

The King's Garb



The Pilgrimage Issue
May ASXXXIX (2004 A.D.)

Armatus' Rambling Editorial

If April showers bring may flowers, what to may flowers bring? Pilgrims! Sorry, I couldn't help myself. So last month's short Garb is replaced with this months long Garb. It wasn't originally intended to be so long, but I found some good information that all seemed to mesh together well.

So, pilgrimage eh? It seems very interesting to me. One of the only ways to see the world back in the day. It even became a bit of an industry. It makes me think recreating a period pilgrimage would be an interesting idea. There is a shrine out by Humboldt somewhere isn't there? Right? Hello?

Your chronicler,
APMATYΣ
Armatus

From the Baron & Baroness

Salut à tout la Myrg!!! Once again this grand Barony has hosted a fabulous event. Thank you to everyone who contributed to An Tir Heraldic Symposium. It was a fantastic success enjoyed by all. Guillemin and Lord Hamish officially became our Champions of Rapier and A&S respectively. We are confident they will represent us well.

At Heraldic Symposium we announced our intention to step down as Baron and Baroness. Myrgan Wood is strong and growing stronger all the time. We feel that this is a good time to pass the reigns on to someone new. Final arrangements must be determined by Their Majesties, but it is our hope that the changeover will occur at Silver Jubilee in October.

It was also with a heavy heart that we presented a Blood of the Wood to Lord Ewan as he will soon be leaving us for western Avacal.

The month of May will see us travel to Lionsdale for An Tir's Crown Tournament. If anyone has gifts to add to our basket we would be most pleased to present them on your behalf.

Raoul et Roxanne Delaroche
Baron et Baronne de Myrgan Wood
Resistere futilis est!

Armatus' Interesting Relic o' the Month - The Foot Reliquary of St. James



The cover is a woodcut of a pilgrimage c.1490

Reasons for Pilgrimage

(edited from <http://www.intst.net/humanities/vs/pilgrims/motive.htm>)

People would undertake a pilgrimage for many different reasons. The motivation for most would be a combination of three closely interrelated reasons. Firstly, people desired to see and touch places and objects that were considered holy. This might involve travelling to view places associated with Jesus or it might be to view relics of a favourite saint. The purpose of this pilgrimage was to attempt to make the object of faith more real. Secondly, people visited holy sites to make amends for having committed sin. By doing a pilgrimage as a penance, they hoped for forgiveness. These pilgrimages might have been for private reasons or for public reasons. They may have been voluntary or they may have been forced. Finally, people went on a pilgrimage for the simple pleasure of travelling. In a world that offered precious few opportunities to experience the world beyond the horizon, pilgrimage was an exciting, challenging opportunity to leave village life behind.

The earliest pilgrimages of the fourth century to the Holy Land were based on a desire to see the places made famous by Bible stories. We might describe these as 'empathetic' pilgrimages, because the pilgrims literally wanted 'to walk in the footsteps of the Master'. At the end of the fourth century Paulinus of Nola explained that:

'No other sentiment draws men to Jerusalem then the desire to see and touch the places where Christ was physically present... Theirs is a truly spiritual desire to see the places where Christ suffered, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven... The manger of His birth, the river of His baptism, the garden of His betrayal...the thorns of His crowning, the wood of His crucifixion, the stone of His burial: all these things recall God's former presence on earth and demonstrate the ancient basis of our modern beliefs'

The desire to make the Christian faith more 'real', is something that all pilgrimages shared in common. To actually be in the presence of something 'holy'; to see, or better still, touch something connected to a 'holy' event (the site of a miracle or the relic of a saint for example) made the believing much easier. The pagan religions that existed before the Christian conversion, had 'God' existing in natural physical objects that could be seen and touched: trees, rocks, water etc. (pantheism) In a sense, pilgrimage satisfied this traditional desire.

The concept of penance is central to pilgrimage in the Middle Ages. If you do something wrong in the eyes of God you commit sin. In order to be forgiven and to avoid going to Hell, you must confess your sins and do a penance. Undertaking a pilgrimage as a penance would be compulsory and where you went would be decided for you. The more serious the sin, the further away you were sent. In Languedoc in France, pilgrimages were classified as minor, major or overseas.

