

The Kings Garb



The Plague Issue

July ASXXXVI (2001 A.D.)

"As the soil, however rich it may be, cannot be productive without cultivation, so the mind without culture can never produce good fruit."

-Seneca (B.C. 3-65 A.D.)

Well, what started as a joke about a Black Death crossword puzzle soon became the fearsome reality of *The Plague Issue*. It is amazing what a little inspiration can do. Inspiration really applies for all things in life, but I find it applies in SCA type things to a higher degree than most. Our inspirations for doing things get the ball rolling. They start projects and keep them alive. One night at Quad War I was asked why I joined the SCA. Off the top of my beer laden head came a feeble answer which really missed the point, so I started reflecting upon the question a little more. The real root of the question, I decided, was asking what inspired me. I did not carefully weigh pros and cons or flip a coin or anything carefully orchestrated to make my decision. I saw things that appealed to me in a way that inspired me to come out and have a go. Our own personal inspirations make things happen. Ask yourself what your inspirations are. Movies? Books? Music? People? Art? Try reflecting on what your inspirations are and have a good look at them again. You may find it refreshing. Reread that book which made you decide to take up fighting or watch the movie that inspired you to make a wonderful set of garb again. Your inspirations can motivate you into action more than once, if not indefinitely! I know going to Quad War inspired me to start plotting and planning a pavilion, which has been sitting in the back of my mind for ages. So have a look around for your own inspirations and have fun playing the game!

Your chronicler,
Armatus

The cover is *A Cemetery* from "The Dance of Death" by Hans Holbein the Younger (1497-1543). Several Deaths are playing on instruments, as a summons to mortals to attend them.

The Black Death

"Neither physicians nor medicines were effective. Whether because these illnesses were previously unknown or because physicians had not previously studied them, there seemed to be no cure. There was such a fear that no one seemed to know what to do. When it took hold in a house it often happened that no one remained who had not died. And it was not just that men and women died, but even sentient animals died. Dogs, cats, chickens, oxen, donkeys sheep showed the same symptoms and died of the same disease. And almost none, or very few, who showed these symptoms, were cured. The symptoms were the following: a bubo in the groin, where the thigh meets the trunk; or a small swelling under the armpit; sudden fever; spitting blood and saliva (and no one who spit blood survived it). It was such a frightful thing that when it got into a house, as was said, no one remained. Frightened people abandoned the house and fled to another."

-Marchione di Coppo Stefani, born in Florence in 1336. He wrote his Florentine Chronicle in the late 1370s and early 1380s

The Black Death - For Mundane Eyes Only

The Black Death existed in three different forms, the bubonic, pneumonic, and septicemic plagues. All three were due to the bacterium called *yersinia pestis* carried by an oriental rat flea or transmitted via the air in the case of pneumonic plague. Bubonic plague was the most common with symptoms of swollen and inflamed lymph nodes, which were called buboes (the root of the word bubonic). These buboes usually occurred around the neck, arm pits, and groin. Further affects included headache, nausea, aching joints, fever, and vomiting. The symptoms usually took 1-7 days to appear and the mortality rate averaged around 50%. Pneumonic plague was the second most common form of the Black Death. Symptoms mainly consisted of blood-tainted sputum (flegm) which became progressively more bloody. Symptoms of Pneumonic plague also took about 1-7 days to appear and the mortality rate averaged greater than 90%. The third variant, the septicemic plague was the rarest, and the least pleasant. Symptoms included a high fever and skin turning a deep purple due to

disseminated intravascular coagulation, which is basically your blood doing very yucky things. This form of the Black Death was nearly 100% fatal and victims often expired the same day symptoms appeared. Be grateful I did not include pictures!

Quad War

Unfortunately, the results of Quad War couldn't be published in this issue of the King's Garb. This is due to the fact that Quad War occurred the weekend directly before July's business meeting and I was not able to include them. The results should be in the next Garb, and listed below is another event coming to the Quad War site.

