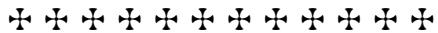


# The Oracle

## News from the Nest



VOLUME 1, ISSUE 5, DECEMBER 2007



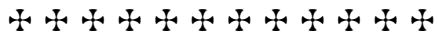
### **WELCOME TO THE ORACLE**



*Lady Ailire inghean  
Aodha—Chronicler*

Greetings everyone! This is *The Oracle*, the newsletter for the Shire of Owl's Nest. This is an online, quarterly publication that is posted to the Shire's Web site.

This issue is available at —  
[www.asbrand.com/owlnest/files/  
Oracle\\_2007\\_12.pdf](http://www.asbrand.com/owlnest/files/Oracle_2007_12.pdf)



### **EVENTS, AWARDS, AND RECOGNITIONS**

*Lady Ailire inghean Aodha—  
Chronicler*

Oh, the places they'll go...

Once again members of Owl's Nest traveled far and wide this quarter. Several were called up in various courts to received awards and recognitions.

### **Meridian Grand Tourney**

At MGT, Red Sword Company was recognized for their service during the event. You couldn't go anywhere without seeing a black and red-tabard person sweeping, picking up trash, or cleaning something that wasn't moving.

### **Castle Wars**

At this year's Castle Wars, Lord Cillian and Lady Sirona were lauded for their work with new comers to the Shire and to fencing. As such, they were both awarded the Argent Comet.

Also, Lady Elisenda de Luna was welcomed into the Argent Rose Sable Company by the Order of the Rose.



### **FROM THE BARD OF OWL'S NEST...**

*Lord Raymond the Scot*

### **Shield Wall**

A warrior fights for himself  
To win himself renown,  
A victory at tournament,

Or even gain a crown,  
Increase his martial knowledge,  
Display his skill at arms,  
To earn the praise of poets,  
To win a lady's charms.

But when the warrior takes his place  
Upon a battlefield,  
Following his sovereign,  
Bearing sword and shield,  
He fights then, for his kingdom,  
Not personal reward,  
The greater glory and the good,  
Which now command his sword.

His fellow warriors, left and right,  
Stand guard upon his flanks.  
And he, in turn, stands guard on

### **IN THIS ISSUE...**

Welcome to The Oracle .....	1
Events, Awards, and Recognitions .....	1
From the Bard of Owl's Nest... .....	1
Arts & Sciences .....	2
Meridian Grand Tourney .....	2
Hanukkah and Latkes .....	3
Where in the Words? .....	5
Samhain .....	5
Twelfth Night .....	7
Yuletide Carols of Yore .....	7
Yule .....	9
Gyngerbrede .....	10
How to Submit Articles .....	12

them,  
True brothers in the ranks.  
United in their purpose,  
They stand on holy ground.  
And he would rather give his life  
Than let his brothers down.

Weapons at the ready,  
Their shields become a wall,  
A veritable fortress  
Protecting one and all.  
A warrior seeking glory,  
Who steps out from his place  
Ensures his kingdom's downfall,  
And only earns disgrace.

No victory is certain,  
However plans are laid.  
But greater is the surety  
When orders are obeyed.  
Honor comes to him who waits  
Upon his lord's command,  
The honor of the shield wall:  
The integrity of the man.

[www.owlsnestbard.blogspot.com](http://www.owlsnestbard.blogspot.com).



## ARTS & SCIENCES



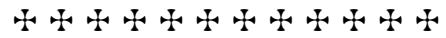
Lady Ailire inghean  
Aodha—Chronicler

September's class was an introduction to forging. THL Beldthora has been teaching a series of classes that will result in participants producing a completed project. Some of the participants have already completed their first item and are now ready to start their second.

In November, milady Ailan the Uncommitted taught a class on Chinese brush painting.

December's class was taught by THL Charles. His class was on device heraldry.

