

The Gryphon's Roar

May 2020 Issue 3
Curse for What Ales You



Woodcut depicting an English medieval feast. From Chaucer's Canterbury Tales 1484. Hosted by fotolibra.

This is the June edition of the Gryphon's Roar.

Mistress Zalkuubar (zal-COO-bar) now holds the Chronicler's Office. Zalkuubar's former existence began 29 years ago as Bianca da Ravenna. If there are topics, items, art, or written words you would like to see published in the newsletter, please contact her at chronicler@gryphonslair.org.

From the Seneschal:

Greetings unto the Lair!

What have you been doing during quarantine? Have you attended a virtual event or taken a class online? Have you been working on new garb or improving your kit? Even though we can't currently attend events the SCA is still going strong!

Currently we have Lammastide to look forward to, with the investiture of Sionainn and Malatesta. We will get together soon and again share the Dream.

The Barony has a couple of open offices and almost every officer needs a deputy. We need bids for 12th Night 2021. If you are interested in helping the Barony please let me know, this Barony is better when everyone helps out.

Yours in Service

THL Michelle of Harris upon York

BGL Seneschal

From the Baronage:

AHOY GRYPHON'S LAIR!

We hope this missive finds you all well and recovering from our period of reflection.

BREAKING NEWS:

Their Majesties Artemisia have announced that HE Sionainn and HE Malatesta will serve as the Eighth Territorial Baron and Baroness of Gryphon's Lair.

Please join us in congratulating them!

VIVAT

Investiture is scheduled for August 1st at our Lammastide event.

It has been our honor to serve as your seventh Territorial Baronage.

We would also like to extend our appreciation to Lady Shirin and Lord Rodrigo for their willingness to serve. The selection process is long and harrowing and difficult. Thank you for the courage it took to apply for the job.

AND

As we begin to recover from our long period of reflection, we would also like to extend thanks to everyone who moved through this plague together. To those who continued to work through the pandemic, thank you for your dedication. To those who were not able to work, thank you for your patience. To those who used the time to learn new skills, CONGRATULATIONS! To those who had new skills thrust upon them, way to roll with the changes! To all the health care workers, thank you for putting yourself in harm's way to help your fellow humans. You are all amazing folks and we are proud of the contributions and the sacrifices you all made during this very trying and difficult time.

Yours in Service
Owen and Malkin
Baron and Baroness

Echoes from the Past

“I climbed into this garden, to see if I can eat grass, or pick a sallet another while, which is not amiss to cool a man’s stomach this hot weather. And I think this word “sallet” sallet, my brainpan had been cleft with a brown bill; and, many a time, when I have been dry and bravely marching, it hath served me instead of a quart pot to drink il and now the word “sallet’ must serve me to feed on.”

Henry VI, Part 1, Act IV Scene 10
William Shakespeare

Content:

The History of Ale

The fictional character, Friar Tuck, commented in the movie "Robin Hood, Prince of Thieves," (1991, Warner Brothers/Morgan Creek):

"This is grain, which any fool can eat, but for which the Lord intended a more divine means of consumption. Let us give praise to our maker and glory to his bounty by learning about BEER."

His humorous comment has historic relevance.

Almost any substance containing sugar can undergo fermentation to create an alcoholic beverage. Beer and ale are similar in many ways. They are alcoholic drinks made from grain and water then fermented with yeast. Traditionally, the distinguishing factor between beer and ale is that beers contain hops and ale does not.

Beer is one of the oldest drinks humans have produced. The first chemically confirmed barley beer dates back to at least the 5th millennium BC in Iran, and was recorded in the written history of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia and spread throughout the world. Though, the ancient Chinese artifacts suggested that beer brewed with grapes, honey, hawthorns, and rice were produced as far back as 7,000 BC. (https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_beer)

It is possible that beer-like drinks were independently developed throughout the world soon after a tribe or culture had domesticated cereal. Chemical tests of ancient pottery jars reveal that beer was produced as far back as 7,000 years ago in what is today Iran. (<http://www.beer100.com/history/beerhistory.htm>).

By the 7th Century AD beer was being produced and sold by European monasteries, generally where the land could not support the production of grapes for wine.