The First Annual Tournaments of the Dragon and Collegium

JULY 13-15 at Elfhiemsland (Quad War Site)

Site opens at noon on the 13th; closes 6 pm on the 15th

Gate fee is \$7.00 adults; under 18 \$1.00

Merchant Tables Free

With the gracious permission of the HE Elfhie, and sponsored by His Grace, Duke Rorik's Household, we are pleased to have the use of the Quad War site for a weekend of tourneying and classes. Prize tourneys in the style of Egil's and Ursalmas with all you can eat rattan, rapier, and we hope archery (in light of recent rulings). This will be primarily a combat showcase. Three things often hold many back from entering tournaments. They are:

- 1) No membership
- 2) Unable to commit to the requirements of coronets or champion's tourneys.
- 3) Fear

The Dragon Tournaments welcome all. This more relaxed format will draw the best fighters. Come and test your skills. The winner of the double elimination tourney will have a legitimate claim as the best fighter in Avacal. The same will be true of the rapier and archery tournaments.

Celtic Games - Myrgan Wood

July 7, 2001

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan Canada

Her Highness Catriona McManus would like to invite all to Myrgan Wood's Annual CelticGames. This event will feature all the best of the highlands including: Caber toss, stone throw, wrestling and much more.

To keep His Highness Gunther happy, there will be a heavy tournament in addition to the other competitions. Great prizes will be awarded to those who come out and demonstrate their Celtic might.

Site opens at noon and games will take place throughout the afternoon. There will be a pot luck supper in the park following the games (6:00 pm).

Site: Diefenbaker Park (East), Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Directions: From the West: Turn right (south) on Idylwyld Dr. Take the freeway to Ruth St. Turn right (west) past the exhibition grounds to St. Henry St. Turn left and the park will be on your right side. From the East: take College Dr. to Clarence Ave. Turn left. Follow this to Ruth St. and turn right. (see above). From the south: just as you enter the city, take Circle Drive West to Ruth St. Turn left (see above). From the north: take Idylwyld to Ruth (see above)

Fee: \$3.00 Make cheques payable to SCA Myrgan Wood.

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Web Links

<http://www.sca.org/> - the SCA Corporate Homepage

<http://www.antir.sca.org/> - the Kingdom of An Tir's Homepage

<http://www.avacal.org/> - the Principality of Avacal's Homepage

<http://www.theringlord.com/mw/> - Myrgan Wood's Homepage

<http://www.godecookery.com/macabre/holdod/holdod.htm> - the entire "Dance of Death" series by Han Holbein

<http://www.fidnet.com/~weid/plague.htm> - good plague site

<http://www.ualberta.ca/~imunro/ring.html> - ring around the rosie FAQ

http://www.urbanlegends.com/misc/ring_around_the_rosie.html - a longer dissertation about ring around the rosie

Armatus' Interesting Fact o' the Month

As some of you may know, the children's rhyme Ring around the Rosie has been claimed by some to be about the Plague. The explanation is basically as follows:

Ring around the rosie, -*Red rash, a symptom of the plague.*

Pocket full of posie, -*Posies were thought to ward off plague.*

Husha, husha, -*Sneezing, a symptom of pneumonic plague.*

We all fall down. -*We all drop dead. From the plague that is...*

Well, that seems to make sense, but I thought I might do a little more investigation. What I found out though was that it seems that the first recorded printing of the rhyme was in Kate Greenaway's *Mother Goose* published in 1881. So, it would seem that if the plague interpretation was correct, the rhyme would have disappeared from record since the most likely reference, the London Plague of 1665 or the Mid 14th century plague which troubled all of Europe. This seems to be a little unlikely to have happened, so it seems that the plague explanation is not correct. There are two web links above that explain this in more detail if you are extra curious.

(This Fact o' the Month was inspired by Lord Rogan the Skin Peeler who like me was curious if the rhyme was indeed about the plague

Swords & Steel – A Metallurgical Miscellany

Part 2 – Carbon Steel Manufacture

In the June's Garb was a brief look at the desired properties of a sword or other combat blade which were that it will not break, it will not bend, and that it will retain a sharp cutting edge. Simple carbon steel, a mixture of iron and carbon was used for making swords in the middle ages. In fact even today, basic carbon steel is one of the best materials we have to make a sword from.

