



The newsletter of the Cleftlands, Vol. 4: Issue 32, December, 2002

Cheap Gifts for Medievalists on a Budget

It's that time of year again- the time for much giving and receiving of gifts. All at once. And you with your first winter heating bill hanging over your head. Well, what can a creative anachronist do, asside from run around the house with a shopping bag looking for stuff you can part with that won't be recognized?

One obvious solution is to make things- but that can sap your much-needed time. Still, a hot glue gun and some trim can transform a spare basket into a lovely gift basket in minutes. You can even grab some cellophane at the craft store and seal it up. Pouches are easy to make, and the materials are cheap. You could draw a medieval game board, such as nine man's morris, on a square of felt with fabric paint and present it in your hand-made sack along with small pebbles or glass counters.

Flavored olive oils are all the rage in the gormet stores. If you have olive oil on hand, you can buy a decorative decanter at Pier One or World Market, shake some of your dried herbs and spices in with oil and decorate with a scrap of ribbon. Better yet- sew a bag for the oil bottle as an attractive presentation as well as a gift in and of itself.

Have a lot of favorite period recipes? A few minutes at the computer, and you can make your own cookbook to give to friends- it doesn't have to be too long. While you're there, if you have the know-how and equipment, why not burn a few CDs of your favorite hard-to-find music?

Now, for those of us too time-challenged to hot glue: I can't think of a SCAdian who would turn down either books or fabric. How about going through your fabric pile, and, with a lamenting sigh, parting with those three yards of silk you just know you're never going to actually cut? Lord So-and-so will cry when he unwraps it! Got a few books you've been meaning to return to a friend for an age? Wrap them up with a Border's gift certificate!

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Chroniclers Step Down

It's been three years since I took over from Lady Celeste as chronicler, and, well, I'm tired! This issue marks the end of my term as chronicler, as well as the end of my dear sister Milesent's service in her roll as Assistant Chronicler. I couldn't have made it through the final stretch if it weren't for her!

We'd like to thank everyone who contributed articles to The Forum over our tenure: Alda, Alaric, Angharad, Cornelious the Sage, Calum, Culan, Darius, Ealdred, Edward Brackenburye, Edward Fitzranulf, Elspeth the Taller, Emelynne, Ephraim, Katherine de Val, Mathew de Boumount, Regan of Blacksilver - and others for sure! Thank you all!

We're leaving the chroniclership in Mathew de Beaumont's capable hands. Milesent will continue to maintain the web site until we get another sucker... er... volunteer to take it on.

A hearty hoobah to Donasian de Sucinio, who continues to maintain our mailing list server, cleftlist. Of course, he doesn't have to do that forever, either. :)

Lyonnete


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Dear Choppy,

by Cornelius the Sage

Dear Choppy,

My local lyceum has been sacked by Vikings and I need to get some research done, what can I do?

-Unenlightened in Ulverston

I'd recommend using the internet to do your research. Most people know the internet is a great tool for finding information on a vast array of subjects. But finding good information quickly can become frustrating. I have some tips that can make internet searches very productive.

The first thing to realize is that everything is on the internet (with the possible exception of only the most esoteric tidbit imaginable). I'm also wary of recommending that children be allowed to do open-ended searches on the internet as some searches can accidentally yield offensive material. Be sure to remain open minded.

Internet search engines can seem at first to be annoyingly indiscriminate at narrowing down the information you need but that is truly up to you. I always try to narrow down searches with additional words. If you look for 'armor' you'll get too many replies to be of use. But if you specify the type of armor, a period, or it's makers you can get excellent information. My usual search engine is www.google.com and I highly recommend it. Almost all search engines use commas to separate words it searches for. Instead try 'armor, German, medieval.' Even this can be somewhat overwhelming, so the more you can specify what you want to find, the more likely you will. Many years ago search engines weren't able to access the kinds of quantities of information that they do now. You may be surprised by how specific of a search you can make now.

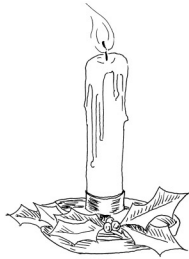
If I wanted to learn the name of a German armorer, a search of 'german, armorer, mark, medieval' immediately led me to the name Konrad Seusenhofer. A further search of 'Konrad, Seusenhofer' gave me a wealth of bibliographical information on him and images of armor in museums fashioned by him. Finding that info with a search for 'armor' would've been quite a difficult task. Even though I may not have known a specific name to search for at first, a search for terms related to the subject I was researching helped immensely.

I also would like to mention that Google allows for searches of images in particular. A search for 'Seusenhofer' in the image tab gave me a wonderful result of the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna where one can peruse the images of their armories. It also led me to several pictures of his famous horned helmet.

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Gifts Continued

For out-of-town family- you can assemble a Cleveland gift basket right at the grocery store- most stores around here carry Little Italy pasta sauce, Cleveland stadium mustard and Cleveland rye bread. Throw in some freeze-dried pierogies and your far flung friends will feel at home again. (For a friend in tropical climes, throw in some white polka-dotted celophane he can put over his window to remember the weather up here.)



