



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE CANTON OF ASTON TOR
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Issue 4



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OFFICIAL SCA MISSION STATEMENT

The Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA) is an international non-profit volunteer educational organization. The SCA is devoted to the research and re-creation of pre-seventeenth century skills, arts, combat, culture, and employing knowledge of history to enrich the lives of participants through events, demonstrations, and other educational presentations and activities.



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"Peasants Breaking Bread" Livre du roi Modus et de la reine Ratio, 14th century. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Département des manuscrits, Français 22545 fol. 72.

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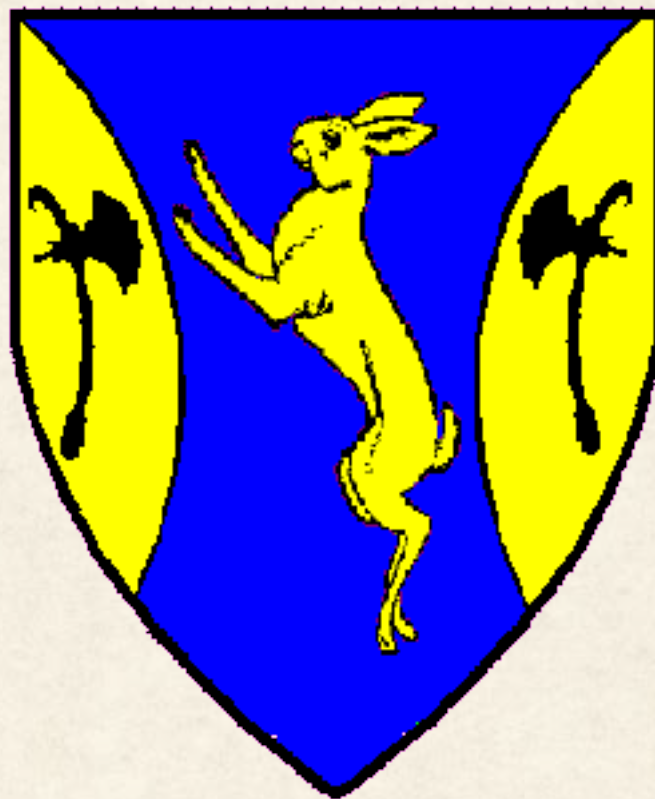
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THIS ISSUE OF THE RETORT IS
DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF

HONORABLE LADY AINE NIC CÁILLIÚIR



AINE'S KINDNESS, COMPASSION, AND WISDOM SHALL LIVE
FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS, OUR ACTIONS, AND OUR LIVES.



OFFICER MISSIVES

SENESCHAL

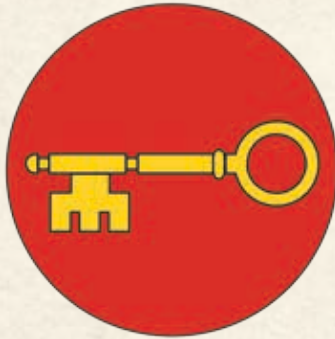
Good gentles of Tor,

Greetings to you all. It's been a very busy year, both for myself and the Canton. I am eternally grateful for the smooth operation of KCOA. It seems that everyone had fun, and appreciated the good weather!

Sadly, we have lost one of our own. Áine nic Tailleir is no longer habituating this plane. We are all grieving her inestimable loss. Please, let us be available to assist her family as needed. There will be a celebration of remembrance at Lilies this upcoming year.

Please keep up all the excellent work you ALL do, constantly. I am blessed to be your Seneschal, and am always available if any of you have need of me.

Yours In Service,
Lady Aelin Kausi



EXCHEQUER

Greetings one and all from your Exchequer,

Overall, things have been going pretty well financially. As the year ends, I would love to get the "Tor Port" kitchen fly project coming to a close, which includes putting Dave's device on it. Artisans, can we get this done?

The thing you may wish to know is what a signatory is. A signatory is a person who can sign and endorse checks, along with rights recognized by the bank for our group's account. To be a signatory, you must be a current member in good standing (can't expire in two months).



As part of Society rules, outbound checks require two signatures. In cases where the recipient of the check is a signatory, they can't write a check for their own benefit.

As of this writing, we have four (4) signatories on our account. This is good, as if there is an 'emergency', we have available parties for quick solution. This is super helpful, especially regarding deadlines like sending the non-member surcharge to society within 10 days from the event.

Being a signatory does not make you an officer, nor does it require you to file reports. The goal is to keep the financial dealings of our group public and above-board.

I hope you find this helpful; I look forward to seeing you in our local meetings.

YIS,
Gerald Kendall

A&S MINSTER

Unto the populace of the Canton of Aston Tor comes greetings from your A&S Minister.

Congratulations to everyone who entered our Kingdom A&S competition, it was a wonderful turnout. So many inspiring projects done by our talented populace.

