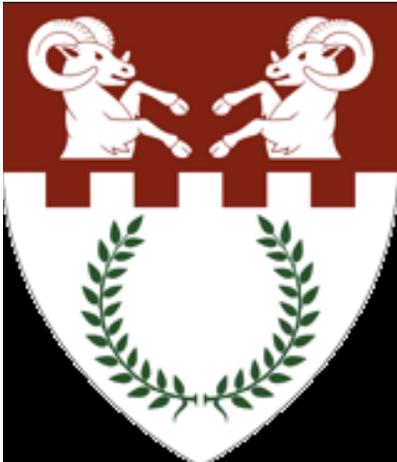


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# Ramshaven Herald

A.S. XLVI November/December 2011

Good Times, Good Food,  
Good Thought

Baronial site	<a href="http://ealdormere.ca/ramshaven">Http://ealdormere.ca/ramshaven</a>
Online group	<a href="http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SCA-Ramshaven">Http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SCA-Ramshaven</a>
Bryniau Tywynnog	<a href="http://www.treheim.ca/bryniau">Http://www.treheim.ca/bryniau</a>
Der Welfengau	<a href="http://dw.sca.gamv.ca">Http://dw.sca.gamv.ca</a>
Kingdom of Ealdormere	<a href="http://www.ealdormere.ca">Www.ealdormere.ca</a>
Upcoming Events	<a href="http://www.ealdormere.ca/listcalendar.php">Www.ealdormere.ca/listcalendar.php</a>

Unto the Populace of RamsHaven do Their Excellencies, Kolbjorn Gothi and Brehyres Wencenedl send Greetings:

One of the most inspirational speeches ever written flowed from the pen of William Shakespeare in 1599, as he put words in the mouth of Henry V, on the eve of the Battle of Agincourt in 1415:

*From this day to the ending of the world,  
But we in it shall be remembered-  
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;  
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me  
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,  
This day shall gentle his condition;  
And gentlemen in England now-a-bed  
Shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here,*

Two themes, glory and fellowship, run through the entire speech. These conditions are compelling to people. They speak of a commonality, a belonging. Glory, although often directed at an individual, is a reflection of common acclaim, and fellowship is the comfort and strength of common interest and purpose. That is probably why this speech speaks to so many; why it practically demands to be memorized and recited out loud. The desire for fellowship is what motivates us to join clubs and social organizations. Ours is one such society.

All social clubs stand or fall on the strength of fellowship within the group. This is perhaps even more true of our Society. It has been said that chivalry is at the heart of what we do and that "The Knights defend it, the Pelicans sacrifice for it, and the Laurels adorn it. Take away any, or fail to appreciate the contribution of one, and you cause our little tripod to fall." What applies to the peerages is even more true of the non-peers among us. We all contribute to our game. We all share the glory of a common fellowship.

Interestingly, there is a somewhat hard-to-define medieval virtue that is worth noting here: franchise. The word is derived from an Old French word meaning "freedom", but it's not a "do whatever you want" type of freedom. It could perhaps be said to be the fruit of noble

action; the freedom to not worry about the self. Franchise in the medieval sense is confidence, but not arrogance. It is belonging, but without the burden of seeing oneself as indispensable. It is a gentleness of heart willing to trust one's fellows. Perhaps more difficultly, it is not a chivalric virtue that can be taught, but only grown into.

As we come into the Christmas season, we wish each and every one of you peace and the joys of fellowship.

## Wassail!

How quickly time marches, since Their Excellencies Sir Edward and Mistress Rylyn became Prince and Princess at our successful Fall Crown Tournament! Many thanks again to all!

As we prepare for the New Year and another calendar filled with frivolity (and perhaps shenanigan), I, Adnar Dionadair, look back at the many accomplishments both by individuals and by teams, and so look forward to seeing all these past successes and experiences reflect well into the future.



## Our First Grand Tournament by Caleigh Jerry of Der Welfengau

*Our First Grand Tournament was rather grand,  
And ended with a ring in hand.  
With skirts swirling we graced the stage,  
While the men battled with blows of rage.*

*To the Tournament we went together,  
With clothes of fiber and shoes of leather.  
To the King and Queen we gave a bow,  
And from all attending we learned know-how.*

*Dancing and Sword work we all learned,  
All before court was adjourned.  
While delicious pie filled us up,  
Others prepared a feast for sup.*

*Representing der Welfengau for the first time at  
large,  
We watched as each man took the charge.  
In the end a prince and princess were found,  
The next in line and now oath bound.*

*When all was done and the day ended,  
The Tournament was one I highly recommended.  
To this day I still will ramble,  
Of the dancing steps and the great sword handle.*

## Excellent Small Cakes

When looking through sources for medieval recipes, I've yet to find a recipe labelled cookie. Rather, I've found a number of references to small cakes, breads and even wafers, which are by their ingredients and cooking instructions, sweet biscuit creations.

