

The Scarlet Letter  
Shire of Loch Ruadh



November/December  
(A.S. XLIV) (C.E. 2009)

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## Subscription and Submission Information

The Scarlet Letter is a bi-monthly publication available free online at [www.lochruadh.org](http://www.lochruadh.org). Printed copies will be available free of charge at populace meetings. Please let the Chronicler know if you want a printed copy so there will be enough available. If you would like a printed copy mailed to you, you must pay for postage. Postage is 0.42 x number of issues left in the calendar year.

Submissions must include a written statement (email is fine) stating that permission is granted to publish in electronic and print format the article, photograph, poem, artwork, etc.

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# Seneschal

Greetings unto the Populace!

It's the Holiday Season in the Shire of Loch Ruadh!

Yule Revel fast approaches, and this is Loch Ruadh's event this year! While this is a one-day, indoor event, there is still a lot of work involved. If you haven't already volunteered to help out with some aspect of the event, please contact the Autocrats, Lord Kaz and Lady Catrin, and find out where your help is needed the most. Loch Ruadh's Yule Revel at Dragonsfire Tor will feature our Titled Bard Competition and OOPS (Out Of Period – Sorta) A&S Competition, as well as the Tor's Titled Artisan Competition and annual fund raising raffle.

Also remember that this will be an opportunity to recommend people for awards that you know they deserve to receive. As always, award recommendations go to Their Majesties Ansteorra, with a copy to your humble Seneschal. You can use the online form at the Ansteorra website, or submit recommendations in letter form. Just make sure either method gets to TRMs at least three weeks before the event to ensure they have time to make a decision and get everything taken care of. For more information on award recommendation, see my article on the subject on the Shire website.

If you have suggestions for Ember recommendations, give them to current Embers (see the list on the Loch Ruadh website), and the Embers will make their decisions as a group.

Several of those good gentles who won items in our Gulf War gate fund raising raffle have re-donated their prizes, and along with a number of new items (including a trailer), we are holding another raffle to hopefully raise enough to complete all the remaining work. The drawing will be held after the shed cleaning party, which will take place right after Thanksgiving. See Lady Fiona for tickets.

It's not too soon to start thinking about Gulf Wars. The Gulf War committee will make a decision about the pre-reservation cutoff date to ensure that you have reserved space on the Loch Ruadh permanent land, and this will be published as soon as it is known. Remember that one of the requirements to maintain our claim on our reserved land is that there must be a minimum of 20 pre-registered attendees camping on the land for at least part of the War. While not all 20 have to be members of Loch Ruadh, the more folks we have, the better. And a large encampment is much more fun than a small one, anyway.

As always, don't hesitate to speak with me in person, call me or email me with any ideas, questions or concerns that you have about the Shire.

I wish you all a very happy holiday season, and hope to see everyone at Yule Revel.

In Service to Loch Ruadh,  
Padraig

# Chamberlain

Greetings from the Chamberlain, Librarian and Scribes and Illuminators Guild Leader,

Chamberlain:

Not much new from the Chamberlain. Please check the November calendar for the latest updates on the shed cleaning day and Yule Revel load out. Right now they are both scheduled for the Thanksgiving weekend. Your help would sure be appreciated.

Librarian:

The library is temporarily closed for renovations!! Caerell and Aingeal's house flooded due to a stuck float on the washer. Nothing in the Library was damaged but everything had to be moved out of the room. Watch for a request to help move everything back on the Loch Ruadh mailing list.

Scribes and Illuminators Guild:

Scribes and Illuminators will be held as usual on the first Monday in November. We will work on Yule Revel Invitations. Please bring a chair and something to drink if you don't want coffee.

Look for some changes in the schedule sometime after the first of the year.

In service,  
Dana

# Exchequer

Greeting to All,

This is your Exchequer doing the 'happy dance' because I am no longer idle. Thanks to the generosity of our very own Polydore, there has been activity in our account this month. This will get things moving for our upcoming event, "Yule Revel at Dragonsfire Tor".

Please come out and support the event because we have lots of fun things planned and we would hate for you to miss it.

I will see you at Gate,  
Bicé

# Archery

Alas, there is not much news. We've missed most of the last few practices because of weather, Shire business or mundane affairs. Our next practice will be November 8th. All are welcome and bring a friend. We have plenty loaner equipment and plenty people who can help the newbies.

Grufydd Mawr ap Rodri.  
Loch Ruadh Archery Marshal

# Herald

All is quiet (well, as quiet as heralds can be) in the Herald's arena. Upon my last perusal of the all lists and letters, devices and names submitted from the Shire are still "in process". We have had no new submissions since the Ansteorran XXX celebration. I have had one person express an interest in registering a name, but no action has been taken yet. If you haven't registered a name or device and wish to learn more, please contact me.