From the 13th century, pilgrimage was also used as a punishment for crimes, particularly for scandalous crimes by the powerful and famous. Pilgrimages imposed by the law are called judicial pilgrimages. They were quite convenient, because the community got rid of the criminal without the cost of imprisonment. In 1319, Roger de Bonito was sent to Rome, Santiago and Jerusalem for the murder of a bishop. If you committed murder, it was common to have the murder weapon hung around your neck throughout the pilgrimage. If you were guilty of heresy, you might be expected to wear two yellow crosses on your front and back. As a consequence, you were not treated like other pilgrims but instead would be publicly humiliated. You would also be expected to collect signatures at all the shrines you visited, to prove you had been there. In particularly scandalous cases you might also be expected to undertake the pilgrimage barefoot or even naked! As the English poet Chaucer ((c1340-1400) described: "*when a man has sinned openly, of which sin the fame is openly spoken in the country... Common penance is that priests enjoin men commonly in certain cases, as for to go, peradventure, naked in pilgrimages or barefoot.*"

For many pilgrims their motivation was very personal and completely voluntary. They might still be motivated by the need to do a penance, but the sin committed might be something only God would know about. The people would also go on pilgrimages to attain better health, for themselves or for their loved ones; for protection from enemies or to honour a vow. They wandered with the strong conviction that the relics or pictures of the saints kept at the place of miracle, would guarantee the presence of the saint itself. Pilgrims believed that the saints would perform miracles and cure diseases. They would pray to God or to a saint, promising that if the sick person recovered, they would make a pilgrimage to the grave of the saint afterwards to honour the vow, in praise. You could even go on pilgrimage to release a dead person from purgatory.

Eventually the pilgrimages became more regulated, connected to and motivated by the idea of the indulgence. According to this notion, the church held a treasury of extra 'merits' because Jesus and the saints had done so many good deeds. These extra merits would be given to whoever underwent a pilgrimage to a certain destination. The sins of the pilgrim could be forgiven to whatever extent the church desired. The pilgrims might hope to save their souls from eternal damnation in Hell or shorten or entirely escape purgatory. One general belief was that if you undertook a pilgrimage to the grave of St. James the Apostle in Santiago, your time in purgatory would be halved.

In the 12th century, Gerald of Wales undertook a pilgrimage to Rome and rushed around as many sites as possible, to accumulate as many indulgences as he could. Having calculated that he had collected 92 years of indulgences, he undertook another religious act in order to round-up his indulgences to 100 years! By the 14th century indulgences became a serious problem, as each holy site competed to attract pilgrims by offering a greater indulgence than a rival site. Some sites were offering hundreds or even thousands of years of indulgences. This was one of the major causes of the decline in the number of long distance pilgrimages.

Another cause of decline of Pilgrimage was the appearance of professional pilgrims. In the case of illness or old age, it had always been possible to have somebody do the pilgrimage for you. These are called vicarious pilgrimages. Roger the clerk was too ill to travel to Canterbury, so he sent his candle instead. As soon as his candle was lit, he recovered. Eventually, it became possible for anyone to pay for a pilgrimage to be done and as consequence 'professional pilgrims' began to appear. At the Baltic port of Lübeck, a group of professional pilgrims would compete to be your Jerusalem pilgrim with fees ranging from 20 to 100 marks.

As we have seen, (see Church) medieval life for most was monotonous and strictly controlled. Most people never travelled outside of the county in which they were born. Therefore, despite the criticisms of people like Santo Brasca, a pilgrimage was often the only chance people had to travel. A pilgrimage journey would often be dangerous, uncomfortable and boring, but it did give people the opportunity to be something they rarely were, strangers. (The word 'pilgrim' literally means 'stranger') In medieval villages everyone knew everyone else's business. There was very little privacy. One 15th century writer complained that the main motive of pilgrims was to break away from convention and authority. Pilgrims he suggested, were driven by a *'curiosity to see new places and experience new things, [it was] impatience of the servant with the master, of children with their parents, or wives with their husbands.'* (Sumption: 13)

For reasons of safety, Pilgrims tended to do the journey in groups. As well as providing opportunities to make new friends, it also meant there were plenty of parties or 'making merry'. If travelling to the Holy Land by sea, the travel merchants of Venice could offer you a complete package tour including travel, food, accommodation and guided tours of Jerusalem and special excursions to the river Jordan.

