



Fairy Dust

First Quarter 2009

Publication of the Northern California Friends of Faire

Calendar:

Full Membership Meeting

January 31, 2009 11:00

Round Table. Fremont

46600 Mission Blvd

Fremont CA 94539

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Two Rivers Renaissance Faire:

Dec. 12-14 Reno Nevada

Sonora Celtic Festival

[Formerly Calaveras Celtic]

Jan 30-Feb 1 Sonora

FOF is signed up

Symposium

Feb 7-8 Modesto [date change]

Lompoc Renaissance Style Festival

Mar 28-29 Lompoc CA

Tartan Day Scottish Faire

April 4 Ardenwood Farms

Medieval Fantasy Festival

Apr 18-19 Vacaville CA

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The Calendar of the Sixteenth Century

The people didn't have calendars or clocks in this time, and the day and year revolved around church and planting/harvest. The clock was the sun. The day/date was based upon the liturgical calendar.

Each day's hours were marked with bells, if any church nearby had any, for prime, mass,

sext [noon] angelus or vespers. These were the hours marked for the common person's day. Meals were the breaking of the fast, - first meal of the day, and dinner, around noon. Breakfast usually consisted of last night's leftovers, and watered down beer.

Just as we know when Memorial Day is, or Veterans Day....so too did the people of the sixteenth century know days like Michaelmas, or Whitsun, or Corpus Christi. Those were the days that divided the year, the year was divided into feast and fast days, and planting and harvest. Thus the year actually started after Epiphany, or January 6, the end of a 12 day feast that even went down to the poorest. Then was the short period before Shrove tide, the week, or so, before Lent. This was in the middle of winter with no food, and little work except indoor work or preparation for planting. Then was the fasting period of Lent, not so hard to fast when you have nothing, but you would be surprised how many ways you could cook fish and eels if you were wealthier. Then in the round of dates came Holy Week, and if the weather was good enough some early planting was done. After Easter, came planting or readying one's home/barn/area for planting. Whitsun came 50 days later and planting was done, it was early summer, late spring. Usually the week of Whitsun was a feast time. This was early May to early June counted down from Easter, one of the rotation feasts of the church calendar. There was also Corpus Christi, or Christ's Body. This was another church day to remember the crucifixion and it fell around



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Trinity, which rotated from around late May to early June.

After the summer was Lammastide, August 1; a feast that has long history in England, with roots in pagan times. It was put into the liturgical calendar to commemorate St. Peter's unchaining from prison by the angel. The villein – if he could afford it – traditionally brought a lamb to the mass, a sort of first fruits. Then it was blessed and butchered. The meat could then be preserved if necessary. After August's harvest came Michaelmas, September 29. Usually that was the harvest festival, and commemorated the Archangels, Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. The Feast was sometimes called the Feast of Michael and All Angels. Then comes "All Hallows," or the Feast of all Saints, on 1 November, and of course All Hallows Eve which was not as much a feast as a feared time. This has become a fun holiday in America more than Europe. Then came the Feast of Martinmas named for St. Martin a Roman martyr. That was about November 11. Then came the season of Advent which was the preparation for the Holy season of Christ's mass, which in fact starts the liturgical calendar. This culminates in Epiphany and the year starts again.

Christmas in the Sixteenth Century

Twelfth Night was the period from December 26, St. Stephens Day, to Epiphany – January 6. The people of the sixteenth century did not observe Christmas as we do, but as a 12 day feasting time to bring in the New Year. This feast had its

roots in druidic times, to ward off the darkness of winter. It was adopted by the Church because of its popularity. The Yule log was brought in, to burn the whole time, the hall or parlor or main room was decorated with holy and pine boughs. Holly berries were considered lucky. Mistletoe was used as well, as decoration. Both the holly and the mistletoe were traditional and considered somewhat holy in druidic times, thus was used still in the sixteenth century for luck and good hope for the year. In wealthier homes feasts were thrown each day, so Elizabeth's court would have been one of a merry round of revels and food. The leftovers were given to the poor, after the servants had eaten too. The Lord of Misrule was appointed the "master of the feast" and it was his job to make sure the feast was unforgettable. The last day of the season he was "king" for the day, allowing him license to "make merry" and to mock the court ...as long as he did not embarrass the queen. This feast has its roots in many traditions as far back as Roman times and "saturnalia" according to the Encyclopedia Britannica.

Wassail: There are various explanations of the term and meaning of Wassail according to various resources it goes back to pre medieval history and was always connected to the year's end and deep winter. Phonetically, the term Wassail has fairly clear origins. The original cry was "Wes Hal" meaning "Be in Good Health". The host would then raise his tankard and reply



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"Drink Hail", meaning literally "Drink Health". The act of toasting and drinking wassail was meant to wish good health and then to quite literally consume that good health.

The wassail bowl was usually beer and something else, and in one area, apples became popular. The following recipe is one of 3 I found, and is a good adaptation.

Modern recipes use brandy and Sherries of the sweeter kind, one even used port and said it tasted awful. The *Joy of Cooking* gives a recipe for wassail with both and a dozen raw eggs, which I do not recommend.

- 1 quart apple juice
- 1 quart apple cider
- 8 oranges
- 4 lemons
- 1 TB Honey
- 16 cinnamon sticks (10 for garnish)
- 10 whole cloves
- 10 whole allspice berries
- 1/2 teaspoon mace

In a large pot, combine apple juice and cider. Wash and slice the oranges and lemons and add them to the pot. Create a spice pouch by wrapping 6 cinnamon sticks, cloves, allspice, and mace in a piece of cheesecloth or muslin and add that to the pot as well. Simmer for at least 30 minutes. Ladle into mugs and garnish with a cinnamon stick.

One version suggests you roast apples, and another version had you soaking apple slices in white syrup. Another way of making that work is to slice a couple tart apples, and roll in brown sugar and bake till soft, and float into the wassail bowl making it more like the original. If you want it to be potable, substitute 4 parts of ale to 1 part of sherry to the apple cider.

Then lift your glass, toast to good times and sing:

Here we come a wassailing among the leaves so green

Here we come a wandering so fair to be seen

Love and joy come to you and to your wassail too

And God bless you and send you a happy New Year

And God send you a happy New Year

We are not daily beggars that beg from door to door

We are your neighbor's children whom you have seen before

God bless the master of this house, likewise the mistress, too

And all the little children that round the table go."



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From the Membership Manager

Hi all, we are beginning another season of Faires. I would like to inform all members especially the new ones of upcoming events.

The first event is the Renaissance Symposium held in Modesto on Feb 7th and 8th. This has classes in language, history, costuming, dance and much more. It is a great way to start learning skills for faire or to freshen up your skills. The site is <http://www.rensymposium.com/default.aspx> and this will give you all the info you need to sign up for it.

The first faire of the season is the Sonora Celtic Festival on March 14th and 15th. We usually help with meet and greet at this faire

so please volunteer if you are interested. The contact person is Vicki Houston for now. Her email is u2bjunk1@yahoo.com. Please let her know if you want to help with this faire. She will need your full information and a contact number.

Lastly, remember we are having our first election for Board Members this year. Your ballots should have arrived in the beginning of January. If you didn't receive it please contact Betti Cogswell at chinmom@pobox.com. Please vote!!

That is all for now, if you need any more information please contact me at alderwye@gmail.com

Robroy Current, Membership Manager