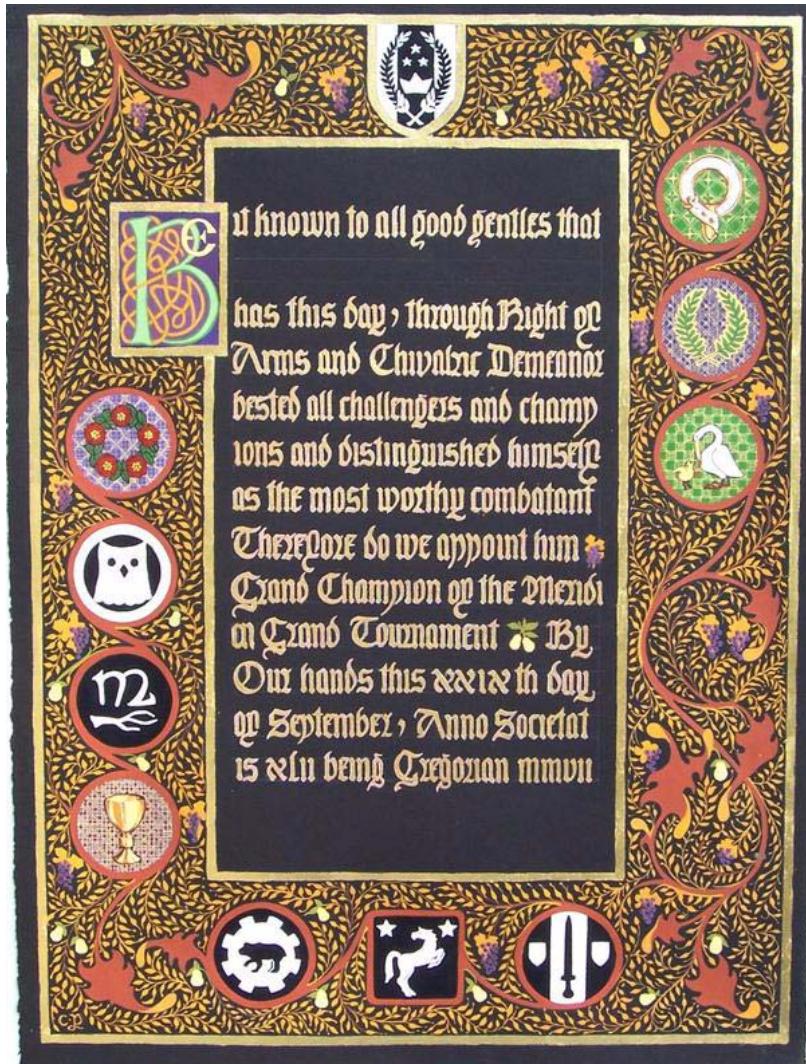
If you haven't attended an A&S class, you should make every effort to do so. These classes are informative and help you to explore the different creative areas that are available to you to enhance your experience within the Society.



## MERIDIAN GRAND TOURNEY

Lady Ailire inghean Aodha—  
Chronicler

Meridian Grand Tourney this season proved to be a veritable feast for the eyes. Everyone in attendance turned out in their finery and did their best to support the theme of the event. There were many colorful pavilions set around the field.



**Grand Champion scroll for Meridian Grand Tourney**  
Calligraphy and illumination by Mistress Constance of Purneos  
Photograph courtesy of Lady Alisoun Brewster

Once the fighters saw the winner's scroll, everyone knew that there would be fierce competition to be the one who took it home to display.

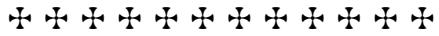
Lady Essyllt could be seen moving among the visitors ensuring that everyone was having a lovely time. (On several occasions, she was heard to worry out loud because things were going "too smoothly.")

Various members of the Shire stood fly patrol around the serving tables, while others made trips to town to secure extra provisions and supplies.

All in all, the grand event was a success. Whew!



**Pageantry and the Tourney Field at Meridian Grand Tourney**  
Image courtesy of Lady Ailsoun Brewster



## HANUKKAH AND LATKES

*Lady Alisoun Brewster—Historian*

Hanukkah is a minor Jewish holiday in that there is no obligation to refrain from certain activities as there is on the Sabbath or major festivals, such as Passover and Yom Kippur. It has only been in the last 50 years or so that its importance has grown, primarily due to its proximity to Christmas and other winter festivals. Over the years, Hanukkah has become both a secular holiday and a heavily commercialized one.

Sometimes referred to as the Festival of Lights, Hanukkah commemorates the miracle that occurred in 165 BC after the upheaval of Syrian King Antiochus IV by the Jews, who were led by Judah Maccabeus and his brothers. When the Jews reclaimed the Temple, they cleaned it and built a new altar, but there was only enough purified oil to last for one day in the Temple's menorah. However, as the story in the Talmud goes, the oil burned for eight days, allowing plenty of time to make a new supply. Thus, a great miracle happened there.

There are numerous Hanukkah traditions. There is the ritual of lighting candles or oil lamps and reciting blessings over them for eight nights. There is the singing of songs, such as Ma'oz Tzur (Rock of Ages), a 13th century poem of which the modern tune is believed to have been adapted from a 15th century German folk song.

