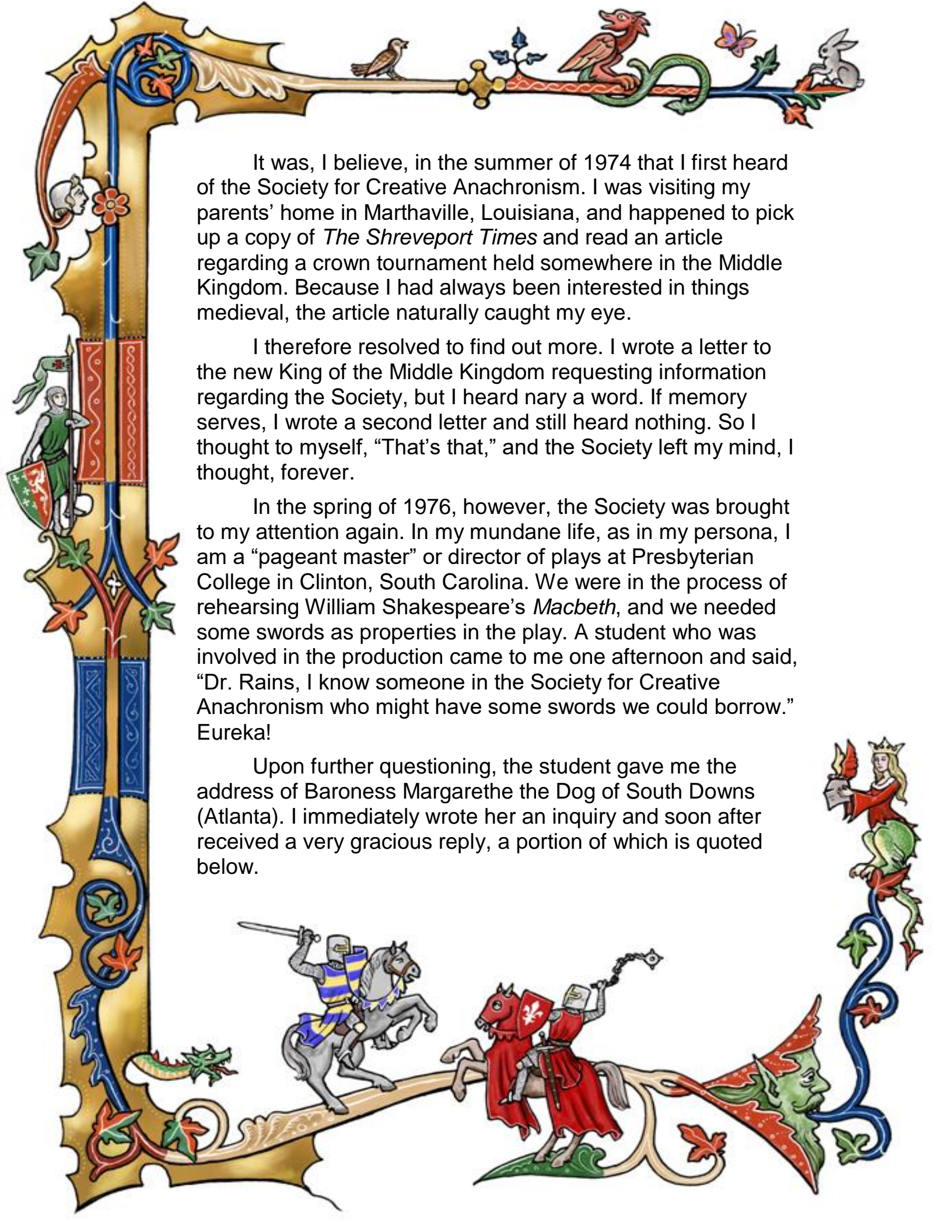




As I Remember It

(Being a brief reconstruction from memory of
the history of the early years of the Society for
Creative Anachronism in South Carolina and
the Barony of Nottingham Coill)

Master Baron Gavin Keynes, O. P., O. C. T.
Founding Baron Nottingham Coill




It was, I believe, in the summer of 1974 that I first heard of the Society for Creative Anachronism. I was visiting my parents' home in Marthaville, Louisiana, and happened to pick up a copy of *The Shreveport Times* and read an article regarding a crown tournament held somewhere in the Middle Kingdom. Because I had always been interested in things medieval, the article naturally caught my eye.

I therefore resolved to find out more. I wrote a letter to the new King of the Middle Kingdom requesting information regarding the Society, but I heard nary a word. If memory serves, I wrote a second letter and still heard nothing. So I thought to myself, "That's that," and the Society left my mind, I thought, forever.

In the spring of 1976, however, the Society was brought to my attention again. In my mundane life, as in my persona, I am a "pageant master" or director of plays at Presbyterian College in Clinton, South Carolina. We were in the process of rehearsing William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, and we needed some swords as properties in the play. A student who was involved in the production came to me one afternoon and said, "Dr. Rains, I know someone in the Society for Creative Anachronism who might have some swords we could borrow." Eureka!

Upon further questioning, the student gave me the address of Baroness Margarethe the Dog of South Downs (Atlanta). I immediately wrote her an inquiry and soon after received a very gracious reply, a portion of which is quoted below.





Greetings to D. O. Rains from Baroness Margarethe the dog.

Milord thy interest in the SCA has fallen on fertile ground and shall flower in South Carolina thru your efforts and mine.

Sounds neat, doesn't it? Aside from that you have a unique distinction—there are no groups formed in S. C. at this time. We have had several attempts but nothing has developed.


Baroness Margarethe continued the letter with a very lengthy description of the officers, the branches, and the events of the Society. She enclosed copies of *Queen Carol's Guide* and other literature that would be helpful in forming a group.

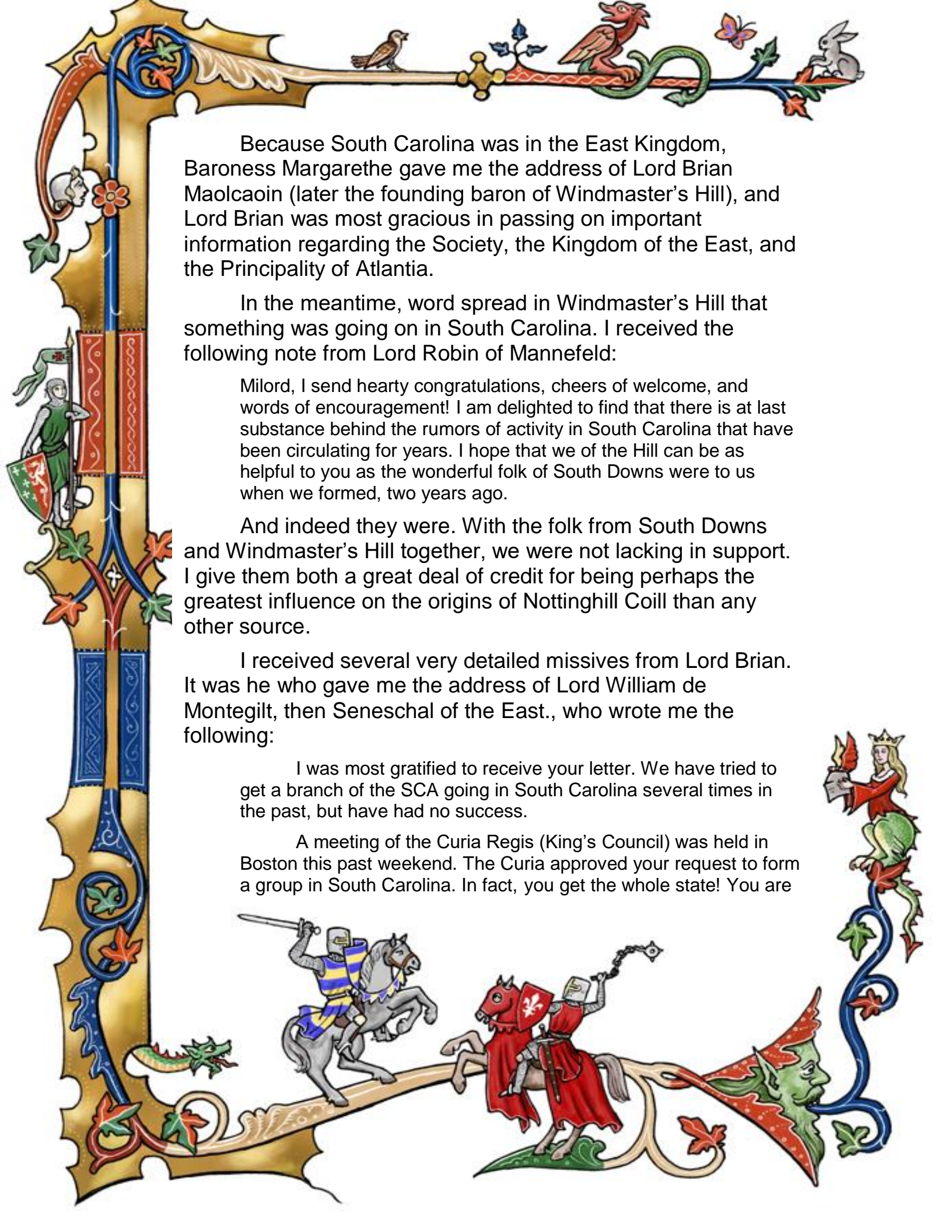
In further correspondence, Her Excellency sent me additional a form for membership in the Society and other valuable information. She explained the following:

The USA is divided into four kingdoms. West, Middle, East and Atenveldt. South Carolina is part of the East Kingdom. A member in Raleigh wrote to me . . . [and] so I assisted him, and Raleigh, Charlotte and Winston-Salem all began new groups and prospered.

Georgia was part of Atenveldt at the time.

Her Excellency invited me to attend the Red Tower Tourney in South Downs on December 11, so I made arrangements to attend my first event. Unfortunately the Tourney itself was canceled, but the Baroness asked me to come anyway, because the barony would be holding "a feast and revel and this way we could show as well as tell you all about the finer details." I went and, because I had no garb, borrowed garb from the Baroness' son Sir Galen. I thoroughly enjoyed the evening and determined at that point to attempt to establish a group in South Carolina.





Because South Carolina was in the East Kingdom, Baroness Margarethe gave me the address of Lord Brian Maolcaoin (later the founding baron of Windmaster's Hill), and Lord Brian was most gracious in passing on important information regarding the Society, the Kingdom of the East, and the Principality of Atlantia.

In the meantime, word spread in Windmaster's Hill that something was going on in South Carolina. I received the following note from Lord Robin of Mannefeld:

Milord, I send hearty congratulations, cheers of welcome, and words of encouragement! I am delighted to find that there is at last substance behind the rumors of activity in South Carolina that have been circulating for years. I hope that we of the Hill can be as helpful to you as the wonderful folk of South Downs were to us when we formed, two years ago.

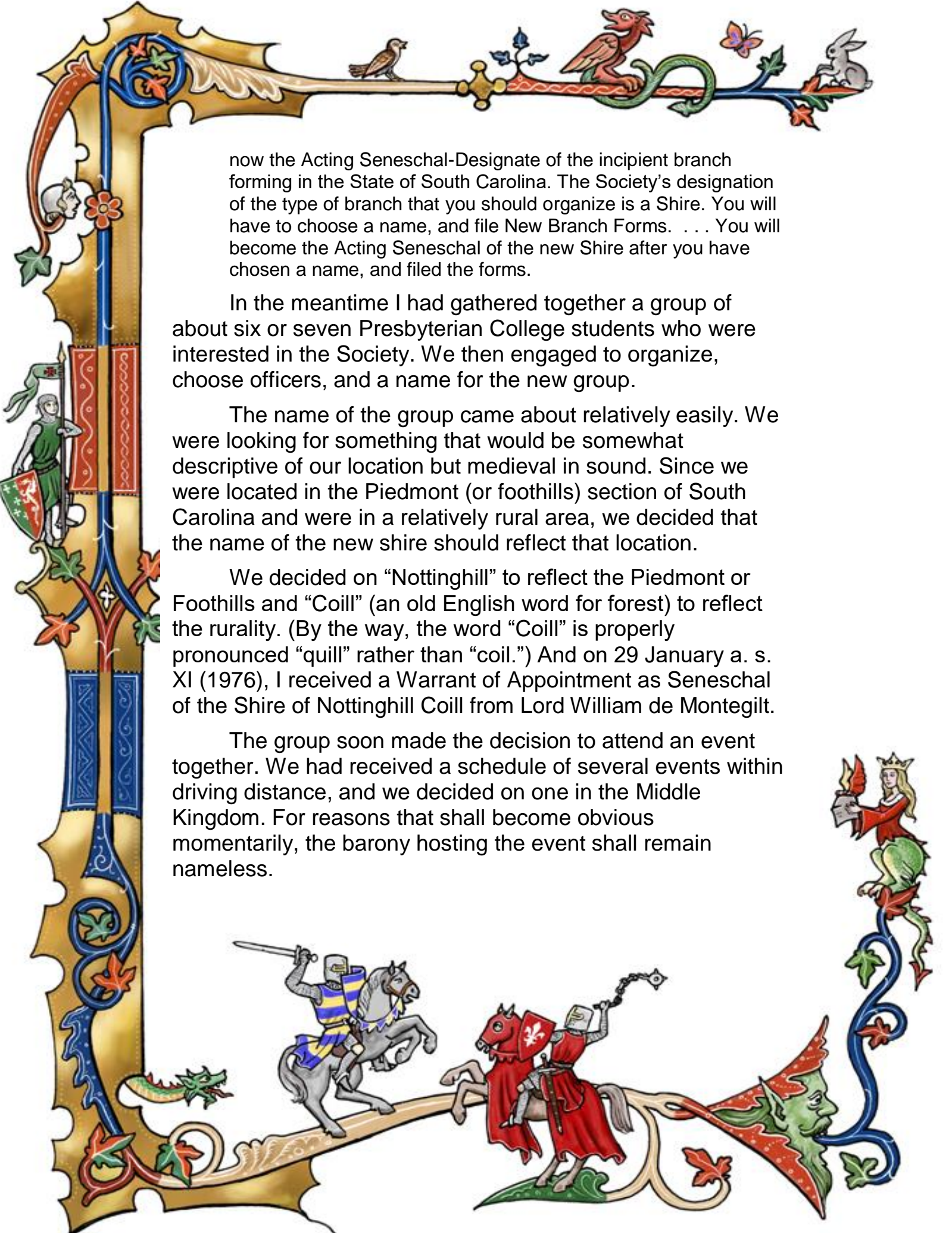
And indeed they were. With the folk from South Downs and Windmaster's Hill together, we were not lacking in support. I give them both a great deal of credit for being perhaps the greatest influence on the origins of Nottinghill Coill than any other source.

I received several very detailed missives from Lord Brian. It was he who gave me the address of Lord William de Montegilt, then Seneschal of the East., who wrote me the following:

I was most gratified to receive your letter. We have tried to get a branch of the SCA going in South Carolina several times in the past, but have had no success.

A meeting of the Curia Regis (King's Council) was held in Boston this past weekend. The Curia approved your request to form a group in South Carolina. In fact, you get the whole state! You are






now the Acting Seneschal-Designate of the incipient branch forming in the State of South Carolina. The Society's designation of the type of branch that you should organize is a Shire. You will have to choose a name, and file New Branch Forms. . . . You will become the Acting Seneschal of the new Shire after you have chosen a name, and filed the forms.

