



## *A Cleftlands (Middle Kingdom) Newsletter - 10/25/2020*

### News of the Realm

#### SCA News -

- Remember the SCA census? The first results have been posted: <https://www.sca.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2020-10-24-SCA-Census-Report-final1.pdf>
- Society October 25 2020 BoD Meeting is going to be streamed live. Learn more: <https://www.sca.org/news/october-2020-bod-meeting-goes-live/>
- Looking for entertainment? Check out the weekly online content guide on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/KWEGuide>
- The Society has a Youth and Family Achievement Program and are asking for a library of videos focused on certain subjects. Go to [yafa.sca.org](http://yafa.sca.org) for more information, or email [yafa@sca.org](mailto:yafa@sca.org).

#### Kingdom News

1. Their Majesties held a brief court on October 17. Watch it here: <https://youtu.be/-7LQo1uYbUw>
2. Announced at court: on 9/25/2020, Felix and Madeleina, The Crown of the Middle Kingdom, have issued a Temporary Removal from Participation from the SCA against McKenzie Levi, known in the Society of Levi Athlon.
3. Their Majesties extended their thanks to His Grace, Sir Ullr, for his service as the Kingdom Earl Marshal. Sir Marcus will be the new Kingdom Earl Marshal.
4. The Barony of Cynnabar is hosting Grand Day of Tournaments - Virtual Edition, on Saturday, November 7: <https://www.facebook.com/events/3486932514661327>

## The Medieval Origins of Halloween

*By Lady Claricia de la Mere*

Our word "Halloween" had its origins in the Middle Ages, although it was probably written that way only post-period, perhaps in the poem "Halloween" by Robert Burns. Prior to that, it was written as Hallowe'en, or, as Shakespeare wrote in "Measure for Measure" in 1603, "All-Hallow's Eve" - better known as "All Hallow's Eve." November 1 was All Hallow's Day, so the day before would have been the eve.

"Hallow" is from the word hallowed, or saintly, so "hallows" were saints. All Hallow's Day is also known to us as All Saint's Day. This goes back to at least 1000 AD, where Aelfric of Eynsham wrote "the month begins on the day of the mass for All Saints".

Before Christianity, this time was the Celtic new year, called Samhain (pronounced "sow-in"). The translation of "samhain" is "summer's end", and was a harvest festival that also honored the dead. The veil between worlds was said to be more thin at this time, so spirits were more likely to come through. Revelers would disguise themselves as the dead and otherworldly creatures so that anything that came through the veil would be fooled into thinking they were among their same kind and not cause mischief.

This was also said to be a powerful time for divinations, often involving apple, hazelnuts, and bonfires. Games based on these activities are still even played today, like bobbing for apples. Thankfully, some once popular games are not played today, like this one: hang a rod horizontally at about face-height, with a lit candle on one end and an apple on the other. All participants stand in a circle and the rod is spun around while the players try to catch it with their teeth (and hopefully not catch on fire).



*Continued on page 2.*

# The Medieval Origins of Halloween - continued

In 1048 the Catholic Church put All Souls' Day on November 2, so that there was a day when all saints could be honored. Some theorize they selected this date to co-opt some of the pagan traditions with Christian ones. It became a time associated with Purgatory, and prayers for the release of the dead from this in-between place.

A tradition began where children would go through their communities, often to the wealthier homes, and sing these prayers for their family's lost loved ones, getting a treat at the end (called "souling"). There is also the custom of "mumming" that began in the Middle Ages where people dressed up and performed various antics in exchange for food and drink. One day when mumming plays were celebrated was All Hallows' Eve. It's easy to see how this became today's trick-or-treating.

Purgatory prayers were also the modern tradition of carving pumpkins. It was already a harvest practice to carve things like turnips, and a Catholic practice to light candles for the dead. Combine the two, and you've got jack-o-lanterns.

The traditions of harvest festivals and All Souls' Day continued separately until the Victorian era: All Souls' Day and the prayers for the dead was a somber occasion while the ancient traditions for the harvest season were festive, and held at the mid-point between the autumn equinox and winter solstice instead of a set day.

Halloween is very popular in America today, although early almanacs up through the first part of the 19th century don't show it on the calendar. It was when the Irish and Scottish began to arrive in large numbers during the mid-19th century that Halloween became popularized. The practice known as "guising" was recorded in Scotland in 1895, which was specifically children going out on Halloween in costume and begging for food or coins. It was recorded first in North America in 1911 in Canada.

By the 1920s, Halloween became more about pranks than treats. Vandalism, assaults, and violence escalated until in the 1930s communities organized more wholesome events to satisfy the youth. The trend of trick-or-treating was halted during World War II, but continued soon after and has now spread back across the ocean into Europe.

There are still many people who celebrate Halloween, Samhain, All Saint's Day, and/or the Day of the Dead separately, and in their own ways. In the southern hemisphere, Halloween falls at the crux of spring equinox and summer solstice, so some modern pagans there celebrate Samhain in April.

