

The Newcastle Current

1st Quarter - March 2005

Upcoming Event:

Faire of the Roses, April 9 & 10th
Set in: Faversham, October 1513

It doeth marvel me much! Not once but twice this very year the Royal presence shall be upon our dear Faversham. Our most gracious Queen Catherine will be upon the village on the morrow. She goes to meet good King Harry whence he returns from France! T'would it not be most wondrous if her Majesty were to attend our Harvest Festival? Such a mighty queen as she, who raised an army and laid waste to the Scottish brigands and their king for daring to attack us when our King fights in France!

Our ale be the best in all of Kent Shire, made right here in Faversham. That be a better lure for good King Harry. He mayhaps be in need of stout pull or two. Did not that good King Harry send the French a lesson or two?

But most assuredly, t'will be a most grand celebration for one and all, be she stay or not, for what more could an Englishman ask but to have a **victorious King AND a victorious Queen**. We shall make a great day of it!



St. Matthew's
Performing Guild is a
non-profit, family
oriented organization
dedicated to bringing
the English
Renaissance to life.

What Did You Do When You Were Young?

At least 60% of people in late Tudor England spent their youth as a servant in someone else's house. Gentlemen's sons spent their youth in formal schooling, their daughters in learning housewifery from their female relatives... Many middling urban families, a few yeomen and the occasional gentry's younger son opted instead for apprenticeships. At about the age of 14 or 15 these boys and very occasionally girls, left home and came entirely under the care and control of their master. **Apprenticeships cost money**. No one took an apprentice for free. Different trades were able to charge different fees.

So apprenticeships were limited to the better off or well connected especially urban, families... Once the contract was agreed they couldn't leave until their year was up unless they could convince a magistrate that their very lives were in danger. On the other hand, they couldn't be sacked until the year was up either. Most people changed positions a fair bit in the twelve or so years until they married.

Boys and men did all forms of agricultural work depending on their strength, skills and the needs of the master - looking after and driving horses carrying the highest status and pay. Men also did some of the heavier work about the house.

Girls and women were not restricted to the house but regularly worked in the fields, harvesting, weeding, herding animals, indeed almost anything except plowing, reaping and the care of horses. Dairy work, laundry, brewing, poultry keeping and much of the gardening were all tasks particular to women. Dairymaids could command higher wages in many parts of the country.

Once young men and women married (on average at 25-27) they stopped being servants and set up their own homes. For the lucky ones a mix of small inheritances and their savings were enough to farm on their own account...and be independent. Maybe even employing their own servants one day. But many had to rely on wages as day labourers to survive and bring up their children.

By Ruth Goodman (www.tudorgroup.co.uk)

Health Unto Her Majesty

Here's a health unto Her
Majesty, with a
fa la la la la.

Confusion to her enemies,
with a fa la la la la.

And he that will not drink
her health, we wish him
neither wit nor health, nor
yet a rope to hang himself,
with a fa la la la la,
with a fa la la la la.



And now a word from the President.

Another faire year has come again, full of promise and excitement. Old friends to see, new friends to make, costumes to create, and wondrous things to learn. **2005 begins my 7th year as a member of St. Matthew's Guild, 5th as President and sees me directing my 4th Folsom faire.** I cannot begin to tell you of all the memories that these past years have generated. I am amazed that it has only been such a short time. Becoming a part of the renaissance fair family has been some of the most rewarding times of my life as well as some of the most maddening!!

On the rewarding side, I have more than I ever thought possible. I have friends; friends who will bail me out of jail, and those that will be sitting next to me saying – “Wow! That was fun!” I have the rich and rewarding experience of working with and learning from those members of our community that have been there since it's inception, those who are the “big kids” of this, our own little playground. And I have my family: St. Matthew's.

I have seen St. Matthew's Guild grow, in size and in it's outlook. We are becoming a guild that has much to bring to a fair, a guild that other guilds look to with respect. Our growth in the past year has been fabulous. We have so many new people with so much great energy and enthusiasm. It is probably there that lies most of my frustration.