Ale was an important source of nutrition in the medieval world. It was one of three main sources of grain at the start of the fourteenth century in England. Scholars believe grains accounted for around 80% of the calorie intake of agricultural workers and 75% for soldiers. Even nobles received around 65% of their calories from grains. (<http://www.beer100.com/history/beerhistory.htm>)

Small beer, also known as table beer or mild beer, was also highly nutritious. It contained just enough alcohol to act as a preservative, and provided hydration without intoxicating effects. Small beer would have been consumed daily by almost everyone, including children. (https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_beer)

In medieval times, ale was likely safer to drink than most water. This is because the germ theory of disease had not been identified, and the sterilization properties of boiling water were still unknown.

The addition of hops to beer for bittering, preservation, and aroma is a relatively recent innovation: in the Middle Ages many other mixtures of herbs were often employed in beer prior to hops. These mixtures are often referred to as *gruit*. Hops were cultivated in France as early as the 800s; the oldest surviving written record of the use of hops in beer is in 1067 by well-known writer Abbess Hildegard of Bingen: "If one intends to make beer from oats, it is prepared

with hops.” (<http://www.beer100.com/history/beerhistory.htm>) Peter Mathias wrote *The brewing industry in England, 1700-1830*, where he explained that ale was a sweetish, unhopped malt liquor and beer was a bitter, hopped malt liquor.

Records from the Middle Ages show that ale was consumed in huge quantities. In 1272 a husband and wife who retired at Selby Abbey were given 2 gallons of ale per day with two loaves of white bread and one loaf of brown bread. Monks at Westminster Abbey consumed 1 gallon of ale each day. In 1299, Henry de Lacy's household purchased an average of 85 gallons of ale daily and in 1385-6 Framlingham Castle consumed 78 gallons per day. (https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_beer)



Depiction of an alewife from the *Smithfield Decretals*, c. 1300. Source: *Smithfield Decretals* [Public Domain], via Wikimedia Commons.

The original profession of brewing for daily consumption, as far back as ancient Mesopotamia, was principally performed by women. Brewing ale in the Middle Ages was a local industry primarily pursued by women. Brewsters, or alewives, would brew in the home for both domestic consumption and small scale commercial sale. Brewsters provided a substantial supplemental income for families; however, only in select few cases, as was the case for widows, was brewing considered the primary income of the household. (https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_beer)

After the fall of the Roman Empire monasteries became centers of brewing and winemaking techniques. Home production of rustic beers continued, but artisanal beers and wine became the province of the monks. They carefully guarded their secret recipes, and produced the best quality beer until the twelfth century. Monks would use the revenue generated by sale of their beer or wine to maintain the monastery and upkeep of brewing equipment. (<https://www.alcoholproblemsandsolutions.org/alcohol-in-the-middle-ages/>)

By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, beermaking was gradually changing from a family-oriented activity to an artisan one, with pubs and monasteries brewing their own beer for mass consumption. (<http://www.beer100.com/history/beerhistory.htm>)

Old ales are a good representation of the English brewing heritage. The medieval brewer's wares were designated as either ale or beer. Ale contained a higher alcohol content than beer.

Ales primarily used barley in the brewing process. Other malts used were wheat, "half dredge" which is a mix of oats and barley, another was half wheat and half oats, or oats alone.

Large brewhouses, such as those that served big households, were situated near the bakehouse and downwind from the main residential areas due to the smell of the malting process. (<http://www.ladydespensersscribery.com/2014/01/30/ale/>)



1350, a taverner providing alcohol to upstairs patrons

Other times, the brewhouse was located in a underground section of the keep. The thick walls and vaulted ceilings acted as insulation, keeping the ferment at a steady temperature. The malting kiln in the Nottingham caves is an example of an underground brewhouse.

The brewhouse would contain a drying floor, where the soaked barley would be left to dry and sprout. It would be regularly turned to ensure an even temperature and continuous airflow to the grains. The brewhouse would contain a kiln for stopping the germination process and roasting the grains. A mill was necessary for grinding the malted barley into flour. The mill wheel would be water-powered. Other times, horses would move the wheel. In smaller processes, the grain could be ground by hand. Once ground, the flour would be put into bushel sacks.

In another area of the brewhouse were the vats. The copper vat (called a lead vat in historic texts) was placed over the furnace. Water was boiled in the copper vat before it was transferred to the mash vat.