Sources:

<https://www.tor.com/2016/10/20/the-medieval-origins-of-halloween/>

<https://www.discovermiddleages.co.uk/the-history-of-halloween/>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halloween>

<https://www.history.com/news/halloween-trick-or-treating-origins>

## Virtual Classes for October 25 through November 8:

- **Sunday November 1 7pm EST- Dukes & Duchesses, Knights & Barons, and more!** by Antonia di Sforza: <https://zoom.us/j/91914841326?pwd=ckRqSkY5UnkxNDNzcVNJR0Z4aUVQdz09>
- **Monday November 2 7pm EST - Making Magic in Multiple Medievalisms: Crossing the Bridge From Rennie to Scadian** by Antonia di Sforza: <https://zoom.us/j/95600201722?pwd=QWREeTVaKzFuN-2lucmZaUDBubW9VQT09>
- **Tuesday November 3 7p EST - Bodhran Rhythms Workshop 3: Jig, Slipjig and Mazurka Rhythms** by Liadan Liathan: <https://zoom.us/j/96061096890?pwd=RTY5WHBSNmRveE93eVV0Qy9QUVB-6dz09>
- **Wednesday November 4 7pm EST - How to Create a Class from What You Know** by Lucia Elena Braganza: <https://zoom.us/j/97721674192?pwd=ekFhMyt1NmFEbUJobWwvTURaR05iUT09>
- **Sunday November 8 7pm EST - The Roman Soldier's Diet** by Arria Marina: <https://zoom.us/j/92431507943?pwd=NzJwcWZ2SWhlLWEYzZ2xmUTJwOTkQUT09>

## For the Combat & Ranged Arts

**Armored:** Duke Eik's Videos:  
LitW Sword and Shield Kata #21

<https://youtu.be/zVQk0A6C6tw>

LitW Sword and Shield Kata #22

<https://youtu.be/zZWCipz6iKE>

LitW Sword and Shield Kata #23

<https://youtu.be/4EimWgjrAw>

LitW Sword and Shield Kata #23

<https://youtu.be/4EimWgjrAw>

**Fencers:** Warder Velvet's Videos:

Stretches We Can All Use:

<https://www.facebook.com/msrlapin/videos/10220994339821986>

Lateral Movement:

<https://www.facebook.com/1046572331/videos/10220887494790927/>

## Call for Content

We want to make sure there's a central place to get information and see posts that might get buried, or resources that might not be shared.

If you have info to share - an upcoming virtual gathering, activity ideas, or a great website, please contact me: [clariciadlm@gmail.com](mailto:clariciadlm@gmail.com).

Thank you and stay well!

## 5 Questions for Cleftlanders - Master Sorcha Fraser (mka Val Eisenberg)

### 1.) How did you get started in the SCA?

Back in 2003, I met someone, I can't remember how, who used to be involved in his local group (he was in the Charleston, WV area). He told me about the SCA, after asking me if I knew what it was, and me having no idea what he was talking about. I found my local group, which happened to be the Cleftlands, lurked on the then mailing list for a long time, and finally, sometime in 2004, introduced myself. The first two people I "met" were Katerin ferch Gwenllian and Nial the Wanderer of Bork. My first event was Pennsic that year, and, although it took a while for me to find a niche, when I did, the rest is history.

### 2.) What are your two main activities in the SCA?

Working in the kitchen and being in the scribes room as signet.

### 3.) Tell us what the job of the Middle Kingdom Dragon Signet does.

The Dragon Signet facilitates 99% of the scrolls that the Crown gives out. I work with the Crown to make sure information on the court list is correct and send the list to the regional signet, who then assigns the awards to scribes to do. Sometimes I'll do that job too, depending on what the event is.

### 4.) Describe your process for creating a scroll for someone.

When I've got the basics (recipient name, reason for the award, the name of the award, and event info), I start plotting out what I want to do. Sometimes, I'll see if I can find personal things about the person, their arms, what colors they like, other things they like, that I could put into the scroll. Then I start flipping through images, either in books I have or online, looking for inspiration from period pieces. I will also look up a specific time period to get inspiration from, especially if I know the recipient is, say, a 13th century French persona, and sometimes I just look for something I want to do. Then I outline in pencil, ink the outline, do the calligraphy, and paint.

### 5.) What is one fun fact about you?

One of my favorite words is "defenestrate" and I like coffee ice cream.



## Random Period Object - Cleveland Museum of Art



Mastiff (Dog-Faced) Bat Vessel - Central Andes, Moche people, 200-850 AD

Ceramic

There is not much known about this piece, but it is thought to have been found in a tomb as a burial offering. The detail shows the quality of the work, indicating the person was of high status. It is not known if the vessel was used before being deposited, and if so, what it was used for. The Moche conceived of the animal and human world as being very close. They may have thought that the bats were mediators between realms.



