

BARONY MARCHE OF THE
DEBATABLE LANDS



ARTS AND SCIENCES
ISSUE

A compendium of information about the gentle
and martial arts and sciences as they are
practiced and understood in the Barony
Marche. Published in the year two thousand
and ten and made available at the celebration
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Cam  gratia.

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Any gentle wishing to submit articles, artwork, poetry, etc, to the Althing is invited to do so. Please send your work to the chronicler. All material in the Althing is copyrighted to the individual contributors. The chronicler reserves the right to edit, refuse, or reprint any submissions. The submission deadline for the Althing is the first Wednesday of the month.

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The Arts and Sciences Issue of the Althing

This issue encompasses both the gentle Arts and the Arts martial. This balance is at the heart of what makes the Barony Marche of the Debatable Lands the rich and wonderful place that it is.

I would like to thank everyone that submitted an article for this issue: Mistress Arianna of Wynthrope, Baroness Ariella of Thornbury, THL Katla Ulfhedinn, THL Kieran MacRae, and Odriana vander Brugghe, who acted as co-editor with me.

While you are reading this issue, I hope that you are inspired to learn more, reproduce something described here, and/or connect the information with your persona/area of interest. If you are so inspired; please consider sharing your experience through writing an article for the Althing or dropping a line to the writer that inspired you.

Yours in Service,

Elss of Augsburg
Chronicler

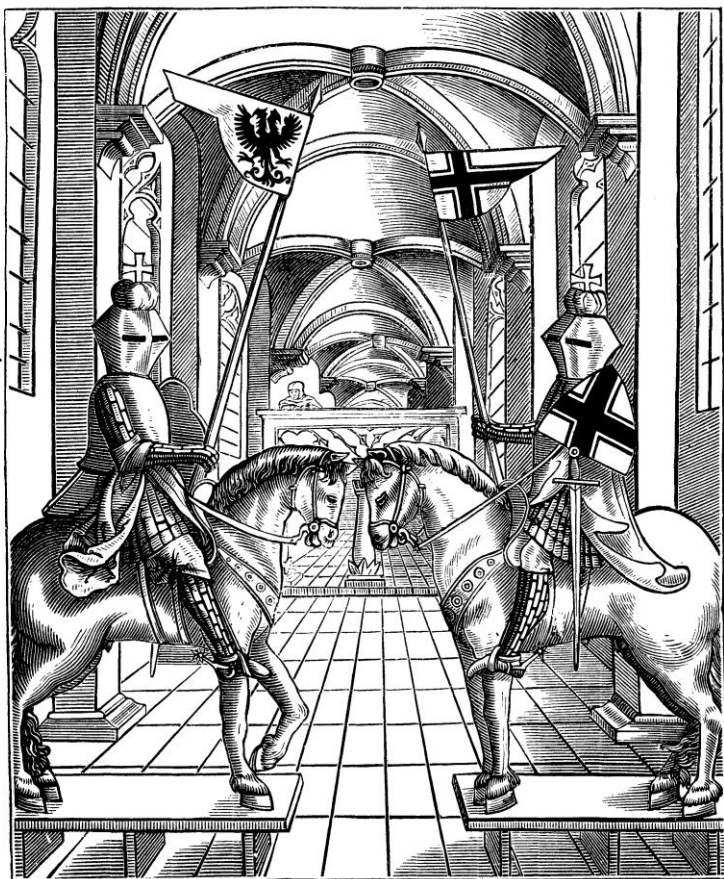
Barony Marche of the Debatable Lands



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Your Persona and Their Dog

By **THL Katla Ulfhedinn**

Have you ever wondered what type of dogs would accompany your persona? Dogs were domesticated thousands of years ago. Since then dogs have functioned in many roles. Some dogs are companions, hunters or herders, as well as protectors. Many breeds are multipurpose. Crossing continents and cultures, dogs and their relationship with people stretch through the centuries.



Perhaps your persona has origins in the Far East. Some Chinese dogs had personal servants and were granted titles and honors by reigning Emperors. The Emperor Kao Wei, granted a title equivalent to that of a Duke to a Persian dog. This animal was fed the best meat and rice, as well as had private guards escort it on its daily walks. (Not much has changed for our dogs has it?) During the Tang Dynasty (618-907), the chow was a favored dog and in some cases considered to be members of the imperial house. Today the chow is a mid-large sized dog, known for a black tongue, a curled tail, and a protective demeanor.

