

May 2008 A.S. XXXXIII

Volume XIII Issue Special

# The Ursus

## Thirtieth Anniversary Edition



## Table of Contents

Cynred's Line of Septentria By Baron Cynred Broccan	4
Septentria 101 By Master Hector of the Black Height	5
Septentria's Distinctive Traditions By Master Hector of the Black Height	10
Whither Septentria By Master Hector of the Black Height	18

## Copyright Information

Copyright 2008 Society for Creative Anachronism, Inc. The *Ursus* publishes First north American Serial and Reprint rights (including electronic and web). Reproduction by any means without the express permission of the author or artist constitutes a breach of copyright and is punishable by law. For information on printing photographs, articles or artwork from this publication, please contact the Chroniclers, who will assist you in contacting the original creator of the piece. Please respect the legal rights of our contributors.

## Disclaimer

This is the Thirtieth Anniversary issue of the *Ursus* a publication of the Barony of Septentria of the Society for Creative Anachronism, Inc. (SCA, Inc.). The *Ursus* is available from David Clark and Susan Carroll-Clark ([marginalia@rogers.com](mailto:marginalia@rogers.com)). It is not a corporate publication of SCA, Inc., and does not delineate SCA, Inc. policies. Copyright © 2008 Society for Creative Anachronism, Inc. For information on reprinting photographs, articles, or artwork from this publication, please contact the Chroniclers, who will assist you in contacting the original creator of the piece. Please respect the legal rights of our contributors.

## Contributors

Master Hector of the Black Height: Septentria 101 Page 5, Septentria's Distinctive Traditions Page 10, Whither Septentria Page 18

Baron Cynred Broccan: Cynred's "Line of Septentria" Page 4

Duke Finnvarr de Taahe: Photo, Page 5

Lord Gunther Wahlstadt of Bremen: Photo, Pages 4, 6, 9 and 19

Lord Raffé Scholemaystre : Photo, Page 8

Mistress Keja Tselebnika : Photo, Page 11

THL Eirik Anderson: Photo, Pages 13, 15 and 18

Lord Thorolfr inn smithr: Photo, Page 17

THL Eirik Anderson, Duke Edouard Beausoliel, Lord Thorolfr inn smithr: Heraldry graphics

## Submission Information

Submissions of articles for potential publication in the *Ursus* are due to the Chroniclers on the 15th of the month before publication. Publication is currently bimonthly in January, March, May, July, September and November. All submissions are subject to editing for length, content and style. Submitters should also indicate if they will not permit potential publication on the Septentrian webpage. Please contact the Chroniclers for submission permission form information

## Subscriptions

Subscriptions to *The Ursus* are free of charge. Issues can be viewed and / or downloaded on the Septentrian website: <http://septentria.ealdormere.ca/ursusdigital.htm>



## Introduction

It is almost exactly thirty years ago to the day that the barony of Septentria was created, on the thirteenth day of the thirteenth year. Few of those who will read this special issue of the *Ursus* were there, but through song, story, and image many of us have learned of the giants on whose shoulders we stand.

The *Ursus* itself was one of the very early witnesses to the formation and growth of the Barony, existing more or less from its foundation. This newsletter is Septentria's Anglo-Saxon Chronicle—the contemporary roll of deeds done, stories told, events held, and knowledge shared.

The traditional SCA newsletter is in many areas a thing of the past, supplanted by web pages, discussion boards, and other such modes of communication. This, we think, may prove a loss in future years when we seek to look back on earlier events; so many of these outstanding new forms of communication are also ephemeral.

### Septentriones

It's all Cynred's fault. That's a safe statement most of the time, actually, but in this case it's true.

At Baronial Twelfth Night in A.S. XLIII, Thegn Cynred Broccan expressed grave concern about the populace of Septentria and their knowledge of Septentria's rich heritage and vibrant culture. Cynred concluded by looking me straight in the chest, poking me in the xyphoid (the joys of SCA fighting; without armour standards I wouldn't know what my xyphoid was, and now I can write about it in polite publications) and asking, in his inimitable, Smurf-like fashion, "And what are we going to do about it?"

This is what we're going to do about it, Cynred Thegn. This is an issue about Septentria, its history, its customs and its character. It's a celebration, and one of the things - no, the very first thing -- everybody in Septentria needs to understand is that Septentria is something to celebrate.

The Society for Creative Anachronism is big. There are lots of us nut-bars out there, folks. It's a world-wide organization of intensely creative, imaginative people. Its participants dress up and do things appropriate to people who lived in over one thousand years of medieval-like

The *Ursus* has bowed to the present in adopting a new electronic format, but we feel it's important to continue to chronicle our history in a permanent, written form. In doing so, we are following in our forbears' footsteps—not only those of early Septentrians, but those of our medieval ancestors.

Stories must be told, but the bardic circle is often not suited to more lengthy topics. Thus, the work before you, constructed by one of our master storytellers with the inspiration of another. Perhaps you will sit somewhere during a quiet moment during this thirtieth year, read these words, and contemplate what Septentria means to you. This is a history not so much of individuals, but of ideas. Hopefully you will learn about the origins of our culture, about the crucible in which this Barony was formed, and about the people who continue to forge our future.

You included.

Nicolaa and Gunthar

history and literally the entire world, from Samurai to Aztecs and all points in between, in any direction. That's a lot of scope for endeavour and accomplishment. Like many other large institutions, the SCA created and evolved sub-groupings in order to allow for a more personal, social experience for participants and to encourage friendly and healthy rivalry: thus came Kingdoms, Principalities, Baronies and households. There are so many different people in so many places that there is bound to be a wide variety of styles and flavours to the game. Atlantians aren't Midrealmers. An Tir folks play slightly different from Meridieans. Ealdormere is Ealdormere and it's a little different from everyone else. And within Ealdormere, the various Baronies and the shire-folk have put their own spin on what we do and how we do it.

And then there's Septentria.

Septentria is different. Septentria is special. This book is meant to show you, gentle reader, why that's so. I suppose some might say I, and those who've contributed to this project, are trying to persuade people that Septentria is special. I know that persuasion is unnecessary in this case and I hope that, after you read this, you'll know that too.

eachuinn  
called Hector of the Black Height

## The Barons and Baronesses of Septentria

### Cynred's "Line of Septentria"

Hearken Septentria and ne'er forget  
For before the Wolf, Ram and Keep,  
The Hare and Cup, There was the Bear.  
Swift in battle, gifted in arts,  
Guardian of hearth, Ealdormere's heart.

And many are the Names held high in our past,  
But this, Your Excellencies, is your Lineage.  
First came Gillian D'Uriel, Wise foundress of Love's  
Court  
In days of misty past.

