



# Barony of Ramshaven Herald

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## Welcome to the Ramshaven Herald!

Greetings and Hello from your Office of the Chronicler and welcome to a new edition of the Herald. Welcome back from Pennsic, let autumn begin!

*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:

It has been a month since we returned from the fields of valour in the Debatable Lands and we find ourselves reminded of the great deeds witnessed there. While the War Point battles are most impressive in their sheer size and scope, some of the most interesting fighting was in smaller venues, such as the Combat of the Thirty and a particular Pax des Armes we were privileged to be asked to witness. While honour, loyalty and courtesy are chivalric virtues we like to talk about often, Pennsic this year reminded us of one of the most basic: Prowess.

Simply defined, prowess is skill. Prowess is the reason we have fight practice every week, and yet it is a virtue that is often overlooked when considering the "philosophy of Chivalry." It is easy to think of prowess in the SCA as simply the ability to consistently hit other people with a piece of rattan, while avoiding a similar fate and leave it at that. But at its most basic, chivalry is a marriage of prowess and courtesy, so it's important to spend some time considering prowess.

The highest compliment for a noble during the Middle Ages was to be called "preudome", a man of prowess, and as late as the Renaissance, writers such as Baldassare Castiglione still counted prowess as an important quality for the courtier. Our English word "knight" is derived from the Saxon for a servant, a servant tasked with a particular military duty. A knight who did not have prowess was not useful to his feudal lord and therefore subject to ridicule by his peers. Something that we saw at Pennsic this year is that a lack of prowess also makes a fighter unsafe, a danger to himself and others.

Physical ability for knightly sports includes strength, speed, and dexterity. Mental ability includes strategy, awareness of your surroundings, and thinking on your feet. In some ways, prowess is a combination of courage and style. For those who do not play the martial side of our game (be it armoured combat, rapier, archery or thrown weapons) prowess in a wider sense means excellence; seeking to do the very best at whatever you choose to do. As we leave the melee season behind us and enter the winter months we urge you to bear in mind that prowess is something you cannot simply will into existence. Your character can, however, give you to the persistence

needed to learn the skills of arms.  
We look forward to seeing each and every one of you working on improving your prowess over the coming months.

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## Accessories are a Necessity

By Lady Brigit Larkin

As the Kingdom of Ealdormere keeps changing and growing, there is no question that we are continuing to improve our efforts when it comes to historical accuracy. Saxon or Norse, Mongolian or Japanese, Tudor or Elizabethan, and even the middle period middle European types: it doesn't matter what period or region you play, accessories can go a long way to suspend or dissolve disbelief that you are from another time.

So often in the SCA it is a struggle to put together an outfit. First you need to decide on what style you want to wear, then you need to acquire the skills needed to make said garment (especially if you're new), and then you're racing against the clock to finish your outfit for the event you're going to the next day, or desperately trying to avoid doing laundry at Pennsic. In the end you have a fetching garment and you can't wait to show off your latest and best! Very often we find ourselves eager to start our Newer Better Garment and it becomes easy to let accessories fall by the wayside. In doing so however, we lose out on some of the most powerful visual cues that place us in a particular time period or geographic region; not to mention the fact that we've missed the chance to show off that we've done our homework and that we know what our persona would be wearing, carrying, and using. We've missed a chance to take our game to the next level.

I propose we put aside the sewing machine and take a look at our kits as they stand now. Go back to your reference books, inventories, effigies and portraiture and look beyond the garment. What kind of belt would you be wearing? How would it have been held closed? What kind of headwear would be appropriate to your gender and station? What type of headwear would match with your garment? Would you carry or wear some sort of purse or pouch? What jewelry would you be wearing?

Many of you might have heard of Baroness Kes' crusade to replace all of the ring belt buckles with historically accurate tang belt buckles. For a time there was a rumour that her Excellency would replace your ring buckle with a tang buckle for free! You may laugh at what might seem like such a minute detail, but it is the small things like this that can go a long way in making our game a little more accurate.