During Marco Polo's travels into the Mongol empire (13th century), he encountered immense dogs, called Mastiffs. He described them as being the size of a donkey. The Mastiff is a giant dog with a large square head, great for hunting and protection. Kublai Khan was noted to have 10,000 dogs, tended by as many servants. Also valued were small lap dogs, like the Japanese Chin. During the 10th century the Japanese tried to breed this dog to look more like the Buddhist lion, with a fluffy tail, feathered feet and a spot on their foreheads said to represent the island of Japan. Both the Mastiff, (though perhaps exaggerated in size), and the Chin are examples of a breed that has changed little over the centuries.

Magyar tribes from the east first entered Hungary around the 9th century; with them they brought flocks of sheep and hounds to herd and protect them. The Kuvasz is a large dog, all white, with a thick heavy coat that never mats. These dogs spent their days tending the flock with a lone shepherd. Today, just as when they were charged with guarding the flock, the Kuvasz are very protective of those they guard. King Mátyás Corvinus reigned in the 15th

century. It is said that the King always had a Kuvasz at his side, trusting the dogs more than his own guards.

For protection and to aid in the hunt, the Magyars also brought with them the Agár. The Agár was similar in appearance to the Greyhound – deep-chested, built for speed and endurance. Used to hunt hare, and run down deer, the Agár was a valuable companion. Just after our period of study the European greyhound was brought to Hungary to add speed to the Agár; much time and breeding has been spent since then trying to reestablish the original characteristics of the breed.

The Persian Empire stretched from northern Africa, north to the Mediterranean and east to India. No matter where in the Persian Empire you come from, the Saluki was valued for its hunting ability. A sight hound, built with a deep chest and powerful lungs, it can run both sprints and distances across the desert after its prey. Arabic hunting manuscripts such as “Al Mansur’s Book on Hunting” include chapters dedicated to Salukis, their breeding, their abilities, and even their veterinary care. It is easy to spot a mosaic or illumination with a Saluki; they look like short coated greyhounds with a fluffy tail and droopy ears. Little to nothing has changed in the appearance of the Saluki over the centuries.

Let’s move north and talk about some herding and hunting type dogs. By far the most well known Viking dog that exists today is the Elkhound. A mid size dog, its purpose is also its namesake. The Elkhound is a hunting dog, often used to harry or distract the elk so a hunter could slay it. The Elkhound is a very loyal dog, good with family but also very protective. Elkhounds have a pointy nose, pricked ears and a curled tail.

Less well known is a small dog called the Lundehund. This dog was prized by the Norse for its abilities to swim and climb cliffs. Why? Puffins, a cliff dwelling bird, were a delicacy to the Vikings. The Lundehund not only has webbed feet but can also rotate its front legs 180 degrees, making it an adept climber. Training, combined with natural ability and its physical attributes, made this dog well suited to climb the cliffs where the puffins sought shelter. A good hound was able to bring home a dozen or more of these delicious birds in one night.

What types of dogs were popular in Europe? English nobility kept kennels with hundreds, sometime thousands, of dogs. These dogs were kenneled and ready to hunt at any time. Many hounds for the formal hunt were Greyhounds, Alauntes, Spaniels, and Lymers; Alauntes would be recognized today as

Mastiffs, large dogs with a huge head and a wide powerful chest. In the early 15th century, Duke Edward of Norwich, penned “The Master of Game”, in which he describes a good Alaunte:

“...should run as fast as a greyhound, and any beast that he can catch he should hold with his seizers and not leave it...be well conditioned....as I have said that he is the best bound that can be to take all manner of beasts.....for when a wild boar is within a strong hatte of wood, perhaps all day the running of the bounds will not make him come out. And when men let such mastiffs run at him to come out his strength, so that he shall not remain long at bay.”

Norwich also describes a different type of Alaunte that you would see in towns. The Alauntes of the butcheries were easy to keep because they ate the “foul things in the butcher’s row” and were very useful at helping bring recently bought animals in from the country, or at helping catch the oxen who escaped from the butcher.

Norwich goes on in the next chapter to describe the attributes of the Spaniel. Spaniels were bird dogs, used in combination with falcons or hawks to hunt for partridge or quail. If you are a falconer, this may be the dog for you. Spaniels can be taught to swim to retrieve waterfowl and “they love their masters and follow them without losing, although they be in a great crowd of men, and commonly they go before their master, running and wagging their tail”. Sounds familiar, doesn’t it? Though Norwich praises the fine qualities of the Spaniel, he also states they are great barkers and fighters and they are sure to ruin the hunt if you bring them along.

“If he sees geese or kine, or horses, or hens, or oxen or other beasts he will run anon and begin to bark at them, and because of him all the greyhounds will run and take the beast through his egging on, for he will make all the riot and all the harm.”

