



# The Thorn

Shire of Blak Rose Volume 30, Issue 1

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## Upcoming Events in the Shire

**Maypole Dance Demo  
Fort Hunter Garden Faire  
Sunday, May 6, 10 am to 4 pm**

Dancers and musicians are needed for this demo. The dance is easy and practice sessions will be held at the park in the weeks leading up to the demo. Because we perform this service for the park, they make an exception for us to their usual restriction on only allowing groups from the Fort's 1700s time period to participate. Anyone who wishes to display A&S or combat materials with us should contact the Shire's Chatelain.

**McLain Celtic Festival  
Fort Hunter Garden Faire  
Saturday, September 1**

All members of the Shire are welcome to join us for this demo. We are in need of interactive activities and people who like to talk about what they do in the SCA. The more the merrier for this event. The contacts we make at this event have a true love of history and have the highest chance of coming to a second event of any other demo we do.

You are expected to remain in our area unless you purchase a ticket at the entrance.

After a hiatus since winter 2015 (Volume 27, Issue 1), the Thorn is back in publication.

We make a note of this to prevent our readers from frantically searching the archives for the missing copies.

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# A Medieval Christmas

Alice Hanewell (Jan. 2018)  
citations available upon request

Christmas served a different purpose in medieval society than it does today. Christmas, widely declaimed in today's society as a celebration of commercialism, served as a marker of the year's end and as a start of new beginnings.

In that highly rural time, celebrations marked the dates when different crop plantings were to happen. Christmas marked the end of planting wheat and rye and the beginning of spring crops, which would be planted through Easter. Christmas was generally celebrated on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December, though as one of the most important medieval holidays, it was celebrated for twelve days, starting Christmas Eve, the 24<sup>th</sup>, and ending on January 5<sup>th</sup>.

During Christmas, houses were decorated with holly and ivy. Holly was the most valued of the winter greenery. It was believed that it would bring better harvests in the coming year. Each holly twig would have twelve leaves on it, in deference to the twelve days of Christmas. Giant Yule logs were also burned during the celebration. The Christmas tree with which we are all familiar was not a feature in these celebrations. Instead it was replaced with a Kissing Bush. The Kissing Bush, more commonly known today as mistletoe, was hung where it could not be avoided, such as in the entrance to the dining room. Those who walked under it had to kiss the person physically closest to them. As Christmas was a twelve-day-long celebration, everyone had to do this at least twelve times.

What would Christmas be without presents? During Christmas, a lord often gave gifts of food, clothing, drink, and firewood to his servants. People generally readied twelve presents to give, again in deference to the twelve days of Christmas. Food was given as gifts. Such treats included clove-spiked apples and oranges, nuts, cider-soaked cakes, sugared ale, eggnog, and pork.

Christmas was not so different back in medieval times. It marked the change of crops, the wish for a better harvest in the coming year, and a time of giving. Today it still plays a similar role. Though most of us cannot tell wheat from rye, we still wish for a better year and enjoy our time to be able to give back to the ones that we love.

# Thoughts on the Maypole Dance

## Tuathflaith

Fort Hunter contacted us several years ago after searching the internet for any group that knew how to perform this dance. They wanted to start doing it at their annual Garden Faire. I first became aware of this when an email went out from the Chatelain at the time (Eogan, I think) asking if *anyone* knew how to do this dance.

As it turned out, I had recently been assigned to learn the dance and teach it to the girl scouts in my local service unit and I still had the instructions. The Shire got a group of people together to learn the dance, it was a great success, and we were asked back. The second year Lady Sol played a melody on recorder and the third year she got Nutmegs and Ginger to join her. This was such a success that we have become one of the main attractions for this event.

To tie our society into this dance, which is not really in our period, Eogan reasoned that there were middle ages re-enactors in the Victorian period and we are representing them. We announce this at the demo and everyone has a wonderful time.

Practices will be held at the Fort Hunter park on the barn side of the road on the following dates, weather permitting:

Saturday, April 21 at 11:00 am

Sunday, April 29 at 2:00 pm

Saturday, May 5 at 11:00 am

This schedule is subject to change, so keep an eye on the Shire calendar.