Indeed, on arrival at the destination, pilgrims would often encounter a scene not too dissimilar to the modern day package holiday. Chances are they would be met on the roads outside the town by boys sent by hotel owners and innkeepers offering accommodation. Advertising billboards for accommodation could be found in surrounding villages, often many miles from the final destination. Sometimes the innkeepers went too far. In 1205 in Toulouse, France, the authorities had to warn the hotel owners to stop

physically dragging pilgrims in off the street! There were tourist guidebooks to read, such as the famous 'Mirabilia Urbis Romae' which listed and described the 'wonderful' sites of Rome that the visitor might like to explore. If you had the money, then you might hire your own local guide and translator. At the sanctuary itself, particularly the famous ones, pilgrims would be met by a large noisy crowd. In a city like Trondheim, where many pilgrims wandered to visit the grave of St. Olav, there were many people making money from the pilgrims. Amongst the fellow pilgrims, there would be buskers and entertainers, market stalls and pickpockets, beggars and prostitutes. There were primitive postcards and souvenir pilgrim-badges to buy from licensed traders. Pilgrims showed particular interest in the exotic products, spices, wines and silks, not available at home. Many pilgrims also indulged in a little bit of 'duty free', hiding their purchases from the customs men or bribing the appropriate officials to turn a blind eye.

Inside the sanctuary, things were little quieter. As the day progressed, crowds grew and the wine flowed freely. At Santiago de Compostella, the priests despaired that *'all sorts of noises and languages can be heard together, discordant shouts, barbarous singing in German, English, Greek and every other language under the sun'*. (*Sumption: 213*) The behaviour was such that many sanctuaries, such as Durham in England, employed the equivalent of 'bouncers' to keep order and eject those whose behaviour was considered too 'rude'. Some pilgrims even decided to leave their mark by carving their name or their family coat of arms in the sanctuary itself. Ghillebert de Lannoy's graffiti at Mount Sinai, can still be seen today.

An Tir May Crown Tournament - Shire of Lionsdale

Friday May 21- Sunday 23, 2004 (Chilliwack, BC)

The snow has retreated and spring calls the first tentative shoots from their slumber. Join us in the pastoral environs of Lionsdale for three days of grand combat, competition and pageantry. We offer flat, well-drained areas for camping and equestrian activities, 40+ RV hook-ups, hotels and other amenities less than five minutes away, and abundant parking. Indoors you will find spacious erics, A&S and merchants, all with dedicated areas. For your convenience, there are indoor bathrooms, coin-operated warm water shower stalls outdoors and a pay phone on site. Come one and all to experience this wondrous event!

Site location:

Chilliwack Heritage Park

44140 Luckakuck Way Chilliwack, BC V2R 4A7

Site opens Friday, May 21 at 4PM. Site closes on Sunday, May 23 at 6PM. Early birds WILL be conscripted to assist with any remaining set-up tasks. If you'd like to volunteer for set-up crew contact the autocrat.

Site Fees:

Canadian Funds

\$20.00 Adults(16+), \$10.00 Children(5-15), no charge for children under 5 years \$60.00 family cap NMS - \$4.00 for non-member adults applies

\$12.00 Adult Daytrip fee (no pre-registration required)

Merchants - regular site fees apply plus \$10.00 CAN/ \$7.50 US per 10 foot x 10 foot space reserved. Merchants MUST reserve. See website for further information.

Autocrat: HL Johanna Katarina Morgenstocher (Marion Felgenhauer)

Email: maycrown@lionsdale.com

Phone: 604-795-9611

Mail: 46625 Emerald Drive, Chilliwack, BC V2P 3V4

The Journey

(edited from: <http://www.intst.net/humanities/vs/pilgrims/journey.htm>)

'There are three acts in a man's life which no one should advise him either to do or not to do. The first is to get married, the second is to go to the wars and the third is to go to the Holy Land. These things are all good in themselves, but they may turn out ill, in which case he who gave the advice will be blamed as if he were the cause of it.' Eberhard of Wurtemberg (adapted from *Sumption: 210*)

Undertaking a long distance journey in the Middle-Ages was a decision not taken lightly. Much needed to be planned. If the motive for a pilgrimage was voluntary and not imposed by a priest or a court of law, the first decision that a pilgrim needed to make was: where to go? Lots of factors might influence where the pilgrim chose. The name of saint, the association of a saint with a particular trade or illness, sometimes it was left to chance; in Wales it was common to draw twigs or straws. This last alternative had the advantage of letting fate, or God decide.

