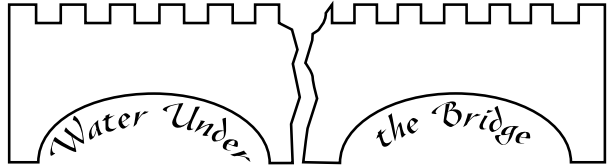


The Incipient Canton of the Broken Bridge



Volume 2, Issue 5



September 1998 ASXXXII

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* * * *

Our web site at <http://members.aol.com/alyessaoak/broken/> includes complete .pdf archives of back issues of WUTB.

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Cover Art: Richard II of England and the Kentish Rebels. Jean Froissart, *Chronicles*. 15C.

Submissions, letters, comments, critiques, etc. should be sent to:

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Please include all copyright information with your submissions!

Seneschal's Report:

Unto the gentlefolk of Broken Bridge:

Greetings! I'm pleased to report that all is well in our Canton. Keep up the good work, folks.

I've just recently returned from War and was gratified that many of us were able to make it this year. Our gift to the Crown, presented at East Kingdom Royal, of 50 gallons of mead and beer was well received. Thanks to all who assisted in the production process.

It appears that the joint event scheduled with Lion's End has been postponed. More details on this will be forthcoming from Lion's End. In the interim, it seems likely that there will be an additional slot for an event possibly opening up in the Ostgardr calendar. We should consider holding a small event this winter. Please note this as a topic for discussion at our next commons meeting.

On the subject of commons meetings: We will be hosting the next Ostgardr commons at our place this month. See the calendar for details. Please make an effort to be there.

A recent review of the membership lists reveals that there are folks who have let their society memberships lapse. Please keep your memberships up to date. There will be various issues possibly coming up in the next few months which will require official voting procedures. Votes will be restricted to current memberships only.

There are members residing in our canton who choose to play primarily with other groups. This is fine, and to be actively encouraged in some cases. However, please remember to periodically check in with your local canton and actively participate and vote on issues that may ultimately affect you.

We have recently discussed the possibility of running regular practices in Brooklyn with our neighbouring medievalists in the MSR aka The Kingdom of Acre. Needless to say, this is an issue requiring some careful planning and discussion. Our preliminary planning includes running an SCA sponsored fighting practice in Marine park, under all SCA standard rules and running a separate MSR sponsored fencing practice under MSR rules. So far everything looks promising. More on this as it develops.

In Service,

Lord Ben of Broken Bridge

Greetings and well-wishes from the Chronicler:

I've been busy busy busy. I've attended events in Bhakail (Philly) and Barren Sands (near Atlantic City), I'm soon to visit Iron Bog (southern NJ) as well. My desk is littered with complimentary newsletters! At Pennsic, I attended many classes, and I had the pleasure of meeting some of my superior officers (as Chatelaine).

I'm still looking for assistants/assistance to aid with this newsletter! If you can't help out with the newsletter itself, maybe you can help by keeping an eye on Grub (Hector), my son, while I work on it! He's entering his toddler years a little early.

I'll be giving a combined weed-walk and hands-on herbal preparation class on Labor Day. Please see the announcements on page 18 for details! Since I plan to be making a lot of new garb, I will continue offering the garb making open house to anyone interested in coming over to make new clothes.

The new WUTB calendar is a 10-week model, so it can fully encompass two calendar months.

Love, Light & Laughter,

Alyessa Oaktree

Part Three: Making a Heater Shield

This article gives instructions for making a shield for use in SCA heavy combat. The opinions expressed and advice or directions given are those of the author, based on his own experience, and do not represent the SCA or any of its branches or members other than the author himself and don't you just hate it when people refer to themselves in the third person.

By the way, I used to finance my trips to Pennsic War by making and selling shields and shield blanks. Learn from a pro.

Contents of this article:

1. Start with a shield blank
 2. Edging (Part One)
 3. Something to hold on to
 4. Edging (Part Two)
 5. Shield-hand protection
- A few notes about shield weight

A word about those new-fangled, high-tech, damn-near-indestructable aluminum shields

NOTE: If you've decided to ignore my prejudice about shield-shape and make a round shield, excellent instructions can be found in the Known World Handbook, available from the SCA's Stock Clerk. You might still find usefull information below.

1. Start with a Shield Blank

What is a "Heater" shield, anyway? In case you're wondering why shields with a straight edge at the top and sides that curve to a point at the bottom are called "heaters," I believe that the term goes back to a 19th- or early 20th-century scholar who borrowed the term from the common name for cast-iron flatirons, which were heated on a stove before use. Thus, in SCA usage a "heater" is a shield is shaped like the bottom of an iron.

The first thing you're going to need is a heater-shaped blank. These can be either flat or curved from side to side. A curved shield 24" wide will usually have about three inches of "bow" at the center. The curved heater is (in most opinions) superior to the flat heater, but I've seen fighters who have used flat shields very effectively.

A flat heater can be cut out of a peice of 1/2" plywood using a saber saw, jigsaw or bandsaw. No need to go out and buy a full 4' x 8' sheet, either; many lumber yards and "home centers" will sell you a quarter sheet. (Fig. 5 shows a pattern for cutting the final shape of a 24" x 26" heater; for longer shields, I use the same pattern to cut the lower curves.)

