



THE RIVENVALE REVIEW



The Shire of Rivenvale's Quarterly Newsletter (Jan - Mar 2016)

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Serving Trumbull, Mahoning & Columbiana Counties in Ohio

Calendar of Shire Events

January 2016

- 5 - Business meeting and potluck. Dance practice after meeting.
- 12 - Dance practice & Open Project Night - Bring anything you are working on
- 19 - Leatherworking 101 Class
- 23 - [Winter Wassail Event \(with period Potluck\)](#)
- 26 - Sewing and Games.

February 2016

- 2 - Business meeting and potluck. Dance practice after meeting
- 9 - Heraldry workshop & Dance practice.
- 13 - Shire Project Day - Banners - Hakon's Clubhouse
- 16 - Sewing and Games
- 23 - Leatherworking 102 Class

March 2016

- 1 - Quarterly Revel - Business meeting and potluck. Dancing and merriment! Garb & feast gear requested & encouraged.
- 8 - Beginning juggling workshop & wooden signet rings
- 15 - Open Shire Library night & Heraldry
- 22 - Sewing, Games & Dancing
- 29 - Leatherworking and Open Projects

For the latest and most current event & meeting information, you are invited to browse the Shire's website at: www.Rivenvale.org.

We still have vacant officer positions! Currently vacant are Knight's Marshal (Heavy Combat), Rapier Marshal, & Youth Officer. If you are a registered SCA member and wish to volunteer, please contact our Seneschal as listed.

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From the Chronicler

Greetings to Everyone:

Brrr...the temperature is starting to drop, but the warmth and cheer of friends, fellowship and fun is felt in our Shire. We are having our Annual Winter Wassail on January 23rd....last year was the first time I went and it was an AMAZING night in a wonderful location...the historic lumber mill in Mill Creek Park in Youngstown. It is one of my favorite settings for an event, as the rustic and cozy atmosphere brings the Medieval feel even more to life (at least it did for me!) If you have not attended this event yet, here is your chance! We are also having a bucket auction of items from our populace. (We are requesting if possible, items that have been made by our members, but certainly items that would be of interest to other SCA gentles...) It is wonderful to behold the talent we have among us! The event is free, as we are not allowed to charge admission at this historic site...but we are accepting donations from members to help off-set the cost of the event site to our shire.

With the celebration of Christmas and the New Year just recently behind us, I felt it appropriate to publish another wonderful submission from THL Johnnae Ilyn Lewis, CE, regarding Medieval Yule and Wassail traditions. She is a professional librarian and co-author of the reference volume Concordance of English Recipes: Thirteenth to Fifteenth Centuries, 2006, and a bibliography on "Medieval Food and Drink" for Oxford Bibliographies Online (Authority and Innovation for Research) 2010. She currently edits Elizabethan cookery books for medievalcookery.com. THL Johnnae Ilyn Lewis (CE) joined the Society in 1973. August 2015 marked her 42nd Anniversary! She answers reference questions on various Society e-mail lists, as well as writing articles for numerous publications.

I am sure that the busy time of year precluded many of you from submitting for this issue. Keep in mind that this is a quarterly publication and the months of publication will be January, April, July and October. I generally prefer to receive submission about 2 weeks prior to the expected publication month. The only criteria is that it either be original work or properly referenced work. If you wish to reprint something in it's entirety that was published elsewhere, we must have the proper permission from the original author to print it. Please feel free to email me or call or text me at the number provided in the officer listing. This newsletter is intended to be an electronic one. If you know of someone without electronic access, please encourage them to contact me directly at my contact information as listed on the first page of this newsletter.

Please stay safe and warm this winter! Respectfully, Áine ingen Uí Briain

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Save the Date for Winter Wassail !!!

Winter Wassail will be held on Saturday January 23, 2016, from 5:00 PM - 10:00 PM

The location is:

Pioneer Pavillion, Mill Creek Park, Youngstown, OH

This event is **FREE** and would be a great opportunity to introduce your friends and family to SCA. We are having a period pot luck, so bring your best period dish to share! (Please provide an ingredient list with your dish.) Period garb is required and feast gear is strongly recommended.