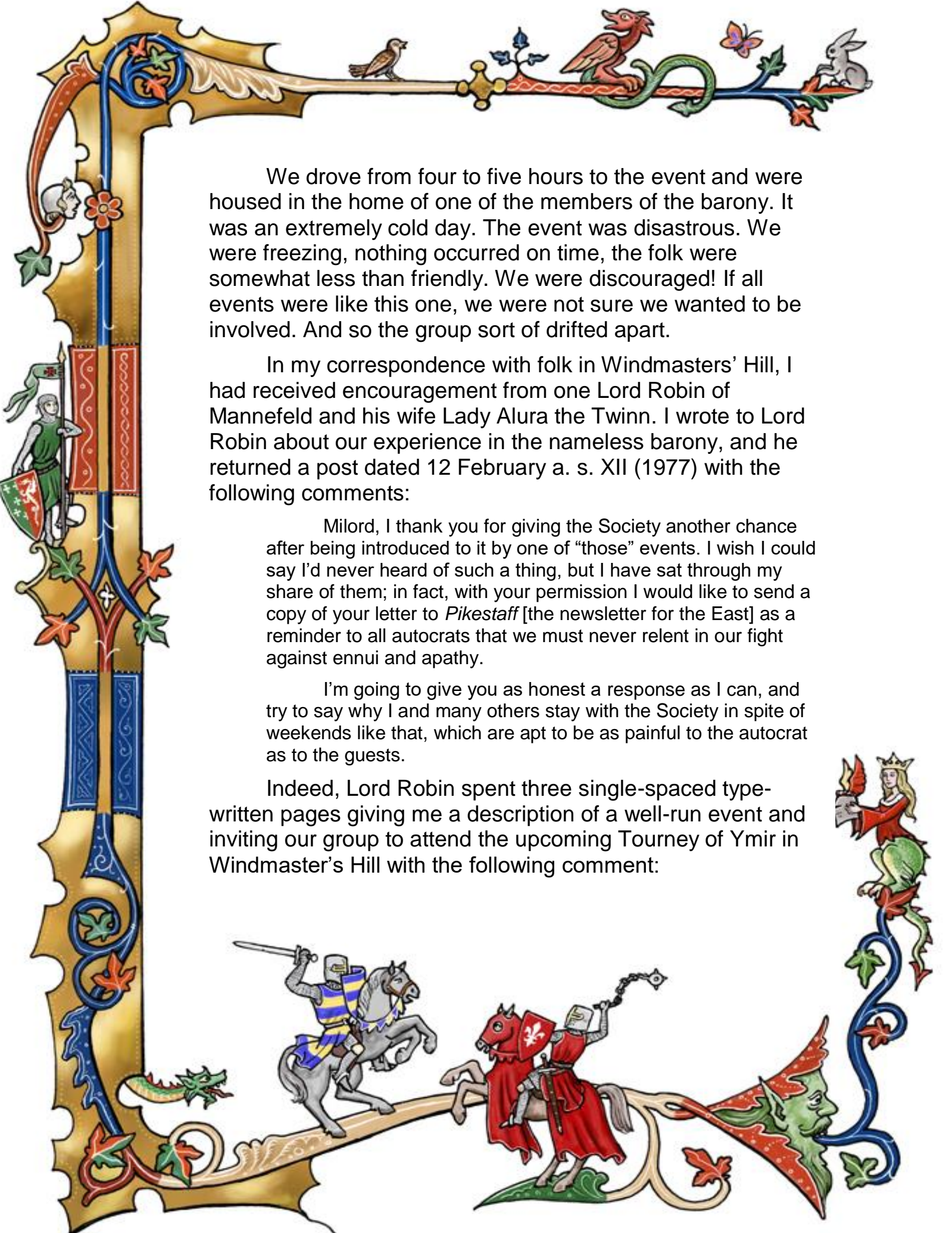
In the meantime I had gathered together a group of about six or seven Presbyterian College students who were interested in the Society. We then engaged to organize, choose officers, and a name for the new group.

The name of the group came about relatively easily. We were looking for something that would be somewhat descriptive of our location but medieval in sound. Since we were located in the Piedmont (or foothills) section of South Carolina and were in a relatively rural area, we decided that the name of the new shire should reflect that location.

We decided on "Nottinghill" to reflect the Piedmont or Foothills and "Coill" (an old English word for forest) to reflect the rurality. (By the way, the word "Coill" is properly pronounced "quill" rather than "coil.") And on 29 January a. s. XI (1976), I received a Warrant of Appointment as Seneschal of the Shire of Nottinghill Coill from Lord William de Montegilt.

The group soon made the decision to attend an event together. We had received a schedule of several events within driving distance, and we decided on one in the Middle Kingdom. For reasons that shall become obvious momentarily, the barony hosting the event shall remain nameless.





We drove from four to five hours to the event and were housed in the home of one of the members of the barony. It was an extremely cold day. The event was disastrous. We were freezing, nothing occurred on time, the folk were somewhat less than friendly. We were discouraged! If all events were like this one, we were not sure we wanted to be involved. And so the group sort of drifted apart.

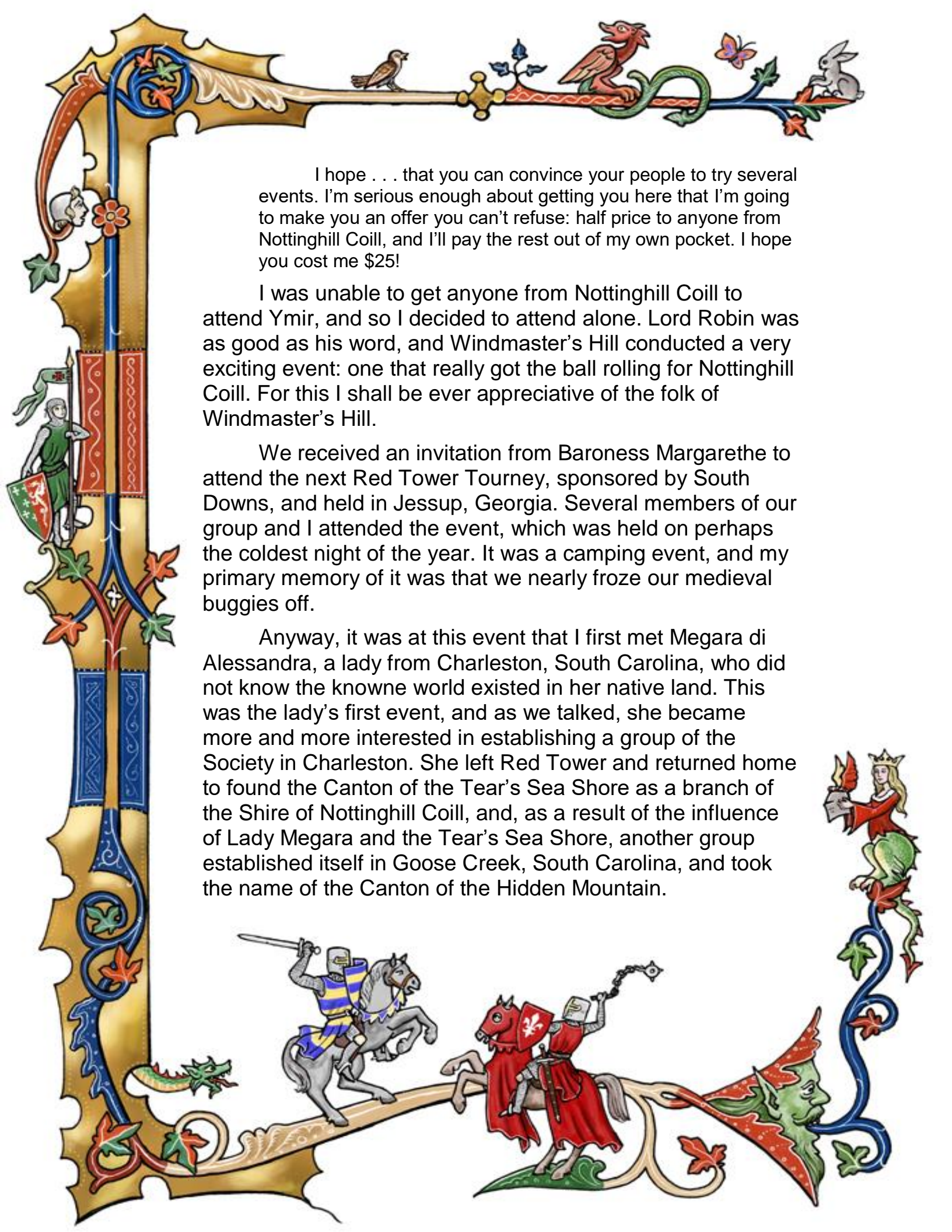
In my correspondence with folk in Windmasters' Hill, I had received encouragement from one Lord Robin of Mannefeld and his wife Lady Alura the Twinn. I wrote to Lord Robin about our experience in the nameless barony, and he returned a post dated 12 February a. s. XII (1977) with the following comments:

Milord, I thank you for giving the Society another chance after being introduced to it by one of "those" events. I wish I could say I'd never heard of such a thing, but I have sat through my share of them; in fact, with your permission I would like to send a copy of your letter to *Pikestaff* [the newsletter for the East] as a reminder to all autocrats that we must never relent in our fight against ennui and apathy.

I'm going to give you as honest a response as I can, and try to say why I and many others stay with the Society in spite of weekends like that, which are apt to be as painful to the autocrat as to the guests.

Indeed, Lord Robin spent three single-spaced type-written pages giving me a description of a well-run event and inviting our group to attend the upcoming Tourney of Ymir in Windmaster's Hill with the following comment:



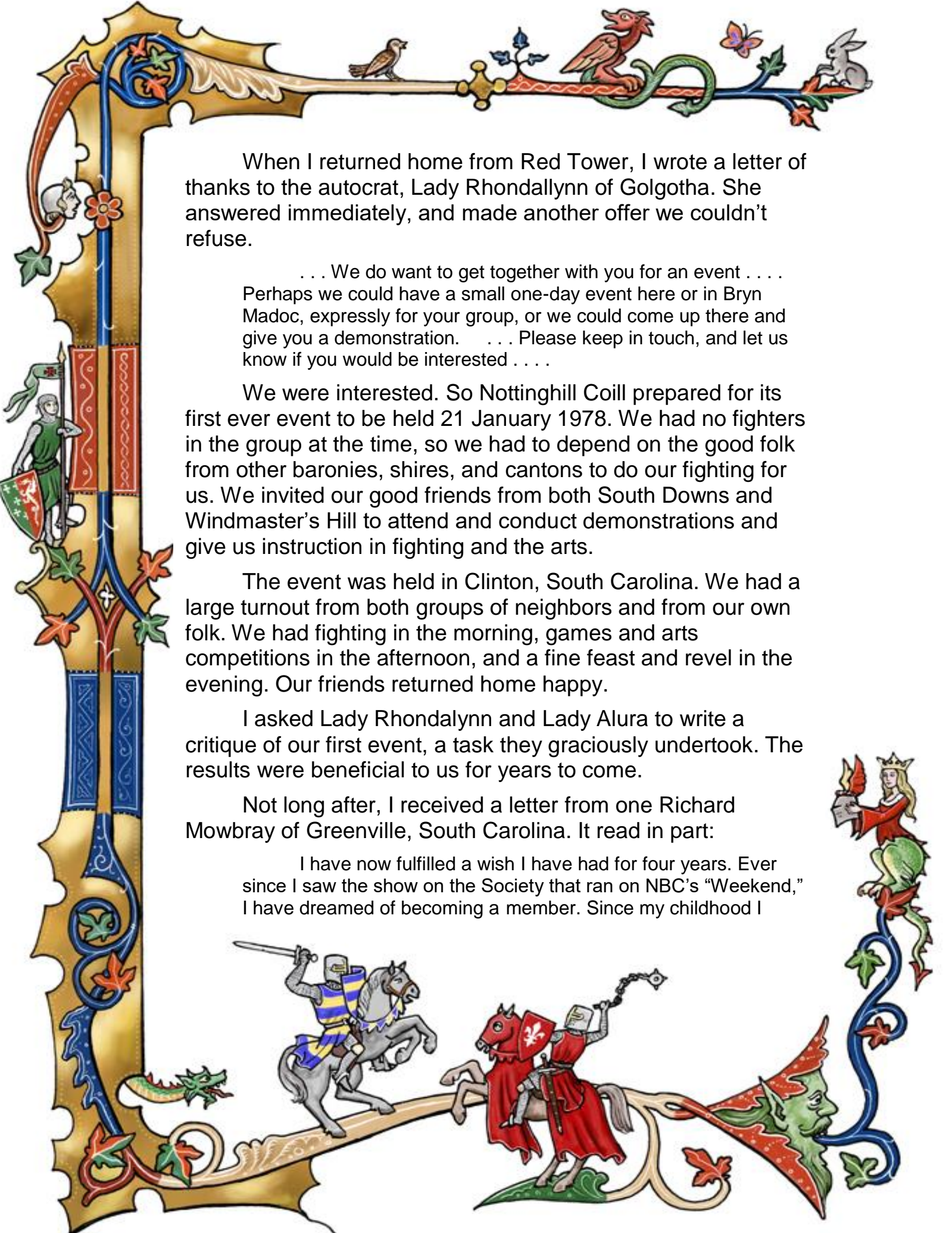


I hope . . . that you can convince your people to try several events. I'm serious enough about getting you here that I'm going to make you an offer you can't refuse: half price to anyone from Nottinghill Coill, and I'll pay the rest out of my own pocket. I hope you cost me \$25!

I was unable to get anyone from Nottinghill Coill to attend Ymir, and so I decided to attend alone. Lord Robin was as good as his word, and Windmaster's Hill conducted a very exciting event: one that really got the ball rolling for Nottinghill Coill. For this I shall be ever appreciative of the folk of Windmaster's Hill.

We received an invitation from Baroness Margarethe to attend the next Red Tower Tourney, sponsored by South Downs, and held in Jessup, Georgia. Several members of our group and I attended the event, which was held on perhaps the coldest night of the year. It was a camping event, and my primary memory of it was that we nearly froze our medieval buggies off.

Anyway, it was at this event that I first met Megara di Alessandra, a lady from Charleston, South Carolina, who did not know the knowne world existed in her native land. This was the lady's first event, and as we talked, she became more and more interested in establishing a group of the Society in Charleston. She left Red Tower and returned home to found the Canton of the Tear's Sea Shore as a branch of the Shire of Nottinghill Coill, and, as a result of the influence of Lady Megara and the Tear's Sea Shore, another group established itself in Goose Creek, South Carolina, and took the name of the Canton of the Hidden Mountain.



When I returned home from Red Tower, I wrote a letter of thanks to the autocrat, Lady Rhondallynn of Golgotha. She answered immediately, and made another offer we couldn't refuse.

. . . We do want to get together with you for an event Perhaps we could have a small one-day event here or in Bryn Madoc, expressly for your group, or we could come up there and give you a demonstration. . . . Please keep in touch, and let us know if you would be interested

We were interested. So Nottinghill Coill prepared for its first ever event to be held 21 January 1978. We had no fighters in the group at the time, so we had to depend on the good folk from other baronies, shires, and cantons to do our fighting for us. We invited our good friends from both South Downs and Windmaster's Hill to attend and conduct demonstrations and give us instruction in fighting and the arts.

