

# Chips



March, A.S. XXVIII

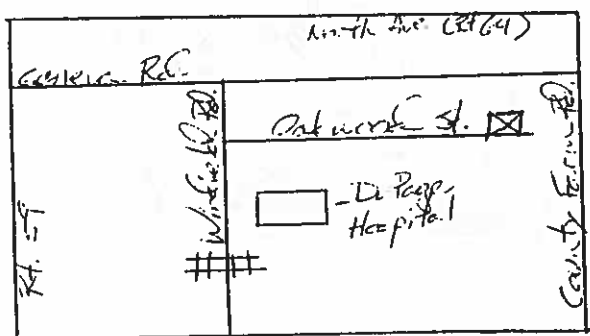
## Moot Points

Little of high import happened at our February moot. Katherine reported that the demo we put on at Glen Crest School in Glen Ellyn was well received and that we may, in consequence, get permission to use the school as an event site.

After much discussion, we finalized plans for the 25th Year Celebration tournament. It will be a multiple-list bearpit, with a separate list table for each list and waterbearers. We will award three prizes: one for prowess to the fighter with the most victories; one for chivalry, the winner to be chosen by a committee of ladies from the host groups; and one for period-style armor and accoutrements. No decision was made on who will choose that winner. Also, we voted to lend our silver platters and green serving bowls to Rokkehealdan for use during the feast.

Katherine asks that shirefolk think up suggestions for a shire field trip. Locations proposed at the moot include the Crerar Library to hunt down a 16th-century chocolate icing recipe rumored to lurk there; and the Art Institute's textiles collection. Bring your pet plans to the March moot.

And where is the March moot, I hear you cry? Trygve Sophister will host it on the 27th at his house, 27 W 338 Oakwood St. in unincorporated Winfield (682-9854). Be there or be gossiped about!





## Medieval Marketplace

Crocheted or netted snoods are gaining popularity among Midrealm women. Both period and practical, they can be plain-worked for daywear or worked in complex patterns and studded with pearls and gems to make you shine at Court. The only hitch - despite their seeming simplicity, they're tricky and time-consuming to make (I have a bag filled with snarled, half-finished attempts and unwearable mistakes).

Juline the Somewhat New of Illiton, who hasn't yet settled on her persona's name, has chosen to be a lacemaker specializing in intricate snoods. For a relative pittance, she will crochet you a snood in any color of Knit-Cro-Sheen or in glittering metallic threads and incorporate pearls or gemlike glass beads into the design. Ladies who prefer more understated elegance will appreciate the range of patterns Juline has created, from a basic honeycomb net to a complex pattern of leaves frequently sported by Lady Georgia the Pragmatic, proprietress of The Likely Lotus.

Juline charges \$8-\$10 for a small snood, \$10-\$15 for a medium snood and \$15-\$20 for a large snood, depending on the pattern and materials requested. You can browse through her stock in hand, carried at The Likely Lotus, or commission a custom piece.

If you miss Juline at Illiton's event March 19, you can reach her c/o Juline Fielinski, 1205 N. University, Peoria 61606, (309) 674-6236.