Then came Kaffa Murriath, second of that line,  
Mother of tradition, true spirit of the land.  
And Aeden o Kincora, First of the Patrimony,  
Heart of the Bear, Lord Lieutenant of yore.

Then came Diane de Arnot, third of her line,  
Hearth keeper, future foundress.  
And Cordigan de Arnot, second of his line,  
Bardic lord, founding father.

Then came Adrielle Kerrec, fourth of her line,  
Flame haired, one true daughter.  
And Ieuen MacKellmore, third of his line,  
Hearth's shield, called to Crusade.

Then stood Adrielle alone,  
Flame's guardian, 'til the next are chosen.

Then came Gaerwen of Trafford, fifth of her line,  
People's servant, legend's weaver.  
And Cynred Broccan, fourth of his line,  
Sure spear, traditions remembered.

And then came Domhnail Galbraith, sixth of her line,  
Art's Mistress, fierce sword.  
And Corwyn Galbraith, fifth of his line,  
Deadly axeman of quiet wisdom.

This then is your heritage, wrapped in legend made truth,  
Burden and joy, the High seats of Septentria

### The Barons and Baronesses of Septentria

(personal titles cited are those held apart from the Barony  
during the term in office)

Mistress Gillian Olafsdottir d'Uriel (OL)

Master Aeden o Kincora (OL, OP) and  
Mistress Kaffa Muraith (OL, OP)

Viscount Sir Cordigan de Arnot and  
Viscountess Diane de Arnot

Lord Ieuen MacKellmore and  
Lady Adrielle Kerrec

Thegn Cynred Broccan and  
Lady Gaerwen of Trafford

Master Corwyn Galbraith (OL) and  
Mistress Domhnail Galbraith (OL)

THL Percival de la Roque and  
THL Christiana MacNamara

Photo: The Great Cloak of Septentria



## Septentria 101

The first thing you need to understand about the history of Septentria is that Septentria really is Ealdormere. When Septentria was established as a Barony of the Middle Kingdom, back when the Society had all of four Kingdoms, all of Ontario was Septentria. Septentria included all of what now is Ealdormere plus the small slice of the Middle that remains Starleaf Gate (Windsor and immediate environs). Yes, the Baronies and shires split off over the years; first Skraeling Althing, later Rising Waters, then RamsHaven (Ben Dunfirth split off from Rising Waters, though it too was a Canton of Septentria way back when). The root of all these is common, and the root is Septentria. As Baron Brand Thorwaldsson of Ben Dunfirth has pointed out, we all are Septentrian when we look back at our origins within the SCA.

That said, some of us are more Septentrian than others.

Skraeling Althing split off from Septentria early on and has had far longer than any other Barony to develop in parallel to Septentria. Rising Waters split off next, though many old-timers grew up in the Septentrian culture and geographic proximity meant many in Rising Waters (especially in Ben Dunfirth) played more or less constantly

with Septentrians at events. After the Skrael and Rising Waters had split away, there was an extended period when everything else in Ontario was Septentria. Finally, as the Society grew and prospered in these parts, the Society's Board of Directors determined that, in terms of populace and number of separate cantons (if not also in geography), Septentria was by far the largest Barony in the entire Known World. This led to grave concerns about the ability of one Baron and Baroness to lead that many disparate groups (no doubt reflecting corollary concerns about Baronial burn-out, which in retrospect were justified), so the Board ordered that Septentria be split in two. Thus Ramshaven came into being. However, it can be argued that Ramshaven never really "left" Septentria, because the incumbent Baron and Baroness of Septentria shifted their jobs one Barony to the west and were proclaimed Baron and Baroness Ramshaven the day that Barony was declared. Ramshaven's culture by necessity has Septentria as its launching point.

Photo: Baroness Gillian Olafsdottir d'Uriel with Duke Finnvarr de Taahe



## Septentria 101

### So What Is Being Septentrian, Anyway?

Being Septentrian is, well... different. Understanding that difference will be easier if you understand the roots of the Barony and its parent Kingdom(s).

Septentria was proclaimed a Barony by the Middle Kingdom, at a time when the Midrealm's geography includes all of what are now the Midrealm, Ealdormere, Northshield and Calontir. That is a huge landmass; that's a vast distance for the reigning Royalty and their Kingdom officers to travel on weekends. In addition, it must be remembered that Septentria came into being before e-mail and the Internet. Long-distance leadership, management and corporate governance happened very differently back then.

And yes, we were young. There was a lot less grey hair seen at events, a lot fewer families and children. The Society was equally young and the numbers of Peers of the Society playing in Ontario was pretty limited. There were a lot of university-age young adults seeking fun on a budget, socialization (i.e. a chance to meet/date/hook up with people with as strange a set of hobbies as they had themselves) and, in many cases, leadership.

What this all resulted in was:

- 1) Septentria was pretty much left on its own. The Great Lakes and the international border contributed to this sense of isolation.
- 2) The Kingdom (a.k.a. Ohio, to the cynics among us) didn't impose or supply a lot of leadership, so we had to develop our own. This meant, in part, we tended to be less conscious of Peerage and related rank as a means of selecting our leaders; if we'd waited for Peers and Barons to take over everything we wouldn't have got much done. So our local households (many led by non-Peers) took on a great deal of importance in the life of the Barony and its people. This meant people without the Kingdom's official sanction assumed and exercised positive leadership.
- 3) Further to the need to develop local leadership, when strong local leaders did come along, they had no competition from the Kingdom hierarchy down south. Without distractions from elsewhere they could have huge impact.

Photo: Baron Aeden o Kincora and Baroness Kaffa Muraith



## Septentria 101

And that's where Aeden and Kaffa come in.

Aeden o Kincora and Kaffa Muraith became Baron and Baroness shortly after Skraeling Althing split off as a one-group Barony. When they stepped down ten years later, their successors stepped up to await word from the Kingdom and the Board of Directors of the SCA that the Barony would be split in two (Ramshaven and Septentria). A lot happened in the intervening period and Aeden and Kaffa led us through all of it. In the process they left a profound imprint on the flavour of the great game played in these parts.

Have you ever noticed how many Vikings, early-period Celts and pre-Conquest Anglo-Saxons show up at our events (to quote the late Thorbjorn Osis, "Late period starts 15 October 1066")? Aeden and Kaffa were early period folks. They were good at it -- both were Laureled during their tenure in the Barony -- and had a lot of fun doing what they did. It was fun to do early period, so a lot of us did early period. A lot of us still do. The clothes are comfy and simple for new folks to put together. The ideas of clan and tribe corresponded closely to our existing social groups of households (led by local folks, not by "imposed" Royal appointments or Peers) and, as we were a pretty homogeneous group in terms of age and social background, mostly we all got along and "played nice" one with another.

