

SCA medieval mockers making merry at York

By KEITH NICKSON

Within the hallowed domain of the York Room, Lady Lilidred of Walsted charged Wolfram with poor punning, during the Society for Creative Anachronism's first court night held last week.

The society is a group of medieval enthusiasts who recreate the more positive aspects of the Middle Ages as extensively as possible.

Dressed in self-made medieval garb, the court directed by the seneschal or keeper of the keys, Lady Tsvia ben Tamara, decided to allow Wolfram to make a jest, as a test of his guilt or innocence. The resulting meandering tale drew such a grumbling response that Wolfram was quickly sentenced to be 'punless' for the remainder of the evenings activities.

These included the playing of medieval games and the recital of ancient English and Scottish folk songs, all carried out with remarkable relish by the scholars, pages, ladies and knights present.

The Court ended with an explanation of the society's new banner, whose design was inspired by the C.S. Lewis series, *The Chronicles of Narnia*. York's chapter of the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA), unlike many others,

has decided to admit figures from works of science fiction or fantasy and classify them as 'Astrolifics'. To include the proceedings, characters from other parallel cultures such as hobbits, middle world figures and Logan Six himself were introduced to their medieval companions.

The York branch of the SCA occupying Shire Noerlanda, was formed last February by Seppan Veli, Jane Horne and Jeannette Waldie as an outgrowth of the Fellowship Middle Earth which functioned briefly in 1975. Since that time, the society has held a quest, a medieval feast and in August they organized a two day tournament, revel and pot-luck feast. According to Shelley Rabinovich (Lady Tsvia ben Tamara) it was the first time such an event had been held at York.

This year the society has a more ambitious programme of events scheduled. Waldie revealed that "In January we have a court of pages and indoor quest planned while in the spring a full crusade is being organized which will include the siege of the sepulchre on top of the Ross building, outside the chapel." The society also hopes to convene a court night once a month,

some of which will focus on a certain medieval theme, such as love.

York's branch of the SCA is merely one of many located all over North America. The organization traces its origins to the University of California in Berkely, when in 1966 a farewell party was thrown for a medievalist who was moving to England. The bash turned into such a wild revel, it is told, that the party goers decided to meet more often and the idea spread as members moved to new cities.

This expansion necessitated a division of the members into four sections — the east, west, middle and atenveldt kingdoms. Both the University of Toronto's and York's chapters are part of the middle kingdom whose king is chosen in a crown tournament held each May and October and who reigns for the following six months.

Although York's branch began at a later date than the U of T's, that is certainly not the most crucial difference between them. Rabinovich believes "the U of T society is very authenticity minded. They are against the inclusion of figures from parallel cultures and instead, medieval academics comprise a fair proportion of their interest."

Rabinovich is quick to point out York's group has a very diverse membership and that student status is not a necessary prerequisite. She noted York's membership includes "truck drivers, cream makers, steelworkers, Sheridan College students and even a SCA-bum."

These SCA-bums (skar-bums) are members who specialize in a medieval craft such as armoury or heraldry and sell their wares to SCA members and antiquarians in order to make a living.

This past weekend, life in the SCA's Middle Ages continued its steady course when Lady Tsvia ben Tamara and an escort journeyed as emissaries to the Coronation of Crown Prince Dagan du Darragonne in Kalamazoo.

Although the SCA genuinely attempt to recreate the culture of the Middle Ages, they try to make it "not as it was but as it should have been." Living in medieval times today care of SCA is certainly more like one continuous jolly revel since such delights as the black plague, the pox and witch dunking are selectively ignored. This way at least, membership will remain steady.



Dave MacLeod photo

Society for Creative Anachronism members battle on the Stong plains for some lofty ideal and the use of a can opener.

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