## 'Out, Out, Damned Spot'

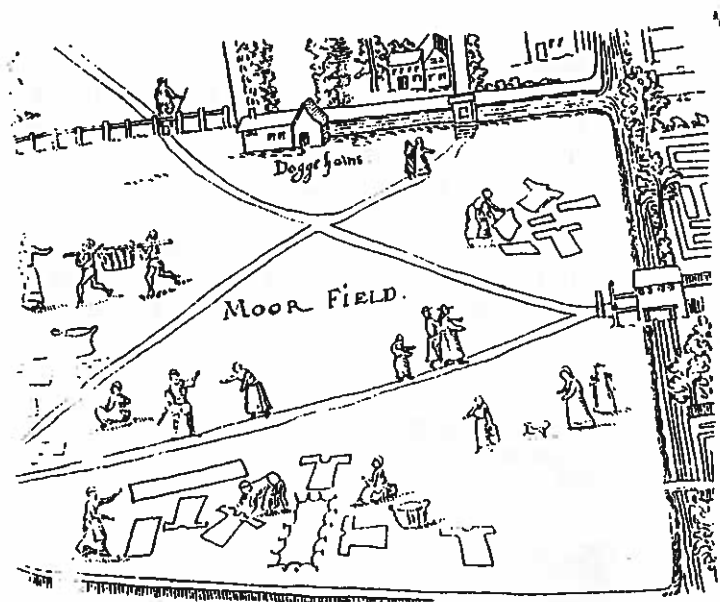
*Hints for the Anachronistic Launderer*

Ever wonder how medieval housewives kept their gowns so elegant without dry cleaners or even a spin cycle? Here are state-of-the-art laundering instructions from the Goodman of Paris, as given to his bride in 1393:

"Be aware, and tell your women, that to protect and take care of your furs and dresses, you should air them often in order to avoid the damage that the larvae of moths can do. Because such vermin breed in the warmer periods of fall and winter and are born in the summer, it is a good idea to put the furs and dresses in the sun when the weather is fair and dry. If a dark, damp cloud comes and settles on your dresses and you fold them in that condition, this air wrapped up and folded in your garments will conceal and engender worse vermin than before. Because of this, choose weather that will stay fine and dry; and as soon as you see other, heavy air coming, before it reaches you, have your dresses put under cover and shaken to get rid of the bulk of the dust and then cleaned with a whisk of dry twigs.

The Beguine [Dame Agnes the Beguine, the Goodman's head housekeeper] knows well, and will tell you, that if there is any spot of oil or other grease, this is the remedy: Take urine and heat it until it is warm, and soak the spot in it for two days. Then, without twisting it, squeeze out the part of the dress with the spot. If the spot is not gone, have Dame Agnes put it in other urine, beat in ox gall, and do as before.

Or you can do this: Have fuller's earth soaked in lye and then put it on the spot. Let it dry, and then rub it. If the earth doesn't come off easily, have it moistened in lye, let it dry again, and rub until it goes away. Or, if you don't have any fuller's earth, have ashes soaked in lye and



put these well-moistened ashes on the spot. Or have very clean chicken feathers soaked in very hot water to get rid of any grease they have picked up. Wet them again in clean water, rub the spot on the dress well once more, and all the stains will go away.

If there is some stain or fading on a dress of light blue cloth, moisten a sponge in clear, clean lye, squeeze it out, draw it over the dress while rubbing the stain, and the color will come back. If there are faded spots on cloth of any other color, put very clean lye, which has not been used for boiling washing, on the spot together with ashes, and let it dry. Then rub it and the original color will come back.

To take stains out of dresses of silk, satin, camlet, silk damask or other material: soak and wash the stain in verjuice and it will go away. Even though the dress is faded, the color will come back, although I don't really believe this.

Verjuice: At the time when the new verjuice is made, one should take a glass vial of it, without salt, and keep it, because it is useful for taking spots out of dresses and bringing back their color. It is

always good, new or old.

If any of your furs or fur skins have been wet and have gotten hard, take the fur off the garment and sprinkle the fur that is hard with wine - it should be sprayed by mouth as a tailor sprays water on the part of a dress that he wants to hem. Throw flour on the watered part and let it dry for a day. Then rub the fur well and it will return to its original state.''



### Fighting Words

The March combat practices will be held at 7 p.m. on the 10th and 24th at Roselle United Methodist Church, 206 S. Rush St. in Roselle. Be there or be square!



## Hearth & Kettle

One of the Lenten strictures medieval nobles found most annoying was not eating meat for 40 days (the peasants didn't mind so much because they rarely got to eat meat, anyway). As the centuries wore on, the Church's definition of "meat" became looser and looser until it excluded seafood, unborn animals and, in Poland, anything served on a Wednesday (a boon given by the pope to the Bishop of Prock in the mid-16th century).