Dear Choppy continued

Another small tip to help in searches is to encapsulate more than one word in quotation marks. This tells the search engine to only find those words together as you've specified. Instead of 'Konrad, Seusenhofer' I could have entered "'Konrad Seusenhofer'" and I would've had the most appropriate returns.

I found the place name in the title above, Ulverston, online. I searched for 'England, place names' and was led to Place Names in North Eastern England - Origins A-Z. It originates from Ulfar's farm.

Good luck in your searches, and remember to narrow them down for the best results.

At the Movies with Klaus

Harry Potter & the Chamber of Secrets: A Movie Review

By Klaus von Eisenstein

Where most sequels fall flat trying to measure up to their original, Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets joins that elite circle of films, which include Godfather 2, Star Trek 2: The Wrath of Khan and The Empire Strikes Back, where the sequel makes the original pale by comparison. As with these other films, Chamber of Secrets accomplishes this herculean task by making the mood darker than the original, showing character growth and gently adding layers of complexity to the mythology.

We return to the world of Harry Potter the same way we were introduced to it, in the home of Harry's mind-numbingly awful foster family, the Dursley's. Life here is much the same as before, except Harry was graciously allowed to move from his closet under the stairs to his cousin Dudley's extra bedroom. The other new wrinkle to Harry's domestic situation is the impish appearance of a masochistic house elf named Dobby with a grave warning, "Harry Potter must not be allowed to return to Hogwart's this year."

Dobby and his warning are the first of many darker elements and themes that permeate this movie. This mischievous, but well meaning character symbolizes both the humor and heart of the first movie while adding an element of uncertainty and distrust. While there are several other humorous characters and situations injected into the story, each of these also has its darker side. From Colin Creevey, the eager-to-please first year Gryffindore photographer who is prevented from photographing messages scrawled in blood on the school walls, to Ginny Weasley's awestruck hero worship of Harry which turns to looks of disappointment and fear with the discovery of one of Harry's freakier talents, to Gilderoy Lockhart, a smug, self-congratulatory celebrity wizard and the new Defense against the Dark Arts teacher at Hogwarts with a potentially deadly secret, each character, new or old, is touched by the shadowy specters of fear and distrust. The character that most personifies these feelings is Lucius Malfoy, father of Draco Malfoy. From his icy-cool composure to his arrogant, malicious words, Lucius Malfoy is the most delicious villain to arrive on the silver screen since Hannibal Lecter. (No pun intended.)

I also enjoyed the fact that the both the young actors and the characters they portray have grown considerably since we last saw them. They are treated less like children and more like young adults. The first movie, for all of its wonderment, was a very safe film. The themes and conflicts within Sorcerer's Stone, such as peer pressure, making new friends, problems with 3

teachers and getting acquainted with a new school, were very childlike. Where as, the obstacles and threats in Chamber of Secrets are more mature in nature. Now, Harry and friends must face adult issues such as racism(mudbloods vs. purebloods), slavery(house elves are slaves until given clothing by their master), and murder. Murder in a Harry Potter movie, you say. Yes, murder. Each issue is handled well, by addressing it properly without sweeping it under the carpet or beating you over the head with it.

The characters themselves have grown a lot as well. Ron Weasley's voice is showing signs of changing, Harry learns to take up the sword as well as the wand and Hermione's fondness of Harry is progressing well beyond the crush stage. However, the character that has shown the most development since the last movie has to be Draco Malfoy. In the first movie, Draco was an arrogant, behind-the-scenes scheming rich brat, but still showed the innocence of youth perfectly, both with his fear in the dark forest and his disappointment at Slytherin losing the House Cup. Now Draco is a future force to be reckoned with. His arrogance has turned to hatred, giving Draco a creepiness and power that George Lucas only wishes he could have captured for his Anakin Skywalker.

The thing I liked most about Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets was that they used the KISS method: Keep It Simple Stupid. Rather than taking the wonderful characters as they were in the first movie and transplanting them into a new situation, the author and director have chosen to add, bit by bit, layer by layer, to the incredible foundation that the first movie created. Little, non-contradictory changes are always preferable to huge sweeping changes in the retelling of myths and legends. (Meta-chlorians, my foot!) Old themes from the first movie, such as Harry's ability to speak with a python, the Choosing Hat's decision of which house Harry should belong to, and why Hagrid isn't a real teacher at Hogwart's, are addressed while new themes are introduced and never explained. This is the type of storytelling that engages the audience and makes them hunger for more.

Well, I could go on and on about why I liked this movie, but I won't. Suffice it to say, that Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets has more thrills, spills and chills than its predecessor. The only real disappointment I had with the film was seeing Richard Harris(Dumbledore) looking like death warmed over(he was fighting cancer at the time). While I eagerly await the next installment of this popular series, it just won't be the same without Richard Harris, whose personal strength, humor and heart made Dumbledore such a wonderful character. I, for one, will miss him terribly.