Curved heater blanks require more effort. There may be a few around that people aren't using, but good luck finding one. Chances are, you're going to have to buy one or make one. Sometimes you'll see blanks for sale at events, and someone's always selling them at Pennsic War. When they can be had, they sell for anything from fifteen to thirty-five dollars. Sometimes they are available with steel edging attached (for more money, of course). Making your own isn't all that difficult, as you'll see below, and in my less-than-humble opinion well worth the effort.

To make a curved shield blank, you'll need two pieces of quarter-inch plywood, twenty-four inches wide by twenty-six inches long.¹ You'll need enough TiteBond glue to cover one face of your plywood. And you'll need some kind of shield press.

There's no real need to make a press unless you're planning to make a lot of blanks. Someone in your area may already have a press, and you might be able to bribe them into pressing your shield for you. (I wish I still had mine!.) I know of one fighter who improvised a press out of sandbags; the result was excellent. I have heard a story (which I cannot confirm) of someone who did much the same thing using sandbags inside of a steel drum.²

Spread a generous amount of glue over one face of your plywood (make sure that the glue

covers the entire surface), place the other piece on top of it, and put them in your press. Leave them overnight.

Make a paper pattern from someone's finished shield, or use the pattern illustrated in Figure 5, and use it to mark the final shape of a heater onto your blank. Cut it to shape with a jigsaw, saber saw or band saw (if using a band saw, mark the inside of the shield). Sand the edges. You've made a heater blank. Aren't you proud?

This step is optional: If you want, you can glue a piece of light canvas to the face of your shield. It should make your shield last a little longer, and it won't add noticeably to the weight. (I did this for my first shield, but don't bother with it now.)

2. Edging (Part One)

The next step is to attach the steel edging. You'll need steel along the top edge and down the top third of the leading edge (Fig. 1). In addition, you may want to add a "V" of metal at the point. It's a good idea. I'd use strips of eighteen- or twenty-gauge steel, about one and a half inches wide. The illustration shows steel on both sides, but if you prefer you can use sixteen- or seventeen-gauge steel on the front only and large washers on the back. (Fig. 2)

The metal can be cut to shape with a Beverly sheer (if you know someone who has one), with a band saw or jigsaw, or with a pair of hand-sheers if you're not using anything heavier than 17-gauge. You can also use a cold chisel if you're a stark staring loony.

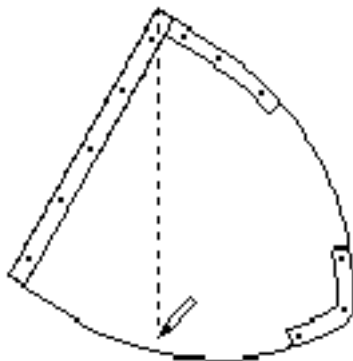


Figure 1 - Finding the approximate position for the forearm.

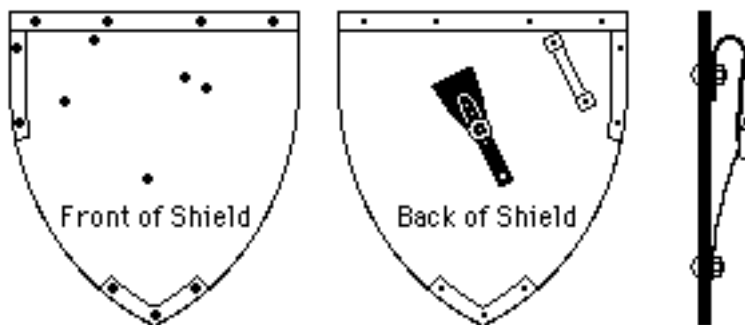


Figure 2 - Front and back views of a shield hung for a right-handed fighter, and an enlarged detail of the mounting for the arm strap. Final edging with automotive heater hose has not been done.

You can attach the edging with either three-quarter inch rivets or quarter inch carriage bolts one inch long (don't forget to buy nuts and washers). The rivets would be somewhat lighter, if that makes any difference to you. (I've actually made rivets for this job out of 16-penny nails, cut to 3/4" with a hack saw.) Mark and drill the strips for the front first, then clamp them in place with the shield and the back strips and drill through. Use a power hand-drill for this; don't use a drill press unless you've got someone there to help you hold the shield in place.

(Here's a trick I've been using lately. I let the edging on the face of the shield overlap the edge by 1/4" to 3/8", then hammer it over the edge. I don't know if it makes any difference or not, but it looks like it might. Don't worry if it doesn't look perfect; you're going to cover it with hose anyway.)

3. Something to hold on to

So far, so good...but now it gets tricky. Grab your shield and a pencil. Hold the shield up by the top corner at the leading edge. Let it hang naturally. Mark a line from that corner down, perpendicular to the floor, on the back of the shield (Fig. 1). This line should tell you approximately where the top of your arm should be when you're holding the shield.

There's not a lot I can tell you about positioning the handle and the strap. Don't put the strap too close to your elbow, and don't put the handle too close to the leading edge. And don't worry if you have to change their positions a few times to get it right; many of us seem to end up with a lot of extra holes in our first shields. Fig. 2 shows a wider piece of leather used for the upper part of the arm strap. The buckle can be on either part of the strap.