Throughout the ages, Jewish students have played the game of dreidel to make it look like they were gambling instead of studying the Torah. The game is played by spinning a four-sided top and putting in or taking away markers—often coins, nuts, etc.—depending on the side that has landed face up.

And, finally, there is the eating of foods that have been cooked in oil, such as sufganiyot (doughnuts filled with jelly or custard) and latkes—a Yiddish word deriving from Ukrainian and Old Russian meaning "pancake" or "fritter."

It is known that the potato did not make its first appearance in Europe until the late 15th century. The potato latkes which are frequently served today, did not make an

appearance on the Hanukkah table until at least the middle of the 19th century. The first latkes eaten during Hanukkah were most likely pieces of cheese fried in oil. Provided below, is a 14th century recipe and redaction for cheese fritters.

(Please note that the author of this article has not tried the following recipe.)

**125. Frytour of Mylke.** Take cruddes and presse out be whey3e clene; do þerto sum white of ayren. Fry hem as to fore, & lay on sugar, and messe forth. FC 155 [The Forme of Cury]

A variant in another manuscript calls for flour, which is really almost indispensable: the batter is very difficult to handle without it unless you beat the egg whites stiff, and it is unlikely that a medieval cook could have done that.

### Cheese Fritters (redaction by Sharon Butler)

- 2 cups fresh curd cheese or ricotta, or 2 1/2 cups large-curd cottage cheese
- 4–5 egg whites
- 1/3 cup flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- oil for frying
- 1/2 cup sugar

If you are using cottage cheese, drain it and press out the whey. Beat cheese, egg whites, flour, and salt together, using enough flour to make a thick batter. Drop the mixture by spoonfuls into the hot oil or fat and cook long enough to brown slightly. Drain on paper; sprinkle with sugar before serving.

(Recipe Source: Hieatt, Constance B. & Hosington, Brenda & Butler, Sharon. *Pleyn Delit: Medieval Cookery for Modern Cooks. Second Edition.*)

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- <http://www.forward.com/articles/4651/>
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potato>

### Hanukkah Lamps

*Hanukkah lamp—France 14th Century*



Discovered in the 19th century in the old Jewish quarter of Lyon, this lamp dates back to pre-1394, the year of the last expulsion of the Jews from France. It is one of the oldest known objects of worship in the home from the Medieval period. Designed to be suspended from the wall, this lamp takes its inspiration from Gothic architecture, and its triangular shape is characteristic of the period.

Strauss Collection, Rothschild donation—on long-term loan from the Musée national du Moyen Âge, Paris

[http://www.mahj.org/gb/01\\_visitez/3\\_parcours/oeuvres/02\\_1.htm](http://www.mahj.org/gb/01_visitez/3_parcours/oeuvres/02_1.htm)

*Hanukkah Lamp—Germany 14th-15th Century*



Two dragons support the central pillar of this lamp. Dragons and mythical beasts appear in Jewish manuscripts from medieval Europe and it is not uncommon to find their forms incorporated into decoration of contemporary secular and religious vessels.

*Hanukkah Lamp—Italy 16th Century*



The stylized acanthus leaf and scroll work design on the backplate of this Hanukkah lamp are reminiscent of late Renaissance and Baroque decorative motifs. The font for the shamash (servant light) is missing on the original lamp.



## WHERE IN THE WORDS?

Lady Alisoun Brewster—Historian

It's time once again to test your knowledge (and your



eye) to see if you can find all the words hidden in this quarter's word puzzle. The theme for this puzzle is Holidays.



## SAMHAIN

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/  
Samhain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samhain)

Samhain is the word for November in the Gaelic languages. The Scottish Gaelic spelling is Samhainn or Samhuinn (for the feast), or an t-Samhain (for the month). The Festival of Samhain is a celebration of the end of the harvest season in Gaelic culture, and is generally regarded as "The Celtic New Year."<sup>[2][3][4]</sup>

The same word was used for a month in the ancient Celtic calendar, in particular the first three nights of this month, with the festival marking the end of the summer season and the end of the harvest. A modernized version of this festival continues today in