An important influence on choice of pilgrimage site was changing fashion. Sometimes a site acquired (invented) a new relic or perhaps a new saint might be created (canonized). The most significant canonization in the Middle Ages was that of Thomas Becket at Canterbury. The French Pilgrim, Hugh Brustins, unfortunately possessed by the Devil, was disappointed to discover on arrival at St. Denis near Paris, that the local French saint had given up curing the sick and that this service was now being provided by St. Thomas *'in order that a new and relatively unknown martyr might make his name.'* (*Sumption: 150*) But what made a site particularly fashionable was news of a significant miracle. When a blind man was healed at Saintes in France by St Eutrope, what had previously been a town passed by on the route to Santiago de Compostella, became a significant pilgrimage site in its own right. News would spread wide and far. We know from the records that news of a miracle at St-Gilles in the south of France travelled as far as Poland and Denmark.

Churches would also compete to attract pilgrims by using a range of different 'advertising' techniques. Packaging the product was very important, with vast sums spent on the elaborate decoration of shrines and magnificent reliquaries. Pamphlets were written which listed the miracle 'track record' of the saint; jingles and rhymes were composed and preachers were employed to drum up interest around the country. Even primitive 'mail shots' were attempted by the bigger shrines such as Canterbury, which sent out 'flyers' listing St. Thomas's miracles to other religious centres in England and France. The advertising would not only celebrate the benefits of the local site over the long distance major shrines, 'remember you are never far from Fécamp, where the Lord has sent his precious blood for your benefit' but would also be at pains to point out that local miracles had been achieved only after rival saints and shrines had failed. It was not always subtle. One pamphlet reported how a sick Englishman heard a 'voice' at St Peter's at Rome, 'Why are you wasting your time here' it apparently said, *'go back home to England and make your offering at the monastery of St. Egwin at Evesham, for there alone will you be healed.'* (*Sumption: 152*)

The first important practical consideration was cost. If a pilgrim wanted to undertake a long distance pilgrimage and expected to travel comfortably, they had to expect a very big bill. Many rich pilgrims needed a year's income and were forced to sell their land to the church. Although the religious authorities recommended that true pilgrimage should be undertaken in poverty and on foot, many richer pilgrims did not. German pilgrims in particular were notorious for travelling in style, as many thieves noted. Poorer pilgrims would have to live on the charity of people who provided alms.

Before leaving home, a pilgrims would have to clear up all their unsettled business; pay all debts, make a will, settle arguments and apologize to everyone he or she might have offended. Finally, the pilgrim needed to make an appointment to see his priest. In front of the priest the pilgrim would make a vow to complete his journey. In return the priest would give the pilgrim his blessing. Having made the vow the pilgrim had to make the journey or face being excommunicated. But only after having made the vow could he or she put on the uniform of the pilgrim.

The origins of the pilgrim's uniform are unknown. Much can be explained by the practical considerations of medieval travel and the need to distinguish yourself clearly as a pilgrim. The staff and scrip were the earliest parts of the uniform, and both are very practical. The staff had to be made of strong wood, preferably with a metal tip. Apart from its obvious use to someone walking hundreds of kilometers, the staff could be an important means of self defence against wolves or human attackers. The scrip was a soft pouch, usually made of leather and tied to the pilgrim's waist. The scrip was used to store all the essential belongings: food, money, documents etc. The long tunic or sclavein became part of the pilgrim uniform in the 11th century at the same time as the priests began to bless the pilgrims clothes. In the later Middle Ages the uniform became more elaborate. After the find of the suit of a pilgrim, worn by pilgrim from Nürnberg during his trip to Jerusalem 1595, we have been able to establish how the uniform of a pilgrim may have looked. They travelled in long (often blue) robes which served as coats and sleeping bags and wore a wide-brimmed hat. They would also carry some sort of bag or sack, often a book bag, carrying with them some sort of religious book.

In the religious ceremony, which very much resembled the 'dubbing' of a knight, the pilgrim would presented with the staff from the altar. This ceremony almost certainly began in imitation of the blessing of the first crusaders (1095-99). In time, the staff, scrip and sclavein were given a religious symbolism: the staff is used to ward off wolves which symbolize the Devil, the scrip is small symbolizing the poverty of the pilgrim and the sclavein's complete covering represents Christ's love for mankind.