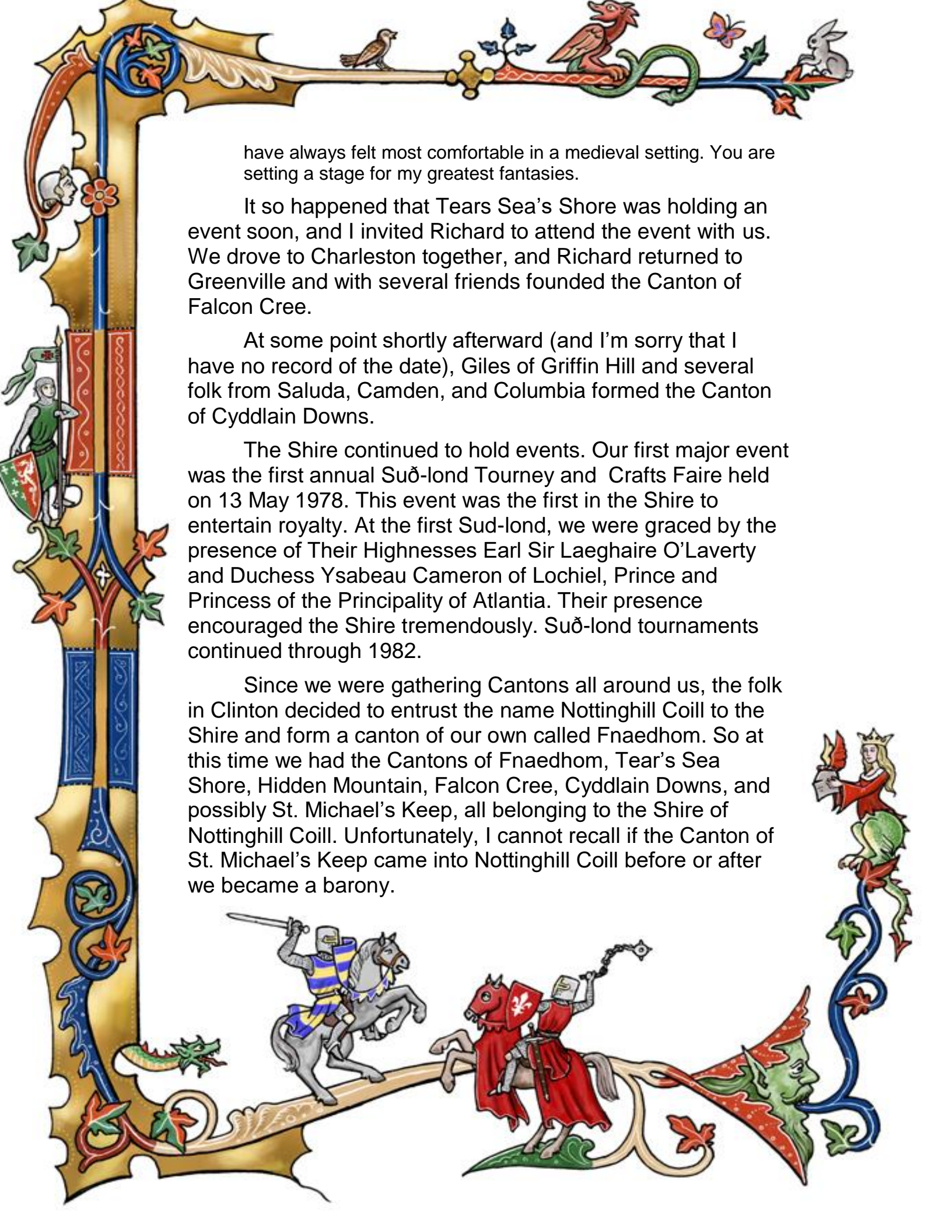
The event was held in Clinton, South Carolina. We had a large turnout from both groups of neighbors and from our own folk. We had fighting in the morning, games and arts competitions in the afternoon, and a fine feast and revel in the evening. Our friends returned home happy.

I asked Lady Rhondalynn and Lady Alura to write a critique of our first event, a task they graciously undertook. The results were beneficial to us for years to come.

Not long after, I received a letter from one Richard Mowbray of Greenville, South Carolina. It read in part:

I have now fulfilled a wish I have had for four years. Ever since I saw the show on the Society that ran on NBC's "Weekend," I have dreamed of becoming a member. Since my childhood I






have always felt most comfortable in a medieval setting. You are setting a stage for my greatest fantasies.

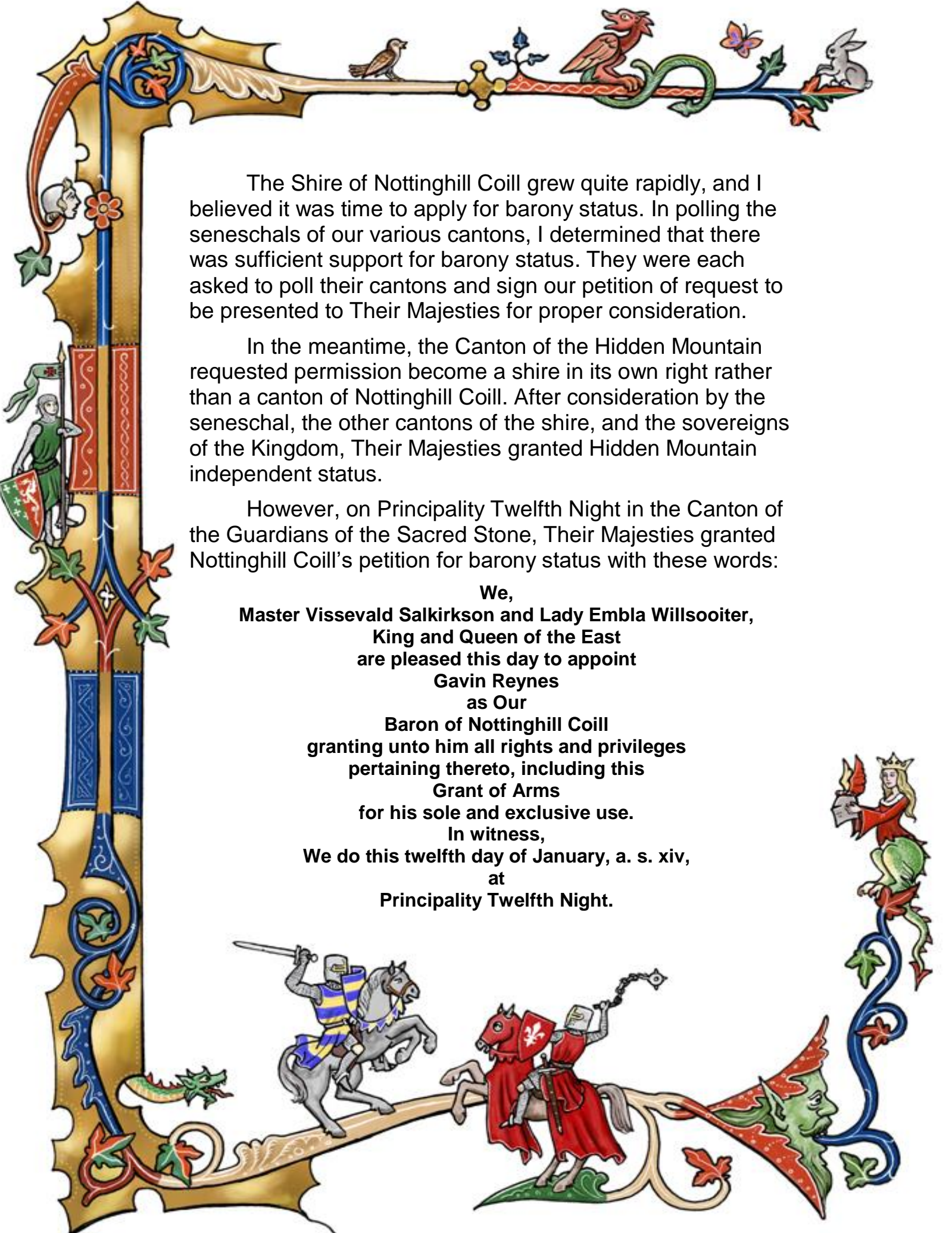
It so happened that Tears Sea's Shore was holding an event soon, and I invited Richard to attend the event with us. We drove to Charleston together, and Richard returned to Greenville and with several friends founded the Canton of Falcon Cree.

