



## *A Cleftlands (Middle Kingdom) Newsletter - 12/27/2020*

### News of the Realm

**Happy New Year!**

#### **SCA News -**

- It may be past Christmas, but you can still enjoy some holiday cheer with 9 SCA kings reading "'Twas the Night Before Christmas": [https://youtu.be/R\\_MOTzhVbao](https://youtu.be/R_MOTzhVbao)

#### **Kingdom News**

- Their Majesties held a Royal Court on December 19. Watch it here: <https://youtu.be/krPDRLbqjis>
- During this court, a challenge was issued for #15forSCA. Complete 15 minutes of SCA-related activities for 30 days, and receive war pay. This can be practicing with a pell, researching garb, doing a project, taking a class, or anything at all. Use the # and join the discussions on Facebook.
- If you received an email from the rum@midrealm.org account with an invitation to teach, that email was sent in error.
- Please note that as of right now, no combat authorizations will lapse due to the forced break.
- Also note that Kingdom rules for gatherings of 10 people and under that were announced this summer are still in effect. This means a gathering posted on an SCA group page.

#### **Baronial News**

- A huge thanks to Lady Aethelwynn and Lord Jaromir for organizing the Baronial Yule virtual party on December 18! More fun to come.

## Monsters for Christmas

*By Lady Claricia de la Mere*

Krampus has been getting more notice in recent times, but there are other, equally monstrous creatures from ancient folklore who also come out around the same time of year. Learn more about the horror in the holidays from three different period traditions.

**Krampus** - Krampus is a horned, bestial figure who joins St. Nicholas on the night of December 5th to reward or punish children. St. Nicholas gives small gifts to good children, but Krampus is responsible for the bad ones. He may do no more than provide coal and a scare, but in legend he used his birch rod to beat the naughty children. Sometimes, he is pictured with a sack or basket to take away evil children to eat them or bring them to Hell. St. Nicholas became popular in the 11th century, but Krampus is believed to have been around since pre-Christian times in the Alpine area of Europe. Krampus may have originally been Percht, who is also goat-like in appearance. The emphasis on birch carries heavy pagan significance, and may have had a ritualistic purpose.

Like people do today for Krampusnacht (Krampus night), historically people would dress as Percht and march in Perchtenlaufs (processions). The Catholic Church banned Perchtenlaufs, but the ban was ineffective, and it wasn't until St. Nicholas was added to the Perchtenlauf that the two traditions combined and Krampus emerged. Today, there are Krampus parades all around the world, where people wear elaborate costumes and take to the streets. However, they no longer do anything more than perhaps scare children

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# Monsters for Christmas - continued

**The Christmas Witch, Yule Cat, and Yule Lads** - Iceland brings us a legend in three parts. It starts with Grýla (the Christmas Witch), a female ogre who lives in the frigid north of Iceland. Earliest written records of Grýla can be found in sagas and poems of the 13th century. She was not originally associated with Christmas, but would come down from the mountains to ask parents to give her their disobedient children to eat.

The Yule Lads and Yule Cat were separate traditions not tied to the Christmas Witch originally. Each Yule lad represented a different form of mischief, and would visit Icelandic homes on their specific day in December to cause trouble. For example, Pottaskefill would eat all your leftovers. The Yule Cat was a giant feline who would come and eat anyone who didn't receive a gift of new clothes by Christmas Eve (as a way to encourage workers to finish the wool processing). It wasn't until the early 1800s that the legends were combined, making the Yule Lads Grýla's sons, and the Yule Cat their pet. More recently, depictions of all three of these creatures have been softened. Grýla has been removed from many stories, while the Yule Lads look more and more like Santa Claus (stories even have them leaving gifts instead of taking them).