On the way home, a pilgrim would wear a lead badge to show where they had been and to prove they had fulfilled their vow. From the Holy Land a pilgrim would wear a palm, from Rome a set of keys and from Santiago de Compostella on the up-turned brim of the hat, they would pin a shell from the St. James' scallop, which became the symbol most often associated with the pilgrims.

The distinctiveness of the uniform was important because it entitled the wearer to be treated as a pilgrim. This was supposed to guarantee the safety of the pilgrim along the road and to give them admission to the many shelters and hospices that had sprung up along the bigger roads.

Long distance travel whether overland or by sea was very difficult and could be dangerous. If travelling overland you faced the problem of very poor quality paths that were badly signposted, if at all. Where roads were well maintained, the chances are you would be expected to pay a fee or toll for their use. Even an experienced rider on horseback could only expect to cover 50 kilometers a day. The 12th century guidebook *The Guide for Pilgrims to Santiago* described some of the dangers that the pilgrim faced including thick forests, mosquito infested marshes, wild animals, impassable rivers and undrinkable water. Supplies of water and drink were a constant problem and would be pilgrims were advised not to travel at certain times of year. The food in Gascony, in the south of France was excellent but Spain was different: *'if anyone can eat their fish without being sick, then he must have a stronger constitution than most of us'*. (*Sumption: 177*)

Although punishments for attacking pilgrims were very harsh, it did not stop pilgrims being attacked by robbers and bandits. In northern Italy the problem was with German robbers, in northern Spain on the routes to Santiago, the bandits tended to be English.

By far the most dangerous route was the pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The overland route became possible in the 11th and 12th century as a result of Christian conversion and conquest in south east Europe and Holy Land. But it was always dangerous. The route from Joppa to Jerusalem was notorious. An English pilgrim who travelled the route in 1102 described how the Arabs *'lay hidden in caves and crevices, waiting day and night for people travelling in small groups or straggling behind their groups. At one moment they are everywhere, the next they are gone.'* (*Sumption: 184*) From the end of the 13th century it became virtually impossible to undertake the overland pilgrimage.

The alternative to the overland route was to travel by sea. Travelling long distances by boat in the Middle Ages was not an easy option. As with the overland route, it was also dangerous, extremely uncomfortable and had the additional inconvenience of being very boring. The journey from Venice to the Holy Land would take six weeks or more. In addition to the obvious threat of shipwreck, there was also

the problem of piracy. Accommodation was basic. Pilgrims were crammed into small boats where they hardly had room enough to turn over in their sleep. The ships were rat and flea infested and the animals stored as the only fresh food, sometimes broke out and trampled on the paying guests. If you had a choice of where to sleep, William Way advised pilgrims to take a place as close to the deck as possible *'for in the lowst under hyt is ryght smoulderyng, hote and stynking'*. (Sumption: 185)

The food was very poor and the water was stale. Experienced pilgrims advised others to take their own food, including laxatives and restoratives such as ginger, figs and cloves. In addition to the problems of hunger and sleeplessness, there was also the boredom. The only organised activity was the daily sermon. Otherwise pilgrims were left to their own devices. Some pilgrims gambled and drank others played chess and did keep fit. 'But most people' observed Felix Faber *'simply sit about looking blankly, passing their eyes from one group to another, and thence to the open sea'*. (Sumption: 186)

(above) 13th century image of pilgrims at sea.

Foreigners - Whether the pilgrim travelled by land or by sea, there were certain experiences common to both and familiar to travellers even today. Language was always a major obstacle to be overcome. The medieval guidebooks offered some help with common phrases but even the educated of pilgrims could only speak a few words of any language apart from their own or Latin. Attitudes to the host people along the way reflected at best ignorance but often hostility. The author of the Guide for Pilgrims to Santiago, for example, wrote of the Basques:

Not only are they badly dressed, but they eat and drink in the most disgusting way... Far from using spoons, they eat with their hands, slobbering over their food like any pig or dog. To hear them speaking, you would think they were a pack of hounds barking, for their language is absolutely barbarous... They have dark, evil, ugly faces... They are like fierce savages, dishonest and untrustworthy, impious, common, cruel and quarrelsome people... They will kill you for a penny. Men and women alike warm themselves by the fire, revealing those parts which are better hidden. (Sumption: 192)