Ask any SCAdian and they can talk to you about "their" Baron or "their" King. That's almost always the first Baron or King they saw or worked for, who becomes their role model and standard against whom all subsequent Barons or Kings are measured. That first SCAdian VIP tends to make a big impression (no doubt exacerbated by the coronet, heraldry, thrones and so on). Aeden and Kaffa presided over an extended period of growth for the Society across Ontario; simply put, they were "the" Baron and Baroness for ten years' worth of Septentrians, which meant the vast majority of the people who live in what is now Ealdormere. If you accept that, for most volunteer groups, a "generation" of people from intake to majority turnover (whereupon the once-new intake become old salts to the next generation) is about two years, Aeden and Kaffa presided over five generations' worth of Septentrians. That's a profound opportunity for motivated, switched-on people to make a lasting difference and Aeden and Kaffa grasped those opportunities firmly.

Aeden's and Kaffa's courts were anything but highfalutin' events. They spoke plainly and simply, and they created an

atmosphere where plain speech was accepted and encouraged.

While Aeden and Kaffa were not the first Laurels in Septentria, their elevation during their tenure was indicative of a culture of artistic excellence. In their time, Septentrians were famed for showing up at the massive Arts and Sciences competition the East Kingdom held annually at Ice Dragon and winning all the big prizes. Our artists and artisans accomplished spectacular things, especially in the early years of the Society when standards in A&S were being established.

Aeden and Kaffa both fought and led on the field. While both were proficient tourney fighters (Kaffa was the first Queen's Champion in the history of the Midrealm), their special joy was melee fighting. Indeed, Aeden was thought by many to be a battlefield genius. This combination of socialization, group martial arts and the overall political environment created a culture that prized teamwork, cooperation and the accomplishment of group tasks. This culture did not let rank and title get in the way of a good idea or the best interests of the group: indeed, it was Aeden, speaking to his troops on the Pennsic battlefield, who coined the phrase "Buttheads in Regalia," as in, "This is the battle plan the Buttheads in Regalia have cooked up. And this is what we're actually going to do."

Aeden and Kaffa believed in celebrating success. Their house was, for years, the Toronto SCA drop-in spot; for post-revels, for stitch'n'bitches, for armouring and for assorted other craft sessions. It is not an accident that Aeden got his Laurel for brewing; Septentria always has been a place to work hard, play hard and celebrate the group's achievements.

Whether by chance or through deliberation, Septentria grew because Aeden and Kaffa developed within our SCA community a profound sense of teamwork and pride in group accomplishments. They ramrodded the distribution of the first scarlet bear tabards, ready for Pennsic XV, to emphasize that group identity and pride. They made it clear that the Midrealm was doing some okay stuff but Septentria was the pick of the bunch. As Lord Thomas Grozier said to me recently, Aeden and Kaffa taught us to stand tall. Septentria camped together at Pennsic long before many of the large group encampments developed. In Aeden's day, the young women of Septentria never walked out alone at night; a young man in a bear tabard would walk the lady to her class or dinner or party and would

## Septentria 101

make sure she got home safely. She was one of us; we took care of our own. It was what was expected of us.

Plain speech. Teamwork. Co-operation. Excellence in the arts. Celebration of the group and its successes. These are the heart of Septentrian culture, established by Aeden and Kaffa.

### Stops and Starts

As noted above, the Board of Directors ordered Septentria split in two. This process began near the end of Aeden's and Kaffa's ten years as Baron and Baroness. Cordigan and Diane were selected to succeed Aeden and Kaffa, and there is no doubt they were a prudent choice. Cordigan was the head of Clan Faeringold, a Principality officer and well on his way towards the white belt of the Chivalry.

Cordigan and Diane led a pretty informal lifestyle (the Faeringolds were a notorious party house) but they dressed in cotehardies and projected a far less early-period appearance than their predecessors.

The problem was that Cordigan and Diane lived in Guelph. Aeden and Kaffa were severely burned out and needed to

be replaced. The word was that Cordigan and Diane would step up as Baron and Baroness of Septentria and then would transfer their titles to become the founding Baron and Baroness Ramshaven. They would leave a vacancy in Septentria to be followed by as-yet-unselected successors, but their promotion would allow Aeden and Kaffa to bow out gracefully and allow continuity of leadership for the western half of the barony after the split.

So, when Cordigan and Diane stepped up, they saw no point in changing anything in particular; they had no desire to saddle their imminent successors in the core of Septentria with their policies when they would be moving one Barony west in the foreseeable future.

So they waited for the imminent severance of Septentria. The trouble was, they waited for the "any day now" to come for over eighteen months. This was not their fault from all accounts; between the Kingdom and the Board bureaucracy, the process just took longer than anyone expected. Had Cordigan and Diane known they had a year

Photo: Baron Cordigan de Arnot and Baroness Diane de Arnot (far right)



## Septentria 101

and a half to wait before the Barony split, I am convinced they would have felt free to be more directive. They were told that they had weeks to wait, as were we all. The result was that Cordigan and Diane did not impose their vision or their style of game play on the Barony while they held all of Septentria. In culture and heritage, Aeden and Kaffa's influence remained.

### Restoring and Maintaining Momentum

And when Cordigan and Diane left for Ramshaven and their successors were selected and stepped up, Ieuen and Adrielle very deliberately associated themselves with Aeden and Kaffa. Adrielle always saw herself to be Kaffa's daughter (and told us so, often); a partying fighter-chick who loved Septentria passionately. Ieuen loved melee fighting and was a highly effective field leader, in an efficient and straightforward style reminiscent of Aeden's field presence. Ieuen and Adrielle often dressed in later-period garb but they maintained much of the visual signature (regalia, heraldic style) that Aeden and Kaffa had established. Indeed, when Ieuen and Adrielle instituted their special Baronial award, replacing the Cauldron of Ceridwen, they called it the Cup of Teacht Cearta Mor, in honour of Aeden and Kaffa's household.

After Adrielle stepped down (Ieuen had stepped down separately some months before), her successors Cynred and Gaerwen maintained an early-period style. Their institution of the Isengeisitha created another way for ordinary Septentrians to declare their commitment to the Barony. The iron rings Cynred forged a loose community of equals united in martial service, a reflection of the egalitarian streak that always has run through Septentria's beliefs. What makes that egalitarian impulse so notable is that it is not based on a lowest common denominator, but on an

assumption that all Septentrians are equally noble and worthy.