Scent hounds were utilized ahead of the hunt to track and locate suitable quarry to be later flushed out for the hunting party. Lymers were trained to track specific game and would live with the dog keeper, away from the rest of the hounds. These scent hounds would not run with the other dogs on the chase, they would be kept in backup in case the running hounds lost the trail. From illuminations such as those from Gaston Pheobus and the hunting tapestries of Maximilian you can see a dog with a large head, droopy ears, and large jowls much resembling the modern Bloodhound. In period, these dogs were chosen from other types of hounds because of their ability to scent and track, today’s Bloodhounds are most likely descendant from Lymers.

Perhaps hunting dogs are not your cup of tea. Are you a gracious lady that cannot be troubled with such gruesome things? Perhaps a small lap dog would better suit your persona. Anne of Denmark, 1574-1619, owned numerous Italian Greyhounds, essentially a miniature greyhound. Favored pets, they wore collars that were of blue velvet, with silver placards bearing the initials AR, for Anna Regina. Paintings in the 15th and 16th century include ladies with their small dogs. Many resemble the Papillion, a very dainty dog, with feathered ears, sometimes called the butterfly dog for the way their ears look like butterfly wings.

No matter where or when you are from, you can find a dog to suit both your mundane life and your SCA persona. Whether hunting, herding, protecting, or carting, hounds were and are a valuable part of our lives. Just like their medieval counterparts, dogs today are loving companions. If you are looking for the most common dog of the Middle Ages, visit your local animal shelter. The mutt is still the most readily available hound of all.

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A Method for Documentation

By Odriana vander Brugghe

The scariest part of any A&S Competition (or Display) is producing documentation to go with your entry. There are few clear cut expectations given to entrants beyond “having some” or that anything from a few lines on a 3x5 card to a twenty page dissertation on the object and its place in history is acceptable. This broad playing field is specifically to provide flexibility for the person holding the competition or display.

There are many ways to go about writing documentation, and these hints and suggestions are what I’ve learned along the way. I recommend talking to other people to learn what their experiences are and what techniques they use for their documentation.

I find that writing documentation while I’m doing something, much like a travel log of my adventure, works best for me. I keep paper near me and write down observations, ideas, and conclusions on the fly and organize the information in a more coherent fashion later. The process of writing while working slows me down enough to ensure that I’m fully paying attention to what is happening and gives me a place to write down questions that may arise so that I can track down the information later.

Once I have my observations from the experience of doing something, I will then do the additional research to answer any questions that I may have, and to better place things within a historical and cultural context, as that is my particular viewpoint. This includes data-checking and following up any information that needs to be followed up on. Then I structure everything for the final paper.

Our organization being as it is, we have the flexibility to choose a citation style that suits each person, rather than being bound to a singular standard. Citation styles are standardized forms for properly crediting (citing) the materials used. The citation style has defined ways to properly credit quotes, paraphrasing, and references.

Using a standard citation style will help to keep where you got your information well organized and it gives the judges something that they can work with when reviewing your documentation. The two best known citation styles are APA (American Psychological Association) and MLA (Modern

Language Association). APA citation style is used primarily for the arts, and MLA is the recognized scientific standard. There are also preferred citation styles by different disciplines, for example, the American Anthropological Association (AAA) uses the Chicago Manual of Style as their standard.

How long should your documentation be? For an entry in an A&S competition, I recommend three or four pages (including your reference list) maximum; anything over two pages should have a 50 word abstract at the beginning. The abstract gives a solid overview, without detail, which is more for the casual observer than the Judge. When you only have three or four pages, there may be the necessity for additional explanation to better detail the information about the entry. This additional information should be arranged in Appendices that can then be referenced by the Judge.

Once my documentation has been fully drafted, I have a crack team of editors, some of whom are familiar with my field, some of whom aren't. They make sure that I'm communicating well, writing in English, and that the information flows well. They make sure that my metaphorical skirt is not tucked into my metaphorical panty hose. Without them, I am nothing, and I credit them for that every time. I recommend finding an editor or two to help look over your work before you enter the competition. They are a fantastic resource, especially if they are familiar with your field and they see that you have missed a great resource that really should be included, or have additional information that you didn't realize was out there. Having such fantastic editors has pushed me to be a better researcher, and I believe that it can do the same thing for other people.

Resources

American Psychological Association (APA) Style Guide

<http://www.apastyle.org/>

Chicago Manual of Style

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

The Landmark Project's Son of Citation Machine

<http://citationmachine.net/>

Modern Language Association (MLA) Style Guide

<http://www.mla.org/style>

Research and Documentation Online

<http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/>



An Approach to Teaching in the SCA

By THL Kieran MacRae

The purpose of this class is to give suggestions and strategies for those who have been asked to teach or wish to teach in an SCA setting. Teaching is very important in The Society, and whether you're relatively new or if you've been around for years, the knowledge you share can inspire or enlighten many others.

