



# Barony of Ramshaven Herald

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## Welcome to the Ramshaven Herald!

Greetings and Hello from your Local Office of the Chronicler and welcome to a new edition of the Herald. In anticipation of Fruits of Our Labours (FOOL), this edition will have some of the softer side of the SCA, you will see what I mean as you read on. If you have any questions, comments, submissions or ideas, feel free to email them to me.

*Ceolwyn æt Fealhdun, Chronicler*

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## Greetings from their Excellencies

Unto the Populace of Ramshaven do Their Excellencies, Kolbjorn gothi and Brehyres Wencenedl send Greetings:

Right at the end of the SCA period, sometime between 1596-1598, William Shakespeare wrote "The Merchant of Venice". In it he had the character Portia speak these words:

*The quality of mercy is not strained.  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest:  
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.*

Mercy is an import character trait for those of us who choose to live in the Current Middle Ages. While there was no single, unified code of Chivalry in the Middle Ages, mercy is a common theme on many of the lists of chivalric virtues that were compiled by various medieval writers.

We often think of mercy either in terms of a lack of severity in punishment or showing compassion to someone you have power over. However, it is more than that. Mercy is forbearance shown to someone who has offended us; being gracious to people who we might not think deserve it. Everyone can make the choice to be merciful – not just kings and judges. It is not always an easy task, but then things worth doing rarely are.

While we in the SCA play in the Middle Ages, we live in the 21st century. The children's rhyme says, "words will never hurt me," but the truth is there is often no weapon in our modern world more painful than words. There is a lady in our fair barony who has the following signature line on all her emails: "Should there be two ways to interpret something I have written, one of which deeply offends you and one of which is neutral, please assume I meant the latter." That is an example of practical mercy. A little mercy goes a long way in creating a sense of community.

As the season of war approaches, let Ramshaven approach the battlefield with vigor, but in camp and in canton exercise mercy in all our dealings with our fellows.

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## An Introduction to Hnefatafl

By Ceolwyn æt Fealhdun

Hnefatafl, also known as the Viking Game, the King's Table or Tafl was one of the most common games played by the Vikings. The game was popular in Scandinavia as early as 400 AD and was carried abroad by the Vikings with variations being found from Ireland to the Ukraine. Examples include Tawlbwrdd (Wales), Brandub (Ireland), Ard Ri (Scotland), Tablut (Lapland).

The object of the game is for the defending king (white) to escape from the encircling attacking (dark) pieces who are laying siege to the kingdom of the white side. If the king ("Hnefi") reaches one of the corner squares then the defenders win, however if all possible escape routes are blocked then the attacker wins.

It is one of the rare games where opponents have an unequal number of pieces. The defending side is comprised of twelve soldiers and a king, while the attackers have 24 soldiers positioned in four groups of 6 around the perimeter of the board. All pieces move like the Rook in chess and pieces are taken by "sandwiching" or trapping your opponent's piece horizontally or vertically between two of yours.

Hnefatafl was mentioned in several of the medieval sagas, including Orkneyinga saga, Friðþjófs saga, and Hervarar saga. From these sources comes the theory that dice were used in this game. However the literary evidence is inconclusive.

Hnefatafl boards and pieces have been found in Viking graves, and the game had a rich history in Viking tales. In one story King Knut and Jarl Ulf were playing, and Knut made a mistake resulting in Ulf capturing a piece. King Knut requested that he be allowed to take back his move but Ulf refused, throwing the board aside. The argument resulted in Ulf being killed. King Knut, then refused to take back his move....

With the rise in popularity of chess, the decline of Hnefatafl began in the Renaissance. Hnefatafl was last recorded as being played in Wales in 1587 and in Lapland in 1723. However, in a world where everything old is new again, modern versions have surfaced, including Swords and Shields (USA 1960, Milton Bradley), and Thud, a board game inspired by the Discworld novels of Terry Pratchett.

This article is just an tafl appetizer. To learn more about Hnefatafl, our own Ragnar Thorbergsson has information on his site at [http://www.treheima.ca/viking/tafl\\_article.doc](http://www.treheima.ca/viking/tafl_article.doc)

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## Tudor Chemise and Drawers

By Mistress Tangwystl D'Courci

### Chemise

A lady's underwear, her 'unmentionables' was a secret private garment not for public viewing in polite company. This has made the discussion of period underwear very difficult and largely speculative. There are few remaining examples of chemises and drawers from this period, yet every women save perhaps the most destitute had at least one chemise.

The chemise or smock was the first garment that women put on next their skin. It was washable and served to help keep the subsequent layers such as her kirtle cleaner. The kirtle and gowns being of wool or silk blends were more difficult though not

impossible to launder. The chemise was usually made of linen and so could be regularly washed. Contrary to popular opinion the Tudors were very concerned with cleanliness and a number of recipes for washing sodas, hand soaps and fresheners survive. Hampton Court had huge boiling houses for washing linen and Henry VIII's personal laundress was handsomely paid to do up his shirts and presumably drawers.