Cynred's and Gaerwen's successors, Corwyn and Domhnail, maintained both the early-period emphasis and the Celtic roots of Aeden and Kaffa. Their Horn of Munin provided a strongly Norse image at the heart of excellence in the Barony. Like Aeden and Kaffa, Corwyn and Domhnail both joined the Order of the Laurel during their tenure as Baron and Baroness. Corwyn's and Domhnail's artistic excellence, combined with vast generosity, meant that articles of beauty and functionality (especially that icon of early-period style, the ornate drinking horn) were seen throughout the entire Kingdom.

Percival and Christiana, while differing in style from their predecessors (in particular due to their inability to participate in heavy combat), have proven enthusiastic proponents of all martial arts, especially their beloved archery. Their Quaich of Artio both reflects their personal interests and resonates with the Celtic roots of the Barony they lead and serve.

Septentria has been blessed in the Barons and Baronesses that have led her and have given her form, substance and especially excellence. As generations have passed, as folks have come and gone, the seeds Aeden and Kaffa in particular planted have taken firm root and have grown strong and splendid. Indeed, the ease with which "old Septentrians" whose lives have drawn them away from the Barony for some time have been able to re-integrate themselves into Baronial life with evident ease, thanks to the consistency of our culture over the decades.

Photo: One of the earliest Septentrian Coronets



## Septentria's Distinctive Traditions

One of the things that make the SCA experience special, that sets it apart from other aspects of our day-to-day lives, is the feast hall. This can be a grand refectory in a Gothic university building or in a school gym but, wherever we may gather, we set out long tables with our Baron and Baroness at the room's head, we dine (usually quite well, for a reasonable price considering what we are served) and we celebrate our society in all the rich senses of that word.

If an event is held within the boundaries of the Barony and there's a feast where the Baron and Baroness are dining, we consider the event site is "the Baron's hall". Even if the King and Queen are present, it's still the Baron's hall and Their Royal Majesties are the Baron's and Baroness' guests within the Barony. Our Baron and Baroness always sit at the head table while dining within Septentria. Because it's the Baron's hall, Septentria's customs, dating back to the days of Aeden and Kaffa if not before, can be invoked.

### The Point Of Honour

In the ancient tradition of hospitality, one of the oldest traditions in Septentria is the "Point of Honour". This is a form of praise often heard on the tourney field, when one fighter voluntarily will surrender use of a limb to even the odds in a fight. It has that meaning in Septentria also, but not in the feast hall.

The tradition is that one of the Barony's warriors (originally the Lord Strigor von Talmetz, a member of House Eagleshaven when it founded the Baronial body-guard and specifically appointed Master of Steel for Eagleshaven and the Barony) stands before dinner and declares:

"In our Baron's Hall is peace. I invite all those present who bear offensive steel longer than their forearms to bring it forth, that it may be placed at a point of honour."

A place is set aside; perhaps a table at the side of the hall near the head table, perhaps a rug or fleece beside the head table (but out of the way of the servers). Guests are welcome to come forward and surrender their long steel for the duration of dinner, reclaiming it after the last remove has been cleared.

This is an invitation, a completely voluntary action, not a command. There is no "standard length of a forearm" nor is there a convention that the forearm includes the length of the hand or runs to the point of the elbow. No official definition of "offensive steel" exists, and whether the length

includes the hand-grip or not is the bearer's decision. The idea is that guests of our Baron and Baroness need fear no harm while in the care of Septentria. They need not be armed at table, and if they choose to surrender their personal arms, they do the Baron and Baroness a great compliment of trust. The definition of "offensive steel longer than their forearms" means people need not get self-conscious about eating knives (and in days past, the length of the forearm was the standard used in Septentria to determine what steel was acceptable to borne into court).

The truth of this matter, of course, is that people are being asked to take their personal property (which may be very valuable; swords and such vary widely in cost) and put it in someone else's keeping. If a Point of Honour is established, it must be supervised throughout dinner, to make sure nothing goes missing and that innocent bystanders (especially restless and curious children) don't have accidents with the sharp, shiny things suddenly collected and within reach. So the individual serving as the Baron's Master of Steel for the night should stand or be seated near the point of honour, and may well want to have friends or comrades take a shift on guard so everyone gets a chance to eat and socialize, and so that due attention can be paid to the steel. Guarding steel isn't just being a security drudge over a pile of expensive shiny stuff; that person is the Baron's explicit guarantor of peace and security in the Baron's hall. This is an ancient office; it is an honourable appointment. The one overseeing the point of honour may bear arms in the hall, albeit discreetly; if an enemy was to attack the hall, that person would stand forth and defend all, buying time for arms to be reclaimed. At the same time, guards serve the Barony; they do not intimidate, nor impose themselves between the people and the Baron and Baroness. To stand as Master of Steel is proud service to the Baron, Baroness and Barony.

And given the somewhat rough-and-ready heritage of a Barony built by Celts and policed in the early days by hired Vikings, a parallel tradition of some old Septentrian warriors is that their personal sidearms happen to have broad, sharp blades just a finger's width shorter than their forearms. Go figure.

### The Toasts

As at any feast, early in the meal the high nobility, in descending order of precedence of those present, will seek the attention of all present and toast the health of the Royalty of our land and, when they are present in person or

## Septentria's Distinctive Traditions

through embassies, the Royalty of other lands. Typically, in a Septentrian feast toasts will be drunk to the health of:

- the King and Queen of Ealdormere
- the Crown Prince and Crown Princess of Ealdormere
- the Baron and Baroness of Septentria

as is the case in most SCA feasts. Then, regardless of toasts to visiting Royalty and the Monarchs of far lands, an additional, final toast may be drunk:

- to absent friends.

These can be people who couldn't make the event. They may be people who live far away. They may have left the Society for a time or permanently. They may be beloved friends and kin lost to our sight for ever. For whatever reason they cannot feast with us, they are remembered within the halls of Septentria.