**Maypole Dancing – Weaving Dance**  
**Blak Rose Version by Eogan 2012**  
**Simplified for Newcomers by Tuathflaith 2013**  
**Some counts altered to match new music 2014**

**Introduction**

Begin with 8 counts of music. Stand still.

Bow to the pole for 8 counts, then bow to your partner for 8 counts.

Skip toward the pole for 4 counts.

Skip back for 4 counts.

Side step to the right for 8 counts.

Side step to the left for 8 counts. Ladies will move to the inner circle as they step left.

**Wrap the Pole**

Ladies walk the inner circle clock-wise while the gentlemen walk the outer circle counter-clockwise.

The fourth time you meet your partner, stop. (*Second time during practice.*)

Skip toward the pole for 4 counts.

Skip back for 4 counts.

Unwrap by walking in the opposite direction. Ladies will move back to the outer circle when the unwrapping completes.

Side step to the right for 8 counts.

Side step to the left for 8 counts.

**Weave the Pole**

Turn to your partner and begin to weave.

Ladies hold ribbon in right hand and begin weaving by going under their partner's ribbon. Alternate going over and under with each person you pass. *Ladies move clockwise.*

Gentlemen hold ribbon in left hand and begin weaving by holding ribbon up "over" their partner as they pass. Alternate going under and over with each person you pass. *Gentlemen move counter-clockwise.*

**(It helps to mentally say "over, under" to yourself to stay on track.)**

The fourth time you meet your partner, stop. (*Second time during practice.*)

Skip toward the pole for 4 counts.

Skip back for 4 counts.

Unweave.

Side step to the right for 8 counts.

Side step to the left for 8 counts.

**End of Dance**

Lift your ribbons high slowly and wait for the band to end their music.

Throw up your ribbons and shout **Vivat!!**



Submitted by Jessica Hanwell  
 known in the Society as Lady Alice Hanewell



### New Shire Banner and Pavilion

In 2017 the Shire purchased a banner to display at the May Pole Dance and McLain Celtic Festival demos, as well as any other demos we are invited to do. The banner was designed by Lady Tuathflaith and printed by Staples.

We also purchased the materials for a second and larger Shire pavilion. Lord Aidan made the purchases and put the pavilion together just in time to keep us dry at the very rainy McLain Fest. Thank you, Aidan.

## The Society for Creative Anachronism



*Welcome to the Current Middle Ages*

Shire of Blak Rose

Your local group for parts of Dauphin, Cumberland, Adams, and Perry Counties



[www.blakrose.eastkingdom.org](http://www.blakrose.eastkingdom.org)

[www.sca.org](http://www.sca.org)

# What is the Shire of Blak Rose?

The Shire of Blak Rose consists of medieval and Renaissance re-enactors who are spread across Central PA in Perry, Cumberland, and Dauphin counties. We are active members of a not-for-profit worldwide educational organization known as the Society for Creative Anachronism, Inc. (SCA, Inc.) The SCA is devoted to recreating the arts, sciences, skills and warfare of pre-seventeenth century European culture. For further information on the SCA, please check out the webpage at [www.blakrose.eastkingdom.org](http://www.blakrose.eastkingdom.org) or contact a local officer. For a listing of local events, please visit the web page of the East Kingdom of the SCA at <http://www.eastkingdom.org>.

## **The Shire of Blak Rose in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Online Addresses of Interest**

Blak Rose Web Page with  
Forum and Calendar

<http://blakrose.eastkingdom.org>

To Subscribe to the  
Blak Rose Yahoo Group

[blak\\_rose-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:blak_rose-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

On Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/947540052044354/>

Or search for “Shire of Blak Rose”

## **Officers of the Shire**

### **Seneschal**

Alana O’Keeve  
Deputy: Aidan the Hostile

### **Exchequer**

Sol la Cantor

### **Herald**

Eleazar ha-Levi

### **Chronicler**

Tuathflaith ingen huí Chleirigh

### **Chatelain**

Orn Shieldbreaker

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