One popular "non-meat" main dish found in *Fabulous Feasts* sounds more like a product of California's spa cuisine than a medieval kitchen.

### *Saumon Rosted*

- 6 salmon steaks
- 1 1/2 cups red wine
- 1 TBS cinnamon
- 1 tsp. powdered ginger
- 4 small minced onions
- 1 TBS vinegar

Roast or broil the salmon on a gridiron about 5 minutes per side. Put the onion, vinegar and spices in the wine and simmer 10-15 minutes until syrupy, then pour over the salmon and serve forth.

# Lent :

## *The 'Fast' Track to Easter Vacation*

The "celebration" of Lent didn't exactly mean 40 red-letter days for medieval Europeans. Fasting, going without music and doing spring cleaning isn't most people's idea of a good time, then or now. But the kaleidoscope of period Lenten customs offers a fertile field for diehard authenticity mavens to get their spring fix of medieval atmosphere - and, maybe, even a little fun.

Here are a few things you can do to experience a period Lent:

### **Take an extended vacation**

Remember those cindery crosses some people have marked on their foreheads every Ash Wednesday? While these days they mark unusually devout churchgoers, during the early Middle Ages ash crosses on the forehead were reserved for serious sinners who were about to do penance for causing public scandal. After confessing their sins and receiving the mark of the cross, made with palm ashes mixed with holy water, they were forbidden to enter a church until Maundy Thursday.

Then they spent the next six weeks confined to a monastery or anchorage, where they fasted, went barefoot, wore hair shirts, slept on the ground and performed acts of charity and contrition. During their penance, they could not converse with others, bathe or cut their hair.

On the Thursday before Easter the penitents were brought back to church and absolved of their sins so they could return home in time to observe Good Friday and Easter (by this time, most of them probably were more concerned with observing a nice hot tub with lots of soapsuds, followed by a soft straw mattress).



People who committed truly heinous sins could find themselves celebrating Lent all year round...and round...and round. An 11th-century document describes the seven-year sentence one English nobleman received from an ecclesiastical judge. He could not bear arms; receive Holy Communion except on his deathbed; enter a church; eat meat except on Sundays and major feast days; or drink wine more than four days a week. He also had to spend the money he saved on meat and wine to feed the poor. The judge did, however, promise the nobleman parole after the first year if he obeyed the sentence.

Don't bother looking up hair shirt suppliers in the Yellow Pages because it's too late to mount your own 40-day penitential retreat, since Ash Wednesday fell on Feb. 16 (gee, whiz! shucks!). Maybe next year...

### **Go on a diet**

While fasting has been part of Lent almost since the beginning of Christianity, the Church did not impose a firm set of fasting rules until 604, when Pope Gregory the Great outlined them in a letter to his bishops. At that time people were forbidden to eat meat and all animal products, such as eggs,

cheese, milk and butter. They were limited to one meal at midday, plus some wine or water at night.

By the ninth century the Benedictine monks had introduced a second meal of bread and wine in the evening, but breakfast wasn't added to the Lenten menu until the 1800s. Sick people were allowed to break the fast, and healthy people could indulge if they paid for it later with donations to their local parish. One of the steeples of the Cathedral of Rouen is called the "butter tower" because its construction was financed by donations from fast-breakers.

Even so, many people found their Lenten diets tedious, to say the least. As a 13th-century English schoolboy wrote,

"Thow wyll not beleve how wery I am of fyssche and how much I desir that flesche were cum in ageyn, for I have ete non other but salt fyssche this Lent."

Protestant countries in the 15th and 16th centuries generally ignored the Lenten fast or limited it to Holy Week. In 1572, King Sigismund August of Poland served meat at a diplomatic banquet during Lent as a favor to his German Lutheran guests. The Church of England abandoned the fast after the Stuart Restoration, though Parliament didn't repeal the laws requiring it until 1863.