You can get a handle at any good hardware store, but make sure it's big enough, especially if you're going to be using a hockey glove behind your shield. You can use a couple of small blocks of wood under the ends of the handle to bring it out, if you have to. If you're not using a hockey glove, you should have a little clearance between the shield and your knuckles. If you don't, you'll regret it. Trust me.

4. Edging (Part Two)

Now measure the circumference of your shield, add a foot, and go to an auto parts store and buy that much heater hose.³ You're going to cut the hose open lengthwise and fit it over the edge of your shield. The most common way to attach the hose to the shield rim is to lace it on, and this is the method illustrated. (Fig. 3)

Plug in the ol' hand drill, chuck up a 5/32" (or so) bit, and make a bunch of holes. Make them about an inch and a half inside the rim and about two inches apart, all around the shield.

(This may be the best time to paint your shield. No need to bother with fancy heraldic designs now; a single color will do. Primer first, then use any color you like so long as it's heraldic; black, white, blue, red, green, yellow or -uhg!- purple. No pastels, please.)

To lace the heater hose on, use imitation sinew, imitation latigo lace (both available from Tandy Leather), or any good, tightly woven cord.

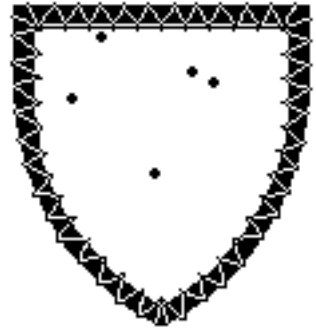


Figure 3 - Shield with laced-on heater hose, seen from front.

5. Shield-hand protection

One matter remains; protection for your shield-hand. It's required.

Perhaps the easiest method is to wear a hockey glove behind your shield. Make sure that you've left enough room between the shield and the grip for the glove; there's a lot of padding on those things. You can use a couple of small blocks of wood under the ends of the handle to bring it out, if you have to.

Otherwise, you will need to make a hand guard that covers the hand and wrist. Any rigid material will do, but I'd use leather if I were remaking my shield. (I've used both steel and aluminum, and haven't been entirely satisfied with either.) Fig. 4 shows a simple pattern to be cut out of eight- or ten-ounce leather, sewn with sinew or lace (got any left?) and bolted or riveted to the shield. It could be held on with the same bolts that hold the grip on.

Now, Rejoice!

You've made a shield. You can put your drill away now; I imagine by now you're just sick of the hole boring business.⁴

A few notes about shield weight:

A heavy shield isn't necessarily a bad thing. The more weight it has, the more resistance it has to your opponent's blows. The downside of this is that the more weight it has, the more resistance it has to your arm moving it. One school of thought holds that your shield should be as heavy as you can manage; another holds that your shield should be as light as you can get away with.

Who's right? Good question. I've slept in both camps. I finally decided that a light shield works best for me; your mileage may vary. As with so many things regarding SCA Combat, the only right answer is what works best for you.

I do advise, however, that you check your Kingdom's Rules of the List/Conventions of Combat for limitations on a shield's weight and/or size. Here in the Middle Kingdom, for example, the current rule is that a 24" x 26" shield should weigh at least eight pounds and larger or smaller shields should weigh proportionally more or less.

If you've followed the directions I've given here, I doubt that you'll end up with a shield weighing less than eight pounds. My own tourney shield, made just as I have described, weighs eight and a half. It's edged with a light plastic hose instead of heater hose and has a full steel handguard on the inside. I imagine that heater hose might add another half pound or so.

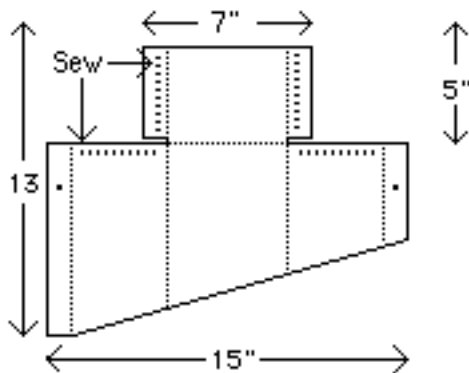


Figure 4 - Pattern for a simple guard for the shield-hand made of leather.

A word about those new-fangled, high-tech, damn-near-indestructible aluminum shields

Aluminum is another popular material for shields. It's light, it takes a hell of a lot of punishment, and aluminum shield blanks are easier to come by than they used to be. A properly made aluminum shield can last the rest of a fighter's life.

All of which should explain why many fighters passionately hate (yes, I said hate) aluminum shields. If this doesn't make sense to you, you haven't been in the SCA very long. Here are some of the arguments, and some of my responses:

Lightweight aluminum shields give an unfair advantage. This opinion arises from the fact that most shields in the SCA are heavy. Unnecessarily heavy, to my way of thinking (See A few notes about shield weight, above).

My shield is light; less than half a pound above the minimum. And it's made of wood. Plywood, in fact, which is a period material for shields (!). I have yet to find an aluminum shield the size of mine (or larger) that weighed less. Some weighed surprisingly more. I once weighed an aluminum heater blank and one of my plywood blanks (same size and cut to the same pattern) on the same scale, and was surprised to discover that they weighed the same. I was so surprised that I suspected the scale, and tried another with the same result.

A knight of my acquaintance once switched to an aluminum heater. One of his stated reasons for choosing aluminum was the weight savings over wood. His finished shield still weighed more than my plywood one, exactly the same size. (He's edged his shield with heater hose, while I used a light plastic hose. If I had used heater hose, the weights would have been about equal.)