Autumn has brought us a bounty of food, dye plants and memories. We are thankful for such natural bounty and the many memories. I hope your summer has been productive and that you have wonderful projects to show for your time and effort.

As the Great Wheel turns, summer comes to a close, autumn turns to winter and we turn our thoughts to the festivities to come. I challenge Tor, one and all to participate with me in an 'A&S Show and Tell'



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to coincide with our Holiday Pot Luck Dinner - on December 12. What say you?

Up coming Competitions:

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| Oct 11-14 | Crown Tourney |
| Smithvill, MO | Celebrating travel & exploration |
| Oct 25-27 | Autumn in Grimfells |
| Pineville, MO | Best period, non-alcoholic drink |
| Nov 1-3 | Feast of Fools |
| Madrid, IA | Failed projects - Relica & Reliquaries |

As always, let me know what you are working on so I can brag about us to the Kingdom A&S Minster.

Yours in Service,
HL Lasair nic Taillier

Szanowny!

Multiple officer missives, an article, heraldic results... The Retort is getting some great content this quarter.

As always, send everything you have to chronider@astontor.calontir.org along with the proper release form, which are available for download at <https://astontor.calontir.org>.

Z poważaniem,
Zygmunt Gdański



IN SEARCH OF THE VIKING LOAF

By Dagmaer Jonsdottir

What would a loaf of Viking bread look like? In medieval times (the 5th through the 15th centuries, for the purposes of this article), grain was often eaten as a porridge, and during the Viking Age (the 9th through the 11th centuries), when not a porridge, grain was often consumed as flat, unleavened loaves, probably cooked on long-handled griddles (1). However, in her analysis of loaves from burial sites in Birka and Bjorko, Hansson found both leavened and unleavened bread (2). To create a leavened loaf of bread, three things are essential: a leavening agent (something to make bubbles), gluten (something to trap the bubbles), and a uniform heat source (something like an oven). My goal was to discover how these requirements might have been met during the time and in the places where the medieval Scandinavians lived.

Quick breads such as Irish soda bread use baking soda as leavening, but baking sodas (carbonates for producing carbon dioxide in the dough) were used much later than the Viking Age. Pearlash, consisting mainly of potassium carbonate, was not used until the 1700's, and sodium bicarbonate was not introduced for baking until 1846 (3). An alternative method for creating loft in bread uses eggs and milk as in Yorkshire pudding, but the first recipe for this does not appear until the 1700's (4), although the method is probably older.


The most common method for leavening bread from ancient times to the present is by fermentation, with living yeast producing carbon dioxide in the dough. Any people who made

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ale or mead would have a working knowledge of fermentation, so it is likely the Scandinavians of the Viking Era knew their way around yeast (although Pasteur was the first to identify the agent in all its microscopic glory). Yeast occurs naturally in grain such as rye and wheat. When wetted and allowed to stand in warm conditions, grains produce a culture of yeast, sometimes along with other organisms that produce a classic sourdough. Apple or grape skins can be added to increase the yeast production (5), and apples were not uncommon in the Viking era garden (6). Alternatively, yeast can be taken directly from an active fermentation process such as from beer barm (although one experiment in my household using beer barm resulted in a beautiful but bitter and inedible loaf—others have had better luck).

Modern milling techniques can decrease the yeast content in the grain (7, 8), especially if the bran and outer layers of the grain are removed, so for recreating the fermentation process, stone ground, whole grain should be used, at least when making the starter sponge. The question is, which grains would the medieval Scandinavians have used in their risen loaves? Hanssen's work showed several types of grain in the 33 loaves from Birka cremation burials and the 27 loaves from other late Iron Age sites around Sweden (2). The main ingredient was barley, with wheat and spelt (a kind of wheat) being the main flours used, followed by oats and rye, with peas, flax, and vetches in some of the loaves. Most of these loaves had two kinds of flour and some had three. But Karin Viklund, in an overview





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paper, describes gradual changes in grains used in various parts of Sweden from the Iron Age through the Middle Ages (9). For example, rye began to be cultivated in Denmark in 500 CE; in central Sweden, rye gained importance over barley only during the 14th and 15th centuries; but northern Sweden never gave up its barley bread tradition. The coming of crop rotation increased the kinds of grains grown in some areas, while climate and soil conditions put restrictions on what could be grown in specific areas. It is also possible the climate shift from the Medieval Warming Period (roughly 900-1300 CE) to the Little Ice Age (about 1300-1850 CE) may have had some influence (10). Whatever the causes, wide variations in grain types across times and locations are evident. A Viking Age loaf is likely to have any number of grains, but wheat, barley, and rye, in some combination, remained ubiquitous.