At some point shortly afterward (and I'm sorry that I have no record of the date), Giles of Griffin Hill and several folk from Saluda, Camden, and Columbia formed the Canton of Cyddlain Downs.

The Shire continued to hold events. Our first major event was the first annual Suð-lond Tourney and Crafts Faire held on 13 May 1978. This event was the first in the Shire to entertain royalty. At the first Sud-lond, we were graced by the presence of Their Highnesses Earl Sir Laeghaire O'Laverty and Duchess Ysabeau Cameron of Lochiel, Prince and Princess of the Principality of Atlantia. Their presence encouraged the Shire tremendously. Suð-lond tournaments continued through 1982.

Since we were gathering Cantons all around us, the folk in Clinton decided to entrust the name Nottinghill Coill to the Shire and form a canton of our own called Fnaedhom. So at this time we had the Cantons of Fnaedhom, Tear's Sea Shore, Hidden Mountain, Falcon Cree, Cyddlain Downs, and possibly St. Michael's Keep, all belonging to the Shire of Nottinghill Coill. Unfortunately, I cannot recall if the Canton of St. Michael's Keep came into Nottinghill Coill before or after we became a barony.






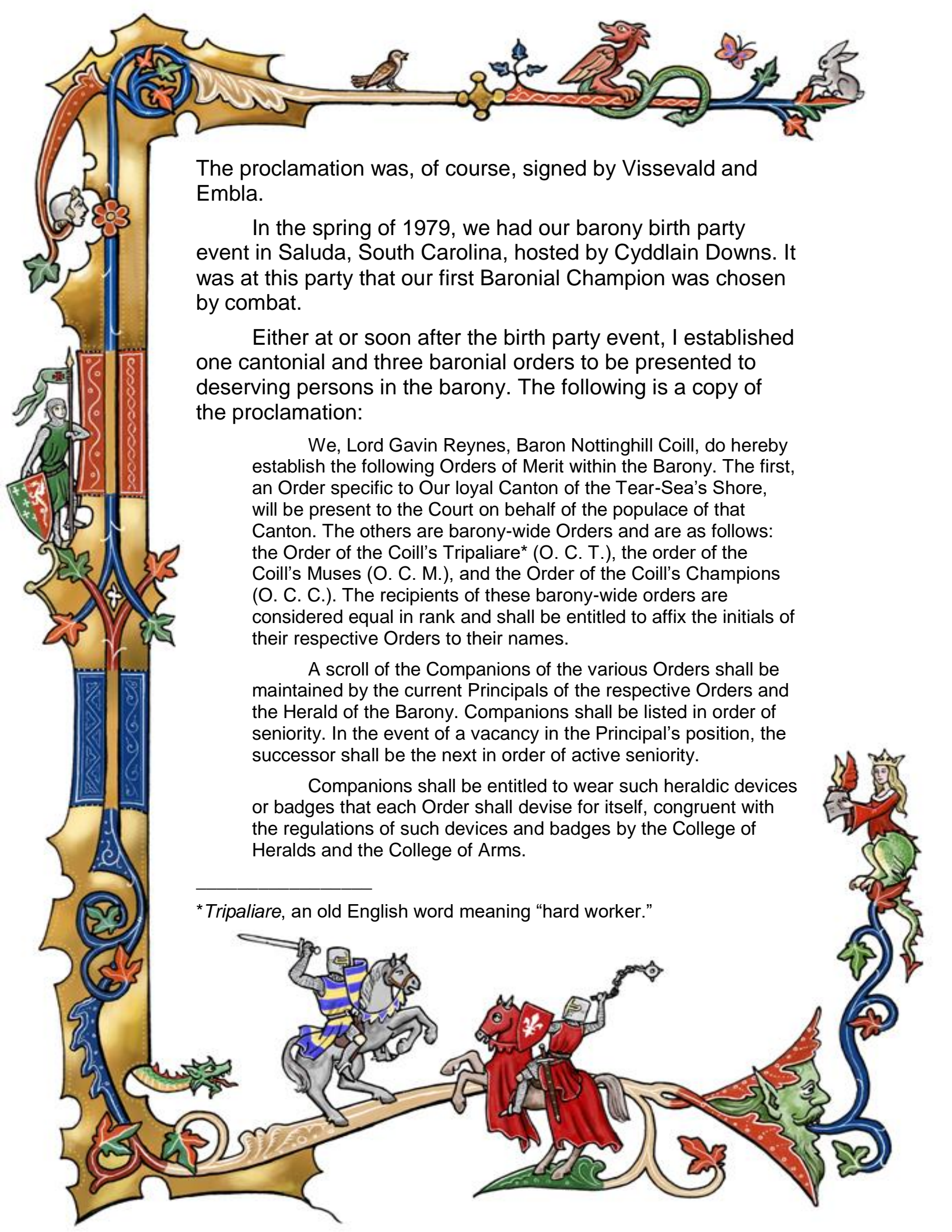
The Shire of Nottingham Coill grew quite rapidly, and I believed it was time to apply for barony status. In polling the seneschals of our various cantons, I determined that there was sufficient support for barony status. They were each asked to poll their cantons and sign our petition of request to be presented to Their Majesties for proper consideration.

In the meantime, the Canton of the Hidden Mountain requested permission become a shire in its own right rather than a canton of Nottingham Coill. After consideration by the seneschal, the other cantons of the shire, and the sovereigns of the Kingdom, Their Majesties granted Hidden Mountain independent status.

However, on Principality Twelfth Night in the Canton of the Guardians of the Sacred Stone, Their Majesties granted Nottingham Coill's petition for barony status with these words:

We,
Master Vissevald Salkirkson and Lady Embla Willsooiter,
King and Queen of the East
are pleased this day to appoint
Gavin Reynes
as Our
Baron of Nottingham Coill
granting unto him all rights and privileges
pertaining thereto, including this
Grant of Arms
for his sole and exclusive use.
In witness,
We do this twelfth day of January, a. s. xiv,
at
Principality Twelfth Night.





The proclamation was, of course, signed by Vissevald and Embla.

In the spring of 1979, we had our barony birth party event in Saluda, South Carolina, hosted by Cyddlain Downs. It was at this party that our first Baronial Champion was chosen by combat.