Aluminum isn't period. Duh. Thanks for clearing that up. Seriously, if being absolutely authentic in the materials you use for your armor, weapons, and garb (as far as safety allows) is important to you, I honestly respect that. And, in fairness, most aluminum looks different than steel, and can fall into the "obvious Mundane intrusion" category.

However, if no one can see that it's aluminum, if it's covered or painted in a period manner or with a period material, I can't honestly see where anyone has a right to gripe about it.

Aluminum is indestructible. Damn near. What's your point? This one I entirely fail to grasp, but I have heard it.

Historically, shields weren't only destructible, they were disposable! Wooden shields weren't expected to last past the next tourney; in fact, you'd probably need several of the things just to get through a tourney. In the SCA, we do all kinds of things to extend the life of our shields; we edge them with steel, we glue canvas or even leather to their faces, we bring them in out of the

rain, all things that would confuse the hell out of any period fighter who saw us do it.

I don't know about you, but I am certainly not going to make a new shield for every tourney! Nobody is--including the "aluminum-is-evil-because-it's-indestructible" crowd. All other things being equal, and they pretty much are, why not make a shield out of aluminum?

The downside of aluminum is the cost. Expect to pay two to three times as much for an aluminum blank, and even though they're easier to find than they used to be they still ain't common. Construction is somewhat different; best to consult with someone who's made one.

Endnotes:

- ¹ These dimensions are the most common for tournament shields. Most tourneys won't place any limits on shield size, type, or shape, but some will specify "Crown tourney legal" shields. This means that shields must conform to the current specifications for use in the Midrealm Crown Tournament and these specs have been changing with each reign. Don't let this confuse you. Most shields still conform to what was standard up until a few years ago--twenty-four by twenty-six inches.
- ² If you try the drum trick, let me know if it works. If it doesn't work, for God's sake don't say I told you to do it!
- ³ You can also use garden hose or 1" plastic tubing. I'm told that garden hose is lighter, cheaper, and holds up just fine, but I've never used it.
- ⁴ Sorry. Couldn't resist

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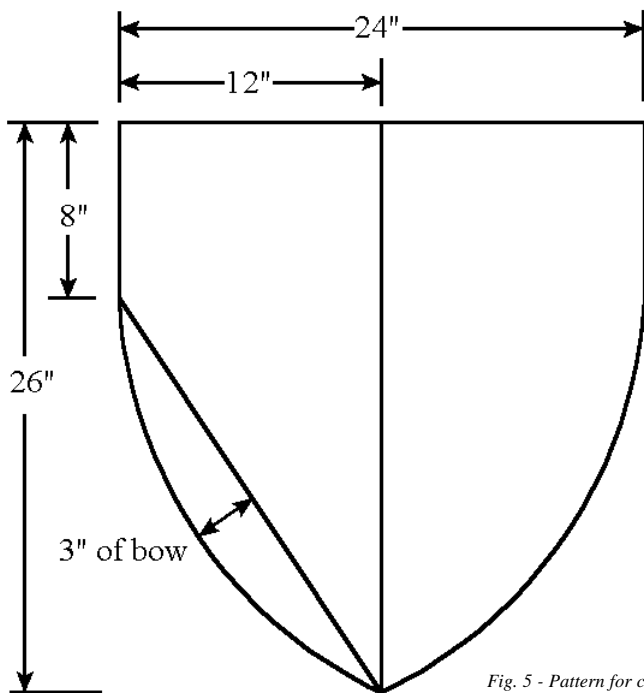


Fig. 5 - Pattern for cutting a Heater-shaped shield blank.

Broken Bridge Activity Calendar

September 1998

(directions on page 12)

Stitch & Bitch: Garb Making Open House: (Anytime, just call ahead) at 190 Ocean Parkway. Please call Alyessa (Criss) at (718)436-6278 for additional info.

9/4 Brewing Workshop: (at 7:00pm) at 190 Ocean Parkway. Questions and comments, etc to Ben of Broken Bridge at (718)436-6278 or *benbroken@aol.com*

9/7 Weed Walk followed by Hands-On Herbal Preparation Class: (monthly Herb Classes on 1st Mondays) Please see page 18 for schedule & a list of things to bring. **RSVP!** to Alyessa (Criss) at (718)436-6278. There will be a materials fee of \$5 for the Herbal Preparation Class. If no one calls me the class will be cancelled, so please don't show up without calling ahead!

9/14 Commons Meeting: (Second Mondays at 7:30pm) at 190 Ocean Parkway. Please call Alyessa (Criss) at (718)436-6278 for additional info.

9/18 Provincial Commons Meeting: (Third Fridays, location varies monthly) at 190 Ocean Parkway. Please call Alyessa (Criss) at (718)436-6278 for additional directions.

9/21 Sit & Spin: (7:30pm) at 85 Eastern Parkway, apt 1G (bell #06). Please call Pacita Prasarn at (718)857-4732 for additional info.

9/28 Stitch & Bitch: Garb Repair: (6:00pm-?) at 190 Ocean Parkway. Please call Alyessa (Criss) at (718)436-6278 for additional info. Do you have garb that needs adjustments and mending after Pennsic? Too tight? Too loose? Lost a button? Just stuff it into a knapsack and come on over!