**Kallikantzaroι** - Here is a monster who made its way from ancient Greece to Bulgaria, Turkey, and Serbia, which all have forms of a similar creature. Between Christmas and Epiphany (January 6) these demons emerge from their underground lairs, where they spend most of the year sawing at the World Tree which holds up the earth. While they are above ground, they wreak havoc and try to steal any child born during this time to turn into a fellow demon. They can slip in through cracks and chimneys, but could be kept at bay by a fire and a colander on the doorstep. They are compelled to count the holes in the colander, but can never finish before the sun comes up because the number 3 in Greek is holy, so cannot be spoken by demons.

In Turkey, the Karakoncolos stands on street corners and gives riddles, to which the answer would include "black". If you solved the riddle, you were free to go - if not, you were killed. In Serbia the 12 days of Christmas were known as "unbaptized days" when demonic forces were more active. The demons would ride on the backs of their victims and only release them at dawn. They particularly punished adulterers.

The origin of the myth has its roots in the festivals of Dionysus and later Bacchus in Roman Saturnalia. This time in now-December was when restrictions were relaxed and revelry abounded. While these traditions continued, at odds with the Catholic Church, the mischief of the time began to be painted in a demonic light.

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

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/why-icelands-christmas-witch-much-cooler-and-scarier-krampus-180967605/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Icelandic\\_Christmas\\_folklore#The\\_trolls\\_Gryla\\_&\\_Leppaludi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Icelandic_Christmas_folklore#The_trolls_Gryla_&_Leppaludi)

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/4zPGG8xQcxX0rmxh0jm8Hy3/dark-christmas-seven-seasonal-monsters-from-myth-and-legend>

<https://travelswithpersephone.blogspot.com/2013/12/kallikantzaroι-greek-goblins-of.html>

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

## Random Period Object - Cleveland Museum of Art



Stater (coin), England, 1st century BCE to 1st century AD.

Gold

"Stater" is from Ancient Greek, meaning literally "weight", and was their name for coins. This term is also used for coins made to imitate Greek staters, such as this one. The earliest known stater, from about 700 BCE, depicts a turtle.

The Celts were known for coins such as this, and may have struck this one in England. The inscription on this coin reads "TASCIOV RICON" on one side and shows a sword-wielding, mounted soldier on the other. Tasciovanus was a historical king of the Catuvellauni tribe before Rome conquered Britain.

<https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1969.151>

## For the Combat & Ranged Arts

**Armored:** Duke Eik's Videos: Longsword "The Silverthorn":

<https://youtu.be/GG4NRbgYTso>

Attack/Defense Visualization Kata #1:

<https://youtu.be/xsAmxAoOx5k>

Polearm Entering/Leaving Kata #1:

<https://youtu.be/QS4ZsEAHGlg>

**Ranged:** Precision Cross-bow Shooting (RUM):

<https://youtu.be/3gsVCemwSIM>

Care & Feeding of Cross-bows (RUM):

[https://youtu.be/XXizF\\_BMmIM](https://youtu.be/XXizF_BMmIM)

Aim Higher! Advanced Aiming in Archery (RUM):

<https://youtu.be/OPT1bjgeZaM>

Shooting at Ground Targets (RUM):

[https://youtu.be/Z-\\_lh9natZU](https://youtu.be/Z-_lh9natZU)

## 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 Cleftlands' Officers - Lady Ragnastórráða Úlfadóttir: Rapier Marshal (mka Nicole Turk) (also known as Hostilia Lupa)

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

My friend Taranis [Lord Tyrannius Seuerus] insisted he could teach us to fence within the rules of the SCA and in doing so, brought us into the welcoming arms of Vito's Minions. Related: I can almost always be convinced to try something where I get to regularly stab my husband. We consider it our weekly marriage therapy.

### 2.) Apart from your officer duties, what are your two main activities in the SCA?

I'm actually not only the Group Rapier Marshal for the Cleftlands, but I'm also the Rouge Scarpe Herald, which means I managed to cover a lot of my interests within the wheelhouses of my officer duties. That being said, rapier is and likely always will be my favorite activity with hound coursing and book heraldry being a strong number two.