Either at or soon after the birth party event, I established one cantonial and three baronial orders to be presented to deserving persons in the barony. The following is a copy of the proclamation:

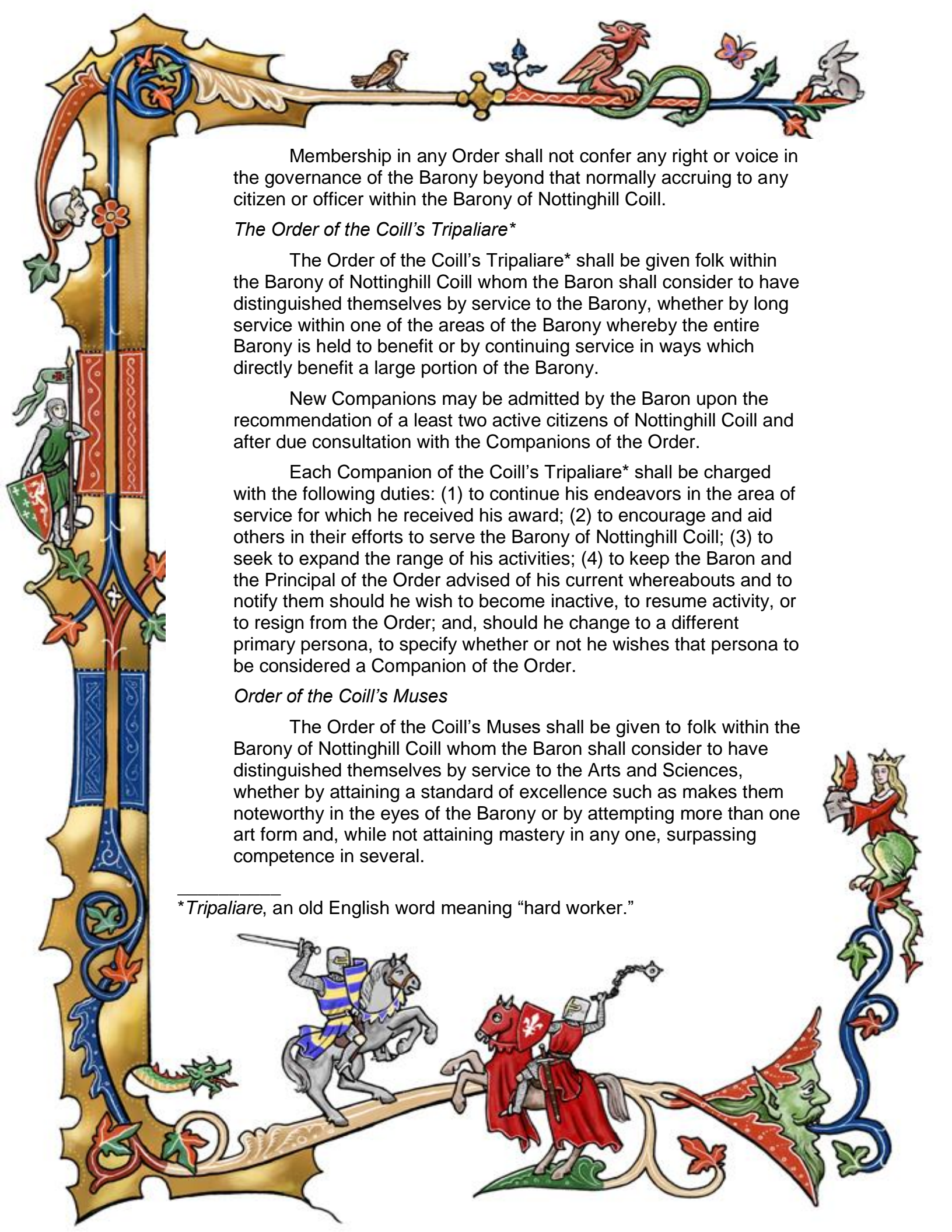
We, Lord Gavin Reynes, Baron Nottingham Coill, do hereby establish the following Orders of Merit within the Barony. The first, an Order specific to Our loyal Canton of the Tear-Sea's Shore, will be present to the Court on behalf of the populace of that Canton. The others are barony-wide Orders and are as follows: the Order of the Coill's Tripaliare* (O. C. T.), the order of the Coill's Muses (O. C. M.), and the Order of the Coill's Champions (O. C. C.). The recipients of these barony-wide orders are considered equal in rank and shall be entitled to affix the initials of their respective Orders to their names.

A scroll of the Companions of the various Orders shall be maintained by the current Principals of the respective Orders and the Herald of the Barony. Companions shall be listed in order of seniority. In the event of a vacancy in the Principal's position, the successor shall be the next in order of active seniority.

Companions shall be entitled to wear such heraldic devices or badges that each Order shall devise for itself, congruent with the regulations of such devices and badges by the College of Heralds and the College of Arms.

**Tripaliare*, an old English word meaning "hard worker."





Membership in any Order shall not confer any right or voice in the governance of the Barony beyond that normally accruing to any citizen or officer within the Barony of Nottinghamill Coill.

*The Order of the Coill's Tripaliare**

The Order of the Coill's Tripaliare* shall be given folk within the Barony of Nottinghamill Coill whom the Baron shall consider to have distinguished themselves by service to the Barony, whether by long service within one of the areas of the Barony whereby the entire Barony is held to benefit or by continuing service in ways which directly benefit a large portion of the Barony.

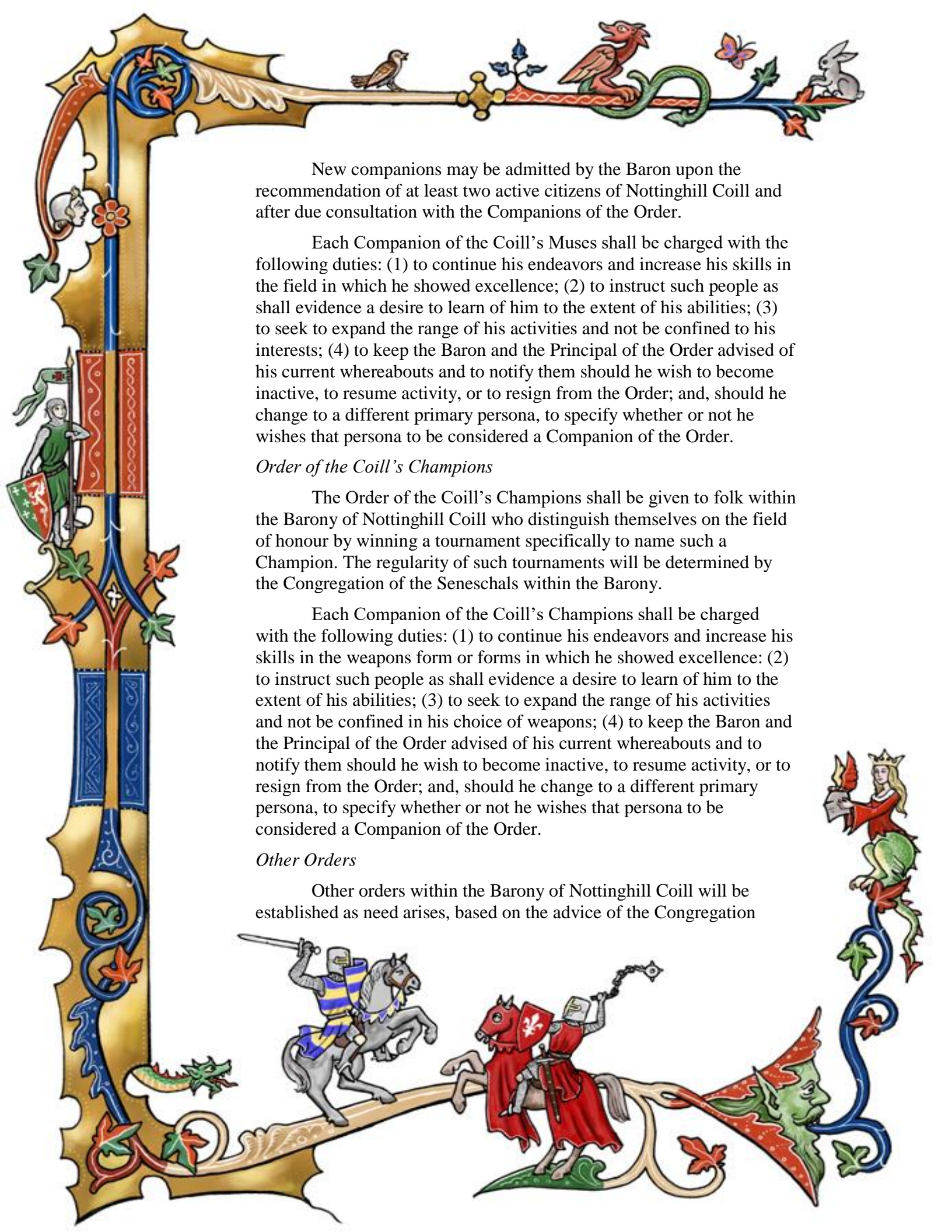
New Companions may be admitted by the Baron upon the recommendation of a least two active citizens of Nottinghamill Coill and after due consultation with the Companions of the Order.