There will be an Artisan's Auction and dancing. Feel free to bring musical instruments, games and stories! Alcoholic beverages are allowed.

Please see our webpage for more information, event location directions, and also how to get in on the period recipe book at the event at: <http://rivenvale.org/events/winter-wassail/>

The Event Steward is Lady Beatrix Beeman (Pamela Rhodes). Please feel free to contact her in regards to this event at her contact information as listed on the linked event site or the first page

The Rivenvale Bransle

The Shire of Rivenvale now has its own dance. The "Rivenvale Bransle" is a dance written in the style of the French bransles. The tune was written by Eleri verch Howel and the choreography was written by Lord Hakon Hrafnsson. Using their creative anachronism, they looked at period dances and constructed a new one to match the spirit and style, but which included various steps that the members of our shire enjoy.

The audio, video, and instructions are posted on our shire's website at:

<http://rivenvale.org/dancing/rivenvale-bransle/>

Rivenvale Bransle

Circle Dance for any number of people

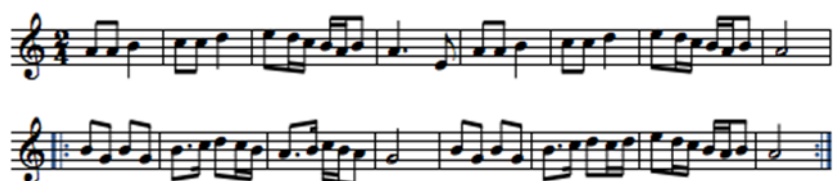
A1 - All take hands. Double Left. Double Right.

A2 - That again.

B1 - Go three Singles Left, then a Single Right. Turn over your Left shoulder, then all go a Double forward into center, clapping three times as you go in.

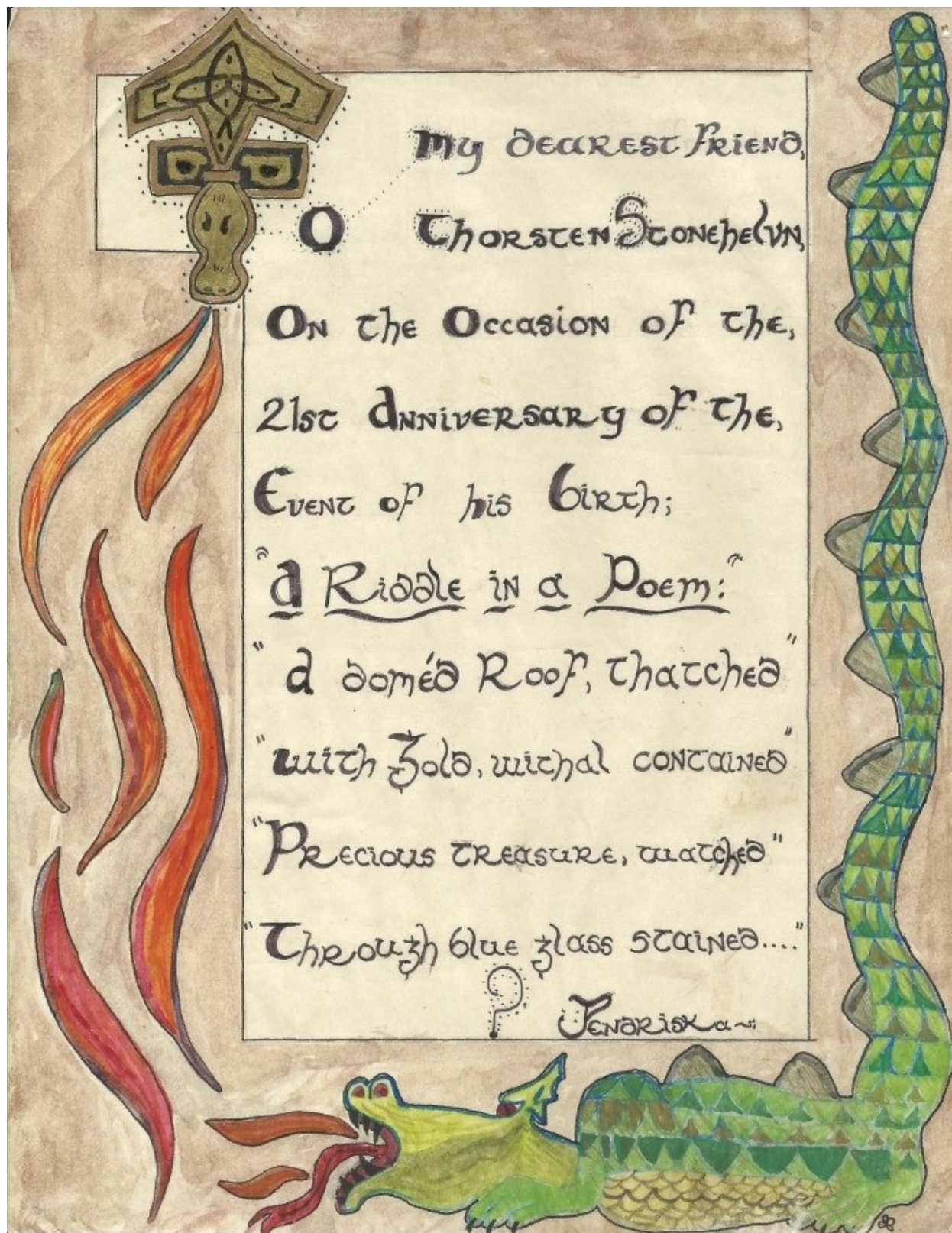
B2 - All join Right hands across and all go a Double clockwise. All fall back a Double. Single Right, Single Left, then Turn over your Right shoulder.