10/5 Herb Class: (1st Mondays, 7pm) 190 Ocean Parkway. **RSVP!** to Alyessa (Criss) at (718)436-6278.

10/12 Commons Meeting: (Second Mondays at 7:30pm) at 190 Ocean Parkway, ground floor. Please call Alyessa (Criss) at (718)436-6278 for additional directions.

10/19 Sit & Spin: (7:30pm) at 85 Eastern Parkway, apt 1G (bell #06). Please call Pacita Prasarn at (718)857-4732 for additional info.

10/26 Heraldry & Persona Workshop: (7:30pm) at 85 Eastern Parkway, apt 1G (bell #06). Please call Daniel Myers at (718)857-4732 for additional info.

S E P T E M B E R

& October
Events
1998

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
(31)	(1)	(2)
(7) <i>Labor Day</i> <i>Weed Walk & Herbal Preparation Class (see pg 18)</i>	(8)	(9)
(14) <i>Broken Bridge Commons (8:30pm)</i>	(15)	(16)
(21) <i>Sit & Spin (7:30pm)</i>	(22)	(23)
(28) <i>Stitch & Bitch (6:00pm)</i>	(29)	(30)
(5) <i>Herb Class (7:00pm)</i>	(6)	(7)
(12) <i>Columbus Day</i> <i>Broken Bridge Commons (8:30pm)</i>	(13)	(14)
(19) <i>Sit & Spin (7:30pm)</i>	(20)	(21)
(26) <i>Heraldry & Persona Workshop (7:30pm)</i>	(27)	(28)
(2)	(3) <i>Election Day</i>	(4)

Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
(3)	(4) <i>Brewing (7:30pm)</i>	(5)	(6)
(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)
	John Barleycorn's Class Reunion (Northpass)		
(17)	(18) <i>Provincial Commons (190 Ocean Parkway)</i>	(19)	(20)
		Queens Fair Demo (Queens, NY)	
(24)	(25)	(26)	(27) <i>Cloisters Demo (Whyt Why)</i>
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
(15)	(16) <i>Provincial Commons</i>	(17)	(18)
(22)	(23)	(24)	(25)
(29)	(30)	(31) <i>Agincourt (Östgard: Huntington, NY)</i>	(1)
(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)

Directions to Sites in Broken Bridge

190 Ocean Parkway, Ground Floor (bet. Albemarle Rd & Church Ave), Bklyn, NY.

By train: F train to Church Ave, walk down Church Ave (past "Rite Aid"). Left at Ocean Pkwy. We are halfway down the block.

By car: *From Manhattan & Queens.* Take your best route to the BQE/Gowanus Expwy ("West" towards Staten Island). Exit at the Prospect Expwy. See "From Prospect Expressway" below.

From Staten Island Expressway & Southwest: Take BQE North to Prospect Expwy. Follow directions "From Prospect Expressway" below.

From Prospect Expressway: Get off the Church Ave West exit (last exit) and stop before you get to traffic signal. We live on that block.

From the South & Long Island: take your best route to the Belt Pkwy. Exit at Ocean Pkwy North and drive appx 4 miles. Left on Ave C. Right on East 5th Street. 3 blocks, right onto Albemarle Rd. Right at stop sign onto Ocean Parkway. We live on that block.

85 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY. a.k.a. "Martha Washington"

By train: 2/3 train to Eastern Pkwy station, walk up and over the hill. or D train to 7th Ave (in Brooklyn) station. Walk up Flatbush Ave (past theatre & Blockbuster video). Left at Park Circle, appx 3 blocks to Eastern Pkwy. Left, 1 1/2 blocks to 85.

By car: *From Manhattan:* Take your best route to the Brooklyn Bridge. Left onto Atlantic Ave (about 10 blocks). See "From Atlantic Avenue", below.

From the B.Q.E.: Find your best route to the B.Q.E./Gowanus Expwy. Exit at Atlantic Avenue, follow directions "From Atlantic Avenue", below.

From Atlantic Avenue: Continue past Atlantic mall (Caldor, Pathmark, Office Max, etc. on left). Bear wide(!) right onto Washington Ave (double check you are on correct road). Bear right onto service road at Eastern Pkwy. The building is over the crest of the hill, about 1/4 down the other side.

Marine Park, Burnett St and Avenue U.

By car: Belt Parkway to Knapp St. Exit. (*Eastbounders will make a left at the light, Westbounders will make a right*) Drive approximately 7 blocks to Avenue U (Knapp St will join Gerritson Avenue. There will be a supermarket and diner on the right, and several gas stations on the left.). Make a right, drive 2 blocks to Burnett St. A right on Burnett will yield probable parking.

By train: N train, F train or D train (D is best choice) to Avenue U Station. Take the B3 bus East (towards Bergen Beach). When you see the park on the left, exit the bus. Burnett St. is on your right.



Comparison of Medieval and Modern Herbal Preparations & Their Therapeutic Value

By Alyessa Oaktree (©1998 Criss Ittermann)

In accordance with FDA regulations, this article is intended for informational purposes only. It is not intended as a prescription for treatment or an aid for diagnosis. In the case of an illness, sound medical advice should be sought from a trained professional, and a treatment plan should be agreed upon and followed.