### 3.) As Rapier Marshal, how would you describe what you do?

I make sure that no one gets dead, permanently.

### 4.) What is your favorite thing to do at Pennsic?

I have actually never been able to attend Pennsic. Between the cost and several surgeries (along with the extended recoveries) it hasn't been in the cards. This year was actually the first time we were set up to be able to attend and then we had a literal pandemic. So, maybe someday we'll go? I would be easier if it were something I could just buy a day or weekend pass for.

### 5.) Tell us about your pets!

I have two Australian Shepherds, Hodgins and Navi. Hodgins has attended a couple of events with us, including the Harvest Days we went to so that he could try out hound coursing. While he's not particularly good at it, he does enjoy hanging out with us and getting loved on by literally every stranger he sees. I also breed and show Maine Coons as well as American Bobtails, which means when I'm not at an SCA event I usually have cat shows to be at.



## Virtual Classes for December 27 through January 10:

- Sunday December 27 9pm EST - History of Yasuke, the African Samurai with Count Seto Gesshouko: <https://www.facebook.com/events/688910828421982>
- Sunday January 3 7pm EST - The Roman Soldier's Diet with Lady Arria Marina: <https://zoom.us/j/91047121310?pwd=LzkzeFhXdW1INIVXUWV-vUU5UY05ldz09>
- Monday January 4 7pm EST - Researching the Rare, Unusual, or Taboo with Mistress Elizabeth Alles: <https://zoom.us/j/91475283331?pwd=V1N-haGFhZGtZQjZITVFSLzJSd0NsUT09>
- Tuesday January 5 8pm EST - Introduction to Drinking with Verena Entenwirth: <https://zoom.us/j/94590433869?pwd=M0xtaEJnRXpta0d4TFFxOHU-vWkpkdz09>
- Wednesday January 6 7pm EST Renaissance Perfumes with Dugu Jinan: <https://zoom.us/j/96696519082?pwd=bGVRbGowbUdScE1yWk1QZH-V6Wi9odz09>

# Book Report: Epic Saga of England's Past Concludes with "War Lord"

By *THL Jolicica atte Northclyffe*

Author Bernard Cornwell, considered one of the best writers of historical adventure, concludes his bestselling medieval series in his latest novel "War Lord" (Harper, \$24.28).

This 13th installment of Cornwell's Saxon Stories series, featuring Uhtred of Bebbanburg and set in the 10th century England, was just published. Cornwell's Saxon Stories series is the basis for the British TV series "The Last Kingdom," which premiered in 2015. The series began on BBC America, then moved to Netflix in its third season. "War Lord" is dedicated to actor Alexander Dreymon, who plays Uhtred in "The Last Kingdom," which was recently renewed for a fifth season, according to the Guardian.

The book series' finale places Uhtred at the center of battles that will forge England as a nation. To the south, King Æthelstan has unified the three kingdoms of Wessex, Mercia, and East Anglia – and now eyes a bigger prize. To the north, Scottish and Irish leaders seek to expand their influence. Uhtred must decide whether to stay out of the coming war, or allow himself to be swept up in the power struggles that surround him.

Cornwell includes the battle of Brunanburh in 937, after which the Saxons incorporated Northumbria into their own country, as part of the action in "War Lord."

"Bernard Cornwell has dazzled and entertained readers and critics with his prolific string of page-turning best-sellers," says Barnes and Noble. "Of all his protagonists, however, none is as beloved as Uhtred of Bebbanburg, and this thrilling historical novel continues the saga of his adventures and the turbulent early years of England."

A review on the website Cultured Vultures stated: "Cornwell's grasp of the history, and the way he blends it into his novels, has always been his strength. The period of time that this series covers, with 'War Lord' ending in 938, is one that is neglected in British history lessons, and by creators in general. Schools would have you believe that the Romans left and then nothing happened in the vast expanse of time before William the Conqueror turned up in 1066. What books like 'War Lord', and authors like Cornwell do, is show us that there is a lot we don't know."

