April.

Summits Winter Investiture 2011 - Terra Pomaria. Think we found a site. Francesca will turn in a bid at the next meeting.

Open Forum/New Business

Please email the Chronicler little blurbs about your favorite memories from the Last year pertaining to the Barony.

Demo- Having a meeting on Wednesday. Will have a report next month.

Meeting ends: 8:00

** Meeting place –(reserved for the entire year of '10)