

# *The Red Threde*



## *Newsletter for The Royal Fibre Guild of Lochac*

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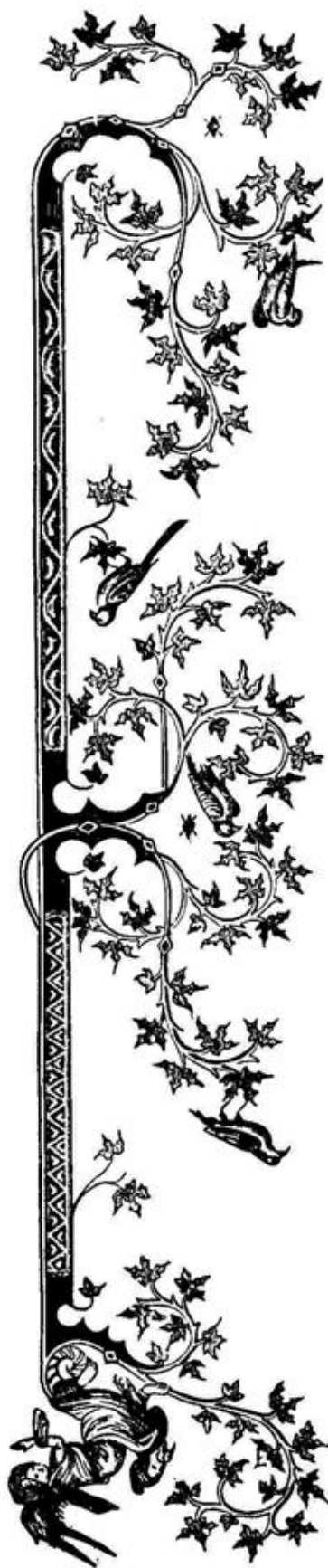
## ~ From the Guildmaster ~

It's May already, and I haven't done as much for the guild as I'd hoped to, but I do have some exciting developments to talk about.

At Rowany Festival a meeting of the guild was held. You can read the Minutes elsewhere in this newsletter, but I'd like to draw especial attention to two exciting new developments regarding award cords.

The guild will be making a submission to the Rowany Fighter Auction Tourney funds to cover the cost of yarn with which to make the cords. This is so guild members can have nice silk thread to work with to produce beautiful gleaming pieces, and not be out of pocket for expenses. This may take some time to arrange, but stay tuned for details if our bid is successful.

The second initiative, also regarding award cords, is a competition to finish at Midwinter. It's to see which guild member can produce the most award cords by that time. As current royals have been giving out, on average, seventy awards per reign, our role in providing cords is more vital than ever.



As we look to the future, I'm interested in hearing more of your ideas for the guild. Please feel free to contact me (details at the end of this newsletter), or post to the mailing list with your ideas of what we could, should or might want to do.

I've had a few people ask, "how do I officially join the guild?" Well it's as simple as contacting me with your name and group, and saying you wish to join. Then you'll be officially listed on the rolls of the guild - as simple as that!

Once you've joined, how can you help the guild? The first and most important thing you can do is spread the word that the guild exists. Recruit others to join, and share your enthusiasm for the fibre arts. One way of sharing enthusiasm, within the guild, is to pass on your knowledge of techniques, suppliers and tricks (or ask questions to fill in your lack of knowledge) on our mailing list, and in our newsletter. You may just know something that someone else always wanted to know, or ask the question someone else was too shy to ask.

Another way you can help is to become a local warden - a local administrative officer and spreader of enthusiasm. I'd like to welcome Caristiona nic Bheathain as the new warden for Rowany, and welcome those members from groups that don't have a warden (listed at the end of the newsletter) to volunteer for the role. One thing that Cairistiona has been doing in her new role, is holding local fibre workshops where people can get together and try new fibre arts, or work on existing projects.

While Caristiona is holding monthly workshops, Amalie von Brisache, of Southron Gaard, has been holding less regular but larger workshops. Whole weekends of fibre fun with many different techniques to try. It's great to see this enthusiasm for spreading the news of the fibre arts, but this isn't a compulsory part of being a warden. Even just being listed as a local warden, and telling people who see you practising your art at events about the guild, is a really useful role as warden. And if your group already has a warden, perhaps you'd like to volunteer to be their deputy, or to host a fibre workshop on their behalf?