How do I channel such new and raw energy? Finding a way to incorporate all of your strengths, ideas and suggestions has been overwhelming. How do I and the other mentors and masters of the guild integrate all of you into the established framework of what we do and who we are as a guild?

With your help, I have honed my skills in diplomacy, have learned when to speak out and when to hold my tongue and have learned that not everyone will share my views or vision. And I have learned that

diversity is a good thing. With every influx of new members we change. It may mean that we learn to present a class in a different way, or that we need to take a look at how we have “always done things” and see if it is time to adapt to a new way.

Change is difficult for all of us, more so for some than others. But change in its self is not bad; it is how we deal with the changes that matter. This coming year presents me with my greatest challenge so far, letting go. I have enjoyed, nay, reveled in my position as your leader, as your president. The time is coming, however, when we will need to change, when I will hand the reigns of leadership to the next fool – I mean the next president.

For the meantime, I will continue to serve my family, my guild, with all the energy and focus that I can. We have a wonderful year ahead of us, with a new fair to play at and new guild members to bring into the fold. I know that we will all survive and conquer the waves of change to come. We, as a guild, have always been able to rise to any occasion with grace and aplomb. I am and always have been very proud to tell the fair community that I am the President of St. Matthew's Guild.

Liz



A Word from our Directors

“Why I joined this crazy group called St Matts.”

I joined because my wife joined with my little girl. You see, I was working shift work and they finally decided after about 15 years of shift work it was time to get on with their life because they had gotten tired of waiting for me. So they joined up so to speak. After about a year I received a promotion and job change that allowed me to see what was going on with this new “group” they had joined.

After working as many years as I had in the state's prison system, seeing people dressed up in funny clothes and talking funny wasn't such a stretch for me as for most newcomers. So I started on my road to learning about the Old English ‘stuff’ and how to “enjoy thy self.”

At first I thought some of the folks were wound a bit too tight. But after being around for a season I learned that it was because some folks had left St Matts and had joined other “groups”. That's always hard! When I joined, St Matts was a very small group of loyal and dedicated people being the best they could at what they were doing. And that was acting and presenting the English way of country or township life.

I have seen people come and go in the few short years of being here. I am the first to admit that I haven't taken the bit in the mouth and ran with it like some of the leaders of our small band of merry folks. But **I always have to return and remember what my mom used to tell me when I was so much younger, “You reap what you sow.” That means you get out of it what you put into it. The “it” in this case is the fun or excitement of being involved in this little group of folks...As they used to tell me, try it, you might like it.** You can never fire a volunteer, but we can't make you have fun either.

The purpose of this message is to encourage everyone to join in and see what adventures you can find!

Gregor The Letch

Member Highlight:

Nathan Schmidt & Liz Martin

a.k.a. "Sir Richard & Margaret Catesby"

Sir Richard is a lawyer who currently serves as the Mayor of Newcastle. Although fiercely loyal to the Queen, his elder brother William is notoriously Catholic and is rapidly depleting the family fortune on recusancy fines.

As a younger brother, Richard has had to make his own way. After a brief period practicing law in London, he moved north to the booming port of Newcastle to make his fortune. After establishing himself as a trusted legal advisor to the major players in the coal trade, Catesby has become a successful coal trader himself and with the influence of the Guild of Hostmen behind him, has risen to the top of Newcastle's civil government.

He has made a few enemies along the way though and it seems that scandal is never far away. Many rumors and unproven accusations have plagued Catesby's administration though he, somehow, always comes out "smelling like a rose."

Sir Richard is a very personable and likeable fellow who truly seems earnest to be of service and to help others. He is known for his listening ear and his unfailing courtesy.

Mistress Catesby, likewise, is known for her sociable ways. Though it is rumored she grows weary of her brother-in-law's continued commitment to the Church of Rome.