### The Bard

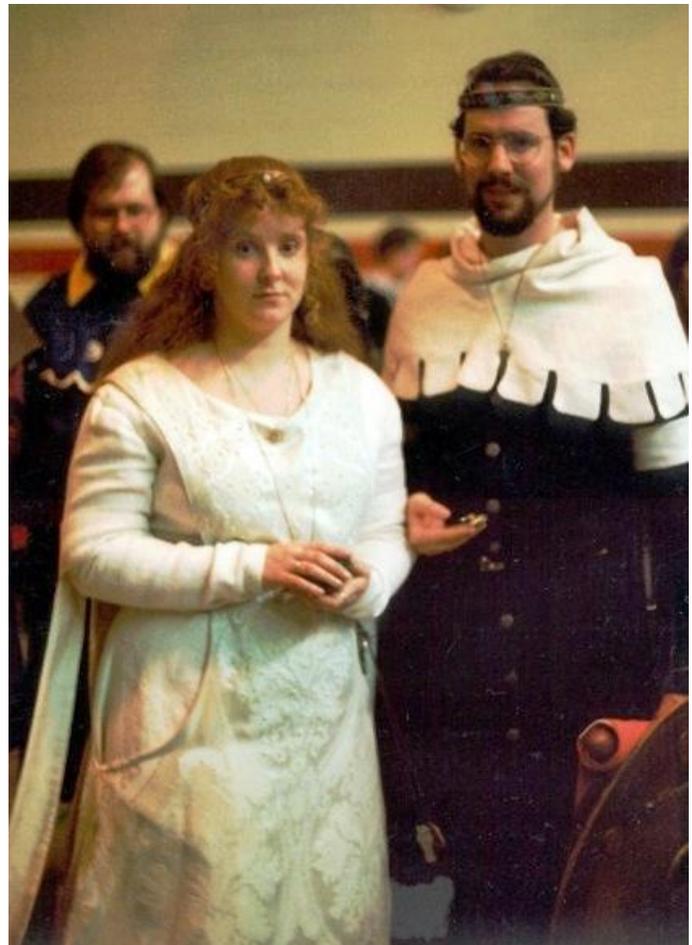
The three major bardic arts of song, poetry and story-telling (and the minor art of recitation of genealogy) are honoured throughout Ealdormere, The Land That Sings. This tradition began early in Septentria's history, when Aeden and Kaffa had a personal harper play in their feast halls. Rhiannon of Wye was the first of many who have held the appointment of bard to the Court of Septentria, and the Baron still has his bard, just as the King has. And while the King's Bard is the foremost bardic appointment in the Kingdom (and many would say is the premier bardic office in all the Known World, for what could be finer than to be the first among all the bards in The Land That Sings? Indeed, anyone who visits another Kingdom anywhere in the Known World and is introduced as the King's Bard of Ealdormere will be made welcome and offered an attentive audience. I know this from glad experience), the Bard of Septentria is an older office.

The bardic prerogative during feasts and at bardic circles as practiced within the bardic community in Ealdormere is based on mutual respect and good manners. It is the prerogative of the bard of the hall to be the first voice raised in song or story, and the last. In Septentria, that means when the Baron and Baroness are present, it is the privilege of Their Excellency's bard to open the singing during feast and to open and, if present, to close any bardic circle afterwards. In terms of the arts, it's the Bard of Septentria's hall, unless the King's Bard is present (especially if the King is present also). In such a case, the King's Bard has the privi-

lege, as first among equals in the Bardic College of Ealdormere, of being the first and last voice heard.

What does all this mean in practice? If the Baron's bard is present, he or she will do the job and start the hall singing once any noisy - or attention-demanding - business is done. If you really want to start singing or recite a poem for the head table or all the hall before the entertainment has been kicked off, it is respectful to greet the Baron's Bard and ask permission to begin (quiet story-telling at your feast table that can't be heard at head table never is an issue). To waive that prerogative is the Bard's gift to give, and it is a fine gift to receive. To ask also ensures that the budding performer doesn't accidentally trample a pre-arranged performance, nor usurp inadvertently the prerogative of the King's Bard.

Photo: Baron Ieuen MacIlmore and Baroness Adrielle Kerrec



## Septentria's Distinctive Traditions

There is another "bardic prerogative", exercised on notable occasions by very venerable bards within the bardic community, and that is to proclaim that an individual, through great deeds, has won a new name that honours those deeds. This is a rare event, discussed elsewhere.

### Rings

Ealdormere is famed throughout the Known World for its custom of giving rings. This in part reflects the Norse-Germanic custom of ring-giving. It also reflects a deliberate intention of Baron Ieuen and Baroness Adrielle to empower their people; ring-giving, as many in Ealdormere practice the custom, started in Septentria.

Unlike some Kingdoms where the Order of Precedence (the heraldic database of who got what award when, which establishes seniority) indicates both personal importance and personal prerogatives, Ieuen and Adrielle wanted their people to feel able to recognize others publicly without holding a Baronial seat, a Peerage or some other special license from the Crown. This is an authentic medieval (and pre-medieval, especially for Germanic and Norse peoples) approach; part of being noble and wealthy was displaying both nobility and wealth through generosity. It also goes against the grain in many places in the SCA, where only Royalty and their delegate vassals, the Landed Barony, may give awards.

Ieuen and Adrielle (and the successors, all of whom have supported and continue to support the tradition of ring-giving within the populace) knew that their people were noble. Accordingly, when approached about the idea, they enthusiastically supported it. And so, in Baronial court at Pennsic, Lord Ulvar van der Nederlander was given a ring to recognize his manifold good works by another Septentrian, not by his Baron and Baroness. The following summer, Ulvar stood up in court and announced that he too was "a man of stature" as he too held a Bear's Claw. Accordingly he too would give a ring, and he did.

Among the wonderful, insidious aspects of ring-giving within Ealdormere are the so-called "Ealdormere rules" of ring-giving. When giving a ring (especially to someone from out of Kingdom) it is customary to ask if they will play this game by Ealdormere rules. If they agree, the ring-giver charges the recipient to seek out a worthy person and to pass the ring along within a year and a day, and in doing so to ask that person to play by the same rules. This is an inherent encouragement for people to be empowered, to exercise generosity and to not let the hierarchy of the SCA

get in the way of fun, achievement and truly noble behaviour. As you can see, the first ring ever presented, to Ulvar, was passed along a year later; in other words, from the beginning Septentrian ring-giving has happened "by Ealdormere rules".

Ring-giving can be a private affair, but those given rings are worthy of praise and of emulation, so the giving and receiving of rings often happens in Baronial Court, after prior arrangement with the Baron and Baroness and their heralds. This serves several purposes:

- Court adds to the sense of occasion for the giver and especially for the recipient;
- it reminds all present that in Septentria all are noble and are empowered, permitted and encouraged to exercise their nobility; and
- it lets the Baron and Baroness learn more about the accomplishments of their people.

This sort of person-to-person recognition doesn't happen very often in other places. In other Kingdoms, it tends to happen because one of the local folks has been given an Ealdormere ring and feels the need to pass along the ring. Indeed, in one notable instance a Trimaran who passed along a ring had from an Ealdormeran went to great pains to explain that, while he had been thinking of who was worthy to receive this special award, it had been as if he was a King. Indeed he was, in his lands, for only Kings and Barons have a license to exercise their nobility. It thus appears that in Septentria every man's a King and every woman's a Queen. How can one argue with that conclusion?