Until Midwinter, may the moths stay out of your wool stash,

*Baroness Jeffania de Tuckerton*  
*Guildmaster*



### *~ Ramblings from the Chronicler ~*

Inside this edition of Red Threde, you'll find the third and final article covering the Guild's ordinances. On this occasion we cover the 'job descriptions' of the various Officers.

Amongst meeting minutes and reports you'll discover a wonderful article by Ásfríðr Úlfvígardóttir in which she shares her research on the mysterious Vegetable Lamb of Muscovy.

Don't forget to let me know if you're intending on teaching a class between Midwinter Coronation and November Crown Tourney so I can advertise it in the Midwinter newsletter. Life's vagaries notwithstanding, I hope to be demonstrating a variety of braiding methods at Spring War to assist in the drive towards more Award Cords!

*Mistress Damiana Tigre de Sylva*  
*Guild Chronicler*



## *Guild Meeting Minutes*

### *~ Rowany Festival ~*

At 12 noon on Good Friday, 6<sup>th</sup> April, 2012, a meeting of the Royal Fibre Guild was held at Rowany Festival.

### *Present*

Teffania de Tuckerton, Tigre de Sylva, Caristiona nic Beathain, Leonore de Alasca, Elizabeth Rowe, Renonys de la Fueille, Catherine de Arc, Eva (if I missed anyone, please let me know)

### *Award cords*

- ❖ Averaging 70 cords needed per reign (range from 23 to 123)
- ❖ Some wonderful donations made by Helen Hartshorn and Renonys de la Fueille during meeting
- ❖ To have an aim to donate 100 cords at Midwinter Coronation
- ❖ To run a competition for volume of award cord donations by individual members which is to commence at Rowany Festival and close at the Midwinter Coronation event

### *Silk from Rowany Fighter Auction Funds*

- ❖ Teffania had the idea to apply to the Rowany Fighter Auction funds in order to purchase bulk silk and some winders suitable for making cords and seal tags for guild member use on such projects
- ❖ Silk is to be red, white and blue (and maybe green) in a heavy thickness so that braids can be made quickly and easily, and of suitable characteristics to make braiding or weaving easy. Reeled silk with its extra gleam is preferred.
- ❖ Winders are to be of a suitable type to take large bulk silk and make into smaller quantities for individual use. With 4 winders it should be easy to share amongst wardens without relying on any single winder passing from hand to hand. Hand winding that much silk would be silly.
- ❖ Catherine d'Arc & Eva are to research sources of bulk silk and winders
- ❖ Caristiona nic Beathain is to draft a bid for the Rowany Fighter Auction funds

### *Seal Tags*

- ❖ Caristiona as Provost of Scribes Guild, reports that seal tags need to be small if round or very thin if flat to fit through scrolls.
- ❖ A joint workshop is proposed to be held next Festival for the purpose of applying a batch of seal tags to documents, probably writs.



### *Website*

- ❖ Fine sent a report that a new website should be ours shortly
- ❖ We will be asking for content from members in due course, so begin to think about your favourite suppliers, links, best book for a topic etc.

### *Other*

- ❖ Advertisement for rest of Fibre Guild activities at Festival
- ❖ 12th Night newsletter shown (submit your contributions for May Crown editions now)
- ❖ Talk of current projects and suppliers

If I missed anything discussed, please let me know. And please feel free to discuss these items further on the mailing list.

