

Scorpion Tales

happy new year!

January Shire Meeting

The next Shire meeting is Tuesday, 6:30 P.M., January 12. Fortunately it was announced elsewhere!

Events

al-Sahid Fighter Practices are held on the 1st and 3rd Sundays at noon at Sir Killian's. Contact the Seneschal at Seneschal@al-sahid.org for address/directions.

Gallavalley Fighter Practice is held on the 2nd and 4th Sunday of the month in Hemet.

Dreiburgen Fighter Practice is held on the first Tuesday of the month. 6:30 PM - 9:30 PM, YMCA of the East Valley, 7793 Central Ave, Highland, CA.

December Officer's Reports

We took the December meeting for a much-deserved Yule celebration. We will return next month with specific reports and business items.



Upcoming Events

- 01/16: 12th Night - Western Seas
- 01/16: Winter Weekend (Dreiburgen)
- 01/16: Angels Melee (Angels)
- 01/23: Gyldenholt Unbelted Tourney (Gyldenholt)
- 01/30: Filthy Dirty Collegium (Isles)
- 01/30: In-Sand-Itty Tourney (Canton of Poll na Gainmhe)
- 02/10 - 02/15: Estrella War (Atenveldt)

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The Brecknock Hill Cheviot – A Shepherd's Investigation

by Blacksheep (Susan C. Childers)

(Note from the Chronicler: as my persona owns a large sheep farm in the Cheviot Hills of Northumbria, I'm fascinated with Cheviot sheep breeds. Although I'm not likely to be raising my own sheep any time soon, I and readers who is interested in historical husbandry or period fiber will find this an excellent article.)

Much discussion concerning authentic medieval wool types has come about due to the increased interest in fiber arts and fabric production of that period. Outside of difficult to find textile archeology publications, usually only available through European sources, and the vaguely documented comments written in sheep breed association publications, little has been written that will help the re-creationist shepherd choose a modern sheep breed or breed type that will have both the aesthetic value as well as wool type and dual-purpose characteristics of their ancestors. This paper is intended to help the recreationist evaluate the value of the Cheviot breeds, especially that of the Brecknock Hill Cheviot in regard to the fiber needs, aesthetic values and shepherding abilities of the recreationist.

The Icelandic varieties which include the Shetland, the Manx Lohgtan, and the Soay, can certainly be classified as sheep that are as close to "period" as we have today because of the isolation of those breeds within the Scottish Isles and the Hebrides. These sheep were brought by the Viking settlers as early as the 900's and there has been little, if no introduction of new blood since that time. Nevertheless, there have been sheep on the European mainland for as far back as man has recorded his life in words or drawings. These sheep, descendents of the French Mouflon, have differing characteristics from the Icelandic varieties in both wool types and body conformation. "One cannot properly speak of 'breeds' in Britain until the late middle ages, but some broad distinctions can be made. By the end of the Roman period what we technically call shortwool, longwool and medium-wool fleeces are attested..." (Wild, p15). The selection of sheep for wool grade is also mentioned (Pliny, 348).

So how are those, who not only want to produce woolens of reproduction quality but also want the "look" of a Medieval flock to decorate their pasture, to choose a modern breed that suits their needs. The textile re-creationist/shepherd needs to consider at least three criteria after choosing a modern breed with origins within the geographical area of interest.

1. Will this sheep breed produce wool within the acceptable grade range for my textile reproduction?
2. Will this sheep have the size and general frame of the sheep pictured from my time period?
3. Do these sheep have the hardiness and flocking characteristics of a Medieval type?

Even through much study and research, the answers to these questions will many times be subjective. I have chosen the border region between Scotland and England as my geographical area of study. Within this area lie the Cheviot Hills. We have little actual documentation for sheep production in this area be-

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fore the time of Phillip the Second of Spain. The Border Cheviot Sheep Society states, "From the time of Bannockburn, or earlier, to that of the Union, there is no reliable information further than that sheep were in 1372 a small, but very hardy race over large tracts of the Cheviot Hills." Much later the sheep of this area were said by tradition to have "come out of the sea". Low asserts as a fact that one of Phillip's ships was wrecked off the shore of England. The sheep, brought along as a source of fresh meat, swam ashore and migrated to the Cheviot Hills (Low, p56) From the cross between the local sheep, who probably resembled the Welsh Mountain Sheep, and these Spanish fine-wools, the foundation for the three Cheviot breeds is thought to have formed.

The wool type and grade acceptability question can only be answered by a thorough study of extant textiles from that time period. It has been found that wool as fine as that of the modern Merino was indeed available during the Medieval period. The work of Dr. Michael Ryder in microscopically examining and documenting fleece characteristics has allowed many conclusions to be made about not only fiber samples but also the sheep that produced the wool. This is important because sheep from Spain are generally considered the predecessors of the modern Merino. The old wool grading system was set up on the "blood count" system. The fineness of the wool was supposed to be related to the amount of Merino "blood" in the sheep producing the wool. The modern Cheviot breeds produce a "blood count" of three-eighths to one-quarter wool. The wool grade we know has been consistent since 1750, just out of period, and seems to have been close to the same before that time.