He considered the Basques to be so dreadful as a race that they could have only originated in Scotland. He had little better to say of the Greeks or the Arabs. Companions- Even if you set out alone, safety and the need for companionship on the road, usually resulted in pilgrims travelling together. After the 11th century virtually no pilgrims travelled alone. Choosing your travelling companions was an important decision. There were many stories of pilgrims who were robbed or even killed by their companions. On the road south of Saintes in France, down to the Pyrenees professional thieves dressed as pilgrims or even priests in the hope of gaining the friendship and confidence of genuine pilgrims. The legal expert Beaumanoir warned would be pilgrims: *'Take care, then, not to join up with bad companions, for however pleasant they may appear, you never know what evil will befall thee.'*

According to custom, pilgrims were entitled free food and a roof over their head. Providing this service was the responsibility of the Church and, in particular, the monasteries. On the busy pilgrimage routes it became impossible to accommodate everyone in the monasteries, so smaller hospices were built and run by small groups of monks. By the middle of the 12th century so many hospices had been built on the routes to Santiago through France and Spain that one hospice was rarely more than a day's travel from the next. The quality of the hospices did vary considerably. Not all hospices provided food and usually only the very poorest received alms. Beds were a rarity and most pilgrims had to make do with a straw covered floor. For the richer pilgrim, there was always the possibility of staying at an inn. However, the standard of comfort was usually much lower than a rich pilgrim would be used to. No-one would have a bed to themselves and would be expected to share the room with a number of other paying guests. The innkeepers of the middle ages did not have a good reputation. They were often accused of cheating the pilgrims with high prices for poor quality food and flea infested beds. It didn't help the reputation that in the days before high street banks and the single European currency, it was often the local innkeepers who took responsibility for money exchange. It was useful source of income for them.

Relics

(Edited from: <http://www.intst.net/humanities/vs/pilgrims/relics.htm>)

Relics are holy objects associated with holy people such as Jesus or the saints. The use of relics was by no means a new phenomenon, it existed previously in Judaism, Buddhism and several other religions. In a world where people believed that evil and the Devil existed all around in the natural world, it was comforting to believe that good was also something that could be seen and touched. The motivation for most pilgrimages was to see and touch something holy and consequently benefit from being in contact with good.

There are two types of relic. The first kind were called brandea and were the most common kind of early Christian relic in the centuries immediately following the death of Christ. These were often ordinary objects which had become holy by coming into contact with holy people or places. These might include, for example, pieces of tomb, a handkerchief of a saint or dust from the Holy Land. The advantage for pilgrims was that they could and did make their own brandea; by rubbing a piece of cloth against a holy tomb or by filling a small flask (ampulla) with holy water, they could take the holiness home with them. In the 6th century, Gregory of Tours described how this might be done at the tomb of St Peter:

'He who wishes to pray before the tomb opens the barrier that surrounds it and puts his head through a small opening in the shrine...Should he wish to bring back a relic from the tomb, he carefully weighs a piece of cloth which he then hangs inside the tomb. Then he prays ardently and, if his faith is sufficient, the cloth, once removed from the tomb, will be found to be so full of divine grace that it will be much heavier than before.' (Sumption: 24)

These early relics were often carried in small, purpose built containers called reliquaries which were hung around the neck, almost like good luck charms. Of course, medieval people did not believe in luck, they believed that God controlled everything (see Church). Therefore, by wearing the relic you were showing you believed in the Christian faith and consequently you hoped God would reward you by making good things happen.

The second kind of relic which became common after the 7th century were bodily relics, these were actual pieces of the body of the saint: a bone, a piece of hair, the head etc. The Church initially outlawed the movement of the body of a saint from the original burial place but over time both the movement (translation) and dividing up (partition) of the body of a saint was allowed. Two factors explain the spread of relics all over Europe from the 8th century. Firstly, after 787 all new Christian churches had to have a relic before they could be properly established or 'consecrated'. During this time, much of northern Europe was being converted to Christianity and there were many new churches that required relics. As a consequence, the Church partitioned and translated a portion of her collection all over Europe. The second factor which explains the spread of relics was the value placed on them by influential collectors all over Europe. Owning a large number of relics became a symbol of status and power for both private collectors and kingdoms. Emperor Charlemagne (742-814) set a trend with his massive collection at Aachen that later monarchs of Europe tried to follow.