Just as Nature is unpredictable, so are Her herbs, thus there is a wide range of effect from a single herb, and how it is prepared can vastly effect the results of an herbal treatment program. This article glosses over the different preparations. Not all preparations, or herbs prepared in a specific form, are appropriate in treating a given illness, and some can be downright deadly.

Carriers

One of the common methods of using some herbs is not to prepare it at all. A good example is with modern-day Plantain, also called Waybread in Saxon times. This plant can be plucked from the ground, macerated (by hand, or by mouth) and placed onto a wound. This is not an appropriate method of preparation for all plants, as raw use may cause contact dermatitis with some plants, and some should not be chewed raw. Raw preparations include a poultice, pills, powders, salads, dried, eaten or worn.

Aside from the raw plant material itself, there are ways of carrying the desirable medicinal properties of a plant into other substances, increasing its effectiveness, portability, shelf life or its palatability. Sometimes the way a plant medicine is prepared simply makes it easier to prescribe & measure. Carrier substances include oil, alcohol (wine, vodka or “aqua vitae”), sugar, water, wax, grease, and syrups.

Herbal Preparations

Herbs (ingested): pills, powders, salads, juices, cooked greens

Value: When a full herb is ingested, the herb and all of its ingredients are digested, both desirable and undesirable. Other preparations allow for the concentration of desirable substances and the discarding of the undesirable, thus making a medicine more reliable and predictable. This method is frequently used when an herb is gentle and tonic, a food to begin with, or when all the substances contained therein are desired. Juiced plants are sometimes exceptionally concentrated and might very well serve as a vitamin supplement.

Middle Ages: Pills & powders were used in the Middle Ages. Fresh medicinal herbs are eaten, or washed down with drink. Juice is used internally and externally in the Middle Ages. Powder is often mixed with a liquid and drunk, which is not the same as Tinctures or Infusions (below), where the herb is soaked then removed from the liquid. The powder is carrying the effect of the herbs, not the liquid.

Modern: Pills & powders are in current use. They are very similar in their therapeutic effects. A pill is made in two different ways: high-pressure compression of herb powder with other ingredients, or a gelatin capsule filled with powdered dried herb. There is mention of therapeutic and tonic value to eating some fresh herbs in modern herbalism.

Herbs (external): powders, poultices, juices, worn

Value: Herbs can be applied externally for many reasons, not least of which is

stypic. Herbs can also ease itchy or swollen eyes and ear infections, and they can disinfect wounds.

Middle Ages: Herbal juices were used both alone and with other substances for many topical applications, especially eye complaints. Poultices are sometimes made from fresh herbs held to the skin. The herbs can be “pounded” for greater effect. In theory, wearing an herb might use the sense of smell to derive an effect upon the body.

Modern: Powders, poultices and juices are applied externally for some complaints, such as powders for diaper rash, poultices for wounds, juices for pink eye, etc. Rarely are herbs worn for medicinal purposes in modern herbal medicine. A possible example for wearing herbs might be wearing sprigs of aromatic plants to ward off insects.

Kindled (breathed): fumigation (cleaning with smoke), incense (herbs smoked for scent), smoking (inhaling smoke)

Value: Ash and smoke carry compounds of the herb directly into the lungs, and thus into the bloodstream. Unlike modern day cigarettes, herbs do not always contain harmful substances such as nicotine or tar, however all smoked herbs will transmit carbon monoxide, and other possibly harmful substances. This method of medication is not highly recommended. Smoke has been used as a cleansing “substance” in many cultures since antiquity.

Middle Ages: Fumigation and incense were both used in medieval times, and especially during the plague, where illness was thought to be carried on the air. Hildegard of Bingen prescribed “herbulae fumantes” for colds with runny noses. Fragrant herbs are strewn on a heated earthenware pot so they smoke. (Strehlow, p. 22) I have also found mention of external application of herbal ashes for sore joints. (A Medieval Herbal, p. 35)

Modern: Fumigation is still seen in “smudging”. Incense is generally used in aromatherapy. Smoking, usually marijuana when not referring to tobacco, is still used therapeutically in treatment of deadly and painful diseases. Other herbs, such as mullein and comfrey, are smoked as well.

Water (ingested): tea, tisane (the technical term for modern “tea”), infusion (herbs steeped in hot water as it cools), decoction (herbs boiled in water), soup

Value: Water-soluble substances in plants include chlorophyll, minerals and vitamins, which can have effects ranging from mild tonic to remarkably curative. One of the desirable effects of a water-based herbal preparation is that very few of the plant’s alkaloids, resins, or oils are water-soluble.

Middle Ages: To “seethe” in water is a common medical instruction of the Middle Ages. Holy water is also an ingredient of medicinal drinks. There are also instructions in the making of Rose Water, both by using heated water, and by letting the mixture sit in the sun for 30 days. (A Medieval Herbal, p.50-51)

Modern: Water is currently used in preparation of herbal medication in the form of herbal teas, decoctions and infusions.

Water (inhaled): steam inhalation, aspiration, nebulizer

Value: When herbs are boiled, nutrients, essential oils and other volatile substances are lost in the steam. Enclosed containers are normally used to retard this process. It may be desirable to inhale the steam of steeping herbs to introduce these substances directly into our lungs. In addition, steam itself can help to moisturize the tissues of the lungs, thus having beneficial effects for dry conditions.

Middle Ages: There is no evidence that steam from steeping herbs was a medicinal therapy in the Middle Ages.