Another online review said: "The Battle of Brunanburh is another forgotten, drenched in blood, foundation stone of Britain and one that Cornwell frames to great effect. He builds things slowly and uses the time to say goodbye to his surviving cast of characters. Cornwell has always been a master in a fight scene and Uhtred's experiences in the shield wall are close up and personal. Fear is admitted and then driven down as the blade is thrust forward and blood is spilt."

Cornwell was born in 1944 London and worked as a teacher and a BBC Television researcher before moving to the United States to marry an American, according to the biography on his web page. Cornwell launched his writing career with the adventures of a British soldier named Sharpe in the Napoleonic wars. He has also written books about the English Civil War, the American Revolutionary war, and modern thrillers.

Read a snippet of "War Lord" here: <http://www.bernardcornwell.net/war-lord-extract/>

The book is available for purchase in hardcover, paperback, digital, and audio format: <https://www.amazon.com/War-Lord-Last-Kingdom-Book/dp/B085W8TJ3F>

## This Week in History

December 27 537 - Construction of the Hagia Sophia is finished, becoming the world's largest known interior space.

December 28 893 - An earthquake destroys Dvin, capital of Armenia, and kills most of its 70,000 inhabitants.

December 29 1170 - Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, is assassinated. He later becomes a saint.

December 30 903 - [Tian Jun](#), a Chinese warlord, is decapitated during a failed attempt at rebellion.

December 31 1600 - The British East India Company is chartered.

January 1 45 BC - Julian calendar becomes the Roman Empire's official calendar, with Jan. 1 as the year's first day.

January 2 366 - Alemanni invade the Roman Empire by having their army cross the frozen Rhine.



## Cleftlands Officers' Contact Information

- Baron: Baron Crispin de la Rouchefoucald; baron@cleftlands.org
- Baroness: Baroness Gianna Vettori; baroness@cleftlands.org
- Seneschal: Lady Claricia de la Mere; seneschal@cleftlands.org
- Exchequer: Lord Robert atte Northclyfe; exchequer@cleftlands.org
- Chatelaine: Lady Shahzada Ishfahani; chatelaine@cleftlands.org
- Web Minister: Lady Brangwayn Snowden; webminister@cleftlands.org
- Social Media Coordinator: Lady Æthelwynn Skerra Dimma, social@cleftlands.org
- Herald: Sergeant Njall Orkneyjarson; herald@cleftlands.org
- Minister of Arts & Sciences: Baroness Angharad ferch Tangwystl; moas@cleftlands.org
- Knight's Marshal: Baroness Constanza de Mendoza; knightsmarshal@cleftlands.org
- Rapier Marshal: Lady Ragna Storrada Úlfsdottir; rapiermarshal@cleftlands.org
- Archery Marshal: Lord Cadfan of the Autumn Wood; archery@cleftlands.org
- Youth Marshal: Sergeant Bastian Eychener; youthmarshal@cleftlands.org
- Chronicler: The Honorable Lady Jolicia atte Northclyfe; chronicler@cleftlands.org
- Minister of Youth: Lord Rojhon the Wanderer; youthminister@cleftlands.org
- Demonstration Coordinator: Lord Carl of Cleftlands; demo@cleftlands.org
- Gold Key: Lady Fritha Eikbrandrsdottir; goldkey@cleftlands.org
- Iron Key: Lord Tryggr Gillason; ironkey@cleftlands.org
- Quartermaster; Lady Sarra Bossard; quartermaster@cleftlands.org

## Upcoming Cleftlands Events

- Thursday, January 7 8pm EST Virtual Armorers' Guild Meeting - <https://www.facebook.com/events/327411918397483/>

*Photo credit of Lady Ragna stórráða Úlfsdóttir credited to Lord Tarmach ben Yehuda al-Khazari.*

*Engraving of St. Martin on page 1 and the Italian spoon on page 3 are from the Cleveland Museum of Art. 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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