For a leavened loaf, the higher the gluten content of the grain the better. Gluten makes bread dough elastic and is the perfect means for capturing the carbon dioxide made by the yeast, thus giving bread its airy texture. The best source of gluten (in the form of the proteins glutenin and gliadin) is wheat, followed by barley and rye, with other grains having much less (11). As noted above, these three grains were commonly grown and used in Medieval Scandinavia.

The final question is, how were these loaves baked? The ideal way to bake a loaf is in an oven. Ovens are few and far between in the archaeological record of Scandinavia (12), perhaps because wood was the main building material, with

stone and clay, which are usually used for making ovens, being rarer. Using wood for building an oven might seem like a bad idea, but Icelanders have long used wooden boxes buried near sites of geothermal activity for cooking. Some other wooden ovens, either buried or above ground are boxes heated by placing hot stones in them. In-ground ovens can also be fashioned by digging a hole and lining it with non-flammable materials, placing the food inside, covering it, and building a fire on top (1). An even easier method uses coals placed above and below a heat-conducting container, or as Hansson says, cooking under a pot (2). Soapstone is the perfect material for baking by this means as it holds heat for a long time and releases it slowly and evenly, the perfect conditions for baking bread. There is evidence of soapstone vessels in use throughout the Viking Age and well before (13). Soapstone bowls are, of necessity, small because of their weight and the effort required to make them. Loaves from Birka are seldom more than 10 cm in diameter (2), so one might guess the bowl over them or in which they were placed (if this was how they were baked) would be smallish as well. Of course, iron and bronze pots were also used for cooking during the Viking Age (1), so a covered pot with coals above and below, as used with Dutch ovens over the last few centuries, might also suffice. I should note that the Viking Age iron vessels I have seen seem more suitably shaped for cooking liquids such as potage, porridge, and stew. Still, cooking in iron is not out of the realm of possibility. Even without traditional ovens such as those used by other Medieval populations, often shared with the

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whole community (14), Scandinavians during the Viking Era baked leavened loaves. It is likely that more than one type of baking method was used depending on the available resources.

My conclusion is that Viking Age loaves were composed mainly of some combination of wheat, barley and rye; were leavened either with a sourdough-like culture or fermentation barm; and were probably small, due to the available means of baking. Based on my own experiments, I can attest that they were likely quite tasty.



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HERALDIC RESULTS

These are the populace of Aston Tor who have had names and/or armory registered recently. There are no returns.

KIRA AKAHITO.

Name and device. Per fess rayonny argent and gules, three oak leaves gules.

ZOPHIA VOLKOVA.

Name and device. Or, in fess a domestic cat sejant contourny azure maintaining an arrow proper flighted sable and a wolf sejant azure maintaining a wooden bow proper.

ZYGMUNT GDANSKI.

Name and device. Vert, on a bend argent three dice palewise sable marked argent.

EMERICK JONES.

Badge for Company of Scarlet. Sable, a shakefork gules fimbriated between the letters O, C, and S argent.

EDWARD LOGAN DE MUNRO.

Device. Per bend sinister azure and sable, in pale a jester's cap conjoined with a mask of comedy within a bordure argent.

SKINNA-HREFNA.

DEVICE. Quarterly argent and gules, in pale a raven sable atop a brunette man's head erased proper.

HELENA OF TOR.

Name and device. Per bend sinister azure and sable, a mouse rampant contourny and a unicorn rampant, a bordure embattled argent.





ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

ASTON TOR POPULACE MEETING

& FIGHTER PRACTICE

Populace meetings are open to everyone. Fighters are often present for training as well as others practicing their chosen arts. Heralds are usually available for consultation on your SCA persona's name or heraldic device.



Second and Fourth
Thursdays of the month at 7:00 p.m.
Walnut Gardens Community of Christ
19201 E RD Mize Road
Independence, MO 64057

BARONIAL POPULACE MEETING

& FIGHTER PRACTICE

Practice includes fighters from both the armored combat and cut & thrust disciplines.



New fighters, please contact the marshalls twenty-four hours in advance so they can bring loaner armor for you to fight in. You must provide your own knee pads and groin protection.

Wednesdays Weekly at 6:30 p.m.
Irene B. French Community Center
5701 Merriam Dr,
Merriam, KS 66203

BARONIAL CURIA MEETING

Curia Meetings are for the officers of Forgotten Sea to discuss the business of the Barony. It is also open to all the populace of the Barony.



Second Wednesday of the
Month at 6:30 p.m.
Irene B. French Community
Center
5701 Merriam Dr,
Merriam, KS 66203


BARONIAL ARCHERY PRACTICE

Everyone is invited, whether you want to shoot, throw weapons, or just hang out!



Monday nights starting at
6:30 p.m.
Kearny, MO
Email lbh-archery@bfs-kc.org
for directions





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Umm Turab Zulaykha

(Modern: Nicole Jestus)
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MINISTER OF YOUTH

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* No calls between 10pm and 8am, remember to leave your name with a message.