Let's begin with your own experiences as a student. What are three characteristics of the *best* teachers you have had?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What are three characteristics of the *worst* teachers you have had?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

To over-simplify, you want to be as much like those best teachers you've had, and as little like the worst. Doing that takes time, effort, and experience in the act of preparation.

Prepare the Subject

As a teacher mundanely, I constantly am preparing – myself, my students, my lessons, and especially my lunch and my coffee. Teaching a class requires a great deal of preparation, just as doing well in a class does. The more you think ahead and prepare, the better your class will be. Questions you need to answer include:

- What are you teaching?
- What do you want your students to know after they finish class?
- How will you lead your students there?
- Will they be making anything along the way?

Begin simply: decide on what you want to teach and what you want your students to know. Focus on one goal. Will it be a general overview class, or will you focus on a specific element? By knowing specifically what you will be teaching and communicating that, your students will not be confused.

The activities you choose for your class set the path to the knowledge you want to share. The more involved your students are, the more they will learn and the better the knowledge will be retained.

While lecturing is useful and necessary for certain topics, strive to get them involved in other ways to reinforce what you're teaching. Even if it's question and answer, the right kinds of questions can keep a topic or a discussion moving forward. I have included a copy of Bloom's Taxonomy¹ after the conclusion of this article to assist in asking questions of your students to elicit better responses.

If you are teaching how to make an object which the students get to take with them, you need to prepare the materials. How much will the students provide and how much are you providing (pencils, paper, thread/floss, leather, armoring tools)? Do you need to provide an expensive material that merits a charge for your class? If so, try to keep the cost as fair as possible. Keep in mind the size of the class you are able to teach, and bring enough materials to share. In most formal contexts, such as Scholas and Æcademy, you can limit your class size to the number of students you have materials for. If you choose not to size limit your class, it is best to significantly overestimate how many people will attend so that you don't run out of materials.

Also consider the external needs of your class – do you require tables, wall space, or anything else that needs to be set up for you? Make sure you mention that as well when you sign up to teach your class.

Handouts

In most classes, the handout is the only artifact that students get to take away from their classes and it becomes their strongest link to what you taught. When creating a handout, take special care that the information that you hand out is worth saving. I create my handouts so that someone that never took my class can read it and get exactly the same information as someone that did take the class. This does not mean that you write out every single detail of your

¹ Bloom's Taxonomy illustrates different learning objectives. You may use this as a starting point for what kinds of questions to ask and when to ask them.

class, nor should you just read your handout aloud to the class. I include every main topic I intend to discuss and aim to include in the class, as well as enough relevant details about the topic that the reader can easily follow the information.

At the beginning of the handout, display the title of your class prominently, followed by your SCA name. Include a listing of the events at which you have taught the class. It can be useful to you to see how many times you teach a particular course, and it allows your students to know your teaching experience with that course. It may also be useful to include when revisions happen to show that you have continued to learn about the subject, or have improved on how to teach the subject matter.

At the end of your handout, include a bibliography (if the subject matter warrants it) and consider including a “for further reading” section. Sometimes all it takes is a push in the right direction to get someone excited about a topic. You may also want to include your mundane name and some contact information so that people can contact you after the event is over if they have questions or would like to talk more about your subject.

Preparing the Lesson

Now it's time to address the lesson itself. How will you start? How long will you talk about each section? How will you know if there's too much/not enough time?

Begin with the fact that most SCA classes are one hour long. It is recommended that this time span be your gold standard and that you extend this time only if the material absolutely requires more time. Using that one hour time frame, apply a basic lesson plan format: sponge activity, main activity, conclusion/assessment.

- **Sponge Activity** (~10 minutes) – This is the first thing your students engage in, like an educational appetizer. In this class, it was the discussion of the best and worst teacher characteristics. It gets students involved easily before getting to the heart of the lesson.
- **Main Activity/ies** (~30-40 minutes) – This is where you do the majority of your discussions and activities. Consider how long you want to spend on each one so there's an even flow through them. Allow some time for questions and tangents.

- **Conclusion/Assessment** (~10-20 minutes) – This is when you wrap up your main points, give feedback to finished or not-quite finished products, and leave time for more extensive questions and answers.

When teaching the class, don't worry if you're done 10 minutes early, or if you realize the hour's already over. Evaluate how to expand or contract certain areas for the next time. You may want to keep an outline of the handout with time amounts for each section so that you can closely keep track of the pace of your class – but don't become so focused on the time limits that you skip over information to meet the time deadlines.

