



# Dragon's Breath

The newsletter for the Shire of Wyrmegeist, in the Kingdom of Glenn Abhann



This is the February 2009 issue of the Dragon's Breath, a publication of the Shire of Wyrmegeist, of the Society for Creative Anachronism, Inc. (SCA, Inc.). Dragon's Breath is available from our Chronicler. It is not a corporate publication of SCA, Inc., and does not delineate SCA, Inc. policies. Copyright © 2009 Society for Creative Anachronism, Inc. For information on reprinting photographs, articles, or artwork from this publication, please contact the Chronicler, who will assist you in contacting the original creator of the piece.

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# Wyrmggeist Regnum

**Senechal:** Katerina Dimetrieva (seneschal@wyrmggeist.org)  
Coordinates shire activities and oversees the other officers.

**Knights Marshal:** Lannon MacGillivray (marshal@wyrmggeist.org)  
In charge of fighter training and combat safety.

**Deputy Knights Marshal:** Agnar 'Rohan' Hringsson  
Assists Knights Marshal

**Herald:** Louis Renart de Bresse (Frenchy) (herald@wyrmggeist.org)  
Handles name and device submission & public announcing.

**Minister of Arts & Sciences:** Emma of Wyrmggeist (artsci@wyrmggeist.org)  
Encourages the study and practice of medieval arts, crafts, and sciences.

**Reeve:** THL Malcom MacAdaim (reeve@wyrmggeist.org)  
Responsible for financial affairs of the group.

**Chiurgeon:** Else Hartmann and Mychel Boese  
Responsible for administering first aid when needed.

**Chatelaine:** Olrun Elidasdottir (chataline@wyrmggeist.org)  
Welcomes new members & coordinates demos.

**Constable:** Martine de Bresse (constable@wyrmggeist.org)  
Responsible for event security and registration.

**Webminister:** Martine de Bresse (webmaster@wyrmggeist.org)  
Responsible for group's website.

**Chronicler:** Lasair inghean mhicSeoin (lasair1@cox.net)  
Publishes group newsletter, phone list, event calendar and flyers.

<b>Wyrmggeist Fighter Practice</b>	Our website address:  <a href="http://www.wyrmggeist.org">www.wyrmggeist.org</a>  Our Yahoo! Group:  <a href="http://groups.yahoo.com/group/wyrmggeistdragoncave/">http://groups.yahoo.com/group/wyrmggeistdragoncave/</a>
Every Sunday Afternoon, 2:00 pm-ish Until Dark Last Sunday of every month is a Garb and Grub Practice Open To The Public Forest Park on South Harrell's Ferry Road (Near the Tennis Courts)	
<b>Wyrmggeist Populace Meetings</b>	Our Kingdom:  <a href="http://www.gleannabhann.org">www.gleannabhann.org</a>
1st Monday of each Month, 7:00 pm Open To The Public Main Library on Goodwood Blvd.	

## February 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2 Business Meeting	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14 Seleone's 30th 
15	16	17	18	19	20	21 Candlemas
22	23	24 	25	26	27	28 Fighter's Collegium

## WHERE IN THE WORLDE?

ARAGON, or Arragon (in Span. *Aragon*), a captaincy general, and formerly a kingdom of Spain; bounded on the N. by the Pyrenees, which separate it from France, on the E. by Catalonia and Valencia, S. by Valencia, and W. by the two Castiles and Navarre. Pop. (1900) 912,711; area, 18,294 sq. m. Aragon was divided in 1833 into the provinces of Huesca, Teruel and Saragossa; an account of its modern condition is therefore given under these names, which have not, however, superseded the older designation in popular usage.

Aragon consists of a central plain, edged by mountain ranges. On the south, east and west, these ranges, though wild and rugged, are of no great elevation, but on the north the Pyrenees attain their greatest altitude in the peaks of Aneto (11,168 ft.) and Monte Perdido (10,998 ft.) - also known as Las Tres Sorores, and, in French, as Mont Perdu. The central pass over the Pyrenees is the Port de Canfranc, on the line between Saragossa and Pau. Aragon is divided by the river Ebro, which flows through it in a south-easterly direction, into two nearly equal parts, known as Trans-ibero and Cis-ibero. The Ebro is the principal river, and receives from the north, in its passage through the province, the Arba, the Gallego and the united waters of the Cinca, Esera, Noguera Ribagorzana, Noguera Pallaresa and Segre - the last three belonging to Catalonia. From the south it receives the Jalon and Jiloca (or *Xalon* and *Xiloca*) and the Guadalope. The Imperial Canal of Aragon, which was begun by the emperor Charles V. in 1529, but remained unfinished for nearly two hundred years, extends from Tudela to El Burgo de Ebro, a distance of 80 m.; it has a depth of 9 ft., and an average breadth of 69, and is navigable for vessels of about 80 tons. The Royal Canal of Tauste, which lies along the north side of the Ebro, was cut for purposes of irrigation, and gives fertility to the district. Two leagues north-north-east of Albarracin is the remarkable fountain called Cella, 3 700 ft. above the sea, which forms the source of the Jiloca; and between this river and the Sierra Molina is an extensive lake called Gallocanta, covering about 6000 acres. The climate is characterized by extreme heat in the summer and cold in the winter; among the mountains the snowfall is heavy, and thunderstorms are frequent, but there is comparatively little rain.