*Teffania*  
*Guildmaster*



## ~ Guild Ordinances Part Three ~

### *The Officers of the Guild*

#### **Guildmaster**

- ❖ Reports to Lochac Arts and Sciences Minister as required
- ❖ Organises meetings at Crown events
- ❖ Organises competitions as applicable
- ❖ Co-ordinates with other officers

#### **Librarian**

- ❖ Maintains the register of rankings
- ❖ Reports advances in rank at crown events
- ❖ Maintains a collection of articles by members of the guild
- ❖ Brings them to crown events as required

#### **Chronicler**

- ❖ Receives articles and arranges for their publication
- ❖ Provides copies of published articles to the librarian

#### **Patron**

- ❖ Not strictly an officer
- ❖ Supports the Guild



### *The Vegetable Lamb of Muscovy*

*by (Rebecca Lucas)*

(An earlier version of this article appeared in Issue 64 of *Slovo: Newsletter of the Slavic Interest Group*, available online at: <http://www.goldschp.net/SIG/slovo.html>)

Zoophytes, or animals that resemble plants, are a staple of the medieval and renaissance-era herbals. Common half-plant, half-animal creatures included the mandrake (the roots of which were said to be shaped like men that could run away from people!)(Van Arsdell *et al.*, 2009), the barnacle goose-tree (a frankly confusing combination of a tree and crustacean that produced barnacles, inside which geese grew)(Dobson, 1958) and the 'Barometz' (a combination of tree and sheep-blossoms) that was said to grow in eastern Europe.



The Barometz, also called the Vegetable Lamb of Tartary, Scythian Lamb, or simply Vegetable Lamb (Ho, 1992), even if considered to be the stuff of legend today, has a fascinating history as its story evolved in western Europe over the centuries. Modernly, the legend is simply seen as a distorted description of cotton production in central Asia – the 'wool' of the sheep is a ripe cotton boll (Fennell Mazzaoui 2008) – however this overlooks later elaborations of the story and a shift from describing woolly fibres to lamb pelts.



While Sir John Mandeville is often credited with the first description (via translation) of the Barometz in English, around 1360 CE, interest in this beast did not seem to gain momentum until the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Mandeville describes his encounter with the lamb-plant as:

Barometz from 1410-1412, in the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris (Bnf MS fonds. fr. 2810 f. 210v)

*“Wherefore I say you, in passing by the land of Cathay towards the high Ind and towards Bacharia, men pass by a kingdom that men clepe Caldilhe, that is a fair full country.*

*And there groweth a manner of fruit, as though it were gourds. And when they be ripe, men cut them a-two, and men find within a little beast, in flesh, in bone, and blood, as though it were a little lamb without wool. And men eat both the fruit and the beast. Of the fruit I have eaten, although it were wonderful, but I that know well that God is marvellous in his works.”* (Black ed., 2009).

As the legend of the Vegetable Lamb circulated in the West, it became more elaborate over time. Sigismund von Herberstein's *Rerum Moscoviticarum Commentarii* (1549), written after his travels to Russia as an Austrian ambassador in 1517 and 1528, described a creature that had more in common with an animal than a plant:

*“...I heard a wonderful and almost incredible story from one Dimitry Danielovich, a man who, (considering that he was a barbarian), was of remarkable dignity and truthfulness. He stated that his father had been on a former occasion sent by the Prince of Moscow to the King of Savoiha, and that in that embassy he had seen in the island a certain seed, somewhat larger and rounder, but not unlike the seed of a melon, from which, when planted, grew up something very like a lamb, of the height of five palms, and that it was called in their language “boranetz”, which signifies a lambkin, for it had a head, eyes, ears, and everything else in the form of a lamb. He also stated, that it bore a very fine wool, which was used by many people in those countries for making caps ; and, indeed, I was assured by many people, that they had seen wool of that kind. He said, moreover, that the plant, — if plant it could be called, — had blood in it, but no flesh ; but in lieu of flesh, there was a kind of matter very like the flesh of crabs; it also had hoofs, not horny like those of a lamb, but covered with a hairy substance resembling horn. Its stem came to the navel, 84vor middle of the belly; it continued alive until the grass around it was eaten away, so that the root dried up for want of nourishment.”*



Vegetable lambs from the 2nd quarter of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, in the St. Gallen Stiftsarchiv. (Cod. Fab. XVI f.84v).

It is this sessile sheep-like plant, permanently tethered to the ground by its' stem and doomed to starve when it has eaten all the grass within reach, that became the usual 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century form of this story. The focus also appears to subtly shift from discussing its edibility, but to the properties of its fur.