Preparing Yourself

Do not underestimate the role that you play as the teacher in your class. Remember those traits of your best teacher. Admittedly, not everyone is comfortable speaking in front of others or is an “expert” on the topic they are teaching. This should not limit anyone from teaching a class. If people didn't teach because they were nervous or felt unqualified, there'd not be enough teachers in the world.

If you have never taught before, or if it's a brand new class for you, running through your class with just a few friends can provide valuable insight. It's like a dress rehearsal, where you try out what you think will work and sound good, and you can safely discuss with friends what does and doesn't work. Then, before the event, you can make changes and go in with more confidence.

There are some tips and reminders for those who are new or nervous about leading a class:

- Your first statement should be a welcome with your name and the title of your class. Then state the goals and/or inspiration for the class. Pass out your handouts while you do this and try to smile. If people see that you're excited and having fun, they will respond to your energy.
- Do not be embarrassed to say it's your first time teaching. Some people assume too much and being straightforward will clear the air.
- If you start to feel nervous, breathe deeply and speak slowly. Take the time you need to collect your thoughts, look over your notes, and move on.

- Take the position that everyone who is in the room with you wants to know what you're going to teach, including Laurels.
- You have every right to be in that room teaching that class. If there are serious flaws in your data or your delivery, they should be dealt with on-on-one and not in public. If that happens, do not be distraught, learn from it and apply it to your class when you're ready to.

Preparing for Others

This topic deals with all of those people looking at you, wanting to learn something. As you will or may have discovered, it's one thing to sit in a class, and another to be in front of it. In general, you should expect that people in your class will be polite, somewhat quiet, and cooperative. You will encounter many different personality types, and with the use of classroom management skills you can deal with those being difficult in a rational, straightforward way.

The Quiet Type – They don't say much, if anything, and they may even be more shy and nervous than you are. If you like, ask a direct but inviting question to get their opinion expressed, but don't put undue pressure on them for a response.

The Non-Sequitur – These are people who take a question about 14th century pottery and in two minutes are talking about their recent trip to Vermont. If a discussion gets off topic and needs to be reeled in, acknowledge the speaker with a short, appropriate response and get right back to the lesson. It's most important to end the off-topic talk quickly and without making a big deal out of it.

The Chatterbox(es) – If people look like they're getting more out of their private discussion than your class, a direct question or two in their direction may return their focus. If not, it would be best to walk to those talking, calmly and directly ask them to stop, and continue with the class. If that doesn't work, approach them again and respectfully ask them to leave. Private conversations don't belong in other's classes.

The Over-Questioner – This person may ask multiple questions about small details, or may not allow you to finish more than one complete sentence at a time. It can be very annoying, but realize the person may honestly be curious and want to know. Decide how you want to deal with questions while you speak. Are one or two okay? Or should all questions wait until the end of a

section or the class? This is why you leave enough time at the end of class, just in case.

The “Class-Hole” – This person will come across as challenging your knowledge base and may look or act like s/he should be teaching the class, not you. This person may or may not be a peer. It will take courage, and perhaps experience, but do not let this person get to you. You are the teacher and this is your class. If you are challenged about a point and you don’t know the answer, admit it and move on. Some useful verbiage to use in this situation is, “Oh! I didn’t come across that. I will have to look that up in the future.” If you are being challenged on a point about which you’re sure, don’t argue, say “I would be happy to discuss this further with you after class, but now I am going to move on.” If you are asked questions about why your class doesn’t include this or that, say “That’s a good question! I’ll have to research that further.” Don’t be afraid to restate the scope of your class.