Ealdormere rings carry no precedence for heralds to record and calculate. However, certain rings have developed special histories and have become prized possessions, with each recipient adding to the lustre of that ring. Examples include:

- the Ring of Locksley.
- the Rings of Six, presented by Berus and Marion, last Prince and Princess of Ealdormere at the end of their last reign over a Principality, immediately before Ealdormere was elevated to Kingdom status. One of these rings is the special token that marks the King's Bard of Ealdormere and is passed from bard to bard with that office.
- the twenty-five Osis Arm-Rings presented by Eoforwic to Thorbjorn Osis at his Coronation as King of the Middle, which wandered (as great rings are wont to wander) across the Known World and still can be seen at Pennsic and

## Septentria's Distinctive Traditions

other major events. One in particular went from Osis' hand to an Eoforing during Osis' reign and has passed annually within and around Eoforwic. That ring has a poem associated with it and the ring and its history together are prized highly.

- rings given by Corwyn and Domhnail while sitting in the High Seats of Septentria. These were often had crafted from bear bone by the Baron and Baroness themselves.

### The Name of the Barony

Septentria in modern English most closely would translate as "Northlands". The word is derived from the Latin. The archaic English adjectival form, septentrional, is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as "ad. L. septentrio, sing. of septentriones, orig. septem triones, the seven stars of the constellation of the Great Bear, f. septem seven + triones, pl. of trio plough-ox. Cf. F. septentrion."

As for the links to the seven stars of the Big Dipper -- or the Great Bear -- the two principal founders of the SCA in Ontario were two American graduate students newly arrived at the University of Toronto, Gillian Olafsdottir d'Uriel from the Midrealm and Finnvarr de Taahe from the East (Finnvarr moved to Toronto just before his reign as King of the East ended). The main charge of Finnvarr's

personal arms are seven golden stars, six surrounding a predominant seventh star.

The links between the constellaion Ursa Major, the North Star and the heraldry of the Barony become self-evident.

### The Customary Rights of a Septentrian

Beyond common sense and good manners, certain specific rights have been defined in Kingdom law for any citizen of the Kingdom of Ealdormere. History and tradition indicate each Septentrian also has certain rights that can be exercised responsibly, proudly and freely. These have not been codified previously.

### To Wear the Livery of the Barony

Every Septentrian can display the livery of the Barony, the white bear on a red field. Some wear the bear on a scarlet tabard; others wear embroidered patches or favours hanging from their belts. Some display the bear "in canton" on

Photo: Baron Cynred Broccan and Baroness Gaerwen of Trafford



## Septentria's Distinctive Traditions

heraldic banners. Some fighters carry a red shield with the white bear. All these are appropriate ways to show pride in being a Septentrian and other methods are available to those with an interest in the active practice of heraldry.

At Pennsic XVI, a Septentrian fighting "on exchange" with the East was asked by the Eastern scout organization to remove his red bear tabard, as seeing that tabard would confuse the scouts of the East who knew that spotting those tabards in the woods meant they'd identified the Midrealm's main effort (the Septentrian didn't remove it, of course).

At Pennsic XXXVI the beleaguered East had Ealdormere as its main ally. Reports filtered back from Midrealm friends that, when the Middle and its numerous allies surveyed the field before attacking, they were careful to note the location of the East's "elite polar bear attack squad", as it was considered a significant threat to be factored in to any plans.

Over those twenty years, the reputation of those who "wear the bear" remains glorious and unsullied.

Please note that the Baron and Baroness (and their personal herald, while working in his or her heraldic capacity as the voice of Their Excellencies) may wear the heraldic arms, "Septentria, proper" or "Gules, three chevronels braced argent, overall a laurel wreath vert, and in chief a bear passant argent" which is the same white bear we all wear on the same red field, above what looks like a mountain range of white triangles with a green laurel wreath superimposed on them. To wear the bear alone says "I am a Septentrian". To wear the complete arms says, "I am the Baron of Septentria", which is not the case for most of us.

### To Counsel the Crown on a New Baron and Baroness

While the decision on who serves as Baron and Baroness is the Crown's, the Crown in Ealdormere must consult the populace before they make a decision. Note they must seek and accept advice from the populace of the Barony; they don't have to take the advice offered, though thus far they always have chosen wisely and heeded counsel before choosing.

That said, every citizen of the Barony has a say in the consultation process, usually through a formal set of polls. Paid members of the SCA each get a counted vote on the non-binding poll; people who are not paid members may submit ballots but their votes are not counted with the paid

members'; though the Crown will see all the ballots and be able to read the trend of popular support.

Popular support is the issue; the Crown will pick the best candidate or candidates they can and then will poll to ensure that their selection will receive support from the people.

### To Counsel the Baron and Baroness

Anyone can contact the Baron and Baroness and offer counsel. This can be specific advice (what taxes should they impose next Twelfth Night? What should we buy the Princess for a Coronation gift?), advice on the exercise of their Baronial prerogatives ("I think you should give the Award of the Bear's Heart to Fred because...") or general advice. The point is, you are a Septentrian and, within the bounds of reason and good manners, you have the ear of your Baron and Baroness. More to the point, you're a Septentrian and, until you prove yourself unreasonable or rude, your Baron and Baroness will be interested in what you have to say about the Barony we all share and the job they and their officers are doing.

### To Give Rings

As noted elsewhere, the custom of any in the populace giving rings to mark praiseworthy deeds started in Septentria. Traditionally rings are given in Baronial court, though they may be passed elsewhere, so long as the gesture is public, so that the recipient can be praised. Other popular venues for the passage of rings include:

- during feast at major events (which cuts down on the length of court);
- around the fire during a Sing as "bard's price"; and
- on the battlefield, especially if given to an outstanding opponent. Rings won from the hand of a willing foe on the battlefield are special, special tokens.

Ring-givers are encouraged to "play by Ealdormere rules" as is the original Septentrian custom, and to pass along rings within a year and a day of their receipt. Ring-givers also are encouraged to ask the recipients of their rings to play by those same rules, thus empowering a whole new set of ring-givers. In this way, there is some hope that the custom of ring-giving and its underlying motives - respect, empowerment and generosity - will infiltrate throughout the stodgiest and most hierarchical ends of the Society.

## Septentria's Distinctive Traditions

Note that rings often are referred to as "bard's price". To celebrate a splendid performance or composition it always is appropriate to give the artist a ring. It was through generosity to bards and skalds that nobles of old won "ring-fame" or "bard-fame", the praise of poets and minstrels that ensured their patrons' good names and great deeds became famous and, in some cases, immortal.