# WHERE IN THE WORDS HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS

S H I R M P Y A W C G A L B M S N D R L Q P E L Y  
A A V G Y L S A A N S O H A E S A R G I D R A M A  
T N Y L L H S N I H R Y Y L W C K T J I F J W E M  
U U T O P S D D W D P D P I D E S O F M A R C H E  
R K H P A L D E O A A P H O L I D A Y R J Q B X H  
N K A I E U D F L Y A D S E G R O E G T S Q B M T  
A A L M P N M M Q R Z W V T Q E M M S I T K O S F  
L H A M E I S C O S T V A L E N T I N E S D A Y O  
I S U S S U T F Y A D S E U T E V O R R H S J R T N  
A L D R N I G W R F B L Y D E D O S S X I M S S E  
P A U D N N T E E H I A O N L F M A A H S T H O E  
Y L A Y I M M S M L D S I F A S T M M J T J E C U  
E Y R B A M A I I S F A H T X J D H L R N Y A E Q  
I G B O U D N U T R T T S D R O P A E E I A D T E  
A O O S S C N N L H O H A A D L I A V C L E N L  
B D D L E H I O E D S C K N N Y O N H O H P A E O  
L I V P E A H B I A Y B S K I H U V C S O S S P P  
M E I E S L I A M S F T L U U G G L I S L R T T Y  
M E N L N P U N S N N E H A P S H U M A A E E S A  
V Q L T K T I Y H H G E S U V R M T L P S M R A M  
S A Y O F T H E D E A D C T R I O Q B V D M G E X  
Y A D I R F D O O G W N W S I S N C F H A U E F T  
C Z F A O C H R I S T M A S A V D R H X Y M Z R T  
Y O M K I P P U R S H A V U O T A A A S A M M A L  
Y N A H P I P E T N A E G A P H Y L Y C R G K N A

HOLIDAY	PAGEANT	GOODFRIDAY
FESTIVAL	MUMMERSPLAY	EASTER
FEAST	YULELOG	PASSOVER
FAST	MINCEPIE	CORPUSCHRISTI
FISHDAY	PLUMPUDDING	STGEORGESDAY
SAMHAIN	EPIPHANY	BELTAINE
ALLSAINTSDAY	TWELFTHNIGHT	MAYDAY
DAYOFTHEDEAD	LORDOFMISRULE	QUEENOFTHEMAY
BOBBINGFORAPPLES	PLOUGHMONDAY	MAYPOLE
MARTINMAS	CANDLEMAS	ASCENSIONDAY
STNICHOLASDAY	STVALENTINESDAY	PENTECOST
ADVENT	IDESOFMARCH	SHAVUOT
SATURNALIA	SHROVETUESDAY	MIDSUMMER
HANUKKAH	MARDISGRAS	LAMMAS
CHRISTMAS	CARNIVAL	LUGHNASADH
HOLLY	ASHWEDNESDAY	ROSHHASHANA
IVY	LENT	YOMKIPPUR
BOARSHEAD	PALMSUNDAY	MICHAELMAS
WASSAIL	MAUNDYTHURSDAY	SUKKOT

some of the traditions of the Catholic All Souls' Day, the secular Halloween, and in folk practices of Samhain itself in the Celtic Nations and the Irish and Scottish diasporas. It is also observed by various types of Neopagans.[2][4][5]

## Origins

The Gaulish calendar appears to have divided the year into two halves: the "dark" half, beginning with the month Samonios (the October/November lunation), and the "light" half, beginning with the month Giamonios (the April/May lunation). The entire year may have been considered as beginning with the "dark" half, so that the beginning of Samonios may be considered the Celtic New Year's day. The celebration of New Year itself may have taken place during the "three nights of Samonios" (Gaulish *trinux[tion] samo[nii]*), the beginning of the lunar cycle which fell nearest to the midpoint between the autumnal equinox and the winter solstice.

The lunations marking the middle of each half-year may also have been marked by specific festivals. The Coligny calendar marks the mid-summer moon (see Lughnasadh), but omits the mid-winter one (see Imbolc). The seasons are not oriented at the solar year, viz. solstice and equinox, so the mid-summer festival would fall considerably later than summer solstice, around 1 August (Lughnasadh).



It appears that the calendar was designed to align the lunations with the agricultural cycle of vegetation, and that the exact astronomical position of the Sun at that time was considered less important.

In medieval Ireland, Samhain became the principal festival, celebrated with a great assembly at the royal court in Tara, lasting for three days. After being ritually started on the Hill of Tlachtga, a bonfire was set alight on the Hill of Tara, which served as a beacon, signaling to people gathered atop hills all across Ireland to light their ritual bonfires. The custom has survived to some extent, and recent years have seen a resurgence in participation in the festival.[6]

## Celtic folklore

The Samhain celebrations have survived in several guises as a festival dedicated to the harvest and the dead.

In Ireland and Scotland, the Féile na Marbh, the 'festival of the dead' took place on Samhain.

The night of Samhain, in Irish, Oíche Shamhna and Scots Gaelic, Oidhche Shamhna, is one of the principal festivals of the Celtic calendar, and falls on the 31st of October. It represents the final harvest.