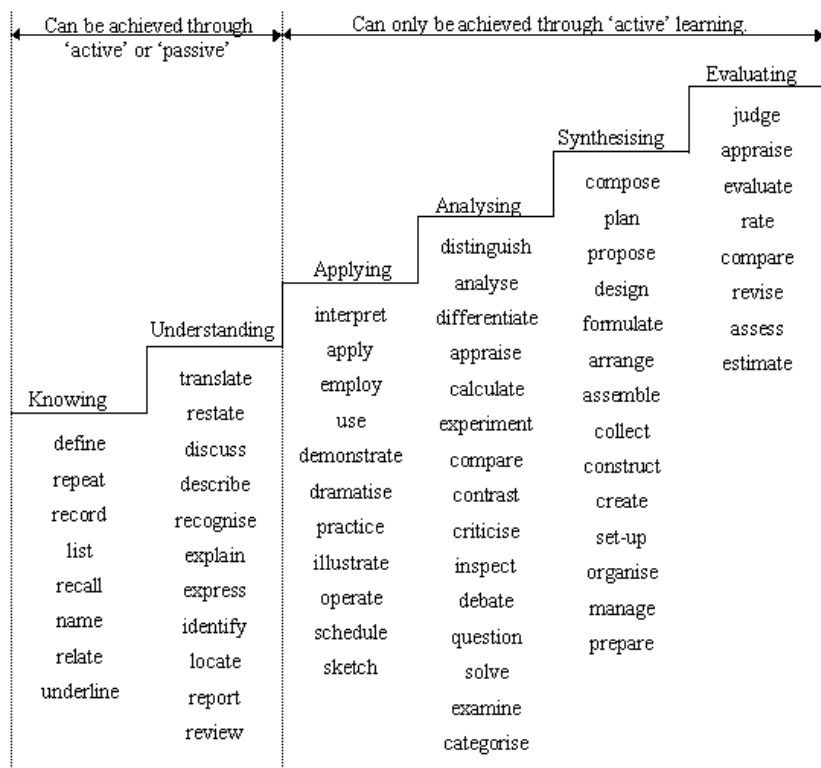
If you start to get really anxious, or angry, and your thoughts get all jittery while you’re getting fidgety, *breathe*. Just take a few seconds and *breathe* to calm down. Review the tips and reminders for when you’re nervous. If you really need to, excuse yourself outside for a moment, take the steps that you need to in order to regain composure, and move on with the class.

In all of these situations, it is crucial to stay calm and act rationally. Word will get out about someone that starts shouting and loses control while teaching, even if that teacher was unfairly provoked. It will take some experience to get comfortable in these situations, but once you build confidence, you will become a more effective teacher.

Conclusion

Much of what we learn in the SCA is from someone teaching us, either in a class, or one-on-one. People who want to share knowledge should be encouraged to teach. You don’t have to be a peer to be a good teacher. You need to be enthusiastic, organized, and confident. Be prepared to teach, and also to learn. By teaching, you open others to the knowledge you have, and you open yourself to learning more through what others give back. It is a rewarding experience, whether you’re teaching a class of two or twenty. Here is my contact information (rstrobel (at) gmail (dot) com), and I encourage you to contact me with any questions or feedback you may have about teaching. You may very well see me in a class of yours someday!

Bloom's Taxonomy



From: <https://curve.coventry.ac.uk/cu/items/33362904-d31d-ad7a-a7ff-b5f63bca5bc2/1/studyskills.zip/ehe/StudWork/Prinlers/pimage7.gif>

English Medieval Tiles

By Baroness Ariella of Thornbury

When one thinks of the best, most impressive floor covering in modern America, one often thinks of polished marble floors or expensive, imported carpets. In the High to Late Middle Ages in England, however, carpets were not available and the thought of putting a beautiful woven cloth or tapestry on the floor where people would walk on it might have seemed absurd or destructive. If one thought of stone, one might have pointed out how fire-resistant stone floors are, and put them in the kitchen, out of sight of nobility. If one really wanted to impress nobility and beautify even the floors, one used tiles on the floor.

Some of the best examples of tile floors or decorative tiles are the British Museum in London. Historians and re-enactors are fortunate that tiles survive the centuries well and were used in places that were treasured, such as Queen Philippa's chapel. English Medieval floor tiles share several characteristics, stemming from methods of tile production at the time, which gives them an "English Medieval look" that varies from our modern tiles.

First, tiles are heavy and were even heavier in medieval times since they were thicker (two to three times as thick). This means transporting them is difficult if not prohibitive, though there are references to importing Flemish tiles in the late 14th and 15th centuries; most tile production centers were near the source of clay and most tiles in England were used close to where they were made.

Second, tiles were fired only once and medieval tile kilns had more variation in heat throughout the kiln, leading to some tiles where the glaze is underfired and some tiles that are overfired with glaze overly dark, sometimes just along one edge.

Third, the English did not have the range of colors of glaze we enjoy today. According to Eames, the colors available were light or dark green, yellow, brown, and near black. Despite at least one tantalizing illumination showing 15th C. English nobility in a great hall with a blue, green, and yellow tile floor, there are no primary sources of blue tiles from medieval England. There were a variety of methods, including mosaic, inlay, printing (stamping the tile with a die coated with white slip instead of stamping first and then pouring in the slip), and relief. Finally, the size was more uniform than modern tiles, with

most tiles approximately 9-12 cm square (4-5 inches square) though some are as large as 7 inches square.

Despite the limitations in technique and methods of production, many English medieval tiles are not only beautiful, but creatively designed and used to create unified floor designs impossible to achieve with flooring materials such as wood or stone. For example, the Tring Tiles in the British Museum show detailed Biblical scenes. Henry II of England's Clarendon Palace had a chapel floor with a large circular design (a portion of which is on display at the British Museum, see photo below).