Within a recent geological period, central Aragon was undoubtedly submerged by the sea, and the parched chalky soil remains saturated with salt, while many of the smaller streams run brackish. As the mountains of Valencia and Catalonia effectually bar out the fertilizing moisture of the sea-winds, much of the province is a sheer wilderness, stony, ash-coloured, scarred with dry watercourses, and destitute of any vegetation except thin grass and heaths. In contrast with the splendid fertility of Valencia or the south of France, the landscape of this region, like the rest of central Spain, seems almost a continuation of the north African desert area. There are, however, extensive oak, pine and beech forests in the highlands, and many beautiful oases in the deeply sunk valleys, and along the rivers, especially beside the Ebro, which is, therefore, often called the "Nile of Aragon." In such oases the flora is exceedingly rich. Wheat, maize, rice, oil, flax and hemp, of fine quality, are grown in considerable quantities; as well as saffron, madder, liquorice, sumach, and a variety of fruits. Merino wool is one of the chief products.

In purity of race the Aragonese are probably equal to the Castilians, to whom, rather than to the Catalans or Valencians, they are also allied in character. The dress of the women is less distinctive than that of the men, who wear a picturesque black and white costume, with knee-breeches, a brilliantly coloured sash, black hempen sandals, and a handkerchief wound round the head.

Three counties - Sobrarbe, situated near the headwaters of the Cinca, Aragon, to the west, and Ribagorza or Ribagorca, to the east - are indicated by tradition and the earliest chronicles as the cradle of the Aragonese monarchy. These districts were never wholly subdued when the Moors overran the country (711-713). Sobrarbe especially was for a time the headquarters of the Christian defence in eastern Spain. About 1035, Sancho III. the Great, ruler of the newly established kingdom of Navarre, which included the

**When the words come they are merely empty shells without the music  
They live as they are sung for the words are the body and the music the spirit**

Hildegard of Bingen

three counties above mentioned, bequeathed them to Gonzalez and Ramiro, his sons. Ramiro soon rid himself of his rival, and welded Sobrarbe, Ribagorza and Aragon into a single kingdom, which thenceforward grew rapidly in size and power and shared with Castile the chief part in the struggle against the Moors. The history of this period, which was terminated by the union of Castile and Aragon under Ferdinand and Isabella in 1479, is given, along with a full account of the very interesting constitution of Aragon, under Spain. At the height of its power under James I. (1213-1276), the kingdom included Valencia, Catalonia, the Balearic Islands and the considerable territory of Montpellier in France; while Peter III. (1276-1285) added Sicily to his dominions.

The literature relating to Aragon is very extensive. See, in addition to the works cited in the article Spain (section *History*), "*Les Archives d'Aragon et de Navarre*," by L. Cadier, in *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, 49 (Paris, 1888). Among the more important original authorities, the following may be selected: - for general history, *Anales de la corona de Aragon*, by G. Curita, 3rd ed. in 7 folio volumes (Saragossa, 1668-1671; 1st ed. 1562-1580); - for ecclesiastical history, *Teatro historico de las iglesias de Aragon* (Pamplona, 1770-1807); for economic history, *Historia de la economia politica de Aragon*, by I. J. de Asso y del Rio (Saragossa, 1798). For the constitution and laws of Aragon, see *Origenes del Justicia de Aragon*, &c., by J. Ribera Tarrago (Saragossa, 1897), and *Instituciones y reyes de Aragon*, by V. Balaguer (Madrid, 1896). The topography, inhabitants, art, products, &c., of the kingdom are described in a volume of the series *Espana* entitled *Aragon*, by J. M. Quadrado (Barcelona, 1886).

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### of interest

#### The Book of the Courtier

This English translation of *The Book of the Courtier* is that of Sir Thomas Hoby (1561) as edited by Walter Raleigh for David Nutt, Publisher, London, 1900, and partakes of the virtues and faults, as may be, of that edition. It was transcribed by Risa S. Bear at the [University of Oregon](#) during the summer of 1997. This edition is provided to the public for nonprofit purposes only; the design is copyright © 1997 The University of Oregon.

#### THE CONTENTES OF THE BOOKE

[The first booke](#), entreateth of the perfect qualities of a Courtier.

[The second](#), of the use of them, and of merie Jestes and Pranckes.

[The thirde](#), of the condicions and qualities of a waytinge Gentillwoman.

[The fourth](#), of the end of a Courtier, and of honest love.