The craze to collect relics even gave rise to national rivalries. When in 1244, Westminster Abbey received the relic of a vase of the blood of Christ, the Bishop of Norwich made a direct and unfavourable comparison to the recent purchase of part of the True Cross by the King of France, Louis IX. He argued with impeccable politician's logic:

'Now it is true that the Cross is a very holy relic but it is holy because it came into contact with the precious blood of Christ. The holiness of the Cross derives from the blood whereas the holiness of the blood in no way derives from the Cross. It therefore follows that England, which possesses the blood of Christ, rejoices in a greater treasure than France, which has no more than the Cross.' (Sumption: 30-1)

Bodily relics were particularly important because the spirit of the saint was said to actually remain in the bodily remains. Wherever the body (or body parts) went the (holy) spirit was sure to follow. There were some religious critics who suggested that the cult of relics owed more to pagan traditions than Christian

teaching, but such was the popularity of the relics and the miracles that surrounded them, it would have been very difficult for the Church to resist even if it had wanted to. In converting pagan people the Church needed every trick in the book. In the 13th century, even the great medieval philosopher and saint, Thomas Aquinas, produced a threefold defence of the cult of relics. He argued that, firstly, the relic acts as a physical reminder of the saint, making it easier for people to understand the importance of the saint. Secondly, because the saint worked miracles through the body, the body remains holy and is therefore valuable in itself. Finally, because miracles occur at sites with relics, God must approve of the preservation and worship of relics.

When the church began to allow the partition and translation of relics, the business of trading in relics began to take off. Even before this time there were many professionals who made a living out of buying and selling relics. Since it was extremely hard to verify the authenticity of the relics (there were no DNA-tests or carbon-14 tests in the Middle Ages!) the trade was a goldmine for all fakers and forgers. This was particularly the case after 1204, when the fourth Crusade captured Constantinople, which had perhaps the largest collection of relics in Christendom. The Constantinople relics found their way into churches all over Europe.

The only way of guaranteeing yourself a widely acknowledged, 'authentic' relic was to steal one. Many of the most famous pilgrimage sites in Europe included stolen relics in their collection. The theft was easily justified. Often the idea for the theft came in the form of a dream or vision, which was widely considered to be the way God and saints communicated. Often the saint itself decided. If the saint allowed itself to be taken without punishing the thieves and if the saint continued to produce miracles, then clearly he or she was happy in their new home.

But there was only really a problem for the Church when two shrines claimed to have the same relic (in the 11th century, there were at least three heads of John the Baptist in circulation and this was true of a number of equally 'unique' relics) or when a church claimed to have a relic of obviously questionable validity. This was particularly the case with bodily relics of Christ. His adult body was, of course, resurrected to heaven, leaving no bones for collectors to hoard. But there were parts of his body separated from his body, that did remain on earth. There were multiple copies of everything imaginable, from umbilical cords, to milk teeth, all over Europe.

In the 11th century, the popes' private chapels in Rome contained the umbilical cord and foreskin of Christ in a gold and jewelled crucifix and preserved in oil, along with the following impressive list of relics: a piece of the true cross, the heads of the saints Peter and Paul, the ark of the covenant, the tablets of Moses, the rod of Aaron, a golden urn of manna, the tunic of the Virgin, various pieces of clothing worn by John the Baptist including his hair shirt, the five loaves and two fishes which fed the five thousand and the table used at the Last Supper. (Sumption: 222-3) Relics were big business!

As long as a relic was never moved or never stolen, there was less of a problem in guaranteeing the authenticity of the relic. In 1215, the Church decided that to minimize theft, all relics should be stored and displayed in a special box, a 'reliquary'. In 1255, it was further decided that under no account should relics be removed from reliquaries. Reliquaries had existed long before the 13th century. The earliest reliquaries of body-relics reflected the belief that the medieval belief that the saint actually inhabited the church where their relics were kept. These statue-reliquaries originated in southern France in the 10th century. The statue of St. Foy in Conques is a particularly good example. It is made of gold and is covered in precious stones.

Business Meeting Notes – April 7th 2004

- \$4200 in Baronial Account – Noted that we should try to keep at least \$3000 in order to have front money for large events.

