

# Volume 3 Issue 3, July 2002

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## **Bestiary – Caristiona nic Beathain**

Although Bestiaries do not have a lot to do with herbs and gardening I thought I would write a small piece about what they are. Bestiaries often have the occasional herb in them and can often be written in conjunction with a herbal.

The Bestiary is a book about animals with details varying from realistic to the fantastical. The information contained in a bestiary is based not on the actual observations of the individual writing the Bestiary but on the handed down wisdom of ancient scholars. The information contains descriptions of the animals and birds, with a morality tale or allegory for each section.

The sources from which the information for a bestiary was derived were probably originally oral histories and mythology. The earliest bestiary we have evidence for is the Physiologus, a Greek work, by an anonymous author written between second and fifth centuries. The Physiologus was presented as a book about animal behaviour, however in reality it was more a book about explaining early Christian associations and meanings and using animals to illustrate Christian stories.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the Bestiary reached its hight of popularity. It was considered one of the fundamental books of the period and illustrated many of the myths of other cultures and religions. Often the animals from these cultures are the animals of myth that are now often associated with the middle ages. However the Bestiary was not just a book of mythical creatures. It also contained a large number of animals that individuals recognised and were familiar with in everyday life.

An good example of an entry about an animal is provided by the section on weasels in (Bodley 764). This quote shows the recognisable, the mythical and the moral tale in a very short piece.

“The weasel, ‘mustela’, is a sort of long mouse; ‘telon’ means long in Greek. It is very cunning: when it gives birth to its young in a house, it carries them from one place to another and puts them somewhere different each time. It attacks serpents and mice. There are two kinds of weasel; one lives in the woods and it is rather bigger- The Greeks call them ‘ictidas’- and the other lives in houses. Some people say that they conceive through their ear and give birth through their mouth, and others that it is the opposite way round, that they conceive through their mouth and give birth through their ear. They are said to be skilled in healing, so that if they find that their young have been killed, they can bring them to life again. They signify those men who readily listen to the seed of the divine word but, held back by the love of worldly things, neglect it and do not want to know more about what they have heard. The weasel signifies a thief, as in Leviticus” [1].

Among the many mythical creatures represented in bestiaries the history of the Barnacle Goose is also often included. This Goose was believed to have existed in Ireland and Scotland and to grow from pine logs floating in the water. Because they were never seen on land, they were considered to

be fish rather than fowl, meaning that they could be eaten during times of fasting without committing a sin.

The Christian tale associated with the Barnacle Goose from (Bodley 764) is a tale extolling the virtues of the creation of man and woman in Genesis. The moral suggests that nature is no less wonderful or miraculous, because it can continue to create man, then the original creation of Adam and Eve. Barnacle Geese are also referred to as a herb, in particular they are mentioned in Gerard's Herbal and in The great Herbal.

By the end of the 16th Century Bestiaries were becoming less popular and Barnacle Geese, among many other animals and plants, were no longer considered to be real. This happened as Renaissance thinking gradually placed an emphasis on observation of nature, rather than the slavish copying of the ancient scholars.

1. Barber, R. Bestiary, being an English version of the Bodlean Library, Oxford M.S. Bodley 764 with all the original miniatures reproduced in facsimile. Translated and introduced by Richard Barber. Boydell Press, Woodbridge, UK. 1999:110.

## References

- Barber, R. Bestiary, being an English version of the Bodlean Library, Oxford M.S. Bodley 764 with all the original miniatures reproduced in facsimile. Translated and introduced by Richard Barber. Boydell Press, Woodbridge, UK. 1999

## Bibliography

- 1. Barber, R. Bestiary, being an English version of the Bodlean Library, Oxford M.S. Bodley 764 with all the original miniatures reproduced in facsimile. Translated and introduced by Richard Barber. Boydell Press, Woodbridge, UK. 1999
- Gerard, J. The herbal or General History of Plants. The Complete 1633 Edition as Revised and Enlarged by Thomas Johnson. Dover Publications Inc. New York. USA 1975.
- Payne, A. Medieval Beasts. The British Library Board, London, UK. 1990.
- Treasures from the World's Great Libraries. National Library of Australia. Canberra, Australia. 2001.

## Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme – Bea of Ildhafn

These four herbs of a ballad chorus are in common usage today, but how would they of been used in period and how could they be used within the SCA today?

“What is a herb?” asks Alcuin the English monk and advisor to Charlemagne

“The friend of physician and the praise of cooks” was the reply

### **Parsley**

(also known as parcelly, persely parceleye & perslie). Parsley sweetens the breath & stimulates digestion.

Petroselinium hortense, Hoff. Apium petroselinum, Carum petroselinum –  
Turnip rooted parsley, Petroselinum crispum neopolitanum ‘SWEET ITALIAN’

“Chawinge of the fresh grene Parceleye, doth cause swete smelling breath”

What can I tell you about parsley- its major culinary uses are primarily, as a sprig used to a garnish, secondly, a raw leaf, used as a salad vegetable, or thirdly, its use as a sauce flavouring. It can also be used in soups, stews, or with egg dishes. For the best flavour pick and add to dish just prior to dishing out, it is not a herb that requires cooking. Cultivation wise it is a frost hardy biennial, that grows to a height 30 cm-1m and to a width of 40cm.-1m. Depending on the botanical variety.