Member Highlight:

Mimi Walker a.k.a.

"Goodwife Constance Bidwell"

Truly the term "goodwife" applies to Constance. She is a hard-working, practical but often befuddled woman of uncertain age. She takes odd jobs to make money and can often be found working at the inn she and her husband George Bidwell used to own.

Not many know that Constance is twice married. She loves her current husband George very much, despite his rather unsavory reputation (a fact she will not discuss for any reason). She also does not discuss her first husband, Geoffrey Balfour, who was found dead in his bed under very mysterious circumstances. It is also a fact that George married Constance shortly after the discovery of Geoffrey's dead body.

Not long after their marriage, George sold the Inn owned by Geoffrey, took all the money and has "gone off to London to increase their fortunes." Constance continues to optimistically expect his return "any day now." Should anyone attempt to prepare her for a different outcome, Constance will become quite agitated and may even break into tears. But she will not hear any unfavorable talk about her beloved George.

Constance loves to sing, especially drinking songs, and dance, and will often do so, sometimes even without being asked.

Newcastle-Upon-Tyne

Folsom fair is set in the town of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne (at away fairs, we represent the townfolk of whatever town the faire is set in). The following (edited) excerpt about Newcastle's history is from Newcastle Upon Tyne, published by the Northern Heritage Society.

The Dissolution

Henry VIII's severance of English life from the Church in Rome transformed Newcastle. The five Newcastle friaries were dissolved during 1539 and the nunnery a year later. The social fabric was torn up and rewoven in only a few years when such change had previously taken centuries.

The Plague

The town's growth was hampered from time to time by visitations of the plague. It came in 1589, taking over seventeen hundred souls, then returned in 1636 for its most brutal visit. It entered North Shields in 1635, reaching Newcastle the following year. When plagues approached anybody who could, would leave the town for the relative safety of rural areas. All that was left behind was a skeleton population of poor and artisan classes, servants and labourers.

The End of the Wars

Newcastle was beginning to lose its military importance as a bulwark against the Scots. Although the town was used in 1547 by the Duke of Somerset during the Pinkie campaign, the border was slowly becoming more settled. Newcastle's existence until then had owed much to its military role. The regular visit of the mighty English army of many thousands, to a town whose population had hovered around five thousand for most of the wars, had provided a steady stimulus to growth over the preceding centuries. This was a worrying time for Newcastle as the town moved into a recession. A new role had to be found.

Merchant Adventurers—the new nobility.

This expansion in the coal industry provided the spark for the growth of other industries along the waterfront. Forty percent of the nation's glass was produced around Tyneside. Other flourishing industries included the production of lime as fertilizer, the "great plenty of salmond", iron smelting and various trades related to shipping.

Coal

From Roman times coal has been a staple commodity of the North East people, providing employment and prosperity. The first area to be exploited was high above Newcastle along the Tyne Valley. During Elizabeth's reign, the merchants became even more powerful. In 1600 she granted a new charter to the hostmen, formally incorporating them into "The Fraternity of Hostmen of Newcastle."

Characterization tips

One of the most important decisions you need to make when you join St. Matthew's is what kind of character you want to play. You can be anything from a server in simple jerkin and breeches to a petty noble dressed in the finest velvet your character could afford. *Obviously, an upper-class character is going to require a much bigger investment, both in sewing time and in cash, than a peasant.* For this reason, we encourage people who aren't sure what they want to do at fair to start with a lower-class character; this gives you time to observe the various roles and decide what will suit you—you can always "upgrade" later.

When you decide to join St. Matthew's, you'll need to develop and clear your character with the president (or the president's designee). This may sound daunting, but it really isn't—all you need is a name, a position within the household, and an idea about what your costume will look like. Your sponsor and the president will go over the available positions and help you pick one that suits you; that position will dictate the kind of costume you'll need.