In modern Ireland and Scotland, the name by which Halloween is known in the Gaelic language is still Oíche/ Oidhche Shamhna. It is still the custom in some areas to set a place for the dead at the Samhain feast and to tell tales of the ancestors on that night.[2][4][7]

Traditionally, Samhain was time to take stock of the herds and grain supplies, and decide which animals would need to be slaughtered in order for the people and livestock to survive the winter. This custom is still observed by many who farm and raise livestock.[2][4][7]

Bonfires played a large part in the festivities celebrated down through the last several centuries, and up through the present day in some rural areas of the Celtic nations and the diaspora. Villagers were said to have cast the bones of the slaughtered cattle upon the flames. In the pre-Christian Gaelic world, cattle were the primary unit of currency and the center of agricultural and pastoral life.

Samhain was the traditional time for slaughter and for preparing stores of meat and grain to last through the coming winter. The word "bonfire," or "bonefire" is a direct translation of the Gaelic "tine cnámh."

With the bonfire ablaze, the villagers extinguished all other fires. Each family then solemnly lit its hearth from the common flame, thus bonding the families of the village together. Often two bonfires would be built side by side, and the people would walk between the fires as a ritual of purification. Sometimes the cattle and other livestock would be driven between the fires, as well.[2][4][7]

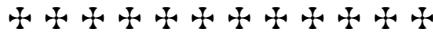
Divination is a common folkloric practice that has also survived in rural areas. The most common uses were to determine the identity of one's future spouse, the location of one's future home, and how many children a person might have.

Seasonal foods such as apples and nuts were often employed in these rituals. Apples were peeled, the peel tossed over the shoulder, and its shape examined to see if it formed the first letter of the future spouse's name. Nuts were roasted on the hearth and their movements interpreted—if the nuts stayed together, so would the couple.

Egg whites were dropped in a glass of water, and the shapes foretold the number of future children. Children would also chase crows and divine some of these things from how many birds appeared or the direction the birds flew.[2][4][7][8]

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## **TWELFTH NIGHT**

*From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twelfth\\_Night\\_\(holiday\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twelfth_Night_(holiday))

Twelfth Night is a holiday in some branches of Christianity marking the coming of the Epiphany, concluding the Twelve Days of Christmas, and is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as "the evening of the fifth of January, preceding Twelfth Day, the eve of the Epiphany, formerly the last day of the Christmas festivities and observed as a time of merrymaking."<sup>[1]</sup>

In some traditions it is taken to mean the evening of the Twelfth Day itself, the sixth of January. This apparent difference has arisen probably due to the old custom of treating sunset as the beginning of the following day. Therefore, according to confluent ancient traditions of the tides of time, Twelfth Night would have been celebrated as occurring on the twelfth day as different to the present custom of celebrating the day prior.

The celebration of Epiphany, the adoration of the Magi, is marked in some cultures by the exchange of gifts, and Twelfth Night, as the eve or vigil of Epiphany, takes on a similar significance to Christmas Eve.

### **Origins and History**

In Tudor England, the Twelfth Night marked the end of an autumn/winter festival that started on All Hallows (also known as All Souls)

Eve—which is now celebrated as Halloween.



The Lord of Misrule symbolizes the world turning upside down. On this day, the king and all those who were high would become the peasants and vice versa.

At the beginning of the twelfth night festival, twelfth cake, which contained a bean, was eaten. The person who found the bean became king of the bean and would run the feast. Midnight signaled the end of his rule and the world would return to normal. The common theme was that the normal order of things was reversed.

This Lord of Misrule tradition can be traced back to pre-Christian European festivals such as the Celtic festival of Samhain and the Ancient Roman festival of Saturnalia. The Winter Solstice (December 21st) marks the 1st day of many Pagan Winter Festivals. The 12 nights following and including the solstice represent the 12 zodiac signs of the year—and the 12th Night (New Years Day) is a culmination and celebration of the Winter Festivals.



## **YULETIDE CAROLS OF YORE**

THL Temair Carr

There are many places to find history. One of my favorites is popular songs. Just think what future historians will make of Rock and Rap.

The lyrics that follow are from 15th century Twelfth Night songs. They are in Middle English, but don't worry, it is easier to understand than some modern lyrics. (Think "Scuse me while I kiss this guy," or even "Now bring us some friggin' pudding.") Just expect strange spelling, and read out loud for best effect. Or even better, sing out loud, in the Christmas spirit(s).