In Service,  
Pan Kazimierz Zlowieszczy  
Lordy Lord Kaz the Sinister

## Yule Revel

Greetings unto the Populace of Loch Ruadh  
**From your duly appointed Yule Revel Coordinators,**

Plans for Yule Revel are running full steam ahead. Coordinators are in place, activities have been determined, and contact with DFT is ongoing. This is shaping up to be a wonderful experience and a successful event for all concerned. We will need donations for Titled Bard, A&S OOPS Competition, and Royals gift baskets. We are also asking for the loan of artificial greenery and battery operated candles. Gwennlian and Vivian have offered the use of a seamstress's mannequin and a head to be used as stage dressing for the Bardic area. We may also need contributions for Children's Activities. As always if you have items to donate to the Tor's Raffle, please bring those with you to the event.

We will need volunteers to assist with Set-Up and Tear-Down, Hall Decorating, Feast Set-Up and Clean-Up, and Gate. Please see the coordinators to volunteer your time. Caterina may need someone to assist her with the A&S competition as she is also the Royal Liaison. Brigid will need Judges for the Titled Bard Competition.

Everyone is encouraged to join us for the next scheduled Work Day 11/15/09 at Kaz and Antonia's, and please lend a hand the day of the shed clean out so that we can load up the needed Shire equipment.

**Greetings from your Yule Revel Gate Coordinator,**

Just a reminder that I will need some volunteers to sit gate in 2 hour shifts from 9:00 AM until about 4:00 PM. If you can spare a couple of hours, just e-mail me with your requested time, I will try to accommodate you on those times.

Send to: [bice@backroadsoftexas.com](mailto:bice@backroadsoftexas.com)

Waiting to hear from you,

Bicé

**Greetings from your Yule Revel A&S Coordinator**

The OOPS Competition will be the same as the past Lughnasad format. Entries are those that the entrant worked diligently upon only to find that they do not for some reason fall into Period guidelines. Documentation would explain why the piece is Not Period. Judging is by Populace vote.

**Greetings from your Yule Revel Children's Activity Coordinator**

Yule by any name is a time for children. This year we plan to make time for the children. This is the perfect event for bringing the kids. "You only have to entertain them for one day at this event". Maybe not even for the whole day. We plan to give them a few things to do other than stuffing themselves with sweets. Maybe they will even learn something. So be prepared to loosen the reins from around 9:30 AM to 10:30 AM, just in time to set up your tables for the table decorating contest, and then again from 2:30 to 4:30 P M, to start winding down. We do not however plan to put them to sleep for you. It might happen but we aren't planning it that way.

Thanks,  
Tegward McAuley

**Greetings from your Titled Bardic Competition Coordinator**

For the Bardic competition I am planning 3 rounds.  
First Round - a song, story or poem about Yule/the Yule season.

Second Round - your best/favorite piece.

Final round - those chosen by the judges will move to the final round and perform one more time so make sure you have a third piece prepared.

Documentation is always welcome if you wish to provide it, but it is not required for this competition.

Brighid



## The SCA According to Padraig A Forsooth Christmas Pádraig Ruad Ó Maolagáin

Aye, verily, let us crush a cup in the tavern, thou and I, and make most merry this Yuletide season! 'Tis Christmas, that joyful day of the Saviour's birth, when the carolers sing and dance in gay revelry in the streets, and all do feast 'pon mince pies and roast goose. Such a time as to make glad the hearts of men, e'en in the depths of winter. From the Feast of Saint Nicholas to Candlemass shall the folk celebrate, though the Bishop may frown at what he doth term foolishness and frippery. Verily, betwixt thou and I, he hath been known to raise a wassail bowl himself. So be of good cheer, for Christmas is here!

Few times in the Medieval year lend themselves so richly to speaking and acting forsoothly, with customs that continue to the present day, as does Christmas. Much of what we think of as Medieval Christmas traditions date from the latter half of our Period, though many of them are related to or are in fact direct carryovers from earlier pagan practices.

While the Church held official Masses to celebrate the birth of Jesus even prior to 600 AD, the first written reference to "Christmas" is in a book from Saxon England in 1038, describing "Cristes Maesse". Christmas, while a time for feasting and celebration, was primarily a religious occasion. Even so, people refused to give up Winter Solstice, Yule and Saturnalia celebrations that had been practiced for hundreds and even thousands of years before the advent of Christianity in Europe and the Near East, and the Church reluctantly (or perhaps cunningly) wove them into the patterns of Christian worship. Other traditions began within the Church, but have changed to a greater or lesser extent since Medieval times.