In the mash vat, the malt flour was stirred into the hot water. The mixture was covered with blankets and left to slowly cool. The water filled with soluble sugars is called grout. The grout was drained through a spigot into the gyle vat.



The taproom, Richard Unger

Yeast was added to the grout in the gyle vat and left to ferment. This process was repeated with more water and another vat to produce a weaker ale than the first. The froth on top of the fermenting brews contains liquid yeast, also called ale barm. The ale barm was skimmed off and kept for the next batch of ale fermentation or for baked bread.

Once the fermentation had stopped, the resulting ale was pouted into barrels with a special coopered funnel called a tundish. The malting operation could take a couple of weeks and depended on temperature, but the actual brewing took only a few days.

It was common to add herbs to give the ale a unique flavor. Flavorings included those herbs that could be found in the countryside or cultivated in the English garden: rosemary, fennel, thyme, rose hips, yarrow, parsley, sage, hyssop, savory, chamomile, purslane, and mint, to name but a few. Spices such as cinnamon, cloves, cubeb, nutmeg, and ginger were also added to spike the flavors and give interest to common fare. To bitter the sweet beer, juniper, mugwort, wormwood, or tansy might be added.

The Assize of Bread and Ale regulated the price, weight and quality of the bread and beer manufactured. It laid out harsh punishments for brewers and bakers who were caught cheating. The cost of beer or ale was determined by the cost of the grains used in its creation.

<https://byo.com/article/searching-for-medieval-ale/>
https://www.cs.cmu.edu/~pwp/tofi/medieval_english_ale.html
<https://www.jacksontrophies.com/blog/the-history-of-ale--who-invented-beer/>
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/ale>
<http://allaboutbeer.com/article/old-ales/>
<http://zythophile.co.uk/2009/12/14/the-long-battle-between-ale-and-beer/>
<https://byo.com/article/searching-for-medieval-ale/>
<https://www.alcoholproblemsandsolutions.org/alcohol-in-the-middle-ages/>
<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-beer-archaeologist-17016372/>
<http://xtbrewing.blogspot.com/2010/10/medieval-ale-homebrew-historic-ale.html>
<http://www.ladydispensersscribery.com/2014/01/30/ale/>
<https://barleyandthehops.com/an-authentic-medieval-ale/>
<https://www.amazon.com/Ale-Beer-Brewsters-England-Changing/dp/0195126505>
<https://regia.org/research/life/brewing.htm>
https://www.thebrewsite.com/medieval_ale/
<http://the-foragers.com/medieval-ale/>
<https://aprilmunday.wordpress.com/tag/medieval-ale/>
<https://medievalmeadandbeer.wordpress.com/mythbusting-medieval-brewing-preconceptions/>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_beer
<https://www.craftbeer.com/craft-beer-muses/gruit-ales-beer-before-hops>
https://web.stanford.edu/~yamins/uploads/2/4/9/2/24920889/medieval_food.pdf

Hangover Cures

Many cultures seem to recommend consuming pickled things to cure a hangover. In Poland, you're supposed to drink pickle juice straight up. But the Mongols from the Era of Genghis Khan took it a step further; they prescribed a breakfast of two pickled sheep's eyes.

<https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/90418/15-historical-hangover-cures>

A favored cure in Medieval Europe was eating raw eels for breakfast. In Portugal specifically, the standard cure was to eat a lamprey boiled in wine and its own blood.

<https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/90418/15-historical-hangover-cures>

This ancient hangover remedy comes from ancient Mesopotamia. It was a tincture made of licorice, beans, oleander, oil and wine. Given that oleander is toxic and induces vomiting, it should help get the alcohol out of your system... if it doesn't kill you first. Either way, the hangover will shortly be gone.

<https://www.wideopeneats.com/how-to-cure-a-hangover/>

From eating whole baby ducks it's a small step to eating whole canaries. In ancient Rome, this was considered to be the best way to revive after a bacchanalia. The small birds were deep fried in oil and served to the Romans.

<https://lordsofthedrinks.com/2015/01/29/the-15-weirdest-ways-to-cure-a-hangover>

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Events to be bid on:

Hunter's Moon

Twelfth Night