Modern: Asthmatics use inhaled medication. Herbs are boiled and the steam is inhaled for their medicinal benefits today.

Water (topical): plasters, poultices, baths, washes, gargles

Value: Plasters can be made with either powdered herbs moistened with water and spread onto the skin, or with water and herbs mixed with clay or another pasty substance. Clay itself has therapeutic value in the treatment of dermatological complaints. A poultice can be made with fresh or dried herbs moistened with hot or cold water fastened by cloth to the skin. Baths and washes are topical applications of infused (steeped) herbs. The skin is the largest organ of the body, and it is not only an organ of elimination but of absorption, although we usually do not think of it this way. Nutrients, tannins, and other substances in the preparations can nurture, protect, heal and rehydrate the skin. Gargles are normally used for throat complaints. Gargles also serve as a direct topical application to the tonsils, larynx, lymph glands and esophagus/trachea.

Middle Ages: Plasters, poultices, baths & gargles are therapies mentioned in medieval medical resources. Some similar preparations use honey with the herbal substance instead of water.

Modern: All of these methods are currently in use.

Candied (ingested): syrup, lozenge

Value: There is value to making the less palatable herbs more palatable, since it is important that herbs be taken as prescribed, not put off due to unpleasant flavor. As well, sugar often aids in absorption of some herbal substances. Lozenges direct the absorption to the mouth and throat tissue, which makes them more useful for mouth and throat complaints. A lozenge also works as a time-release capsule. Syrups are often concentrated from infused herbs with the addition of honey, and their shelf life is extended to one or two months rather than days.

Middle Ages: Herbs were often prepared in syrup form. Lozenges were probably not as hard as they are today, but had a stiff, fudge-like consistency. Powdered herbs were mixed with honey to make a candied medicine.

Modern: Ricola is one example of an herbal lozenge. Homemade herbal lozenges more closely resemble the consistency of those of the Middle Ages.

Spirits (ingested): tincture (alcoholic liquid in which herbs have been steeped), medicinal wine, etc.

Value: Alkaloids and resins are alcohol-soluble substances found in plants with demonstrable medicinal effects. Alcohol is a superb carrier of medicines to the bloodstream, due to the speed at which alcohol is absorbed into the bloodstream. Alcohol itself has therapeutic value as a pain killer and sedative.

Middle Ages: There is mention of tinctures in the Middle Ages, such as Tincture of Opium (le Strange, p. 198). I am uncertain if the alcohol content compared to a modern-day tincture. Medicinal wines were common, and Aqua Vitae was introduced as a medicinal ingredient in the 13th century (Siraisi, p. 148). The alcohol content of Aqua Vitae is uncertain, thus affecting the dosages. Wine-based doses probably ranged from a mouthful to a cupful.

Modern: 50% alcohol solutions (ex: 100 proof vodka) are commonly used for current “tinctures”, dosages are numbered in drops and “dropperfuls”. This appears comparable to medieval doses, considering the alkaloid content of the solution.

Spirits (topical): liniments (alcoholic liquids in which herbs have been steeped), antiseptics

Value: Liniments carry essential oils, resins and alkaloids to the skin. The skin is capable of absorbing some of these substances. Alcohol also has the effect of being antibacterial, thus decreasing the chance of infection from wounds.

Middle Ages: Wine & wine-soaked herbs (later including Aqua Vitae (ibid.)) were used to cleanse wounds and to treat certain skin conditions.

Modern: Alcohol-solutions are still used topically, but usually are non-palatable alcohols (i.e.: rubbing alcohol, witch hazel). Some tinctures may be applied topically.

Oils (ingested): infused oils (oils in which plant matter has been steeped), some essential oils (volatile oils expressed or distilled from plant matter)

Value: Oil-based preparations extract oil-soluble vitamins and plant oils. Some oils (ex: Olive Oil) have therapeutic value in and of themselves.

Middle Ages: There is mention of making “oyle of roses” which is certainly an infused oil, though the means of using said oil is not mentioned. The type of “oyle” used in the preparation is also not mentioned. Olive oil was pressed in the Middle Ages, and it is possibly the substance used in this preparation. Olive oil also has its own medicinal benefits, as does Castor Oil, which was also in use in the Middle Ages.

Modern: Although rare, some herbal oil infusions are ingested. Olive oil is becoming increasingly noted for its therapeutic and medicinal value. Castor oil is still in use today.

Oils (topical): infused oils, essential oils

Value: The absorbency of skin has been mentioned with topical water-based infusions (above), and oils are a normal substance found on our outer layer of skin, as a protective agent, and also in the production of Vitamin D. Oils trap moisture onto our skin, easing dry skin conditions.

Middle Ages: The most likely oils to be used were lard or other animal fats, and thus oil preparations would solidify at room temperature, putting them more into the ointment category. I do not believe people worked with essential oils as such, however some plants may have been used fresh for the value of the essential oils therein. Some plants were pressed for their oils.

Modern: Oils are pressed or expelled from plant substances, giving us our olive oil, canola oil, etc. that are used in modern infused oils. There are also inorganic oils available to us (i.e. mineral oil, petroleum jelly), although their uses are more limited due to the lack of absorption. Essential oils are distilled from plant substances and are extremely volatile. Although they are most often used in aromatherapy, topical applications of some essential oils are of therapeutic value.