Rivenvale Bransle



Illumination with Calligraphy

Submitted by Lady Jendriska Bellasez



Yule and Wassailing

Contributed by THL Johnnae Ilyn Lewis, CE

What should we speak of
When we are old as you? When we shall hear
The rain and wind beat dark December, how,
In this our pinching cave, shall we discourse
The freezing hours away?

Shakespeare. *Cymbeline*. Act 3 sc iii lines: 35-39

The Elizabethan author John Stowe in his *Summarie of Englyshe Chronicles* reminds us that in those days when the world was lit by fire that "December hath xxxi daies. The daye is .vi. houres, the nyght .xviii." The Elizabethans were well aware that there were at best 6 hours of daylight in December. January was improved somewhat and offered perhaps 7 hours of daylight. Prior to the Norman Conquest in England this was Midwinter, a period of days that was sometimes referred to as Yule. The Venerable Bede in the eighth century mentioned both an Early Yule and Later Yule, meaning the months of December and January. Lessened into a period of days and not months, Yule gradually merged into and became part of the English Christmas in the 12th century.

Another Elizabethan author, Raphael Holinshed still wrote about the "twelve day in Christmas, otherwise called Yule" but only in the North of England did Yule still hold sway with any force. One observance in York was known as the Riding of Yule and his Wife. Yule in this case was actually personified as a person with a wife. The origins of the festival remain unclear. It may trace back to pagan culture or it may have been part of the Scandinavian culture of 9th and 10th century York. By the 16th century, the Riding of Yule and his Wife had settled into two people dressed in sheepskins. The man representing Yule carried a shoulder of lamb and a large cake of fine bread; his 'wife', carried her distaff. Thus disguised, they roamed the streets and passed out nuts and cakes. There was music and dancing and the children of York tagged along creating much noise and "misrule." By 1570, a broadside appeared in support of the tradition, saying that it was "Christian" in origin and focus. "Yule, Yule," wrote the author, "a Babe is borne." The sheepskins were symbols of the "lambe of God." The children who followed the couple might be seen as angels. The nuts that were given out were symbols not only of the "Imaculate Virgin" and the Conception, but they were also symbols of the Trinity.