Each Companion of the Coill's Tripaliare* shall be charged with the following duties: (1) to continue his endeavors in the area of service for which he received his award; (2) to encourage and aid others in their efforts to serve the Barony of Nottinghamill Coill; (3) to seek to expand the range of his activities; (4) to keep the Baron and the Principal of the Order advised of his current whereabouts and to notify them should he wish to become inactive, to resume activity, or to resign from the Order; and, should he change to a different primary persona, to specify whether or not he wishes that persona to be considered a Companion of the Order.

Order of the Coill's Muses

The Order of the Coill's Muses shall be given to folk within the Barony of Nottinghamill Coill whom the Baron shall consider to have distinguished themselves by service to the Arts and Sciences, whether by attaining a standard of excellence such as makes them noteworthy in the eyes of the Barony or by attempting more than one art form and, while not attaining mastery in any one, surpassing competence in several.

**Tripaliare*, an old English word meaning "hard worker."



New companions may be admitted by the Baron upon the recommendation of at least two active citizens of Nottingham Coill and after due consultation with the Companions of the Order.

Each Companion of the Coill's Muses shall be charged with the following duties: (1) to continue his endeavors and increase his skills in the field in which he showed excellence; (2) to instruct such people as shall evidence a desire to learn of him to the extent of his abilities; (3) to seek to expand the range of his activities and not be confined to his interests; (4) to keep the Baron and the Principal of the Order advised of his current whereabouts and to notify them should he wish to become inactive, to resume activity, or to resign from the Order; and, should he change to a different primary persona, to specify whether or not he wishes that persona to be considered a Companion of the Order.

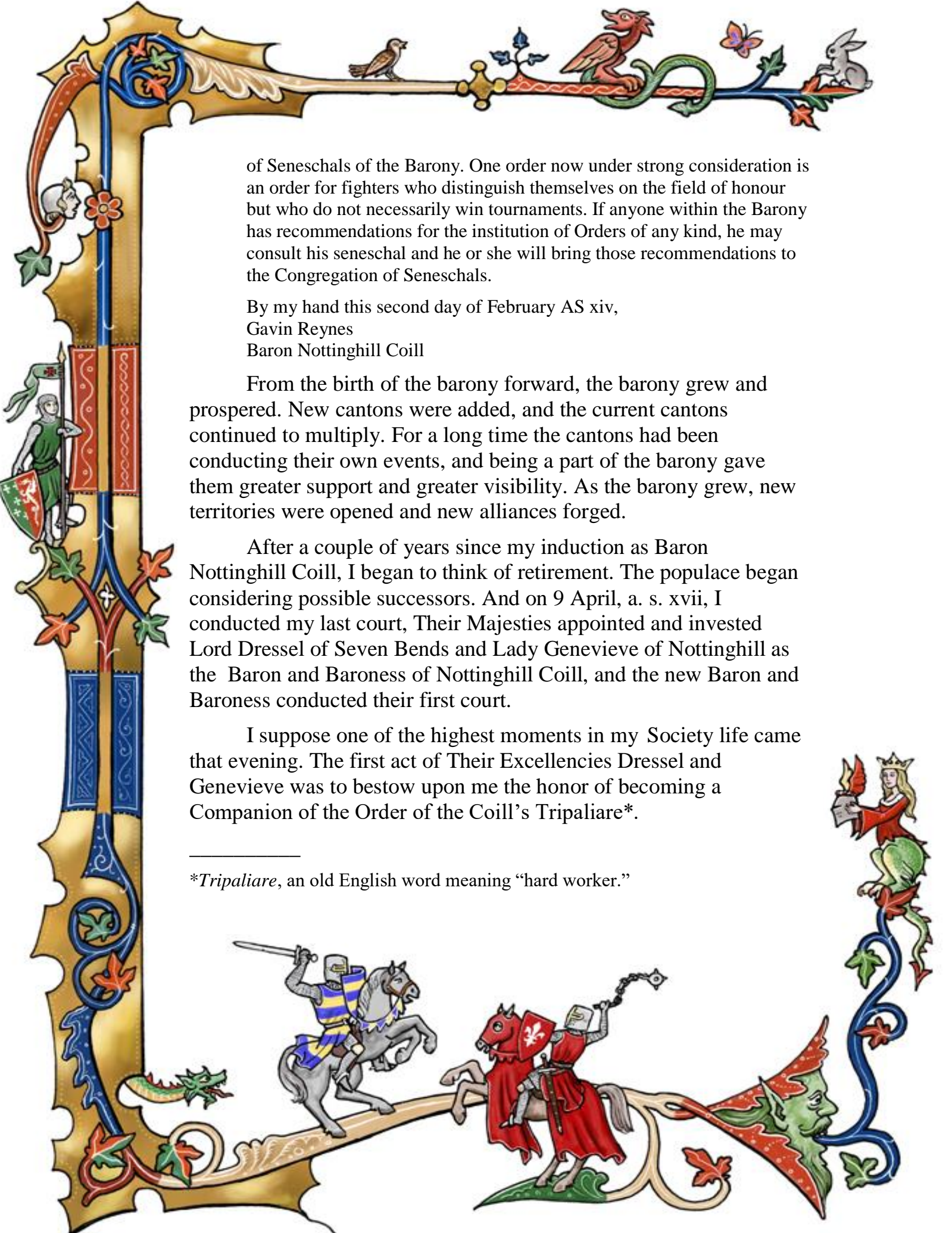
Order of the Coill's Champions

The Order of the Coill's Champions shall be given to folk within the Barony of Nottingham Coill who distinguish themselves on the field of honour by winning a tournament specifically to name such a Champion. The regularity of such tournaments will be determined by the Congregation of the Seneschals within the Barony.

Each Companion of the Coill's Champions shall be charged with the following duties: (1) to continue his endeavors and increase his skills in the weapons form or forms in which he showed excellence; (2) to instruct such people as shall evidence a desire to learn of him to the extent of his abilities; (3) to seek to expand the range of his activities and not be confined in his choice of weapons; (4) to keep the Baron and the Principal of the Order advised of his current whereabouts and to notify them should he wish to become inactive, to resume activity, or to resign from the Order; and, should he change to a different primary persona, to specify whether or not he wishes that persona to be considered a Companion of the Order.

Other Orders

Other orders within the Barony of Nottingham Coill will be established as need arises, based on the advice of the Congregation



of Seneschals of the Barony. One order now under strong consideration is an order for fighters who distinguish themselves on the field of honour but who do not necessarily win tournaments. If anyone within the Barony has recommendations for the institution of Orders of any kind, he may consult his seneschal and he or she will bring those recommendations to the Congregation of Seneschals.

By my hand this second day of February AS xiv,
Gavin Reynes
Baron Nottingham Coill

From the birth of the barony forward, the barony grew and prospered. New cantons were added, and the current cantons continued to multiply. For a long time the cantons had been conducting their own events, and being a part of the barony gave them greater support and greater visibility. As the barony grew, new territories were opened and new alliances forged.

After a couple of years since my induction as Baron Nottingham Coill, I began to think of retirement. The populace began considering possible successors. And on 9 April, a. s. xvii, I conducted my last court, Their Majesties appointed and invested Lord Dressel of Seven Bends and Lady Genevieve of Nottingham as the Baron and Baroness of Nottingham Coill, and the new Baron and Baroness conducted their first court.

I suppose one of the highest moments in my Society life came that evening. The first act of Their Excellencies Dressel and Genevieve was to bestow upon me the honor of becoming a Companion of the Order of the Coill's Tripaliare*.

**Tripaliare*, an old English word meaning "hard worker."