Christmas in Medieval times was not merely Christmas Day. Depending upon the century, country and customs, it could encompass any or all of the following:

- Advent – the forty days leading up to Christmas
- The Feast of St. Nicholas – 6 December
- Adam and Eve Day – Christmas Eve, 24 December
- Christmas Day
- The Feast of St. Stephen – 26 December (St. Stephen was the first Christian martyr)
- Innocents Day – 28 December (commemorates the slaughter of the innocents by Herod)
- The Feast of Fooles – 1 January
- Epiphany or Feast of the Three Kings – 6 January
- Candlemas – 2 February (the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple)

The main time of celebration during this extended holiday period was the Twelve Days of Christmas, from 25 December through 6 January. This is another of the pagan traditions borrowed by the Church and turned into a Christian practice, as twelve day winter solstice celebrations date back at least as far as Mesopotamia, some 2,000 years before Christ.

## Entertainment

Caroling – Caroling began in the Church, and originally "to carol" meant to sing and dance in a circle, usually with a leader singing the verses, and the rest responding with the chorus. This singing was most popular during Christmas season services, and eventually became so boisterous and disruptive that the Church, in exasperation, banished caroling out to the streets, thus beginning the tradition of groups of carolers singing out in the snow.

Passion Plays and Mysteries – These dramas, often presented in the Market Square of a village by the local Craft Guild, were used to illustrate stories from the Bible and moral lessons, and were the direct forebears of acting troupes and stage plays in later Period.

Mumming and Pantomimes – Players would dress in costumes, often as the opposite sex, and act out simple, wordless plays with exaggerated gestures. The Pantomime or "Panto", while greatly different from its Middle Ages ancestor, is still a popular Christmas tradition enjoyed by young and old alike in Great Britain.

Games - Backgammon, chess, cards and various dice games were all very popular pastimes over the days of Christmas.

## Food and Drink

Wassail, the drink, took its name from the Old English *waes hael*, meaning "be well" or "good health." A strong, hot mixture of ale, honey, fruits and spices was poured into a large bowl, and often kept near the door. When visitors arrived, the host would lift the bowl and greet them with "waes hael," to which they would reply "drinc hael," ("drink and be well") and drink from the offered bowl. From this also eventually grew the tradition of wassailing, caroling from door to door to be offered a drink from the wassail bowl and other treats.

Mince Pies were baked into oblong shapes to represent the manger bed of the Christ-child, and originally contained shredded or minced meat, along with cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg to represent the gold, frankincense and myrrh brought by the three Wise Men. It was thought to be good luck to eat a mince pie every day from Christmas Day through Epiphany, the day tradition says the three Wise Men reached the stable.

Roast Goose was often the main course of the Christmas feast for most people. In very late Period, the last half of the 16th century, turkeys, imported from the New World, became a popular substitute, as they grew and fattened quickly, and provided more meat for less cost.

Frumenty, a thick, porridge-like wheat pudding flavored with plums and other fruits, was a much anticipated treat. This evolved over the years into the more solid Christmas pudding that the English still enjoy with their Christmas feasts today, served with hot custard.

Humble Pie was not what one ate when proven wrong about something. Nobles would receive the roasts and other choice cuts of meat from a deer, leaving the scraps and organs, known as the umbles, to the servants and the poor, who would bake

them into a pie to provide as many portions as possible. By the end of the 16th century, Umble or Humble Pie had become a Christmas tradition.

### Decorations

Evergreen trees were decorated with apples on Christmas Eve, known as Adam and Eve Day. Initially, these trees were kept outside, but eventually began to be brought into the house, where no doubt they brought a fresh scent to a home stuffy and stale from being kept closed against the cold. In late-Period Germany, a tree would be decorated with paper flowers and paraded through the streets to the town square, where after a feast, celebration and dancing, it would be burned.

Other green plants, such as holly, ivy and evergreen boughs, were used to decorate both Church and homes, symbols of life in the depths of winter. Holly was especially prized, as it was believed that the berries had originally been white, and had turned red at the crucifixion of Christ from His blood after He was made to wear the crown of thorns. Mistletoe was discouraged as a decoration by the Church, having been a sacred plant to the Druids. In some places, however, an evergreen bough, decorated with apples and candles and hung from the ceiling, was known as the Kissing Bough, serving the same purpose for which we use mistletoe today.

The *Jul* or Yule Log was a carry over from both the Druids and the Vikings, who would choose a log large enough to burn for twelve days as they celebrated the winter solstice. The Vikings would carve runes into the log, symbolizing traits such as bad luck or loss of honor, of which they wished to be rid.

### Gifts

If gifts were given, it was generally done on Epiphany (the Feast of the Three Kings), a custom still followed in some parts of Europe today. Another common day for giving gifts was New Year's Day; such presents were known as First Gifts, and were thought to be lucky for both the giver and the receiver.