## **Expand your wardrobe**

Lent in the Middle Ages was officially considered a period of mourning. Churches went without altar cloths, flowers or music during services, while people at home were expected to forego music and rowdy games. At royal courts, everyone wore black with little or no trimmings or jewelry. Even Queen Elizabeth, a staunch opponent of "popery", commanded that she and her ladies in waiting wear black throughout Lent.

In Russia all public entertainments were forbidden the first and last weeks of Lent,

while all the nobility and most of the peasants attended church twice a day. Eastern Europeans renounced dancing and singing from Ash Wednesday to Easter morning, and could practice no sports except hunting and archery (why they would bother to hunt when they couldn't eat meat, I don't know).

It would be silly to go to an event this month and not fight in the tourney, sit feast or enjoy the dance revel - all of which would be forbidden in our time period. But now would be a good time to sew yourself up a black gown or cotehardie with a matching mourning hood to flaunt your medieval social savvy. After all, basic black is so chic!

### **Visit your mother**

Not all Lenten customs drip gloom and doom. On Laetare, the fourth Sunday in Lent, Church and people alike took a break from the season's strict discipline, enjoying music and flowers at Mass and indulging in meat and eggs at dinner. As Pope Innocent III explained in a 1216 sermon:

"On this Sunday, which marks the middle of Lent, a measure of consoling relaxation is provided, so that the faithful may not break down under the severe strain of Lenten fast but may continue to bear the restrictions with a refreshed and easier heart."

In the German states, people celebrated Laetare with a farewell festival for winter. Many villages staged mock battles between the forces of winter and spring, with everyone applauding the foregone conclusion. Polish children paraded stork effigies through the streets to mark the return of the migratory birds. French and Italian people decorated wells and fountains with flowering branches to mark the spring thaw.

During the Renaissance, English craft masters and heads of households gave their apprentices and young servants permission to visit their home parishes on Laetare. In addition to bringing gifts to the church, each returning teen-ager visited his mother

bearing flowers and plum cakes called simnel cakes. While some sources say the cakes were named after Lambert Simnel, the phony Edward V whose father was a baker, others say they took their name from the fine grade of flour, called simila, used to bake them. To this day, young people who grew up in rural England bring simnel cakes to their families on Laetare.

This year, Laetare falls on March 13. Does anyone have a good recipe for plum cake?

### **Spice up your love life**

It seems contradictory, but the same solid citizens who enforced the bans on fun and frolic spent much of Lent matchmaking for their sons and daughters. In some Irish counties, weddings traditionally took place on Easter after Lenten betrothals.

Bohemian men sent written marriage proposals to their sweethearts by messenger on Laetare Sunday, while in Austria, girls who were husband-high lined up outside the parish church after Mass and waited for their suitors to take them by the hand and lead them back into the church. If a girl agreed to go into church with the swain who took her hand, the couple was considered betrothed. The traditional Laetare pig-out then doubled as their betrothal feast.

The nobility, of course, didn't participate in these rustic rites, since their marriages were matters of state and usually smacked more of corporate mergers than romantic liaisons. This is one aspect of medieval life where the peasants definitely had more fun.

### **Clean house**

European Christians spent a lot of Lent scrubbing and polishing - probably because they weren't allowed to do much else. Russian women got an early start by burnishing all their cookware on Ash Wednesday to remove even the slightest taint of meat or dairy



products so that their fast would be as pure as possible.

The three days after Palm Sunday (March 28-30 this year, if you're interested) were devoted to scrubbing down everything in the house (including the occupants) in order to put on a brave face for Easter. This custom may have originated in the Jewish practice of cleaning house in preparation for Passover.

Wherever it came from, this Lenten ritual has inspired me to emulate my medieval ancestors and clean my house from top to bottom...tomorrow.