From July 1600 to April 1601, Sir Richard Lee was an ambassador to Russia from the English court of Elizabeth I, who had heard of the mysterious vegetable lamb. In fact, Lee was given, by Tsar Boris Godunov, a “gowne or long cloake, made after the fashion of that cuntrie with the skins of those Tartar lambes” (Appleby, 1997; Macray, 1968). The cloak – nicknamed Joseph's parti-coloured coat – was described in the 17<sup>th</sup> century of being comprised of skins the size of rabbit pelts (Appleby, 1997), so it seems this cloak was believed to be made from the skins of many Barometz, not merely more typical sheep that grazed in Tartaria.

Adam Olearius (1603-1671) in his account as an ambassador in Russia gives more skeptical information about seeing these mysterious pelts in 1636:

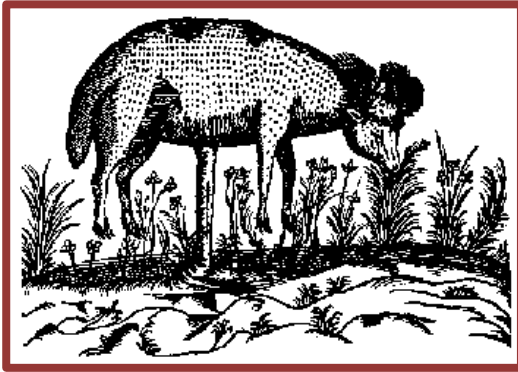
*“We were credibly inform'd that near Samara, between Wolga [Volga] and the Doa [Don], there is a kind of Melons, or rather Gourds, that are form'd like a Lamb, whereof this fruit represents all the members, being being fasten'd to the ground by the stalk, which is as it were its navel. As it grows it changes place, as far as the stalk will give way, and, as it turns, makes the grass to wither. The Muscovites call this browsing, or feeding, adding, that when it is ripe, the stalk withers, and the fruit is cloath'd with a hairy skin, which may be dress'd and used instead of Furr. They call this fruit Boranez, that is to say, the Lamb. They shew'd us some of those skins, taken off the covering of a bed, and swore it came from that fruit, but we could hardly believe it. They were covered with a soft frizzling Wooll not unlike that of a Lamb newly wean'd, or taken out of the Sheep's belly.”* (Davies trans. 1669; 48)

It appears for much of the period middle ages and renaissance, the Barometz was believed to exist, although the renaissance scholars did seem skeptical. For the less doubtful, however, Sir Richard Lee's coat may well have been considered 'proof' at the time, as it became a tourist attraction for visitors to the Bodleian Library in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Appleby, 1997). But what did later experts think the Barometz was?

There are two threads to this zoophytic myth. The first are the pelts shown, or given, in Muscovy, while the second element is the 'plant' itself. It appears that Olearius's suspicions about the Barometz fur was correct: it was most likely made from more mundane lambskins (Appleby, 1997; Carrubba, 1993). The mystery was solved by the late 17<sup>th</sup> century by Engelbert Kaempfer, who travelled east in the hope of discovering a Vegetable Lamb.



Barometz from a 1481 woodcut (Mandeville, 1481)



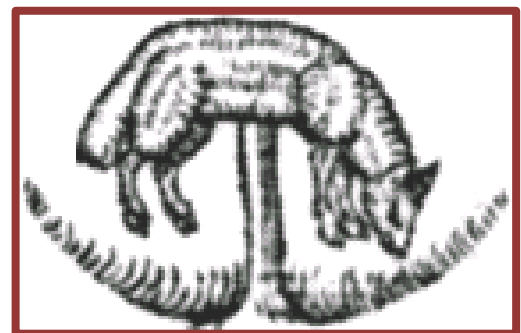
Barometz from 1605 (Duret, 1605)

The cloak, and the bed-covering seen by Olearius, were probably made from the pelts of fetal Karakul lambs, prized for their soft, fine fur that has been described as 'rather like crushed velvet' (Humane Society of the United States, 2001).

As for the 'true' identity of the Barometz, Lee (1887) Carrubba (1993) and Fennell Mazzaoui (2008) consider its earliest incarnation to be a misunderstanding of the cotton plant, and how the cotton boll splits open to reveal the fluffy, woolly fibres within. As the story became more elaborate, it is possible that it became confused with the rhizome of the tree fern *Cibotium barometz*, from southern China and Taiwan, which can be trimmed to give the superficial appearance of a small, half-plant half-quadruped creature (Tryon, 1957). A 17<sup>th</sup> century example of this modified plant can be seen at the Natural History Museum, London (Natural History Museum).