King's Chapel floor tiles, image courtesy of the British Museum, London

In the second photo, on the next page, three 14th century English tile recreations display different levels of detail. Clockwise from the left they are a mounted Knight, a mounted Knight in mail, and a lion. These were made by Kate Tiler, an English re-enactor who sells reproduction tiles (see website below for further information and methods). She uses the same techniques as for the Tring Tiles: a stamped tile with white slip poured into the molded depression in the red clay, then glazed over with a translucent, yellow-tinged glaze. Even just two images here can demonstrate the beauty and complex

designs that tiles offered the medieval craftsman, an aesthetic quality unequalled in other flooring materials available in Medieval England.



Three of many designs of tile reproductions made by Karen Elkins. Two tiles are thicker (as a period tile would be), the mailed Knight tile is half the thickness (closer to modern tile).

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www.katetiler.co.uk This website has photos of Karen Elkins's English Medieval tiles dating from the 13th-16th century and some of her modern designs for sale. It also has brief discussions of her methods and her contact information.

Making Jack Armor

By Mistress Arianna of Wynthrope

Jack armor is ideally suited for SCA youth combat body armor. It's adjustable so it can grow with the kid. It provides the required protection while still being lightweight. It's compact; you can roll it up to easily fit in an armor bag. It is more authentic than using sporting equipment, and can be made in any color the fighter desires. It's even washable – you can throw the whole thing in the washing machine, and then hang it to dry or even run it through the dryer on low heat. It's not difficult to make, though it can be a bit time-consuming. Even better, older youth fighters can do some or all of the labor required.



Jack Armor, also known as a Jack of Plates, Coat of Plates, or Brigandine, was used extensively in England and Scotland during the 13th through 16th centuries, primarily by infantrymen and longbowmen.² There are several styles ranging from a simple padded coat to leather with overlapping plates of metal riveted inside³. This article explains how to make jack armor made of rectangular pieces of a stiff substance sewn into heavy cloth, providing protection for the body and upper thighs.⁴ In period, the stiff substance would

² The Grove Encyclopedia of Decorative Arts, by Gordon Campbell.

³ A Glossary of the Construction, Decoration, and Use of Arms and Armor, by George Cameron Stone.

⁴ *Historic Jamestowne* (website), article: [Archaeologists Uncover Jack of Plate Armor](#)

have been metal or cuir bouillie (literally “boiled leather”, or leather that has been boiled and beaten into shape and allowed to dry and harden). Since the stiff material is completely hidden by the cloth covering, I make my kids’ jack armor out of that old SCA armoring standby, plastic buckets.

Note: Jack armor can be adapted for adult SCA combat. However, it is advisable to use a design with either overlapping plates, additional padding under the armor, or both, to compensate for the higher calibration level of rattan combat. One example of a good style for adult combat is the Visby Coat of Plates⁵.

MATERIALS

2-4 heavy-duty plastic buckets, depending on size of fighter

3-4 yards heavyweight fabric, like canvas

1 spool heavy duty thread

3 yards of 3” bias tape (or make your own by cutting strips of the fabric on the diagonal)

TOOLS

Jigsaw (optional but helpful)

Tin snips or heavy duty shears

Plastic goggles for eye protection

A file or rasp, medium weight

Sewing machine with zipper foot

#18 sewing machine needles (several, as they may break)

1 long thin object for pushing plates into pocket, like a yardstick or long tent stake

5 *Academic Dictionaries and Encyclopedias* (website), article: Coat of Plates

DIRECTIONS

Step 1: Get some heavy duty plastic buckets. I used joint compound buckets. Make sure the plastic is stiff enough that it's difficult to bend. If the bucket cracks as you are trying to cut it, then it's too brittle and should be discarded.

The number of buckets you'll need depends on the size of the kid being armored as well as the size of the buckets. Expect to use two to four of them. Wash the buckets thoroughly and let them dry.

Step 2: Cut the bucket into long strips 2-3" wide with the jigsaw. Make sure to use eye protection.



Figure 2: Cutting the bucket into strips

Note: Do not try to cut all the way through the bottom of the bucket.

Step 3: Cut the strips into rectangles with tin snips or shears, discarding the handle and the reinforced section at the top of the bucket. Round the corners of each rectangle so they can't poke through the fabric covering later.



Figure 3: Cutting the strips into rectangles and trimming corners

Step 4: Use a rasp or file to remove the burs from the edges of the plastic and smooth the corners.