### The Awards of Septentria

One of the distinctive features of Septentria, as opposed to other Baronies, is a relative paucity of awards available to the Baron and Baroness. There are only four awards within the Barony's gift:

- the Award of the Bear's Claw
- the Order of the Bear's Heart
- the Order of the Golden Bear
- the other award (more on it later).

And there's one other Baronial sort-of award that falls outside the Barony's gift, and that deserves some explaining, also later.

The Golden Bear is the most recent of the four awards, instituted late in the tenure of Corwyn and Domhnail.

### The Bear's Claw

Instituted by Aeden and Kaffa, this is the oldest award in the Barony. It is an Award, not an Order, so it can be given to the same person more than once.

The Bear's Claw is the War award, but it is not exclusively a martial award. It is given to honour contributions to the Pennsic War effort. Many fighters have received it for their deeds on the field. So have archers, fencers and scouts. So have Commissariat workers and cooks. So have moms who stayed in camp with the kids so dad could be free to armour up and join the shieldwall. It usually is given at War or the first court thereafter; in rare cases it has been given before War to recognize accomplishments that have trained the up-and-coming members of the Septentrian shieldwall.

On three occasions the contributions of a sitting Baron or Baroness have been recognized with a Bear's Claw. In all three occasions (Corwyn and Domhnail under Edouard and Genevieve and later Percival under Trumbrand and Kayla) the Crown has called the incumbent Baron into Royal Court, dismissed the Baron or Baroness, assumed the fief of Septentria for five minutes, opened a Baronial Court,

bestowed the Bear's Claw and then returned the Barony to its rightful guardians.

### The Bear's Heart

The Bear's Heart is the Baronial service award. It is an Order; it can be received only once by a recipient.

Almost as old as the Bear's Claw, this was for years considered to be a very exclusive Order. Indeed, in the days of Aeden and Kaffa it was generally believed to be easier to get one or more Middle Kingdom service awards than to receive a Bear's Heart. This changed during the tenure of

Photo: Baron Corwyn Galbraith and Baroness Domhnail Galbraith



## Septentria's Distinctive Traditions

Cynred and Gaerwen, and this was a very good step. Baronial awards should not be harder to earn than many Kingdom awards; Baronial honours in part serve to encourage new folks to greater efforts.

### The Golden Bear

Created in the tenure of Corwyn and Domhnail, definitely the most artistic Baron and Baroness since Aeden and Kaffa (and one might argue even more artistic than Aeden and Kaffa, which is high praise), for the first time Septentria has a way of formally rewarding excellence in the arts and sciences. The first award token was a small pendant of a bear, carved by Baron Corwyn from golden amber; it was used as the master for a mould from which all other such tokens will be made.

Why the Barony didn't have an arts award before this one is a subject for discussion. Perhaps it is because, since the earliest days of Septentria, excellence in the arts and sciences has been a staple of Septentrian activity (as made evident through the number of Laurels in the Barony from earliest days and in the record of Septentrian winners at the east and Aethelmearc's Ice Dragon A&S Pentathlon).

### The Other Award - the Cauldron, Cup, Horns and Quaich

Aeden and Kaffa instituted a special award early in their tenure, to recognize a person or persons whose participation in the Society sets a high example and whose contributions to the Barony have made Septentria a better place for all. This is awarded once a year, traditionally at Baronial Twelfth Night.

Aeden and Kaffa instituted the Cauldron of Ceridwen, allegedly crafted by the elves to hold the tears of inspiration from the Welsh goddess Ceridwen and discovered by Master Sylard of Eagleshaven (who just happens to be a noted metal-worker). This was bestowed annually, until Aeden's and Kaffa's departure from the Baronial seats and the Society.

When Ieuen and Adrielle stepped up, they formally retired the Cauldron, but maintained an annual award of excellence. Mistress Bri crafted a jewel-bedecked cup called the Cup of Teach Cearta Mor, named after Aeden and Kaffa's household.

When Adrielle stepped down as Baroness (Ieuen having stepped down some months earlier), the Cup was retired

and Cynred and Gaerwen replaced it with the Horn of Wessex. This honoured the Saxon origins of the Baron.

When Cynred and Gaerwen stepped down, the Horn of Wessex was retired and replaced by Corwyn and Domhnail with a new horn they crafted themselves, called the Horn of Munin. The all-knowing Norse god Odin is said to have had two ravens that flew off every morning to see the world. Every evening the pair returned, landed on Odin's shoulders and whispered what they had seen in Odin's ears; thus did Odin see and know all. His ravens were named Hugin and Munin, which translate respectively as "Thought" and "Memory". The Horn of Munin has carved along its length, "Septentria Remembers".

At the first Twelfth Night after their retirement, Percival and Christiana returned the Horn of Munin to Corwyn and Domhnail for safekeeping and brought forth a new annual award, the Quaich of Artio. A quaich is a traditional Scots drinking bowl used to welcome guests, and the Baron and Baroness made it clear that the recipient was to use the Quaich to greet new folk and make them especially welcome in their Barony.

### The sort-of award: Aedenesyebrother

Septentria is a land of ring-givers. Sometimes a ring is not enough. In the Pennsic woods battle at his last Pennsic as our Baron a small force of Septentrians and their friends, under command of Baron Cynred, fought a brilliant small-unit action, where the Septentrians had an impact upon the enemy far out of proportion to their numbers and suffered no casualties in the process. The manner of the action was so elegant and so ingenious that, to one observer, it was unavoidably reminiscent of the way Baron Aeden fought and led. Accordingly, after a little research into Old English naming conventions, in Baronial Court the fighters involved were called forth by Master Hector of the Black Height, who has served both as King's Bard of Ealdormere and Bard of Septentria. He invoked a bard's prerogative and gave each of them not a ring but that which rings: a shining name.

The company were declared to have proven by their deeds that they all had the blood of Baron Aeden, greatest of all Septentria's war leaders, in their veins and thus could claim kinship to Aeden. They publicly were acclaimed kin of Aeden and told that henceforth could call themselves Aedenesyebrother (the form in Old English) individually and Aedenesyebrother (the plural form) collectively.

## Septentria's Distinctive Traditions

The gift of this splendid name is given occasionally (only three times in the past decade), when deeds of such glory have been seen, especially when a war-band leader has led with courage, tactical acumen and with obvious consideration for his subordinates. Thus far only Master Hector has exercised this prerogative, and has done so only with the consent of the Baron's bard, as the naming happens in Baronial Court.