*Make we mery bothe me and lasse,  
For now is the time of Cristmas*

*Let no man cum into this hall,  
Grome, page, nor yet marshall,  
But that sum sport he bring withall,  
For now is the time of Cristmas.*

*If that he say he can not sing,  
Sum oder sport then let him bring,  
That it may please at this festing,  
For now is the time of Cristmas.*

*If he say he can nought do,  
Then for my love aske him no mo;  
But to the stokes then let him go,  
For now is the time of Cristmas.*

Most everyone in the SCA will recognize this one. We call it the Boar's Head Carol.

*The bores hed in hondes I bringe,  
With garlondes gay and birdes  
singinge!*

*I pray you all helpe me to singe,  
Qui estis in convivio. (Who are at  
this banquet)*

(Refrain)

*Caput apri refer, (The boar's head I  
bring)*

*Resonens laudes Domino. (Singing  
praises to the Lord)*

*The bores hede, I understand,  
Is chef service in all this londe,  
Whersoever it may be fonde,*

*Servitum cum sinapio. (Serve it  
with mustard)*

*The bores hede, I dare well say,  
Anon after the twelfthe day,  
He taketh his leve and goth away  
Exivit tunc de patria. (He has left the  
country)*

Another Boar's Head song. Mess = course. Note the simple refrain. These are sing-along (and drink-along) songs:

*The bores hede in hond I bring,  
With garlond gay in portoring;  
I pray you all with me to singe,  
With Hay!*

(Refrain)

*Hey, hey, hey, hey!*

*The bores hede is armed gay.  
Lordes, knightes, and squiers,  
Persons, prestes, and vicars—  
The bores hede is the furst mess,  
With hay!*

(Refrain)

*The bores hede, as I you say,  
He takes his leve and gothe his way  
Soon after the tweifelth day, With  
hay!*

(Refrain)

*Then comes in the secund cours  
with mikel pride:  
The cranes and the heirons, the  
bitteres by ther side,  
The pertriches and the plovers, the  
woodcokes and the snit, With hay!*

(Refrain)



**Bringing in the Boar's Head with Minstrelsy.**

The Project Gutenberg eBook, *Christmas: Its Origin and Associations*, by William Francis Dawson; pg. 111  
[http://www.gutenberg.org/files/22042/22042-h/22042-h.htm#Page\\_32](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/22042/22042-h/22042-h.htm#Page_32)

Larkes in hot schow, ladys for to pik,  
Good drink therto, lucius and fin—  
Bluet of almain, romnay and win,  
With hay!

(Refrain)

Gud bred, ale, and win, dare I well say,  
The bores hede with mustard armed so gay.  
Furmante to pottage, with venisun fin, With hay!

(Refrain)

Yet another...  
Brane = brawn = meat, and we love it. There were not many vegetarians in the Middle Ages. And like the first song, you shall sing or you're gone:

At the beginning of the mete,  
Of a bores hed ye schal ete,  
And in the mustard ye shall wete;  
And ye shall singen or ye gon.

(Refrain)

Po, po, po, po,  
Love brane and so do mo.

Wolcum be ye that ben here,  
And ye shall have right gud chere,  
And also a right gud fare;  
And ye shall singen or ye gon.

(Refrain)

For contrast, a song that says no to boar...and beef and bacon...well, you get the idea. Capons = chickens, and there were indeed der = dear (expensive) in those days. Docks = ducks which swim in the mer = sea/pond. And in this case, brane = bran. Hey, consistent spelling wasn't invented until the 17th century.

Bring us in good ale, and bring us in good ale;  
For our Blessed Lady sake, bring us in good ale!

Bring us in no brown bred, fore that is made of brane;  
Nor bring us in no whit bread, for therin is no game;  
But bring us in good ale.

Bring us in no befe, for ther is many bones;  
But bring us in good ale, for that goth down at onys;  
And bring us in good ale.

Bring us in no bacon, for that is passing fat;  
But bring us in good ale, and give us inought of that;  
And bring us in good ale.

Bring us in not mutton, for that is ofte lene;  
Nor bring us in no tripes, for they be seldom clene;  
But bring us in good ale.

Bring us in no egges, for ther are many shelles;  
But bring us in good ale, and give us nothing elles;  
And bring us in good ale.

Bring us in no butter, for therin are many heres;  
Nor bring us in no pigges flesche, for that will make us bores;  
But bring us in good ale.

Bring us in no podings, for therin is all gotes blood;  
Nor bring us in no venison, for that is not for our good;  
But bring us in good ale.

Bring us in no capons flesch, for that is ofte der;  
Nor brings us in no dokes flesch, for they slobber in the mer;  
But bring us in good ale.

