

Beyond The Pale



Supplemental Newsletter of the Middle Kingdom

October 2025

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Cover Image: Her Majesty Queen Neassa from the mists of the Woods Battle at Pennsic 52 - Photo by Sir Bran Cuileann (Jack Blunt)

Note from the Editor

It's this editor's favorite season - pumpkin spice season! Yes, that's right, I'm one of THOSE, and not ashamed. Life is too short to not enjoy the things you love - that's why we're in the SCA, isn't it?

This issue of Beyond The Pale is a true supplement because it's full of lot things that didn't fit in the regular issue: MORE of your photos from Pennsic! A fantastic article on modern aesthetics in medieval recreation by Baron Angus Gordon (so many people have asked me when this was coming out - it's here!). There's also an update to the missive from Their Highnesses about Crown Tourney.

Anything can fit here, so if you have an idea for content, please reach out - we'd love to have you. Send your ideas and any fun pumpkin spice product sightings to thepale@midrealm.org.

Huge thanks to everyone who sent in photos and content this month!! It's amazing how everyone can have a totally different Pennsic, and sharing your stories hopefully gives others ideas of things to do next year :)

Take care and enjoy those PSL days,

*~Claricia de la Mere
Editor, The Pale*

Updated: Crown Tourney Missive



From Their Highnesses

To all Gentles of the Midrealm, be it known and made manifest unto thee:

With hearts full of favor, Their Royal Highnesses, Sascha and Kemma, Sovereigns by right of arms and Heirs apparent to the Dragon Throne, do extend warmest greetings. With hearts uplifted and in joyous anticipation, we do hereby proclaim the coming of Our Crown Tournament, wherein shall be determined those most worthy to ascend as Heirs to the Dragon Throne.

This solemn and glorious passage of arms shall serve to reveal such noble souls as possess the valor, skill, wisdom, and steadfast heart to guide this Our beloved Kingdom. Let it be known that all who would take up this burden must fulfill the requirements as laid forth in the ancient Laws and Traditions of the Realm.

Those who meet such criteria may submit unto us their Letter of Intent, that they might be considered among the contenders. These missives must reach us no later than the day of Our Coronation [27 September], or be set aside.

May this Tournament be held in honour, in truth, and with fairness before all, according to the rules we do herein proclaim:

Concerning arms and armor upon the field:

All weapons permitted under Society law shall be allowed, save with these restrictions:

- Any shield of no more than 18 inches in breadth shall be deemed a buckler.
- No shield shall be longer than the span from a fighter's armpit unto the tip of their outstretched fingers.
- No weapon wielded in two hands shall exceed 72 inches in length from pommel unto tip.
- Polearms must bear a head shaped like those from ages past.
- No token of modern sport or manufacture shall be visible to the casual eye
- All plastics must be hidden or painted to resemble materials of the period. Shield bosses and sword baskets of plastic are permitted without alteration.
- Garments and gear shall be in good repair; those who stand upon the field must present themselves with dignity befitting one who would ascend the Throne. Let not duct tape mar the field at the outset.

The manner of the Tournament shall proceed thusly:

- It shall be a double elimination tourney, with the first bracket drawn at random, in accordance with Kingdom Law.
- Byes shall be granted without cost.
- All bouts shall be determined by best two out of three passes.
- Until the final, each fighter may choose their weapon style freely.
- The final shall be best three out of five passes.

Of the Final's form:

The first four passes shall be fought in matched style, with no style repeated, the choice of style made according to the combatants' precedence:

- Passes I and III chosen by the lesser in precedence.
- Passes II and IV chosen by the greater.
- Pass V: Each shall bring forth their best. The styles need not match nor be unique.

Continued next page.

Updated Crown Tournament Missive – continued

The permitted styles are these:

- Weapon and shield
- Weapon and buckler
- Two weapons
- Two-Handed sword
- Polearm
- Spear

Weapons within a given style – be it shield, buckler, or two weapons – need not be alike between combatants.

We await with eagerness the noble deeds to be done upon the field, and the glory this Tournament shall bring unto the Midrealm.

By Our hand and seal,

Sascha and Kemma

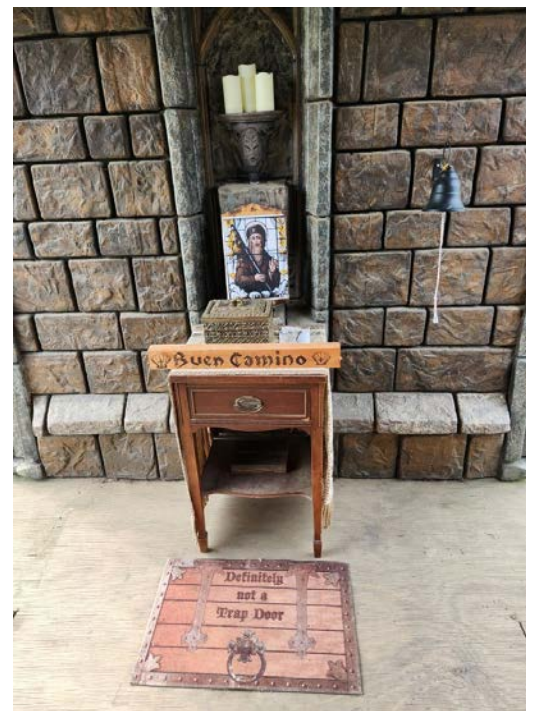
Princeps et Principessa Medii Regni

Pictures From the War



Left: Even Countesses have those days - a broken spear carried by Sir Sadb at Pennsic 52.