The question of proper period size and frame is a rather subjective one. The best sources of information come from archaeological evidence. The Ancient Monuments Laboratory Environmental Studies documented the change in animals from late medieval to the post-medieval times.

Study of animal bones from the city of London has shed light on interesting developments in the agrarian economy between the late medieval and the early post-medieval times. Measurements of sheep and cattle bones from well dated early sixteenth-century and seventeenth-century deposits show that these animals underwent a size increase at that time, probably reflecting early livestock improvement...." (EH 1s)

A fourteenth-century manuscript, in the care of the Trustees of the British Museum, show women milking sheep. This, as in most of the pictures portraying sheep of this period show a small sheep, no more than knee high having high-set prick ears. A few medieval pictures show colored or black sheep. Of the three existing Cheviot breeds, the Border Cheviot, the North Country Cheviot, and the Brecknock Hill or Southern Cheviot, the Brecknock Hill seems to be more of the typical Medieval size. The Brecknock also are bred not to discourage the gene for natural color. The rams also have horns which is consistent with most medieval art portrayals and the lambs of this breed dress out a high percentage carcass at a light weight.

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The last, but certainly not the least important consideration in choosing a breed for re-creationist purposes, deals with the hardiness and flocking instincts of the proposed breed. Shepherds and shearers know that sheep breeds, just like other breeds of animals, have certain personality, hardiness and production characteristics inherited from one generation to another. These characteristics are what we refer to as the adaptability of a breed. Breeds that come from sheep developed through intensive husbandry practices or those living in a temperate climate would not necessarily be able to survive in other more harsh situations (SiD, brd-13). The sheep that developed in the Cheviot Hills did so under many adverse conditions. The region offers little shelter and at times little sustenance for those animals living there. This allowed only the hardest individuals to survive and breed. Today the Cheviot breeds are known for their ability to survive and even thrive where other breeds cannot exist. (SiD, brd-7) They are very resistant to parasites and foot-rot, both major problems of ewe flocks around the world. One of the drawbacks of the Cheviot breeds also seems to be linked to their survivalist nature; they have alert, somewhat nervous, and independent dispositions. They also are wary of strangers but over time become very bonded to the shepherd, especially if raised from lambs. These sheep have a strong flight instinct and can be more of a challenge in handling than other breeds.

In conclusion, one must be careful to realize that any improvement in sheep is never lost (SiD, brd2). It would be impossible to “breed back” to a specific type of animal known in any historic period. Any modern sheep that has not been isolated since the period in question can only reproduce the fleece quality and outward characteristics of a period sheep type. Those considering raising a period type sheep breed need to look at several factors concerning the suitability of not only the fleece but also the hardiness and personality factors. The Brecknock Hill Cheviot seems to exhibit more of the characteristics of the period Cheviot type sheep. They are considered a miniature variety which is consistent with the size of sheep known in period. They have been bred to exhibit the less modern genetic types such as natural color and horns on rams. They also produce a good quality fleece with a comparable spinning count, though most certainly more dense than their predecessors, and they are extremely hardy and lamb without assistance.

Bibliography

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- English Heritage, Ancient Monuments Laboratory Environmental Studies. Swindon, England, 1999

Using the Caid Wiki

By Caitlin Christiana Wintour

I usually write poetry or research articles, but this time I'm devoting an article to the Caid Wiki.

The home page is http://wiki.caid-commons.org/index.php/Main_Page. Most of us have persona pages already set up and all you need to do to edit them is visit the first page and click on Help:Editing. (If you are new and do not have a page yet, you may email the site administrator — that address is also on the home page.)

The personal pages are extremely helpful in getting to know each other better in the SCA. It is extremely simple to request a basic editing account, which lets you upload your photo and type in text for your personal page including accomplishments, awards, links, projects, and more. You can put in as much or as little information and links as you like.

But the Wiki is much more than the personal pages. It also has events with memories and photos, awards explanations, details on various Society orders, and articles on all aspects of Caidan life. Below are the subject categories:

- Activities
- Articles
- Awards
- Bardic
- Baronage
- Caid
- Charities
- Equestrian
- Events
- Groups

- History
- Households
- Memoriam
- Officers
- Peers
- Populace
- Results
- Roses
- Royals
- Scribes
- Showcase
- Territories
- Warbands
- White Scarves

Other major sections include Current News and Pages of the Month, a monthly listing of the most interesting pages in the Wiki. A few of these include a wonderful photographic database of scrolls, Pentathlon results, pictures from major events, war stories, and memorials.

Please consider visiting your personal page and uploading a photo, your device, and your accomplishments. It's fun and lets the rest of us find out more great things about you.