The broadside did not save the fun. In 1572 the Archbishop of York ordered the Mayor and Aldermen to suppress the annual parade because it drew 'great concourses of people' away from church-going on St. Thomas Day (December 21st). It also involved "disguising" which was disapproved of by the Puritans and also that Yule and his Wife were "very undecently and uncomely" in the Riding. The Council agreed and no longer did Yule and his Wife Ride.

Today when Yule is just an adjective attached to such items of modern merchandise as Yulelogs, Yule candies, Yule candles, Yule boughs, Yule greenery, et cetera, it's nice to remember that once there were such things as Ridings of Yule and his wife.

(continued next page)

As to wassail and wassailing, in a very long entry, OED notes that in neither Old English or in Old Norwegian, has any trace been found of the use of *wassail* as a drinking formula, or of the phrases represented by “wassail and drinkhail.” This follows for the other Teutonic languages as well. OED postulates that the use of wassail and drinkhail “arose among the Danish-speaking inhabitants of England” becoming common sometime before the 12th centuries. The Normans saw its use as “markedly characteristic of Englishmen.” It was later recorded that the English on the night before Hastings spent their time in “weissel” and “drincheheil.” The custom of taking the Wassail cup or bowl, crying “Wassail”, drinking from it, and passing it to the answering cry of “Drinkhail” are recorded in a 14th century text by Peter de Langtoft, according to historian Ronald Hutton.

In the Tudor court of Henry VII, Peter Brears notes that in December 1494, it was recorded that “as for wassell, the steward and treasurer shall come for it...” It was an occasion for piles of special cups, including “the Kinge’s cupp and the Queene’s...” When the steward entered the hall “with the wassell, he must crie three tymes, wassell, wassell, wassell, and the chapel to answer with a good songe...” On Twelfth Night during the reign of Henry VIII, it was also recorded that the ‘wassail or banket [was] brought in, and so brake up Christmas.’ Ronald Hutton provides a text of wassailing song from circa 1550.

Wassail, wassail, out of the milk pail,
Wassail, wassail, as white as my nail,
Wassail, wassail, in snow, frost and hail,
Wassail, wassail, that much doth avail,
Wassail, wassail, that never will fail.

For those in search of the traditional 16th and 17th century English wassailing customs, one might read the Christmas poems written by Robert Herrick (1591-1634). Despite the English Civil War and the political turmoil of the times, Herrick wrote about an England where holidays might still be celebrated. In “A New Year’s Gift, Sent to Sir Simeon Steward” he wrote of “Of Christmas sports, the wassail-bowl.” In a poem titled “The Wassail Bowl”, he wrote:

Next I’ll cause my hopeful lad,
If a wild apple can be had,
To crown the hearth;
Lar thus conspiring with our mirth;
Then to infuse
Our browner ale into the cruse;
Which, sweetly spiced, we’ll first carouse
Unto the Genius of the house.

Herrick’s England in many ways is that traditional England of calendar customs and holidays that Society members often long for and seek to recreate. His work deserves better notice today.

(continued next page)

So in terms of meanings, Wassail might have meant:

"A salutation used when presenting a cup of wine to a guest, or drinking the health of a person, the reply being drink-hail." Wassail also came to mean the rather strong liquor (spiced ales) which were drunk traditionally at Twelfth-nights and Christmas-eve celebrations. Also Wassail came to mean the "custom formerly observed on Twelfth-night and New-Year's eve of drinking healths from the wassail-bowl." Also "the person invited to drink from the wassail-bowl" was a Wassail. This leads into the meaning where a Wassail was "a carousal; riotous festivity, reveling." As a verb, "To `keep wassail' came to mean carousing and health-drinking." By the early 17th century, it was also "a carol or song sung by wassailers, thus becoming a wassailing or health-drinking song."