Cotton although well known in this period was not used as a textile for clothing in England. The very wealthy had silk chemises but only for very special occasional use. The chemise was made up of natural or bleached linen. There were many different grades of linen available from the coarse linen that would be the daily chemise for most women to the fine lawns and cambric of the gentry. Please match the grade you choose to the station you are going to be portraying. The more posh your class means that you must choose a finer fabric for your chemise; a coarse peasant linen chemise would have been a disgrace under a posh velvet gown. As linen can be both expensive and sometimes difficult to find today alternative fabrics, such as hemp or yes even cotton can be used to make up your reproduction, but stay away from the bright optic whites that are available today. The bleaching process in this period relied on stale urine and sunlight to be successful.

There are many styles of chemise available in this period. The most common was a square neckline which varied considerably according to the width of the neckline of the gown. There was also a higher neckline with or without a small collar and frill attached to it as well as a simple rounded neckline. Some of the rounded necklines were decorated with simple smocking but only for the middle classes and beyond. Sleeves could be three quarter length, or full with a cuff at the wrist or straight to the wrist.

#### **Drawers.**

Technically we have no direct references to ladies wearing drawers in this period. Janet Arnold suggests that perhaps some of the inventory entries for linen hose might refer to linen drawers but no examples survive from England. Given the private nature of the garment this is not surprising. Two very fine examples from 16th century Italy do however exist. One of these drawers I would suggest was a woman's as it is fuller and knee length. Both have an embroidered band decorating the hem at the leg. This woman's pair also has a narrow waist band and front button closure. The pattern for these can be based on men's pajama pants minus the elastic. The drawers should be made up using the same fabric choices as the chemise. I would strongly suggest that you make these especially if you plan on wearing a farthingale. There are few things less appealing than a beautifully turned out Tudor lady bending over to show all of her assets.

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## **The Line of the North Renewed**

By Lady Thora Volundsdottir *(reprinted from the Skraeling Althing Chronicle with permission).*

This was my first Coronation event and I had a blast.

The ceremony for the stepping down of King Nigel and Queen Adrielle was phenomenal. Their final court was exciting with many awards given out in recognition of great deeds having been done with too many to place all here.

Some truly exceptional gifts were given to the kingdom: Special note on the contribution by Swans Keep. And a wonderful surprise for Baroness Rozalynd of Thornabee on Tees, who was placed on vigil for her Laurel.

The truly heartfelt speeches from both our King and Queen brought tears to my eyes and made my heart soar to see such chivalry being displayed. Days like this are why I love playing this game.

The ceremony for our new King and Queen was both outstanding and fun. A sense of being at court in the tenth century was felt as our Highness, Prince Quilliam walked into court and laid claim to the throne that is rightfully his. There were many people

who stood for our new King and Queen, giving true testament of their loyalty, honesty, bravery and ability to serve their people.

As our new monarchs took their rightful places there was much rejoicing by the populace.

The weather held out for a great day of outdoor fun for the armoured combatants, the boffer fighters and the fencers. Many enjoyed the warm weather and took time outside to welcome in the spring. Having so many fighters out was inspiring to see. The day went by so quickly too.

Before we knew it, it was time for evening court. Our new Royal Majesties sat at their first court; giving credit where credit was due to both the young and not so young.

A special surprise was given by the "Super Secret (Queen) Dagmar Fan Club": a monetary donation to the Kingdom travel fund, received with a smile by Her Royal Majesty.

The day was one of great fun had by all and a day I shall always remember.

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## Perys en Composte

By Odette de Saint Remy

\*ORIGINAL RECEIPT:\*

\*.xxxv. Perys en Composte. Take Wyne an Canel, & a gret dele of Whyte Sugre, an set it on þe fyre & hete it hote, but let it nowt boyle, an draw it þorwe a straynoure; þan take fayre Datys, an pyke owt þe stonys, an leche hem alle þinne, an caste þer-to; panne take Wardonys, an pare hem and sethe hem, an leche hem alle þinne, & caste þer-to in-to þe Syryppe; panne take a lytil Sawnderys, and caste þer-to, an sette it on þe fyre; an yif þow hast charde quynce, caste þer-to in þe boyling, an loke þat it stonde wyl with Sugre, an wyl lyid wyth Canel, an caste Salt þer-to, an let it boyle; an þan caste yt on a treen vessel, & lat it kele, and serue forth.\*

\* - Austin, Thomas. /Two Fifteenth-Century Cookery-Books. Harleian MS. 279 & Harl. MS. 4016, with extracts from Ashmole MS. 1429, Laud MS. 553, & Douce MS 55./ London: for The Early English Text Society by N. Trübner & Co., 1888.

\*

My redaction:

2 cups decent red wine

1/2 cup water

6 cloves

1 piece cinnamon stick

1/4-1/2 cup sugar, depending on your taste

6 pears

Peel pears, slice in half and core. Combine the rest of the ingredients and bring to a simmer and cook until syrup is slightly reduced. Add the pears and cook until the pears are tender. Taste the syrup occasionally so you know when to remove the cloves and cinnamon stick. Let pears cool in the syrup. \*This can be served plain, warm or cold. It's particularly good over non-period ice cream or even better with English Custard.

\*\*You can use canned pears with this. Replace the water and sugar with the pear liquid. Cook the syrup until almost desired consistency and then add the pears to heat up and cook slightly.

Original recipe found on <http://www.godecookery.com>

## Baronial Regnum

The Baronial Regnum can also be located at the [Baronial website](#).

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## In Our Barony....

*Friday, May 21st to Monday - May 24th 2010: FOOL 3: It's All Fun and Games <http://www.treheima.ca>*

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