“Hyll” repeats an idea of “Pliny the elder” (77AD) that parsley leaves would be more “crisped”-that is curled if “before the sowing of them [you] stuffe a tennis ball with the seedes , and beat the same well against the ground”. I find that enough plants become self sown and curly, with out additional help, but will collect a tennis ball full this year, if any one wants to try the period sport.

In my opinion common curled parsley, should be used for garnishing, while large leaf Italian, is better for salads (Tabouleh) having a more intense flavour, I find both bolt (to seed) in summer unless steadily watered, but I’m quite happy for them to self sow, sprouting in early autumn, providing me with a leaf high in vitamin C and iron over winter

**In Herbal medicine:** In a modern herbal, Parsley is recommended to be eaten raw or juiced and is used for its diuretic facility a poultice may also be formed and applied at an early stage of nursing as a softening agent (I include the modern uses as a guide to safe current every day things you can do with parsley in an encampment or society event).

**In Period:** Petresilinium is mentioned in Charlemagne’s lists of herb (Capitulare de Villis Imperialibus copy dated 872 AD) as are Salvia, Sage, Ros marinu, Rosemary.

“There are sauces, broths, stews and soups that use parsley leaves as flavouring And it is recommended “manie use to eate them not onely with flesh of fish, but also with butter in the morning” it being convenient for the stomach-”

Thomas Coghlan, The Haven of Health,1584

And references to the use of its root The leaves are pleasant in sauces with broth... rootes likewise....if they be boiled in broth they be also delightful to taste and agreeable to the stomacke.”

John Gerard, The Herbal 1597

Which brings us to Renaissance herbs which have launched the variety ‘BARTOWICH LONG’ which has been Selected for its nutty flavoured roots. It goes by the botanical name Petroselinum crispum tuberosum and while the roots are growing you can still eat the leaves. This is one you will find in my garden as soon as I can buy it. At which point I will be experimenting with the root, which are said to “add a nutty parsley flavour when grated into salads or diced into soups and stews.”

Symbolically it was linked to victory a “chaplet of persley’ the prize of the “solemne tourney and sacred games. Nemei” Pliny, natural history 77AD (trans.Holland 1601) And its “smoke dryveth away alle serpentis” – and all other venomous beasts.

### **Sources of reference have been**

The illustrated Earth Garden Herbal KV Smith1994

Count Palantines seventieth century herbal

Herbal medicine. D.D.Buchman1993

## **Sage [*Salvia officinalis*]**

Sawge, salgia, sauge

Sage for age

“Amongst my herbs, sage holds place of honour: of good scent it is full virtue for many ills”

WALAFRID STRABO, The little garden, 840AD.

Hints for growing Sage is a grey-green woody perennial that can grow up to a small bush 90 cm tall by 50 cm wide. Sage's chief hate is wet feet. A raised bed of sandy very well drained soil is essential for the humid wet winters around Auckland, and a position in full sun with the advantage of good air movement will prevent the loss of the plant to fungal infections,

In my garden there appears to be three varieties one with a oval green grey leaf one with a spear like silver-grey leaf and red sage with its gorgeous purple tones. I propagate by harvesting the shoots stripping the leaves, and shoving the denuded twigs back into the ground, while the strike rate is not too high, for the amount of effort, it is a no fuss, no cash, quick and easy herbal boarder (I do much the same too Rosemary). It is supposedly a four-year plant, but having never kept one alive over three years I have yet to discover if there is a benefit to this.

In cooking it has a very strong long lasting flavour that goes well with game meat. Young leaves have milder flavour and I personally find them more palatable. I use sage in vinegars, butters, sauces, (gravy) stuffings, and for flavouring Cheese.

“Bruise red sage in mortar (sometimes, with spinach), mix in warm milk with rennet, to preferred colour and taste, separate curd, press and salt.” Adapted from Walsh's manual of domestic economy 1897

Sage is said to break down the oils and fats in meat, which aids digestion. Classic flavour partners are Rosemary, Lemon Thyme, Garlic Chives, Savory, Garlic, Shallots, and Marjoram. Classic food partners are Pork, Veal, Duck, Lamb, Chicken stuffings, Ham, Sausages, Potato, Pumpkin, Artichokes, and Leeks.

### **Symbolic uses**

It is a plant symbolic of age and wisdom “a man shall live for aye who eats sage”

In Herbal medicine, D.D.Buchman takes two pages to list sage's tonic and curative usages If your depressed drink sage tea, it sweetens your breath, cleanse your system, and help you sleep all at the same time. Its external uses are also varied.

“Ys goud for the palsy. Also he ys good to hele a man of the tooth ache, also yf man have a raw wound that bledy the moche take powder of hure and ley to thee wound.”