## Bibliography

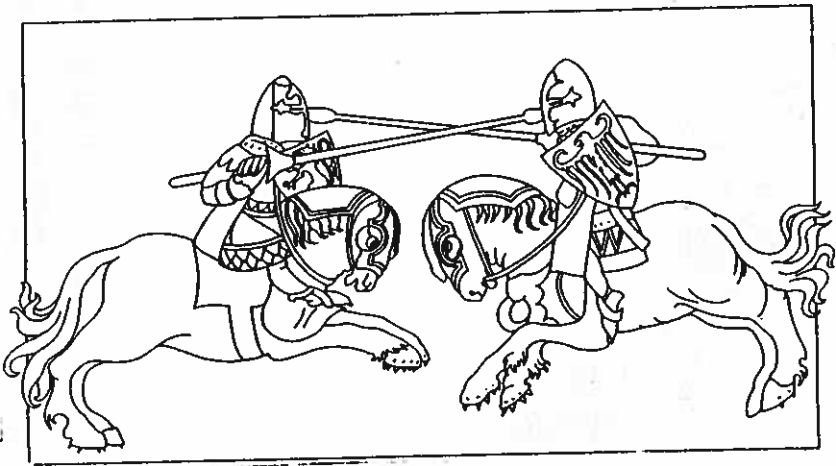
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## Almanac

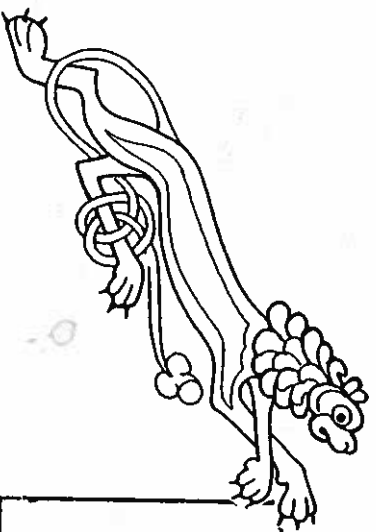
- March 1: First English book printed, 1469; Francis Rabelais died, 1553; Edward VI opened Parliament, 1553
- 2: Sir Thomas Bodley, founder of the Bodleian Library, born, 1545; Katherine Parr and Thomas Seymour betrothed, 1547; Shakespeare's "Henry IV" first performed, 1592
- 3: Canute the Great died, 1052;
- 4: Saladin died, 1193; Henry VI first deposed, 1461
- 5: Michelangelo Buonarroti born, 1475; Gerard Mercator born, 1512
- 9: Earl of Kent beheaded, 1329; Joan of Arc pledged her life to the Dauphin's cause, 1429; Amerigo Vespucci born, 1454; David Riccio, Mary, Queen of Scots' lover, killed, 1566
- 10: Lord Thomas Seymour beheaded, 1549
- 11: Romeo Montecapello and Juliet Capelletto married, 1302; Italian poet Torquato Tasso born, 1544
- 12: Cesare Borgia died, 1507
- 17: St. Patrick died, 464
- 18: Louis VII of France annulled his marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine, 1152; Mary I imprisoned Princess Elizabeth in the Tower, 1554; Czar Ivan the Terrible died, 1584
- 20: Henry IV died, 1413; Thomas Seymour executed, 1549



- 21: Robert the Bruce born, 1274; Henry V crowned, 1413; Bishop Thomas Cranmer burned, 1556
- 22: Jacques de Molay died, 1312; Sir Walter Raleigh discovered Trinidad, 1595; Sir Anthony Van Dyck born, 1599
- 23: Pope Innocent III laid England under interdict, 1208; Knights Templar abolished, 1312; Peter the Cruel of Castile died, 1369
- 24: Elizabeth I died, 1603
- 25: Henry II born, 1133; French and English sign the Peace of Ambois, 1563
- 27: Robert II the Pious born, 972
- 28: Venetians used gunpowder to battle the Genoese, 1380
- 29: Raphael born, 1483; alchemist Raymond Lully died, 1315
- 31: Eleanor of Aquitaine died, 1204; Henry II of France born, 1519; Francis I died, 1547; Rene Descartes born, 1596

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Dear Dennis



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