<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~rbear/courtier/courtier.html>

The celebration of the new year on January 1st is a relatively new phenomenon. The earliest recording of a new year celebration is believed to have been in Mesopotamia, c. 2000 B.C. and was celebrated around the time of the vernal equinox, in mid-March. A variety of other dates tied to the seasons were also used by various ancient cultures. The Egyptians, Phoenicians, and Persians began their new year with the fall equinox, and the Greeks celebrated it on the winter solstice.

#### Early Roman Calendar: March 1st Rings in the New Year

The early Roman calendar designated March 1 as the new year. The calendar had just ten months, beginning with March. That the new year once began with the month of March is still reflected in some of the names of the months. September through December, our ninth through twelfth months, were originally positioned as the seventh through tenth months (septem is Latin for "seven," octo is "eight," novem is "nine," and decem is "ten.")

#### January Joins the Calendar

The first time the new year was celebrated on January 1st was in Rome in 153 B.C. (In fact, the month of January did not even exist until around 700 B.C., when the second king of Rome, Numa Pontilius, added the months of January and February.) The new year was moved from March to January because that was the beginning of the civil year, the month that the two newly elected Roman consuls—the highest officials in the Roman republic—began their one-year tenure. But this new year date was not always strictly and widely observed, and the new year was still sometimes celebrated on March 1.

#### Julian Calendar: January 1st Officially Instituted as the New Year

In 46 B.C. Julius Caesar introduced a new, solar-based calendar that was a vast improvement on the ancient Roman calendar, which was a lunar system that had become wildly inaccurate over the years. The Julian calendar decreed that the new year would occur with January 1, and within the Roman world, January 1 became the consistently observed start of the new year.

#### Middle Ages: January 1st Abolished

In medieval Europe, however, the celebrations accompanying the new year were considered pagan and unchristian like, and in 567 the Council of Tours abolished January 1 as the beginning of the year. At various times and in various places throughout medieval Christian Europe, the new year was celebrated on Dec. 25, the birth of Jesus; March 1; March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation; and Easter.

#### Gregorian Calendar: January 1st Restored

In 1582, the Gregorian calendar reform restored January 1 as new year's day. Although most Catholic countries adopted the Gregorian calendar almost immediately, it was only gradually adopted among Protestant countries. The British, for example, did not adopt the reformed calendar until 1752. Until then, the British Empire—and their American colonies—still celebrated the new year in March.

<http://www.infoplease.com/spot/newyearhistory.html>

While some believe that Valentine's Day is celebrated in the middle of February to commemorate the anniversary of Valentine's death or burial — which probably occurred around 270 A.D. — others claim that the Christian church may have decided to celebrate Valentine's feast day in the middle of February in an effort to 'christianize' celebrations of the pagan Lupercalia festival. In ancient Rome, February was the official beginning of spring and was considered a time for purification. Houses were ritually cleansed by sweeping them out and then sprinkling salt and a type of wheat called spelt throughout their interiors. Lupercalia, which began at the ides of February, February 15, was a fertility festival dedicated to Faunus, the Roman god of agriculture, as well as to the Roman founders Romulus and Remus.

To begin the festival, members of the Luperci, an order of Roman priests, would gather at the sacred cave where the infants Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome, were believed to have been cared for by a she-wolf or lupa. The priests would then sacrifice a goat, for fertility, and a dog, for purification.

The boys then sliced the goat's hide into strips, dipped them in the sacrificial blood and took to the streets, gently slapping both women and fields of crops with the goathide strips. Far from being fearful, Roman women welcomed being touched with the hides because it was believed the strips would make them more fertile in the coming year. Later in the day, according to legend, all the young women in the city would place their names in a big urn. The city's bachelors would then each choose a name out of the urn and become paired for the year with his chosen woman. These matches often ended in marriage. Pope Gelasius declared February 14 St. Valentine's Day around 498 A.D. The Roman 'lottery' system for romantic pairing was deemed un-Christian and outlawed. Later, during the Middle Ages, it was commonly believed in France and England that February 14 was the beginning of birds' mating season, which added to the idea that the middle of February — Valentine's Day — should be a day for romance. The oldest known valentine still in existence today was a poem written by Charles, Duke of Orleans to his wife while he was imprisoned in the Tower of London following his capture at the Battle of Agincourt. The greeting, which was written in 1415, is part of the manuscript collection of the British Library in London, England. Several years later, it is believed that King Henry V hired a writer named John Lydgate to compose a valentine note to Catherine of Valois.

Valentine greetings were popular as far back as the Middle Ages (written Valentine's didn't begin to appear until after 1400), and the oldest known Valentine card is on display at the British Museum. The first commercial Valentine's Day greeting cards produced in the U.S. were created in the 1840s by Esther A. Howland. Howland, known as the Mother of the Valentine, made elaborate creations with real lace, ribbons and colorful pictures known as "scrap"

Excerpts from:

<http://www.history.com/content/valentine/history-of-valentine-s-day>