## For Further Research - Spooky Topics in Period

**“Vampire” Burials** - Graves have been found across Europe that show what is called “anti-vampire practices” by modern researchers. Bodies were placed face down, decapitated, had scythes around their necks, rocks in their mouths - different methods that seem to have been used to stop them from rising again. Though very rare, these burials have been documented in Switzerland, Germany, Austria, and particularly in Slavic areas where legends of the walking dead like vampires originated. No one knows for sure why this was done. Some speculated that it was because people with visible physical ailments were treated differently in death. Others think it had to do with the plague, and increasing superstition around how it spread. Here are a few articles to get you started:

- <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/2020/09/medieval-pandemics-spawned-fears-undead-burials-reveal/>
- <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kristinakillgrove/2016/06/01/healthy-vampires-emerge-from-graves-in-medieval-polish-cemetery/#39f27671e432>

**Bones Everywhere** - It's common to see depictions of skeletons and corpses in various states of decay in period art, often dancing with the living, or leading them somewhere. The artists ask the living to “remember death” - it spares no one. The “Danse Macabre” or “Dance of Death” was particularly popular, perhaps a way to make light of this eventual fate. While such depictions are often not entirely anatomically correct, medics did have knowledge of bone-setting and treatments that might be done by your chiropractor today. And of course, there was the Christian belief in the power of physical remains, so that the bones of saints were sold to pilgrims as reliquaries. Learn more:

- [https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/relc/hd\\_relc.htm](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/relc/hd_relc.htm)
- <https://www.medievalists.net/2014/10/memento-mori-medieval-images-death/>
- <https://time.com/5712368/skeletons-history/>

**Ghost Stories** - Ghosts and demons were often interchangeable. As the Church put more emphasis on purgatory, the idea that ghosts were the souls of those stuck there became more popular. There are plenty of ghost stories to from period to read. Maybe one will become part of your next campfire rotation, or even your bardic performance.

- <https://www.ancient.eu/article/1404/ghosts-in-the-middle-ages/>
- <https://www.historyextra.com/period/medieval/3-curious-medieval-ghost-stories/>
- <https://www.uab.edu/reporter/know-more/academics/item/7915-7-spooky-stories-from-medieval-literature-to-get-you-in-the-halloween-spirit>

**Werewolves** - The term “werewolf” is found in 15th century period literature, but the concept of a man changing into a wolf exists much earlier. Whether ancient Greek “lukanthropos,” Norse “varulfur,” or the French “loup-garou,” this is a common and widespread story. Often medieval literature depicts this as a curse, where the rational nature of the man so afflicted is hidden behind a bestial appearance.

- <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/ren/researchcurrent/researchblog/werewolf/>
- <https://www.medievalists.net/2019/10/5-things-you-might-not-know-about-medieval-werewolves/>
- <https://www.medievalists.net/tag/werewolves-middle-ages/>

### This Week in History

October 25 1415 - Henry V of England and his archers defeat the French cavalry at Agincourt.

October 26 1597 - Korean Admiral Yi Sun-sin routs the 300 ships of the Japanese navy with only 13 ships.

October 27 939 - Aethelstan, the first king over all England, dies. His half brother Edmund I succeeds him.

October 28 306 & 312 - [Maxentius](#) is proclaimed Roman emperor. He is defeated by Constantine I exactly 6 years later, and dies the same day while fleeing with his army - supposedly of drowning in the Tiber river.

October 29 1390 - First witchcraft trial in Paris is held, leading to the death of three people.

October 30 758 - Guangzhou is sacked by Arab and Persian pirates.

October 31 1517 - Martin Luther posts his 95 Theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg.

## Cleftlands Officers' Contact Information

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## Upcoming Events

- Tuesday, October 27 7:30 pm EST Virtual Needleworkers' Guild Meeting - <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88261643621?pwd=UGx1TTdPcVdNNWtHZFhDZkxYR0d5Zz09>
- Wednesday, October 28 6:30 pm EST Dance Practice Challenge - Acacia Reservation - <https://www.facebook.com/events/389039895460784/>
- Thursday, October 29 8pm EST Virtual Armorers' Guild Meeting - <https://www.facebook.com/events/327411918397483/>
- Thursday, November 5 8pm EST Virtual Armorers' Guild Meeting - <https://www.facebook.com/events/327411918397483/>

Image on page 1 is "The Dance of Death" (1493) by Michael Wolgemut, from the Nuremberg Chronicle of Hartmann Schedel and is in the public domain: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danse\\_Macabre#/media/File:Nuremberg\\_chronicles\\_-\\_Dance\\_of\\_Death\\_\(CCLXIIIv\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danse_Macabre#/media/File:Nuremberg_chronicles_-_Dance_of_Death_(CCLXIIIv).jpg)

Photo credit of Master Sorcha on page 3 by Lord Tarmach ben Yehuda al-Khazari.

As of January 23, 2019, the Cleveland Museum of Art is an Open Access institution, using the Creative Commons Zero (CC0) designation for high-resolution images and data related to its collection. This means the public now has the ability to share, collaborate, remix, and reuse images of many as 30,000 public-domain artworks from the CMA's world-renowned collection—all without asking permission. In addition, portions of collections information (metadata) for more than 61,000 artworks, both in the public domain and those works with copyright or other restrictions, are now available.

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