Seneschal's Corner

Dear Shire,

Thank you to those that have stepped-up and helped in the setting-up and breaking down of the shire pavilion at events (you know who you are). At times I have not been able to do much more than deliver the pavilion due to other obligations. There has always been helping hands to unload and load the pavilion and before I know it, the dragonwing is up. I know that you don't do it for awards (you already have-em) so it must be your kind hearts. Know that you are all lovingly regarded. I would love to see this spirit extended to others at events. It would indeed be chivalrous to help set-up our neighbors if they need it (or at least offer). Keep eyes out for that lady struggling with a wagon, bag or chair (the thanks from a lady are worth a thousand rewards). Please let others know that they are welcome to share our pavilion. We always have room, and they may love to have a front row seat on the eric. Many people cruise by pavilions just waiting for an invitation to come in and chat or to see your latest A & S project. Don't be shy about doing some cruising of your own in the hopes of being invited by others to sit for a spell. The shire should be a warm and welcoming place. You all have so much to offer and after all, we are all here to share the dream.

Now is the time to get busy on our short term and long term planning for

events and direction of the shire. The shire needs YOUR participation and help in making SCA a fun activity and for the success of the shire. This is a critical time to attend business meetings to make sure that your valuable input is included. With Anniversary around the corner it is time to select shire office deputies. Please contact the holder of the office you are interested in and/or the seneschal. Society recom-



mends that one holds an office for only one term (to prevent burn-out) however continued service in the office you may now hold is certainly appreciated (and may be needed). Please note that being a deputy does not obligate you to step-up and hold the office if it becomes vacant (although a deputy would certainly be a prime candidate). It may be just another opportunity to help out the shire, get involved, and/or learn more about the responsibilities of the office.

It has been discussed and now time for action for the shire to come out of the closet. We should have at least one monthly event that will expose the shire to the community and provide an event like atmosphere without the expense of traveling and a site fee. There are many members that just don't have the time or spare funds to travel out of town for an event. The idea of combining a fighter practice with a non-business get together at a public park has been proposed and should be tried. This would provide us an opportunity to dress period, practice persona, share A & S projects, dance, drum, try some barding, practice martial arts and do other SCA stuff, all on display to the public. The dragon wing could be set-up. Participation in a barbeque and/or potluck could be an optional activity. This activity would allow business meeting to be business and let fun meetings to be fun. It would also expose our fighting-only participants to the gentler arts. This exposure is sure to get a few bites from curious passer-bys and if it is a monthly event, will be sure to nab a closet anachronist or two.

I was fortunate to attend the recent Twelfth

Night in Dreiburgen. It was my first, (and my first feast for that matter). I was told that the feast was one of the finest. I am sure that the reason for such a successful event was due to its selfless volunteers. The volunteers received recognition at the feast however you may not now that they included some of the Shires own. Huzza, Gratitude, and Appreciation to Blaze, Ryan, Kira, Rick, Tekka, Killian, Kyra, Logan. You contributed to an event that will be pleasantly remembered by all that attended.

Sir Killian, I am sure the water you spilled on me was by accident.

Your Old Servant,

Davi



Sir Ragnar of Sandcastle

A fighter poem by Caitlin Christiana
Wintour

Knight of the high desert sands
Sandcastle rising in the north
northward still Ragnar journeys.
Journeys to battle
battle to win the crown
crown brilliant in the sun.
Sunlight shines on Lady of the Rose
rose-bearer Anastasiia
Anastasiia the fair, Ragnar's lady.

Lady-fair are the fields of battle.
Battle won first against blackened shield
shield goes to ground and Ragnar has triumphed.
Triumphed too against argent castle
castle falling to the blade
blade striking sharp
sharply to slay.

Slaying now the shield maiden
maiden bearing the color of the setting sun
sun that too soon would set in truth.

Truth again told 'gainst the silver and gold

gold cross fallen on green grass.
Grass the cairn for the bull
bull's horns stained with its own blood
blood of the warrior.

Warrior Ragnar now meets lion knight
knight to slay or be slain
slain is Ragnar yet he rises again.

Again to the field
field of battle and honor
honor shown 'gainst the dragon
dragon falls from the sky.

Sky darkens and sun is stilled
stilled in the battle of three
three of the castle, the dragon and the lion.
Lion rules all in the end
in the end the Twin to crown.

Yet castle of sand adamant stands
so stands Ragnar's honor
honor and strength resolute.
A watching knight, a waiting knight,
knight of the high desert sands.

Quote of the Month

I chose this passage in honor of January, which I hope will bring us plenteous snow and blessed rain. Although truthfully, King Lear was none too happy about it.

**Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage!
blow!**

You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout

**Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the
cocks!**

You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,

Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts,

**Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking
thunder,**

Strike flat the thick rotundity o' the world!

— *Character of King Lear, from Shakespeare's play of the same name*



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