Aedenesyebrother

The first of his kin

Cynred Aedenesbrother Broccan

Drogo Aedenesbrother

Duncan Aedenesbrother McDrake

Gunnar Aedenesbrother from West Yorvik

Tormod Aedenesbrother of Kirk Andraes

(This list is almost certainly incomplete)

The second of his kin

Nigel Aedenesbrother MacFarlane

The third of his kin

Streonwald Aedenesbrother Wulfesbaena

Thorolfr Aedenesbrother inn Smithr

### The White Bear Fian

As Baronies split off and developed their own identities and loyalties, there still was a desire to be loyal to Septentria. Also, when the Midrealm's Northern Baronies went on campaign to Pennsic (even in the days before the Region of Ealdormere) Septentria and the Skrael fell in together under the leadership of the stronger of the two Baronies, almost always Septentria. Baron Aeden recognized all this and, as a mechanism to permit ongoing service to Septentria, he created the White Bear Fian.

Aeden, an Irishman, modelled the White Bear Fian after the Irish Fian, a brotherhood of warriors from various Irish Kingdoms sworn to common cause. Aeden saw the White Bear Fian the same way; as a body of warriors from all Baronies and beyond, bound by a fundamental loyalty to Septentria, its culture and ideals.

The White Bear Fian is a heavy combat fellowship entered through challenge; a prospective member declares publicly (often in a Baronial Court) his or her intent to join the Fian. The Fianna (members of the Fian) assemble, accept the challenge, agree on a date for the challenge to be fought and select one of their members to defend in the challenge.

On the day in question the challenger must win two of three bouts against that one defender to win admission into the Fian. If a challenger does not win two bouts, he or she is encouraged to practice and to challenge again.

Membership in the Fian is not an award and it bears no heraldic precedence.

### The Isengeisitha and the Iron Companions

The Isengeisitha (translated as the Iron Companions) are a fellowship in service to the Barony. They are volunteers who offer a martial skill (heavy combat, rapier, archery, thrown weapons) and declare they will serve the Barony for a year and a day. In recognition, Baron Cynred forged black iron arm-rings which were the mark of Companionship. These are worn as a badge of pride. On the year, the ring is returned to the Barony and the Companion is free to retire (in recognition of past service the ring may be gifted to that retired Companion) or may renew the promise of service. In that case the ring is returned from the hand of the Baron or Baroness. Cynred and Gaerwen instituted the Isengeisitha; Corwyn and Domhnail changed the name from the Saxon to the vernacular English but retained the rings and the Companionship in service to Septentria.

Membership in the Iron Companions is not an award and it bears no heraldic precedence.

Photo: A close-up of the one of the most recent Septentrian tabards



## Whither Septentria?

It seems logical and appropriate, having surveyed Septentria's past, to consider its future prospects. Writing this is a large risk, best taken on a foundation of good humour, because articles like this tend to come back and haunt. Still, no guts, no glory and the SCA is fuelled by glory, right?

First, I think any change that occurs within the Barony will be gradual, simply because there are enough long-term Septentrians (in particular, former Barons and Baronesses still active) in our midst to maintain the forward momentum of whatever we've established thus far. Our socio-political culture is pretty well established. This is not to say that the Great Man (or woman!) school of history is invalid - I say Aeden and Kaffa prove conclusively the power of the right people in the right place and time - and that a dynamic leader can't appear and lead us willingly into the foppish late-15th century or a scarlet Shogunate. However, what we have and how we have it seems to work pretty well for most folks. Ours is a volunteer organization which, sensibly enough, tends to follow the path of least resistance - and least overhead effort. Accordingly if what we have works and evidently isn't broken, it's a lot less effort if we don't make unnecessary fixes.

On reflection, I believe the single attribute that has made the greatest contribution to the success of our Barony is our emphasis on the value of each individual. As this is an attribute that promotes vitality and growth in any organization, I can see ongoing potential for prosperity. We'll keep giving rings. We'll keep encouraging people to participate, to try new things.

I hope we'll keep singing.

We never have succumbed to Royals with big egos and an instinct for rule by fiat. It's not our collective style. I cannot imagine Ealdormere Royalty ruling in that sort of absolutist manner, which means an absolutist Crown will never be in a position to appoint a non-populist Baron and Baroness here. We'll always have straight-talking leadership. We'll always have a Baronial court at Pennsic where people sit on the grass and cold beer is not too deep in the background.

I cannot imagine, at least not in the near future, a time when Septentrians won't celebrate each other. I don't mean "celebrate" in the ring-giving, make-a-fuss-about sense. I mean I cannot imagine a time when Septentrians won't feel empowered to try new things within a supportive and positive environment, to step up for the general good, to speak truth to power when the power really is all of us. I believe

this is firmly at the core of why the White Bear on the Pennsic field remains consistently a desirable ally and a respected foe. We all matter. We all put in. We all try to make Septentria look good, to not let the side down, and our combined efforts are spectacular to behold and generate wondrous results.

At the same time, the sense of celebration that acts as a catalyst for our group efforts also gives such scope for individual passion and excellence! So many individual Septentrians do so many different neat things so very well; I say it's no accident that Septentria has given our Society

Photo: Baron Percival de la Roque and Baroness Christiana MacNamara



## Whither Septentria?

Marian of Heatherdale, Kaellyn MacDemott, Corwyn and Domhnail Galbraith, Unnr Hringsdottir, Thorolfr inn Smithr, Nicolaa de Bracton, Streonwald Wulfesbana, Cynred Broccan; I could go on and on. Did Septentria make Corwyn and Domhnail horn carvers? Heck no! The key is, Septentria did nothing to get in their way.

Occasionally I hear from SCAdians from far away and hear about roadblocks in their way as they pursue their passions and dreams. Sometimes the obstacles are political; sometimes they're administrative or procedural. Often culture and tradition intimidate. Occasionally the issue is just plain personal. All that's somebody else's problem, though. However rough our local life may get around the edges, as a rule in Septentria we don't block people or trip them up too badly.

And maybe that sums up the future of this place. The road ahead is wide, straight and clear. Gillian and Finnvarr blazed the trail, Aeden and Kaffa tore it wide open, read the lay of the land and set our course accordingly. There's room to cruise along and enjoy the ride, or to get excited and put the pedal to the metal. I think we as a group will avoid sharp turns, because when you turn sharply you need to brake pretty hard and as a group we like to keep moving forward; forward is more fun. Our route is clear and, when you think about it, we've had no bad weather to slow us down for a phenomenally long time. As I gaze ahead, I cannot foresee any significant clouds in the sky. And why would I? This is Septentria I'm talking about.

Photo: Flyer for the Septentrian Decennial event