In summary, we have *Wassail* meaning the ale or mulled wine that is drunk from a decorated or special cup, the toasts or salutations of the season, the songs being sung, the actual festivities with much carousing, and lastly the drinkers or the drinking carousers. And here we end our brief examination of Yule and Wassail.

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For Robert Herrick's Christmas poetry

http://www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/Hymns_and_Carols/Biographies/robert_herrick.htm

This article was published in the *Pale* in December 2006. Additional material on Robert Herrick added in June 2007.

JOHANNES'S GAME CORNER

This is the first of (hopefully) many of Johannes's Game Corner. The purpose of this is if you don't have time, or if you are slightly interested in a game, but don't know how much yet, then this is for you! Every newsletter that comes out will showcase and explain one of my games. As I get more, you will learn many varieties of games. In later newsletters, games will become more complex and, in my opinion, better.

The first game is simple as can be. Everyone knows Tic-Tac-Toe right? But the thing is, no one remembers the origins. It's called (Three/Nine/Twelve) Man's Morris, or Mill. There are variations of the board but it originated from the Roman Empire. The beginning starts like Tic-Tac-Toe. Back and forth, placing your amount of pieces. What happens when you run out? You don't lose, you slide a piece of yours to another spot. When you make a Morris, or three in a row, you get to remove one of their pieces. The game ends when someone only has two pieces, therefore not being able to make a Morris. An old board dug up is shown for image 1. Images 2, 3, and 4 are some other variations. Enjoy!



Image 1

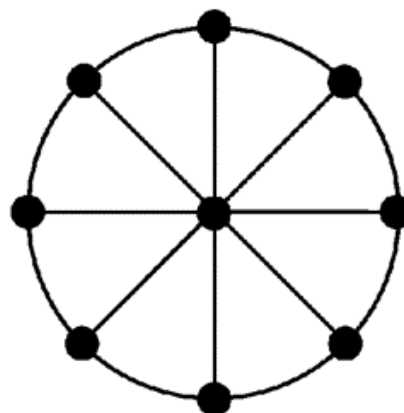


Image 2

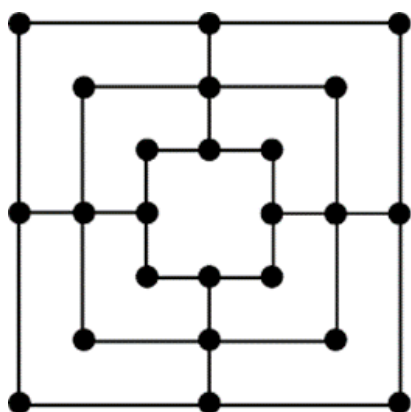


Image 3

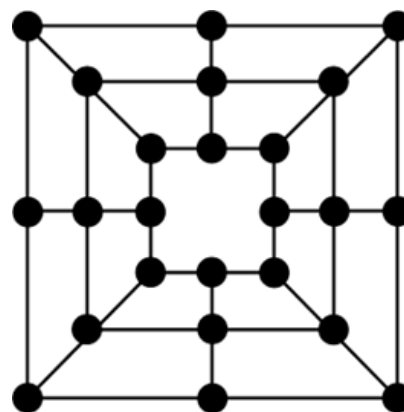


Image 4



WAITING

Sometimes it is easy, to wait for things...
Waiting for that certain time, event or situation...
We muse, we ponder, on what it is we seek...
We stay in hibernation, hunched down and waiting for spring...
Hoping for something, to deliver us from the now, because we yearn for something....
Could be anything, waiting as the cold bite of winter waits for the kiss of spring....
But waiting can be a deceiver, a distraction, taking us from the now...
From the joy of the young, a gleam in our lover's eye, a smile from a friend, the wisdom of the aged...
Listen for the now. It is here. Don't wait for it.

Submitted by Lady Áine

The next issue of the Rivenvale Review is scheduled for publication during the first week of April. Individuals interested in submission to this publication are requested to have items submitted by the 15th of March. Ideas for new articles and suggestions for content improvement are always welcome by the editor.