There are only a few references to food in the Anglo-Saxon era. So far, I've found actual recipes rather elusive. We do know that they had a fairly wide range of food stuffs, and used some more interesting cooking techniques. One of those references is to small honey short bread cakes. With experimentation, honey makes an acceptable sweetener for a cake which resembles a modern short bread, and is quite delicious.

The food history of Persia and surrounding area, can date cookie-like cakes back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century. In Europe, we have evidence of wafers and other small cakes being referenced fairly early, including gingerbread, although recipes are still fairly scarce. By the 16<sup>th</sup> century, cookbooks were starting to become available to the middle class. In some of these are a variety of recipes for small cakes, including Meringues, jumbles, excellent small cakes and biskit bread, with recipes for both French biskit bread and white biskit bread.

Elinor Fettiplace's (1570-1647) recipe for white biskit bread is as follows:

*"To make white biskit bread.  
Take a pound & a half of sugar, & an handfull of  
fine white flower, the whites of twelve eggs beaten  
verie finelie, and a little anniseed brused, temper  
all this together, till it be no thicker than pap, make  
coffins with paper, and put it into the oven, after  
the manchet is drawn."*

The flour is in such a small amount, it must surely act as a meringue stabilizer, much as modern day recipes use Cream of Tarter. Trying back-to-back recipes, using both methods, I've found virtually no difference in the end product, but use cream of tarter because it was available in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, as it is a by product of the wine industry; and, by eliminating flour, it makes the meringue cookies gluten-free. As for oven temperature, apparently Manchet loaves were a fine white bread, cooked after the more dense breads were cooked, needing a lower temperature. One source suggested that manchets were baked at about 350 ° F. Thus by the time they were removed, the oven would be cooler, perhaps 250° F, similar to modern day meringue temperatures.

My current favourite, although slightly post medieval cookie recipe is Digby's Excellent Small cakes, which dates from a book published in 1669.

## EXCELLENT SMALL CAKES

*Take three pound of very fine flower well dried by the fire, and put to it a pound and half of loaf Sugar sifted in a very fine sieve and dried; Three pounds of Currants well washed and dried in a cloth and set by the fire; When your flower is well mixed with the Sugar and Currants, you must put in it a pound and half of unmelted butter, ten spoonfuls of Cream, with the yolks of three new-laid Eggs beat with it, one Nutmeg; and if you please, three spoonfuls of Sack. When you have wrought your paste well, you must put it in a cloth, and set it in a dish before the fire, till it be through warm. Then make them up in little Cakes, and prick them full of holes; you must bake them in a quick oven unclosed. Afterwards Ice them over with Sugar. The Cakes should be about the bigness of a hand-breadth and thin: of the cise of the Sugar Cakes sold at Barnet.*

My version of this recipe yields a much smaller batch of cookies.

4 cups of flour  
1 cup of sugar  
1 cup of butter, softened but not melted  
3.5 cups of currants  
1 egg  
4-5 tbsn of milk  
1 scant tsp of grated nutmeg  
2 -4 tbsn of sack, sherry or milk

sugar glaze - sugar with a few tsp water to make a thick, but still runny glaze.

### Method:

Mix the flour, sugar and nutmeg together in a bowl. With a mixer, blend the butter and egg until completely mixed. Add the milk or cream and sack or sherry and then stir in the flour mixture and the currants. If the mixture is too dry, add a little more cream or milk a few drops at a time, until the dough comes together easily. Dust the rolling pin and work surface with a little flour or sugar to keep the dough from sticking. Roll the dough to desired thickness and cut the cookies with a metal cookie cutter. Scraps can be reused by lightly kneading together and rolling out again.

Bake the small cakes at 350 °, on a cooking sheet lined with parchment paper, in a preheated oven for a few minutes, until the bottoms are just starting to turn a light golden colour. Baking time will depend on the size of the cookies with larger cookies taking more time to bake than smaller ones.

Cool on racks. When the cookies are completely cold, mix the sugar glaze and spread on each individual cookie. Allow icing to dry completely before packing in a cookie tin between layers of waxed paper.

Notes: I usually don't have cream, sack or sherry on hand, so have substituted milk with no issues. The dough will also freeze for a few weeks by forming into a disk and wrapping tightly with plastic wrap. Simply thaw before rolling and baking.

Happy Baking

Odette



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