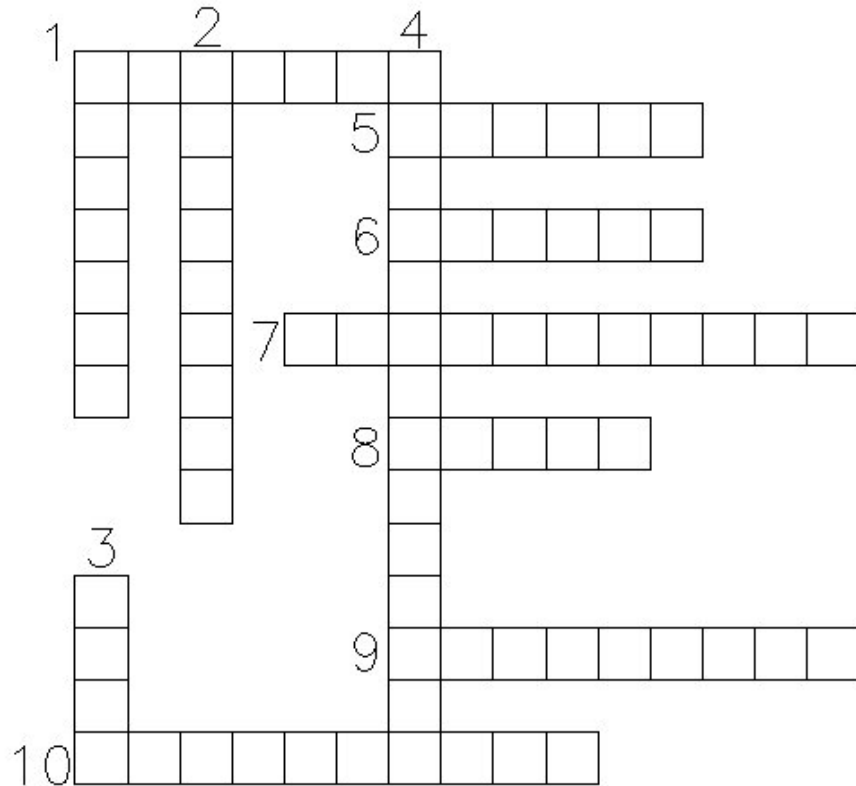
The early forms of European metallurgy involved a process called pattern welding. As the technology to melt down iron into liquid did not really exist, the only method to add carbon to steel was case hardening. In this process, rods of iron were placed in a charcoal (carbon) fire and as time passed, carbon would migrate into the skin of the rod, forming steel. Several of these rods would then be twisted around each other and hammered at high temperature to weld the rods together. The steel was forged into the basic shape of the sword with a hammer and then filed until it the blade was the desired shape. As 'good' iron was very difficult to find, it had to be used sparingly so to make the best sword possible from limited resources, a relatively simple method was used. Rods of poorer quality iron were pattern welded to form the middle section of the sword forming its basic shape. V-sections of steel produced from higher quality iron were then hammer welded onto the edges of the poorer quality middle section, joining it on to the lesser quality interior section of the blade. By doing this, a good cutting surface of harder steel could be formed on the sword edge while the middle section of the blade would be softer and more resilient so that it would avoid fracture. Obviously, pattern welded blades required a great deal of labour in their manufacture, often taking a month to produce. As such they were highly valued and equivalent in value to 120 oxen or 15 slaves. This high price left the sword as a weapon of the nobility.

As time progressed into the 12th century the pattern welded blade was largely abandoned in favor of the use of crucible steel. This was quite similar to modern steel manufacture but was made in much smaller batches. Basically the technique involved loading a

crucible (a small ceramic pot) with iron ore and charcoal then placing it into a furnace and blasting it for many hours until all the ingredients had melted. The carbon and iron would combine to make steel and any impurities would float to the top of the crucible as slag which could be skimmed off. This left fairly pure steel which could then be forged and filed into a sword. This process of crucible metallurgy was brought to Europe by the Spanish who got the technology from the Moors. Its lower cost and purer steel quickly making pattern welding become obsolete.

