


Antygarð



Historical Fantasy or Fantastic History?



T

HE TRAIL IS DARK. Gnarled branches shade the path while twisted roots catch at your high-topped boots, slowing your advance to a crawl. These woods are a formidable barrier, and your unseen opponent is elusive. With a practiced glance, you take in your comrades. Arrow notched, a scout patrols further up the trail, and, in single file, your warriors follow, short swords and small rounds at the ready. Girded in chainmail, equipped with hinged mace and large heater, you take the vanguard and give the order to advance.

Savage battlecries echo from all sides as fur-clad figures burst into view: barbarians! Frantically you turn for your mage, for you know these primitives are a superstitious lot and will fear her mystical talents—but she is nowhere in sight. Struggling shapes close and clash, weapons rising and falling in their deadly dance. A fierce warrior leaps forward, his blue

facepaint smeared over a fanatical smile, swinging a two-handed axe overhead. You take the blow high on your heater, reverse your stance, and contemptuously rake his side with your mace. But he doesn't go down.

"Berserk!" he screams, and with a vicious downward arc, cuts at your thigh. You fall to your knees, hoping the healer can make it to you in time. And as you raise your shield to protect against the next blow, you know in your heart that it is over.

by Sir
Aramithris of
Meadowlake

A movie, a fantasy novel, a role-playing game? No, this is Amtgard, a medieval and fantasy recreation group. While historical verisimilitude is a must (indeed, all Amtgard personas exist before the year 1650 AD), Amtgard takes the reconstructed illusions of ancient bygone eras a step further. Though knights, outlaws, and robber barons are a fixture of Amtgard battlegames and quests, the beliefs and superstitions of the Middle Ages are also a part of the show.

Amtgard Garb and Achievements

The basic mark of achievement for excellence in Amtgard is the "Order" which is awarded by the monarchy for exceptional work. Garbers are awarded Orders of the Dragon for such achievements as making a finely appliqued great cloak or winning a masquerade costume contest. When a garber has received ten Orders of the Dragon—which can take years—he or she earns the title of "Master" and becomes eligible for knighthood.

The Circle of Knights gathers privately once every six months to discuss potential candidates for knighthood before presenting its recommendations to the King/Queen. The Monarch may knight the aspirant or decide to wait for a later time if they feel the individual is not yet prepared for the responsibility. Those who show excellence in the arts and sciences are eligible for induction into the peers of the Knights of the Serpent. These knights wear a white belt trimmed in green which represents a dragon; besides this, there are three other types of knighthood: for service, fighting, and royalty.

Amtgard has a teaching system similar to the medieval master/journeyman apprenticeships. Knights will take a squire under their wing to pass on the knowledge of their craft. Likewise, both knight and squire may agree to jointly sponsor a page or man-at-arms under them both. There is no guarantee that a squire or page will rise to masterhood or knighthood status, but the mutual service is a fair trade. The squire gains invaluable practice and expertise, while the knight has an extra pair of willing hands to help complete various projects. And this relationship helps all of Amtgard, as it is usually the master garbers and Knights of the Serpent who clothe the populace.

Both masters and knights are expected to uphold the same high standards of service, honor, and teaching that earned them their honors in the first place.



Ben Hill Passmore IV and Kristi Speth

Amtgard warriors show off their garb and staffs on the battlefield.

Amtgard international is a non-profit educational organization devoted to both the education and recreation of the ancient and medieval periods. At present there are ten kingdoms established from Oregon to New Hampshire, with smaller baronies and duchies in areas such as Germany, Canada, and Finland. Amtgard quests have even been held in Russia.

The term "Amtgard" is vaguely Norse in origin and means the land between Valhalla (where the worthy Viking warriors go after they die) and Midgard (the Norse word for 'Earth'). It does not stand for—as some pundits suggest—the initials of the original founding members (Aramithris, M'Deth, Tawnee, Gilos, Andralaine, Rift, and Dylan). These early members belonged to science fiction and gaming clubs, and, though Amtgard combat has evolved to a fast-paced sport, its sci-fi/fantasy gaming threads are still strong.

A The History of Amtgard

Amtgard first started in El Paso, Texas, in the spring of 1983, in the Kingdom of the Burning Lands. By 1987, Amtgard had spread to Austin and Dallas, and a thriving kingdom in Colorado soon followed, as well as kingdoms in Texas, New

Mexico, Utah, Minnesota, Washington, Michigan, Georgia, and Florida. And new shires are being formed all the time.

The road from small local club to international organization has been a torturous one. In the early days, Amtgard faced competition for members from the more historically-oriented heavy weapons groups—such as the SCA and Markland—and live action roleplaying groups such as I.F.G.S. and NERO (see articles on the SCA and live action roleplaying in issue #3 of *Renaissance Magazine*). Today, Amtgard has found its niche, walking a fine line between the two groups. Enthusiasts of Tudor court etiquette and emblazoning heraldry are welcome side-by-side with the fans of collectable card games and fantasy adventure comics.

The kingdoms of Amtgard are bound together by a corpora (bylaws) administered by the Board of Directors. In addition to six month terms of kingdom level offices such as Queen or King, Prime Minister, and Champion, the corpora provides a hierarchy of awards and titles ranging from orders of recognition to the much coveted Circle of Knights. Honors are awarded for service, excellence in the arts and sciences, and victory in the fighting tournaments.