- Unitarian Center – We will book for the next two months, before perhaps moving to other venues for the summer.
- Investiture – Attendance was 200+ and profits were \$1300
- Guillemin de Rouen is now Master of Swords
- Robert of Clan Gunn is Missile Marshal
- One set of rapier gear will be purchased by the group.
- Blood of the Wood was given to Shaver at a previous date as he was proving too elusive to give it to him at an event.
- The Chronicler is retiring at Anniversary and is looking for a Deputy to replace him at this time.

Upcoming Events

- May 8 – Pillage Practice in Sigelhundas
- May 15 - Champions Feast and Tourney in Harrow's Cross
- May 21 to 23 – May Crown in Lionsdale
- May 28 to 30 - Festival of Flora and Fauna in Windwyrn
- June 5 to 6 - Avacal Coronet in Montengarde
- June 12 - To the Bitter End in Bitter End
- June 18 to 20 - Dragon Slayer in Montengarde

Regular Events

Monthly Tavern to be held in an Undisclosed Mysterious Dark Place at 7pm the first Wednesday of the month. Contact the Chatelaine for the location of the Undisclosed Mysterious Dark Place. If you really want to know.....

Fighting Practice is held:

-every Sunday at 2pm on the UofS campus in the STM cafeteria or by the Ukrainian Poetess if it is nice outside

-every Wednesday at 7pm, at City Park Collegiate (820 9th Ave N)

Web Links

The SCA Corporate Homepage <http://www.sca.org/>
 The Kingdom of An Tir's Homepage <http://www.antir.sca.org/>
 The Principality of Avacal's Homepage <http://avacal.antir.sca.org>
 Myrgan Wood's Homepage <http://www.chainmailstore.com/mw/>

Pilgrimage Web Links

The European Medieval Pilgrimage Project (an excellent site)
<http://www.eun.org/eun.org2/eun/sv/vs-history/content.cfm?lang=en&ov=22096>
 Period Accounts of Medieval Pilgrimage
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook3.html>

Myrgan Wood Officers List

Baron and Baroness: Their Excellencies Don Raoul and HL Roxanne Delaroche (mka Duane and Tracy Walker) Ph:651-2599 duane.walker@sk.sympatico.ca

Seneschal: Gerhard Thorwulfsson (mka Mark Geldof) Ph:653-1066 midgardarts@yahoo.com

Chatelaine: Lord Hamish Mac Carraig (mka Pat Nixon) Ph: 384-9121 sean131@yahoo.com

Exchequer: Lord Dietrich dietrich.sca@sasktel.net

Chronicler: Lord Armatus (mka Andrew Bennett) Ph: 244-7601 armatus@hotmail.com

Minister of Arts & Science: Joseph de St. Vital (mka Dave Fortier) Ph:242-8894 alone_knightly@hotmail.com

Master of Stables: Lord Ferghail (mka Keith Chapman) Ph: 652-0855 cliffy6@hotmail.com

Master of Swords: Lord Robert of Clan Gunn (mka Robert Simpson) Ph: 664-1052 rms210@mail.usask.ca

Herald: Rebecca Malo Ph: 249-5212 michel.rebecca@sastel.net

Constable: Ewan of Loch Fynne (mka Tony Canevaro) Ph: (306)-682-4810 ewan_of_loch_fynne@hotmail.com

Chirurgion: Position Vacant

Gold Key: Michel Malo Ph: 249-5212 michel.rebecca@sastel.net

Myrgan Wood Champions

Armoured: Lord Ferghail (mka Keith Chapman) Ph: 652-0855 cliffy6@hotmail.com

Missile: Lord Cunan

Rapier: ·Guillemin de Rouen

A&S: Lord Hamish Mac Carraig (mka Pat Nixon) Ph: 384-9121 sean131@yahoo.com

Other Assorted Contacts

King & Queen of An Tir:

Their Majesties,
Skapti Thorinson (Scott Zeller)
Asa Starradottir (Alison Avery)
king@antir.sca.org
queen@antir.sca.org

Prince & Princess of Avacal:

Their Hignesses of Avacal,
Murchad MacArtgal (David Smith)
Morrigan Clubfoot (Jude Harrison)
avacal-prince@antir.sca.org
avacal-princess@antir.sca.org

Contact for Humboldt:

Viscount Sir Gunther & Lady Eyoddi
Ph: (306)682-1984
steadmand@ctrc.sk.ca
jodiv@sasktel.net



Bob's Fish making a Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

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