Be sure to clear your costuming ideas with the Costume Committee before you purchase any fabric or accessories!

Although there is lots of room for flexibility in character choice, there are limits. Characters have to be "realistic": that is, the norm rather than the exception. It's possible that there historically was, say, one lone woman in the sixteenth century who dressed as a man, carried a sword, and made her living as a privateer—but that doesn't mean we need one in the household.

Also, St. Matthew's portrays an English household from an English village; thus, the image we want to project is primarily an English one. Any foreign characters must have a clear and authentic reason to be part of the household. Foreign characters will be approved on a limited basis.

UPCOMING EVENTS

MARCH 19TH 9 a.m. - ALL DAY Mandatory Workshop. Will be held at Lionakis (Dennis' generous workplace) 19th&T St. Dinner likely to follow.

APRIL 9TH & 10TH - "FAIRE OF THE ROSES" in Danville.

APRIL 11TH - Various demonstrations to be presented to Churchill Middle School time approximate: 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

APRIL 16TH - Annual Business Meeting 9:00 a.m. SHARP. All members are expected to attend this important meeting.

MAY 14TH & 15TH - PLACERVILLE FAIRE. Guild will encamp. Guild meeting on Saturday after faire hours in Placerville.

JUNE 25TH & 26TH - FAIR OAKS TUDOR FAYRE. Guild meeting on Saturday following faire hours at the Wilson's. Bring a swimsuit, please.

NO GUILD MEETING IN JULY

AUGUST 17TH - Wednesday - guild meeting to be held at downtown Sac. Old Spaghetti Factory at 6:30. (p.m.)

AUGUST 27TH & 28TH - GOLDEN GATE FAIRE - Guild will encamp to support their wondrous Queen!

SEPTEMBER 17TH - PRE-FOLSOM FAIRE WORKDAY - location to be determined

SEPTEMBER 21ST - Guild meeting at 7 p.m. at Lionakis location.

OCTOBER 1ST & 8TH - PRE-FOLSOM WORKDAYS - location to be determined. The 8th may not be necessary, but if it is, you need to be there!

OCTOBER 12 - 18TH - FOLSOM FAIRE (15&16th) Your planned annual "vacation."

NOVEMBER 16TH - Wednesday - Guild meeting 7 p.m. location tba

NO MEETING IN DECEMBER

PLAN ON A HOLIDAY GET TOGETHER FOR TWELFTH NIGHT IN JANUARY!

Words of Special Thanks To...

Dennis Scoville & Lionakis Beaumont Design Group Inc. – for the generous use of the conference rooms at Lionakis.

The following members volunteered to be "guild wrangler" at the following away events: (This means sending application, gate list, etc.)

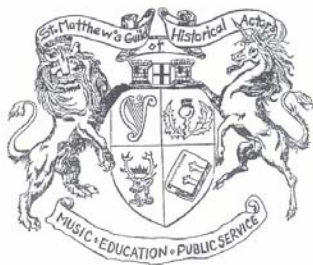
Danville: Dennis

Placerville: Greg & Margo

Fair Oaks: Don

Golden Gate: Jason

THANK YOU FOR YOUR WILLINGNESS TO SERVE!



St. Matthew's Guild

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The "Court" of St. Matthew's

Directors

Dan Lewis
Nathan Schmidt
Greg Wilson

Officers

President - Liz Martin
Vice-President - Melinda Coy
Treasurer - Cathy Rowe
Secretary - Kathy Stefun

Committee Heads

New Members – Kathy Stefun and Mimi Walker
Wagonmaster – Dennis Scoville
Costume – Sandy Cook
Construction – Dennis Scoville, Don Ramage
Plague Rat Dancers & Web Mistress -Lola Pudinski
Assistant Web Mistress – Linda Savage
Perish the Thought Singers – Eric Osborn, Kristie Day
Newsletter - Eric Osborn
E-mail administrator - Nathan Schmidt
Food Coordinator – Michelle Emery