One last verse. Ser Botelere = Sir Butler, though bottle-er is a better description of the job back then. Fere = frère = brother, or in this case drinking bro'. Some things never change.

Mende the fire, and make gud chere!  
Fill the cuppe, Ser Botelere!  
Let every mon drinke to his fere!  
Thys endes my carol, with care away  
Hay, ay, hay, ay,  
Make we merie as we may.

Mery Cristimas!

Excerpts from *Middle English Lyrics*, ed. M. Luria and R. Hoffman, W.W. Norton and Co., New York, N.Y.1974. ISBN 0-393-04379-7



## YULE

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yule>

Yule is a winter festival associated with the winter solstice celebrated in northern Europe since ancient times. Its Christianized form is called Christmas, which is essentially the symbolism and traditions of Yule with the Christian story of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth superimposed upon it. Modern Yule traditions include decorating a fir or spruce tree, burning a Yule log, the hanging of mistletoe and holly, giving gifts, and general celebration and merriment.

In pre-Christian times, Germanic tribes celebrated Yule from late December to early January on a date determined by a lunar calendar.[1]

When Christianity was just beginning, Christmas was set on the dates of Yule. During Christianization, Yule was suppressed by the Christian Church, with many of the traditions being adapted to the new holiday.<sup>[2]</sup> Thus, the terms “Yule” and “Christmas” are often used interchangeably<sup>[3]</sup>, especially in Christmas carols.

### Ancient Yule

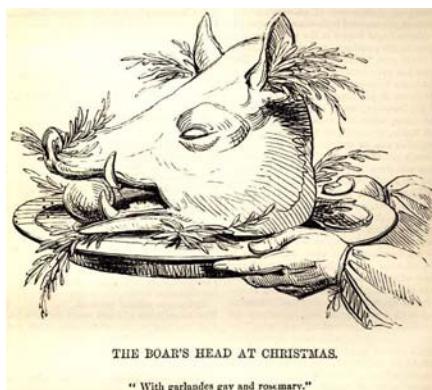
Yule celebrations at the winter solstice predate the conversion to Christianity. It was, in pre-conversion times, the name of a feast celebrated by sacrifice on mid-winter night of January 12th according to the Norwegian historian Olav Bø. [3]

Though there are numerous references to Yule in the Icelandic sagas, there are few accounts of how Yule was actually celebrated, beyond the fact that it was a time for feasting. According to Adam of Bremen, the Swedish kings sacrificed male slaves every ninth year during the Yule sacrifices at the Temple at Uppsala.

“Yule-Joy,” with dancing, continued through the Middle Ages in Iceland, but was frowned upon when the Reformation arrived. The custom of ritually slaughtering a boar on Yule survives in the modern tradition of the Christmas ham and the Boar’s Head Carol.

“On Yule Eve, the best boar in the herd was brought into the hall where the assembled company laid their hands upon the animal and made their unbreakable oaths. Heard by the boar, these oaths were thought to go straight to the ears of Freyr himself. Once the oaths had been sworn, the boar

was sacrificed in the name of Freyr and the feast of boar flesh began. The most commonly recognized remnants of the sacred boar traditions once common at Yule has to be the serving of the boar’s head at later Christmas feasts.”<sup>[4]</sup>



According to the medieval English writer the Venerable Bede, Christian missionaries sent to proselytize among the Germanic peoples of northern Europe were instructed to superimpose Christian themes upon existing pagan holidays of the area, to ease the conversion of the people to Christianity by allowing them to retain their traditional celebrations. Thus, Christmas was created by associating stories of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, the central figure of Christianity, with the existing pagan Yule celebrations, similar to the formation of Halloween and All Saint’s Day via Christianization of existing pagan traditions.

The confraternities of artisans of the 9th century, which developed into the medieval guilds, were denounced by Catholic clergy for their “conjurings” when they swore to support one another in coming adversity and in business ventures. The occasions were annual banquets on December 26, “feast day of the pagan god Jul, when it was possible to couple with

the spirits of the dead and with demons that returned to the surface of the earth... Many clerics denounced these conjurations as being not only a threat to public order but also, more serious in their eyes, satanic and immoral. Hincmar, in 858, sought in vain to Christianize them.”<sup>[6]</sup>

### References:

1. “The Anglo-Saxon Calendar”
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6. Rouche, Michel (1987). “Private life conquers state and society,” in Paul Veyne: *A History of Private Life*, Vol. I. Harvard University Press, 432. ISBN 0-674-39974-9.