Below, right: The end of the Pennsic Camino, a walking "pilgrimage" designed to help you see more of the event. Photos by THL Raziya al-Zarqa' (Kim Garnett).





Her Majesty Neassa holding the knights' chains collected at the champions battle. Photo by THL Raziya al-Zarqa' (Kim Garnett).

What would you ask him? Duke Dag at the Newcomers' Party, right. Below: Nice shot! Photos by THL Philippi (Catherine Greenwood).



Modern Aesthetics in a Medieval Environment

by Baron Angus Gordon KSCA, OP

Merriam -Webster defines aesthetics thusly:

1 aesthetics *also* esthetics es- 'the-tiks British usually ēs- plural in form but singular or plural in construction: a branch of philosophy dealing with the nature of beauty, art, and taste and with the creation and appreciation of beauty

2 : a particular theory or conception of beauty or art: a particular taste for or approach to what is pleasing to the senses and especially sight.

In the SCA, we have a unique opportunity to peer into the medieval period and see everyday objects as well as great works of art, juxtaposed with our modern world. As we observe the works of our artisans and craftspersons we tend, as modern people, to look at those works with our modern eye, either consciously or sub-consciously comparing them to modern counterparts.

As we suspend our disbelief when we walk onto a modern fairgrounds or gymnasium so that we can experience our “there” moments, we must also be able to suspend our expectation of perfectly (perfect according to the modern aesthetic) constructed items or art. For instance, one cannot see too many examples of extant calligraphy and illuminations before we run into a cross out to correct a mistake or an errant ink blot somewhere in the manuscript. There are examples of less than perfect execution in nearly every artifact in every museum in the world before the advent of industrial machines and technology. Dropped stitches in embroidery, minute variations in measurements in carpentry, an irregularity in a hemline and myriad other inconsistencies and mistakes are hallmarks of handcrafted items. Modern manufacturing technology and mass production have all but eliminated these things from our modern lives and left us with a picture of what things “should” look like. We say that we value handcrafted things and assign great importance to the effort needed to produce these things, and then turn around and point out as incorrect, everything that we look for indicates that we are looking at a handcrafted item.

Suspension of the modern aesthetic is important as it applies to Arts and Sciences projects, displays and competitions as well as our everyday interactions at events. I am willing to bet that every one of us could identify machine embroidery or CNC machine carving immediately upon observation. In the context of A&S displays and competitions, it is important not to compare items to modern analogs.

It is important because you may be looking at a master work and become completely focused on inconsistencies and imperfections that would not be present in machine produced items but were absolutely present in the extant works.

This is not to imply that perfection in our arts is not the goal, instead perfection should be defined as how closely our things resemble the things that people produced, possessed, and used in the period that we study. That is not to say that everything needs to be a copy of an extant find or museum piece, but things should be immediately recognizable as not a modern off-the-shelf object.

When looking at works whether in a competition setting or not, it is good to remember this question: “if this object was dropped on the ground in the period that we study, would it be recognizable as to its purpose if found by one of those people?”

Duke Ullr, KSCA, OL, OP from the Middle Kingdom, uses these top three tests when looking at, or scoring items made for use in the SCA: 1. Is the piece recognizable to the actual user in the period; 2. Is the piece practical and durable for its intended use; 3. Could the creator of the piece have made a living in period doing this work. (Paul Koontz, private conversation with author, March 2025.)

Human nature will always be what it is, looking at things without modern bias is going to take conscious effort. I submit that in the context of the SCA, we owe it to our artisans and crafts persons to make every effort to suspend that bias and look at their creations and listen to their stories and songs as if they are from the period that we study and draw our judgements and conclusions from there.

Pictures From the War



Left: Rangers Guild attending the Pennsic War Foresters Guild Meeting & Meet-n-Greet which was hosted by the Æthelmearc Royal Guild of Foresters (Unofficial)! It was fantastic fun and informative. A great number of people attended; members of the East Kingdom Royal Foresters, Æthelmearc Royal Guild of Foresters, Rangers Guild of the Middle Region, Northwest Forester's Guild/An Tir, Kingdom of Atlantia Royal Forestry Guild, and more. Folks were able to network and ask questions. Photo and description by Lord Iofurr Ormarsson. Interested in learning more about the Midrealm Rangers? Find them on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/finnagatarangersinthemiddleregion/?ref=share&mibextid=NSMWBT>

The elevation of Master Adam der Strom at Pennsic, accompanied by Baroness Emmeline von Kaltwasser. Photo by THL Raziya al-Zarqa' (Kim Garnett).





Midrealmlers carry carnyx to Opening Ceremonies. Carnyx was a type of long bronze war trumpet used by the ancient Celts. Photo by THL Raziya al-Zarqa'(Kim Garnett).

Right and below: We go! Flaming Gryphon marches. Photos by THL Philippi (Catherine Greenwood).





Left: Calligraphers and illuminators at Crafters' Green.

Right: Sir Sabah with Queen Neassa at the Champions Battle.

Below: Midrealm rapier fighters battle the allied forces. Photos by THL Raziya al-Zarqa' (Kim Garnett).





A court of mist and sun: after Queen Neassa was shown in a forest haze on the front of this issue, we have King Wigthegn here in sunlight on the back. Photo by Master Cerian Cantwr.