Step 5: Take the following measurements on your fighter:

A: Chest plus 12", divided by 2

B: Top of shoulder to knee plus 2"

C: Neck to point of shoulder plus 2"

D. Top of shoulder to center of chest about 4" below the neck plus 1"

Step 6: Lay out and cut the fabric for the body using Figures 4A and 4B below. Cut two of each.

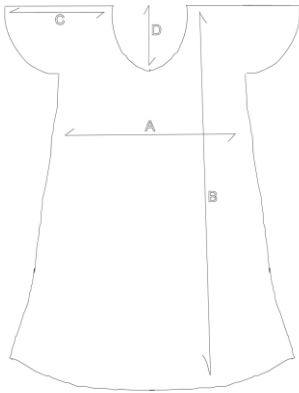


Figure 4A: Front of armor, cut 2

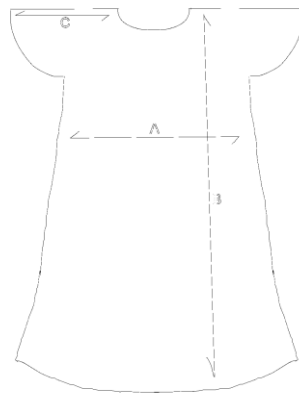


Figure 4B: Back of armor, cut 2

Step 7: With right sides together, sew the two front pieces together along all edges except the bottom. Do the same with the back. Clip the corners and curves, turn right side out and iron the seams.

Step 8: Slide appropriate sized plastic plates into the shoulder areas and sew around them to hold them in place. Continue adding plates until the area from the shoulder to the bottom edge of the neckline is filled with plastic plates as shown in Figure 5 right. You may have to recut some plastic plates to fit as you go along, so keep the snips handy.



Figure 5: Shoulder plates sewn in

Step 9: With a pencil or tailor's chalk, draw vertical lines from the shoulder and neck edge to the hem of each piece and about ½" wider than the narrower width of your plastic rectangles. Sew a straight stitch along each of these lines to create channels into which the plastic pieces will go.



Figure 6: Channels sewn

Step 10: Using a yard stick or other long thin object, push a plate into each channel until you have one row of plates all the way across the body. Stitch horizontally across the body as close as possible to the bottom of the row of plates.

Step 11: Continue inserting a plate in each channel and sewing along the bottom edge of each row. When you reach a point about 8-10" from the bottom edge of the armor, stop and cut a slit from the bottom edge to just below the current row of plates in each piece. This slit is to allow ease of movement. Stitch around the slit to enclose it.

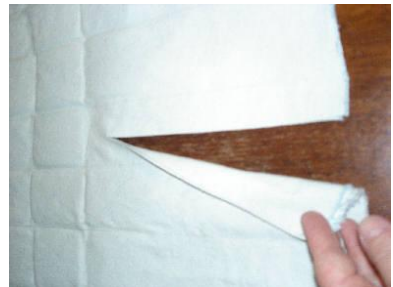
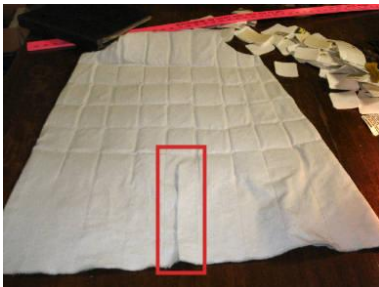


Figure 7: Slit cut in center of body

Step 12: Continue adding plastic plates until the front and back pieces are both filled with plates and there is about an inch of fabric left below the last line of stitching. Trim the bottom edges to even them out as needed.

Step 13: Fold, pin and then sew the bias tape around the raw edges at the bottom of each piece, pinning carefully around the corners of the slit.

Step 14: Open up the seams at the shoulders of each piece and sew the front to the back at the shoulders.



Figure 8: Shoulders sewn together

Step 15: To make the ties, cut four 3” strips of the same cloth you used to make the armor. Make each strip $\frac{1}{2}$ the measurement of the fighter’s waist in length (i.e., if the fighter has a 30” waist, make each tie 15” long). Fold both edges of the fabric in to the middle of the strip lengthwise about 1” and iron it down. Then, fold the entire strip lengthwise again and stitch the edges down as shown below.



Figure 9: Completed ties



Step 16: Place the completed body armor on the fighter and mark the waist at the edges of both front and back panels. Stitch the ties at the marks.

The jack armor is now done! You can paint or appliqué heraldry or other decorations on the armor if desired.

Putting it on: Bring the ties from the front around the fighter’s back *under* the back panel of the armor, then tie the back panel’s ties *over* the front panel.

For a more detailed version of this article, with more photos, go to <http://sites.google.com/site/ariannayouthcombat/home/making-jack-armor>

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