Headwear is another accessory that can 'make or break' the look of your garb. Although a number of you in the barony know my feelings on headwear (I hate wearing hats), I can't pretend that I don't need one (as much as I would like to). No matter what garb I choose to put on that day I should have a cap with my Viking garb, or a wimple or veil with my Bliaut, or a French or gabled hood with my Tudor court gown. To do so leaves my outfit looking incomplete.

Jewelry can also play a big role, although it can be more cost prohibitive to include. I would argue that appropriate jewelry can be integral to portraying any time period but make the case here for early period garments in particular. When portraying an early period persona it is often the jewelry that distinguishes between Anglo Saxon and Norse. Because there is so much cultural crossover, your jewelry can be the cue for people to think "She is Norse" or "He is Saxon". There is something definitive about apron broaches for Norse women and circular enameled broaches for Saxons. In SCA culture in particular, it is the jewelry that makes that delineation.

And let's not forget one of the most important things about this hobby – acquisition of new skills. Garb may not be your thing, and maybe period accuracy isn't high on your list of priorities either, but perhaps this is an excellent opportunity to learn a new skill. The Barony of Ramshaven has a wealth of helpful, knowledgeable people who are happy to share their research and skill sets. Or maybe you prefer to learn on your

own. Whatever your learning style, perhaps you could be the kingdom's next great metal caster, jeweler, leatherworker, naalbinder or milliner. Even if you're not, people will notice that you made the effort to learn a new skill, that you took the time to complete the outfit, that you look like you stepped off of the pages of a book of hours, that you made the effort to go a step beyond and think about more than just the beautiful garments you've constructed.

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## The Return of Mead

By Cú Allaidh

History shows that mead is one of the oldest, if not the oldest, alcoholic beverage known to man. And throughout history mead has enjoyed a long and lustrous career as one of the best loved beverages of mankind, however in recent history mead has been relegated to the geek squad, that is brew geeks who will make alcohol out of anything, history geeks who love to reproduce anything that hasn't been popular for the last few centuries, and dungeons and dragons geeks who just love the idea of becoming more like their fantasy characters.

History, it is said, is cyclical, what once was popular will be popular again. So is Mead poised for a comeback after so long being ignored? I believe it is.

I remember, about ten years ago or so, when I was in college I was wondering about getting a hold of mead. I checked wine stores, asked friends; no one knew what I was talking about let alone how to get some. I found one which claimed to be mead, but at best it was a honey beer. Now I mention mead, and while sometimes it has to be explained as honey wine, most people know what I am talking about.

It's not just the growing knowledge of mead, but the growing palate of the average consumer. Walk into any grocery store; you are likely to find a host of artisan food products and specialty honeys. Add to this the complexity of the alcohol market. Where once there were just the big brew beers and maybe one or two microbreweries, now there are a host of micro and craft brewers on the market. It doesn't end at beer either - wine, spirits, sake, and more all have craft and artisan brewing.

Leaving out the commercial products, open up a phone book and look up wine or beer brewing facilities, most cities have a host of the you-brew stores. Most of these don't offer mead, but some do, and some that don't will allow you to brew mead there if you source your own honey.

With the rise of artisan food products, mead is sure to find its niche. I don't mean just the small occasional apiary turned meadery, or even Moniak, but regular national brands. Currently there aren't many meaderies in the arena, but its popularity is growing, and not just amongst the geeks.

Mead hasn't been popular since King Henry VIIIth ruled England, its due for a comeback. If you are reading this, you are one of the ones that will be responsible for its return. So grab a bottle of your favourite mead, and let's drink to the return of mead.

## Baronial Regnum

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

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## In Our Barony....

### **Crown Tourney** October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2010

Hosted by the Canton of Bryniau Tywynnog (New Hamburg, ON) <http://sca.lilleypress.com/crown/>

### **Wassail** December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010

Hosted by the Canton of Bryniau Tywynnog (Tavistock, ON)

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