The Japanese process of making carbon steel began with making large blocks of steel, the chief ingredient being an iron sand with 2-5% iron content. Using magnets this was concentrated until its composition was about 8% iron with only small amounts of undesirable impurities. This enriched iron sand was placed in a large furnace in alternating layers with charcoal, the carbon source for the steel. The furnace burnt continuously for approximately 70 hours at a temperature about 1200-1500 degrees Celsius lower than the melting point of iron, causing the silica in the sand to melt out and the layers of iron sand and charcoal to form steel. When cooled a large slab of steel weighing around 1.5 tons could be withdrawn. This type of steel smelted in the traditional method is called tamahagane. The difficulty with such large blocks of steel is that the carbon and iron are not perfectly mixed. When chunks of the large block are divided into smaller pieces for swords in order to achieve a more homogeneous steel, it is hammered flat and folded over onto itself 10 to 15 times giving it around 1000 layers (2 to the power of the number of folds). During this process of folding the carbon content can be raised or lowered slightly using the process of case hardening as used in pattern welding. For one Japanese sword at least two types of steel were used, core steel (shinganae) and jacket steel (kawagane). The jacket steel is of a higher carbon content and is forged around the core steel. Thus a sharp hard edge can be obtained with the jacket steel and the resilient core steel can absorb the shocks and impact of use. This resulting blade can then be hammered and filed to the desired shape.

The Black Death



Crossword Puzzle

Here is the innocent joke that inspired a whole issue. It may not be quite as nice as a 'real' crossword puzzle, but here it is anyways...

Down

1. _____ dressed in red robes and masks while raping, pillaging, and murdering in the anarchy during the plagues.
2. Giovanni _____ wrote, "How many valiant men, how many fair ladies, breakfast with their kinfolk and the same night supped with their ancestors in the next world!"
3. ____ were falsely accused of poisoning wells, and as such causing the plague.
4. The city of _____ suffered form the plague in 542 during Emperor Justinian's reign.

Across

1. The most common form of plague was _____.
5. Plague infested rats were imported from the _____.
6. In October 1347 Italian merchants brought the plague to _____.
7. _____ were convinced the plague was God's punishment, and travelled from town to town scourging themselves.
8. From 1347 to 1352 plague killed 25 million Europeans, reducing Europe's population by one _____.
9. _____ plague was spread through the air.
10. _____ plague though rare, was nearly 100% fatal.

Answers are on page 15.

A Primary Account of The Plague by Michael Platiensis (1357)

"At the beginning of October, in the year of the incarnation of the Son of God 1347, twelve Genoese galleys were fleeing from the vengeance which our Lord was taking on account of their nefarious deeds and entered the harbour of Messina. In their bones they bore so virulent a disease that anyone who only spoke to them was seized by a mortal illness and in no manner could evade death. The infection spread to everyone who had intercourse with the diseased. Those infected felt themselves penetrated by a pain throughout their whole bodies and, so to say, undermined. Then there developed in their thighs or on their upper arms a boil.... This infected the whole body and penetrated it so far that the patient violently vomited blood. This vomiting of blood continued without intermission for three days, there being no means of healing it, and then the patient expired. But not only all those who had intercourse with them died, but also those who had touched or used any of their things.... Soon men hated each other so much that, if a son was attacked by the disease, his father would not tend him. If, in spite of all, he dared to approach him, he was immediately infected and...was bound to expire within three days. Nor was this all: all those...dwelling in the same house with him...followed him in death. As the number of deaths increased in Messina many desired to confess their sins to the priests and to draw up their last will and testament. But ecclesiastics, lawyers and attorneys refused to enter the houses of the diseased. But if one or the other had set foot in such a house...he was hopelessly abandoned to sudden death. Minor friars and Dominicans and members of other orders who heard the confessions of the dying were themselves immediately overcome by death, so that some even remained in the rooms of the dying. Soon the corpses were lying forsaken in the houses. No ecclesiastic, no son, no father and no relation dared to enter, but they paid hired servants with high wages to bury the dead. But the houses of the deceased remained open with all their valuables, with gold and jewels; anyone who chose to enter met with no impediment, for the plague raged with such vehemence that soon there was a shortage of servants and finally none at all. When the catastrophe had reached

its climax the Messinians resolved to emigrate. One portion of them settled in the vineyards and the fields, but a larger portion sought refuge in the town of Catania, trusting that the holy virgin Agatha of Catania would deliver them from their evil. To this town the Queen of Sicily came and summoned her son Don Federigo. In November the Messinians persuaded the Patriarch, Archbishop of Catania, to permit the relics of the saints to be brought to their town. But the populace of Catania would not allow the sacred bones to be removed from their old place. Now intercessory processions and pilgrimages were undertaken to Catania to propitiate God. But the plague raged with greater vehemence than before. Flight was no longer of avail. The disease clung to the fugitives and accompanied them everywhere where they turned in search of help. Many of the fleeing fell down by the roadside and dragged themselves into the fields and bushes to expire. Those who reached Catania breathed their last in the hospitals there. The terrified citizens demanded from the Patriarch prohibition on pain of ecclesiastical ban, of burying fugitives from Messina within the town, and so they were all thrown into deep trenches outside the walls."