Boar’s Head image: Washington Irving, *Old Christmas—From the Sketch Book of Washington Irving* (London: Macmillan & Co., Fifth Edition, 1886), p. xx; Illustrated by Randolph Caldecott.



### GYNGERBREDE

Lady Alisoun Brewster—Historian

They fette hym first the sweete wyn,  
And mede eek in a mazelyn,  
And roialspicerye,  
And gyngebrede that was ful fyn,  
165 And lycorys, and eek comyn,  
With sugre that is so trye.

“Chaucer’s Tale of Sir Thopas”

*The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer (14th century)

(Please note that the contributor has not tried the following recipe.)

### Original Recipe

iiij. Gyngerbrede. Take a quart of hony, & seethe it, skeme it clene; take Safroun, pouder Pepir, & brow ber-on; take gratyd Brede, make it so chargeaunt bat it wol be y-lechyd; ben take pouder Canelle, & straw ber-on y-now; ben make yt square, lyke as bou wolt leche it; take when bou lechyst hyt, an caste

London: for The Early English Text Society by N. Trübner & Co., 1888.

### Gode Cookery Translation

Gingerbread. Take a quart of honey, & boil it, & skim it clean; take saffron, pepper, & throw on; take grated bread, and make it so thick that it can be sliced; then take cinnamon, & strew on; then make it square, like you would have it sliced; and when you slice it, stick in cloves. And if you'd like it red, color it with sandalwood.



**Molded, gilded, and colored gingerbread in the form of a Tudor Rose.**

Created by Tammy Crawford

Box leves a-bouyn, y-stykyd ber-on, on clowys. And if bou wolt haue it Red, coloure it with Saunderys y-now.

Austin, Thomas. Two Fifteenth-Century Cookery-Books. [Harleian MS. 279] & Harl. MS. 4016, with extracts from Ashmole MS. 1429, Laud MS. 553, & Douce MS 55.

- ground white pepper—up to 1/2 tsp
- pinch saffron (optional)
- few drops red food coloring (optional)

Bring the honey to a boil and skim off any scum. Keeping the pan over very low heat, add the spices, adjusting the quantities to suit your taste. Add the food coloring “if thou wolt haue it Red.” Then begin to slowly beat in the bread crumbs.

Add just enough bread to achieve a thick, stiff, well-blended mass. Remove from the heat and turn the mixture onto a lightly greased (cooking spray works fine) square or rectangular baking sheet or shallow pan, 1/2 to 1 inch thick.

Take a rolling pin and spread the gingerbread evenly out into the pan. Turn the pan over onto wax paper or parchment paper, & tap gently until the gingerbread falls from the pan. Turn the gingerbread over once again, then cut into small squares or diamonds shapes to serve. Garnish each piece with whole cloves.

HINT: On occasions when rushed, take the slightly cooled mixture and roll it into small balls. Also, children love to create their own designs with this play dough-like edible. For a school or home project, they can be put in charge of molding the gingerbread into a variety of objects [such as] snakes, animals, and even a little model airplane out of this recipe. And they always enjoy eating the final product afterwards.

OPTIONAL: The period recipe calls for the gingerbread to be decorated with box leaves fastened to each piece with a clove. [The redactor] usually uses any

### Modern Recipe

- 1 lb Honey
- UNSEASONED Bread Crumbs—up to a pound, maybe more, maybe less
- ginger—up to 1 Tbsp (optional)
- cinnamon—up to 1 Tbsp

attractive, small, non-poisonous leaf or a candy imitation, and either places one in each piece or just garnish the platter with several of the leaves. If using real leaves, please advise the diners to remove them first!

**BEWARE:** On hot, sticky days the gingerbread may become soft and a little gooey, but it holds up very well in cool weather and can be refrigerated for several weeks.

Source: Matterer, James L. A Boke of Gode Cookery Recipes—<http://www.godecookery.com/goderec/grec42.htm> and <http://www.godecookery.com/ginger/ginger.htm>

<http://www.godecookery.com/ginger/ginger.htm>



## HOW TO SUBMIT ARTICLES

Lady Ailire inghean  
Aodha—Chronicler

*The Oracle* is produced on a quarterly basis. Please have articles, poetry, recipes, artwork, etc. submitted at least one month before publication of the next newsletter edition. Deadlines are posted on the Shire's message board.

Electronic submissions can be sent to [owlsnestchronicler@gmail.com](mailto:owlsnestchronicler@gmail.com). If you are providing an electronic submission of an article, please make sure that it is a text file—not a PDF. Be sure to include a completed publication release form with your submission.

It is only with your support that this newsletter can be successful.

Thank you!

~Ailire~  
Chronicler



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