The nobles and the well-to-do would provide new garments or cloth to their servants. A common amount of cloth was seven ells for a tunic or overdress. (See my Speaking Forsoothly article on measures for the definition of an ell.)

The poor were sometimes given gifts of money on 26 December, coins in baked clay pots with a slit in the top which had to be broken open. These clay pots were known as "piggies", leading to ... well, you can guess.

### In Conclusion...

While much of what I've written here may not be obviously forsooth, the holidays (holy days), customs and celebrations are inextricably woven into the concepts of speaking and acting forsoothly.

### Shakespearian Words and Phrases:

At Christmas I no more desire a rose  
Than wish a snow in May's new-fangled mirth;  
But like of each thing that in season grows.

-*Love's Labours Lost (I.i)*

I see the trick on't: here was a consent,  
Knowing aforehand of our merriment,  
To dash it like a Christmas comedy:  
Some carry-tale, some please-man, some slight zany,

- *Love's Labours Lost (V.ii)*

Marry, I will; let them play it. Is not a comonty a Christmas gambold or a tumbling-trick?

- *The Taming of the Shrew (Intro, scene ii)*



## Kingdom Calendar

### November

- 6-8 Coronation/King's Champion - Eldern Hills/Brad Leah (Duncan, OK)
- 13-15 Queen's Champion - Northkeep (Tulsa, OK)
- 19-22 Bordermarch Autumn Melees/Kingdom Middle Eastern Dance Champions - Bordermarch (Beaumont, TX)
- 27-29 Thanksgiving Weekend

### December

- 4-6 Wiesenfeuer Yule Revel - Wiesenfeuer (OKC, OK)  
Stargate Yule - Stargate (Houston, TX)  
Champions for Children - Trelac (San Angelo, TX)  
Loch Ruadh's Yule Revel at Dragonsfire Tor - Loch Ruadh (Benbrook, TX)
- 11-13 Guardian of the Gauntlet/Yule Revel - Bryn Gwlad/Ffynnon Gath (Austin, San Marcos, TX)
- 18-20 Open
- 25-27 (Friday 25th - Christmas Day)

# Loch Ruadh's Meeting Places

**Archery Practice**  
Park Road  
Dutch Branch Park  
Benbrook, TX 76126

**Fighter Practice**  
Z Boaz Park  
S Z Boaz Park Rd  
Benbrook, TX 76126

**Populace Meeting**  
IHOP - 5920 Quebec Street  
Fort Worth, TX 76135

**Laird Caerell & HLady Aingeal's**  
2604 Creekwood Ln  
FortWorth, TX 76123  
817-294-8136

**Mistress Caterina Fregoso's**  
4341 Meadowknoll  
Fort Worth, TX 76123  
817-423-4807

**Lord Padraig's**  
3808 Arroyo Drive  
Weatherford, TX 76087  
817-599-4192

**Lord Kaz and Lady Antonia's**  
8762 Gray Fox Court  
Fort Worth, TX 76123  
817-263-2969

# Events in Loch Ruadh

## November

**Sun 1** - Archery Practice  
Dutch Branch Park 2 pm  
**Mon 2** - Scribes & Illuminators/Library open  
HL Aingeal and Laird Caerell's 6:30 pm  
**Wed 4** - Populace Meeting  
IHOP on Quebec 8 pm  
**Sat 7** - Fighter Practice  
Z Boaz Park 10 am  
**Tues 10** - Needleworkers Guild Meeting  
Mistress Caterina Fregoso's 7:30 pm  
**Sun 15** - Yule Work Day  
Lord Kaz and Lady Antonia's 10 am  
**Wed 18** - Officer's Meeting  
HL Aingeal and Laird Caerell's 8 pm  
**Tues 24** - Needleworkers Guild Meeting  
Mistress Caterina Fregoso's 7:30 pm  
**Wed 25** - Ceilidh  
Lord Kaz and Lady Antonia's 7:00 pm  
**Thur 26** - Fighter Practice  
Lord Padraig's 7 pm

## December

**Wed 5** - Populace Meeting  
IHOP on Quebec 8 pm  
**Sat 5** - Loch Ruadh's Yule Revel at Dragonsfire Tor  
**Wed 21** - Officer's Meeting  
HL Aingeal and Laird Caerell's 8 pm

**Note:** All Loch Ruadh meetings, practices, and gatherings are posted on the Loch Ruadh online calendar at [www.lochruadh.org](http://www.lochruadh.org), and reminders are sent out on the the Loch Ruadh email list. The email list is maintained on the Kingdom of Ansteorra web server and can be accessed at [www.ansteorra.org](http://www.ansteorra.org). Both of these contain address information with online map links for directions. If you don't have computer or email access, please contact the Seneschal or any other Officer for directions.

**The Scarlet Letter**  
**Shire of Loch Ruadh**

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