"The population of Catania was so godless and timid that no one among them...offered [the fugitives] shelter. If some relations in Catania had not secretly harboured a number of people from Messina, they would have been deprived of all assistance. Thus the people of Messina dispersed over the whole island of Sicily...and with them the disease, so that...innumerable people died.... As soon as anyone in Catania was seized with a headache and shivering, he knew that he was bound to pass away within the specified time, and first confessed his sins to the priest and then made his last will. When the plague had attained its height in Catania, the patriarch endowed all ecclesiastics, even the youngest, with all priestly powers for the absolution of sin which he himself possessed as bishop and patriarch. But the pestilence raged from October 1347 to April 1348. The patriarch himself was one of the last to be carried off. He died fulfilling his duty. At the same time Duke Giovanni who had carefully avoided every infected house and every patient, died."

Events

Monthly **Tavern** is held on the first Wednesday of every month at 912 Idylwyld Dr at 7pm; \$1 site fee, \$5 feast (garb essential)

Fighting Practice is held:

-every Sunday at 2pm near The Ukrainian Poetess on the UofS campus

-every Wednesday at 7pm, **relocated** near Kinsman Park on Spadina Crescent (across from the Mendel Art Gallery) it has been suggested that those not intending to fight dress in garb as this is a very visible location

July

Celtic Games – Myrgan Wood - July7

Tournament of the Dragon – Myrgan Wood - July13-15

August

Moorish Tavern – Midewinde - August 3-5

Avacal Investiture - Valley Wold – August 18

Avacal Sergeant's Trials – Borealis - August 25

September

Crown - September 1

Harvest Feast - Bitter End – September 22

Vinfest - Vingard – September 29

October

Myrgan Wood Anniversary – October 26

May Business Meeting Notes

- Chatelaine: -Victoria Park Summer Festival (Dragon Boat Races) Sat. June16th and Sun Jun 17th. Please contact Baroness Roxanne if you are interested in helping out during any part of either of these days.
-Biggar School Demo Friday June 22nd 10am – 12am. Presenting to grades 1-6. If interested in helping out or if you have things you are willing to lend for the day please contact Elizabeth (mileage and a meal will be paid).
-Shakespeare on the SK Sun July 15th. We will have the opportunity to take in a play free of charge
- Exchequer: -organizer of the next Business Meeting Tavern should contact the previous organizer for advice, requirements, and procedures
-no expense report for Anniversary has been received yet
- Master of Stables:-fighting practice as usual
-June 17th fight practice to be moved to Victoria Park Summer Festival
-List Mistress is Alayna
- Constable: -nothing to report
- Chronicler: -Junes Garb is here
-any and all contributions welcome....
- A&S Minister:-not present, but:
-class on brewing mead taught by Pandora June 27th at Mistress Fabienne's house, contact Lina Joya if interested
- Herald: -nothing to report
- Chirurgion: -not present, but was recently warranted at Crown
- Seneschal: -Quad War approaches

Baron&Baroness:-tabards are getting done for Quad War
-Bitter End will fight with Myrgan Wood at Quad War
-Sergeantry for Myrgan Wood is proposed to be changed as outlineg in June's Garb
Other Business: -work weekends will be happening before Quad War if anyone is interested in volunteering

Answers to the Black Death Crossword Puzzle

Down

1. Bechini
2. Boccaccio
3. Jews
4. Constantinople

Across

1. Bubonic
5. Orient
6. Sicily
7. Flagellants
8. Third
9. Pneumonic
10. Septicemic

Disclaimer: This is The King's Garb; a publication of the Barony of Myrgan Wood, of the S.C.A. The King's Garb is not a corporate publication and does not delineate official S.C.A. policy

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