Ointments (topical): ointments, salves

Value: Ointments have a longer shelf life than oils and are less likely to spill, however they generally have the same medicinal benefits of oils. Wax or grease is used with herbs or oils to thicken the preparation. Beeswax and lanolin, two of the substances used currently to thicken ointments, have their own therapeutic value.

Middle Ages: Ointments and salves were used for many medieval complaints. Herbs were pounded in grease, and powdered herbs were mixed into salves.

Modern: From chapped lips to diaper rash, ointments and salves are used extensively in the modern era, both herbal and pharmaceutical.

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Many of my personal notes used to write this article are taken from lectures by the following:
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Brill, "The Wildman" Steve. Weed walks in NYC Parks.
Trinkle, Peekka. Green Medicine: An Eight-Month Herbal Training Program. Feb 1997-Dec
1997. New York Open Center, NY, NY.
Weed, Susun S. Wise Woman Tradition series. New York Open Center, NY, NY. Green Nations
Gathering, Phoenicia, NY.

As well as information from Amanda McQuade, Pam Montgomery, Letha Hadadi, Deb Soule
and many others.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Brewing Party

Sept 4 at 7:30pm, 190 Ocean Parkway (See p.12 for directions)

We picked the berries, now you help us make the mead!

Broken Bridge Breweries was such a big hit in the Royal Encampment at Pennsic! We have to ensure that we have fresh stock for next year. We have blackberries and raspberries by the bucketfull to make meads with. We are also considering making ales for upcoming events. Stop by to help out and learn how to make your own.

Contact Lord Ben of Broken Bridge at (718)436-6278 for more information.
We also have some availability for Canton members to brew their own batches and store them here.



Weed Walk & Hands-On Herbal Preparation Class

Sept 7 (Labor Day) at 1pm, Marine Park

(SE Corner of Burnett St. & Avenue U, 2 blocks from Gerritson Avenue)

We will find tons of mugwort, possibly yarrow, and other wild plants which were brought over from Europe and Asia and were used in the Middle Ages. We may also pick some New World plants to demonstrate how herbs are prepared. We will make herbal extracts, oils, and salves, discuss drying and storage of plant materials, and make a water-based infusion to drink during the class.

Schedule (subject to change):

- 1pm Weed Walk: pick the herbs to make medicines later in the day!
- 4pm Dinner and refreshments: can't just spend all your time working, can you?
- 5pm Herbal Preparation Class. Materials fee of \$5 includes menstruums, beeswax, and bottles/jars.

Things to bring:

Backpack, paper bags, ziplock bags, a small scissor or a legal pocket knife, drinking water, trail rations or a snack. Please dress for the weather (sunscreen, bug repellent, raincoat, etc as necessary)!!! This section of Marine Park is a wildlife preserve, wear comfortable and safe shoes, and be prepared to clean up after yourself. If the pickings are lean, we may also visit other areas of the Gateway Preserve.

RSVP! and questions to Alyessa (Criss) at (718)436-6278.

Car pooling will be available to and from Marine Park. If you have additional seating available to drive people, please let me know. If no one calls me the class will be cancelled, so call ahead! In case of REALLY NASTY-BAD WEATHER, please call ahead and come to the class anyways. We can pick fresh herbs from my backyard, and use dried herbs, to demonstrate herbal preparations.

Attention:

Please help keep us up to date:

We go through the trouble of mailing our newsletter to anyone who wants it, so help us ensure the proper receipt of it! We'd also like to conserve postage, paper and postal worker deaths due to undeliverable-address-stress-syndrome. Please send your address changes & add your friends and newbies to our list!

Database Update
c/o Criss Ittermann
190 Ocean Parkway
Brooklyn, NY 11218
alyessaoak@aol.com

or call and leave a **clear, loud** message on the answering machine at (718)436-6278, to 10pm.

Note: if you know of anyone who joined Ostgardr in the last two years, or is newly joining, their name probably is not on our mailing list. Please let them know about *Water Under the Bridge* and give them a photocopy of the form below so they may request our newsletter.

Thank you for your cooperation,
Alyessa.

- New Member Confirmation Correction Please Send New Membership Info

Mundane Name _____
Society Name _____
Address _____

Phone _____

email address _____
Interests _____

Skills _____

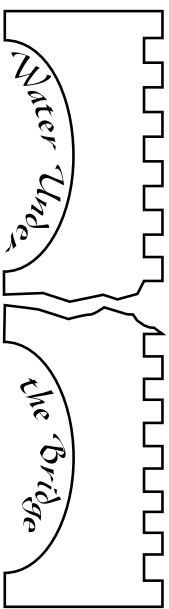
Do you have spare gear/garb/fighting equipment? The canton has **much** storage space, and many new members who are enthusiastic, yet unequipped. Enclose a note regarding what you have, and what conditions you would be willing to part with or loan stuff under. You can't **Possibly!** wear all your garb to every event!

Would you be interested in an Adobe Acrobat version of our newsletter (email rather than paper & postage) when available?



Christina Itermann
190 Ocean Parkway
Brooklyn, NY 11218

**Broken
Bridge**



W.U.T.B. is a publication of the proposed Canton of Broken Bridge, the downtown Brooklyn area of the Society for Creative Anachronism, Inc. It is not a publication of the SCA, INC., and does not delineate SCA policies.

**Please Forward.
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