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An Easy System to Learn

The rulebook and corpora are extensive and detailed, though the game itself is easy to learn. The membership is diverse and includes students, police officers, medical techs, housewives, professional writers, secretaries, teachers, clerks and archaeologists.

Players choose a persona such as an archer or assassin, arm themselves with weapons, and don appropriate garb. Unlike many other recreationist groups, Amtgard pads its weapons rather than the fighters, so the game itself is comparatively safe and inexpensive. Amtgard is performed free form and offers much latitude in choices of persona, character class, garb, and weapons.

Amtgard has been called an experiment in controlled anarchy. Knights, warlords, and kings have their places of honor in Amtgard, but the infrastructure is loosely structured. Both individuals and kingdoms form their own distinct personalities and personas, the golden rule being to enjoy yourself but not interfere with the other member's pursuit of the same.

Noncombatants are welcome on the battlefield as reeves (referees) or pages (servants to knights and squires). Minstrels and bards perform their arts for the populace while artisans create everything from leather craftwork to genuine steel swords. In addition to the games, regular events include feasts, demonstrations for the mundanes (the general public), royal courts and ceremonies, and cultural workshops and faires. The Amtgard Olympiad, held once a year, brings together the best competitors from all the kingdoms, for contests in both prowess at arms and competitions in the arts and sciences. The 1997 Olympiad will be held in New Mexico.

Oldest and largest of the many yearly Amtgard events is the Gathering of the Clans. Sponsored by the Burning Lands, this camping extravaganza is held every third weekend in July in Cloudcroft, NM. Attractions include a live action roleplaying town, merchants' row, feasts and taverns, fire-eaters and jugglers, and dueling pits. But the main attraction is always the war. Past wars have included East versus West, Knights and squires versus the world (a siege battle), and old kingdoms versus new kingdoms.

As historical recreation and fantasy continue to gain interest, Amtgard will continue to offer an eclectic mix of the historical and the fantasy in a safe environment. In an

increasingly harried world, Amtgard provides a comradery that allows members to share in a joint world of all their making. So the next time you are at a science fiction convention or medieval movie and populated with folks dressed in period tunics and robes, then prepare to "lay on!" as you may have just encountered the diverse ranks of Amtgard. ~

For more information on Amtgard, write to Amtgard, Inc. B.O.D., c/o J.W. Donnelly, 900-A Stockwell, El Paso, Texas 79902, ae814@rgfn.epcc.edu or email Mark Willis aka Sir Ivar Nefarious at ivar@horus.anth.utep.edu

A fair maiden bestows a kiss on the cheek of an Amtgard warrior.



Ben Hill Passmore IV and Krati Speith

Amtgard Terminology

Amtgard, like any group, has its own unique *lingua franca*, where some terms are borrowed, others coined.

Ditch Battles: fighting scenarios with no armor or magic.

Lay-on/Hold: start fighting/stop fighting.

Order: an award of achievement.

Coliseum: a guild of Amtgard members on the Internet.

Peasant: an Amtgard member who is not in garb while at an event.

Richard Edward: joking term for a Grand Duke (former multiple term monarch), usually shortened to "Dick Ed."

Master: someone who has shown excellence in a class or guild.

Discolored bird: a person who writes off-colored satire and reviews about Amtgard and its events.

Mosh: intense, involved combat.

Boffer: an unusually awkward and clumsy weapon.

Bridge Seige: a larger force attacking defenders in a fortified position.

Magic User: one of the four classes which utilize rules for magic in the battlegames: wizard, healer, druid, and bard.

Phoenix: the symbol of Amtgard.

Crown Qualifications: arts and sciences competitions held twice a year in each kingdom.

Weaponmaster: a tourney involving one-on-one bouts in several different weapon systems, such as sword and shield, and spear.

Sardakar Shirt: a shirt with long, flowing sleeves.

Celtic Tunic: a skirted tunic that flares out at the sleeves and bottom.

Allthing: meeting of the Amtgard government where the populace votes on various issues concerning the kingdom.

Flatblade: a thinner, faster weapon with only two legal striking edges.

Zombie Game: a night battle where a horde of regenerating monsters tries to hunt down a handful of armed but fleeing humans.

Madu: a short spear vertically attached to a small shield.

Orcs: derogatory term for the enemy when they have you heavily outnumbered.

R.A.N.: the Royal Amtgard Navy, the only fleet in the world without a ship.

Relics: magical artifacts of great power, sometimes used in the quests.

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Amtgard

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Spirit of Sherwood

Spirit of Sherwood is the official Robin of Sherwood TV series international fan club. As a member, receive cast credits and bios and our newsletter, *On Target*. Membership rates: \$15 US; \$20 Canada; (payable in US Funds) to Spirit of

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THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR PRECEPTORY

www.trantex.fi/staff/heikkih/knights/portcull

This site is a repository of data related to the Order of the Temple. The viewpoint is historical and the focus is on giving a complete picture on the various aspects of the Order, clerical, financial and military. Conspiracy theorists are better served elsewhere, but those interested in the true history between 1118 and 1314 will thoroughly enjoy this site.

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