The earliest dated images of a Vegetable Lamb I have been able to find, as yet, is from the early 15<sup>th</sup> century. It is a manuscript illumination comparing the Occidental barnacle goose and the Oriental vegetable lamb, with one of the melon-like fruits of the tree opened to reveal a fluffy, white lamb (Bnf MS fonds. fr. 2810 f. 210v). From the second quarter of the 15<sup>th</sup> century comes an image from St. Gallen's Stiftsarchiv, Cod. Fab. XVI f. 84v. The oft-cited image said to have come from a version of Sir John Mandeville's account, of a plant with lambs bursting out from seed pods (eg. Lee 1887), dates to 1481 at the latest (Mandeville, 1481), and cannot be 14<sup>th</sup> century as it is frequently claimed, as it comes from a printed text.

There then appears to be a gap until the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. In the 1605 text by Claude Duret. *Histoire admirable des plantes* (Willis, 2007; NYPL Digital Gallery), the Barometz is shown tethered to the ground with a stem. The second is from the frontis-piece of the botanist John Parkinson's *Paradisus Terrestris* (1629), which shows a tiny lamb growing in the garden of Eden (Wikimedia). It probably can be said for certain, however, that the Barometz is a mysterious creature that captured the imagination of medieval and renaissance scholars, and shows how little information many European people had about the flora and fauna of the Great Steppe, at the time.



Barometz from 1629 (Wikimedia, 2011)

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See also: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Vegetable\\_lamb\\_of\\_tartary.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Vegetable_lamb_of_tartary.png)
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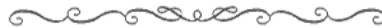
## ~ Award Cord Competition ~

*Hear ye, Hear ye...* the Royal Fibre Guild of Lochac is running a competition for all members to produce the highest number of award cords for the kingdom by Midwinter coronation. Cords will be counted from the day after the close of Rowany Festival until the first day of Midwinter Coronation. Cords must be physically at Midwinter Coronation for presentation to Their Majesties, so please leave time for postage or pre-arranging transport.

Competition entries will only be counted if they are accompanied by something saying who they are from to help forgetful Guildmasters count and spell names correctly. Your Guildmaster has heard Royalty love to hear who the cords are from, and what technique has been used. So a little label with your SCA name and the technique used, is the preferred way to receive cords, but any form of labelling will be accepted. Consider knotting each individual cord into a bundle (eg double up and then a loose overhand), so that cords do not tangle with each other.

To submit your cord to be counted, contact your Guildmaster (details in Regnum) for details of where to send the cords.

A prize will be awarded to the individual guild member who produces the highest number of suitable cords, but they will also have the prestige of being named as having made the greatest contribution to this vital service to the Kingdom.



## ~ News from Canterbury Faire ~

At Canterbury Faire (Jan 2012), a meeting of the Fibre Guild was held. We saw an attendance of 12 (that I got names of, I think we had more), many new to the guild.

My notes say that we discussed the following:

- ❖ The possibility of a guild A&S display at festival to attract new members
- ❖ The possibility of a solar at Festival to get together and chat while doing fibre arts
- ❖ the possibility of setting a time at either Festival or Canterbury Faire for people interested in multi person fingerloop braids to get together and experiment
- ❖ Glynhyvar of River Haven volunteered to make the guild a banner for use at events

After this formal portion of the meeting, we discussed what items we'd been making lately from fibre, and what suppliers we used (we have plans to setup a section of the website to record this information).

My notes may have missed some items, or misconstrued others, so if you were there, please correct me.

*Jeffania*  
Guildmaster

## ~ Report from Suth Moot ~

*Hello all,*

It's been a little while since Suth Moot, but Teffania asked me to give a report on the Fibre Guild meeting held there.

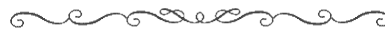
We had about 8 kids join us at the start of the meeting. So we took the opportunity to chat to them about the stages of wool processing. The kids got to handle greasy wool and washed wool and compare the difference. They handled different types of unspun fibres, like silk, linen and hemp.

They also handled some handspun yarn and some handwoven cloth I had made in the past. We showed them how to use hand carders and a few of the kids took different coloured fleece (died in primary colours) and blended them together. By having brightly coloured wools they could see what happened when the wools were well blended. Eg: yellow and blue make green.

We demonstrated how a drop spindle and a spinning wheel work. Some of the kids had a go at spinning with the drop spindle and the wheel. We started to talk about tablet weaving, but Hrothgar dropped by and offered to fulfil his previous promise to take the kids to the swamp, which they all happily ran off to do.

Mfanwy showed us her lovely lace tatting (have I got the term right?), and Emma had a go at drop spindling, starting with an assistant to spin the spindle while her hands remembered the drawing out action, and then performing both together making a lovely thread. We looked at some of the books I had brought along to share and just generally chatted about all things fibre.

*Lady Ava del Mas*



### *An item of any kind, made from wool*



This is one of the categories for the Kingdom Arts & Sciences Competition for Midwinter Coronation 2012. With the event not being held until 2-3<sup>rd</sup> July, in Innilgard (Adelaide), you still have **loads** of time to make something. Felt like felting, warped about weaving, spin a skein, dye a hank? Then if you start contemplating what might suit your persona (as a launching point), you have **six months** to finish it! So many options, so much time, perhaps enter several items! This category is tailor made for us!

For more information about the competitions go to - <http://lochac.sca.org/artsandsciences> but also feel free to contact raise any questions on the Fibre Guild email list.

## Suppliers of Silk

<https://www.treenwaysilks.com/index.php>

<http://www.bbyarn.com/silk.html>

Ragnhildr's guild (details in Regnum under Politarchopolis)

<http://www.beautifulsilks.com/>

<http://www.yarnsgalore.com.au/>

[http://www.handweavers.co.uk/shop/Samples\\_Catalogues.html](http://www.handweavers.co.uk/shop/Samples_Catalogues.html)

<http://www.silksational.com.au/pages/About-us-and-contact-details.html>

Recent discussions as to the quality and prices of these suppliers can be unearthed in the archives of the Fibre Guild email list (see below).  
Search for 'Silk for Award Cords'

## ~ Guild Contact List ~

- ❖ **Website -** <http://lochac.sca.org/fibre>
- ❖ **Email List -** <http://lochac.sca.org/mailman/listinfo/fibreguild>
- ❖ **Guildmaster -** Baroness Teffania de Tuckerton  
<http://lochac.sca.org/fibre/about/contact/>  
PO Box 8029, Monash University LPO, Clayton VIC 3800
- ❖ **Patron -** Master Ragnar Magnusson
- ❖ **Webmistress -** Lady Fíne ingen uí Scolaighe
- ❖ **Chronicler -** Mistress Damiana Tigre de Sylva (Tig)  
tig @ fastmail . com . au (remove spaces)



## ~ Local Wardens ~

- ❖ Politarchopolis (ACT)
  - Fru Ragnhildr Freysteinnottir
- ❖ Rowany (Sydney, NSW)
  - Mistress Caristiona nic Beathain
- ❖ Agaricus (Southern Sydney district, NSW)
  - Mistress Marit the Wanderer OP
- ❖ Okewaite (Goulburn & Southern Highlands, NSW)
  - Mistress Damiana Tigre de Sylva OL
- ❖ St-Florian-de-la-Riviere (QLD)
  - Countess Leonore d'Scotia OL
  - Mistress Glynhyvar OP
- ❖ River Haven (QLD)
- ❖ Bordescros (Albury, Wondonga, Wagga Wagga districts, VIC/NSW)
  - TH Lady Lowry ferch Gwynwynwyn ap Llewelyn
- ❖ Ynys Fawr (Tasmania)
  - Mistress Miriam d'Mont Noir OP
- ❖ Southron Gaard (Christchurch, NZ)
  - Lady Amalie von Brisache
- ❖ Aneala (Western Australia)
  - Lady Aoife inghean Uí Chonchobhair (of St Basil's)