‘Also yf a man wyl have blak here take the juice of thys herbe and wessh well yn the hot sonne thyne hed therwyth.

‘ AGNES CASTUS, 14 century

I personally link sage with anti dandruff hair rinses for brunettes, tasty vinegar oil dressings and stuffing, and for the treatment of sore throats, gargled sage tea relieves the pain.

In a period encampment sage leaves powdered mixed with sea salt could be used as toothpaste or a supply of leaves provided for rubbing – this removes yellow stains.

### **Period recipes use sage**

The leaves were is used in salads and green sauces and as a cleansing spring tonic

### **Sources used**

The illustrated Earth Garden Herbal, by KV Smith 1994

In Herbal Medicine, by D.D. Buchman 1993

Renaissance herb on line catalogue

## **Herber or A Hortus Conclusus – A permanent medieval garden at Crossroads – Master Cristoval**

The Lochac Herb and Garden Guild has installed a temporary medieval garden at recent Rowany Festivals. Crossroads is keen to have a permanent medieval garden, and the Guild has agreed to support the project. This article describes the currently proposed design.

The proposal is for an enclosed medieval garden, also known as a herber or a Hortus Conclusus. These are commonly seen in medieval illuminations, consistent with classical and biblical references. Because they have walls all around, they are somewhat resistant to kangaroos and sheep, a great advantage at Crossroads.

The classic herber is described by Albertus Magnus (circa 1400):

“Care must be taken that the lawn is of such a size that about it in a square may be planted every sweet-smelling herb such as rue and sage and basil, and likewise all sorts of flowers, as violet, columbine, lily, rose, iris and the like. Between these herbs and the turf, at the edge of the lawn, set square, let there be a higher bench of turf, flowering and lovely, and somewhere in the middle provide seats. Upon the lawn too against the heat of the sun trees should be planted or vines trained – the trees should not be bitter ones – but with perfumed flowers and agreeable shade, like grapevines, pears, apples, pomegranates, sweet bays, cypresses and such like. Beyond the lawn there may be a great diversity of medicinal and scented herbs – There should not be any trees in the middle of the lawn, but let its surface delight in the open air – If possible a clean fountain of water in a stone basin should be in the midst. It is delight rather than fruit that is looked for in the pleasure garden.”

Typically, the herber in illuminations has two compartments: a utility garden, with regular rectangular raised beds, and a pleasure garden which usually has a fountain. For Crossroads, two factors warranted a third compartment. Firstly, the garden will be heavily used during the Rowany Festival, quarterly fairs and other public events, so we need some size. Secondly, the fountain will probably be run from a modest solar pump and so is more suited to a smaller space. So the current plan is to have a larger central compartment, with a utility garden at one end and a more intimate fountain garden at the other.

The size of the garden is an interesting issue. Sylvia Landsberg (The Medieval Garden, British Museum Press) mentions a surviving medieval measuring cord, and references to others. Her waxed cord is 84 feet long, which means that it is particularly well suited to laying out a rectangle using the well-known 3:4:5 triangle with a module of 7. This would give a size for the utility garden of

21' x 28'. This is a bit big for the available space at Crossroads, and expensive to build, so we are proposing the same calculation methods for a module of 5, which gives 15' x 20' for the utility garden and the fountain garden. The central pleasure garden would be two of these units, ie 20' x 30'. The total enclosed garden would then be 20' x 60'.

Garden walls were woven wicker, or oak lath lattice, or brick. The wicker is not readily available, and labour intensive. The decision was to use commercial pine lattice with timber surrounds and plenty of heavy posts topped with suitable finials. As will be seen, some of the panels will be brick.

In the utility garden, the beds will have timber sides of about six inches, held in by short stakes. These will be filled with herbs and vegetables. In medieval times, the commoner vegies like cabbage would be banished to a separate bulk garden. Four feet wide beds allows most gardeners free access without the need to tread on the beds.

For the other gardens, we need to have some turf seats. While these are somewhat impractical, they are absolutely everywhere in the illuminations and documentary evidence. These could also be held up by timber, but would be higher maintenance and modern timber is too regular. Instead, they will be made of brick. The illuminations look much the same as today's brick walls, so if we choose a suitable style brick they will probably be OK. The turf will have to be replaced say twice a year: at least it comes in suitable rolls now. (In medieval times, brown ratty turf was OK, and you replaced it before key events, so we'll do the same.)

For the Crossroads design, the turf seats will be the dividers between the three garden compartments, with lattice over the top and arbours (vine-covered tunnels) linking them. The raised brick areas will extend to the border fence, where they will be raised a little above the adjoining lattice fence in a crenellation pattern, as seen in many illuminations.

The other walls of the garden can be planted with espaliered trees – these are the ones pruned flat against the wall in certain patterns, very efficient for fruiting. Parts of the trellis walls may be covered with medieval rose varieties in red and white. At appropriate places, standard fruit trees will be incorporated for produce and shade.

We need a fair bit of lawn for recreational purposes. The medievals liked to have fairly longish grass, with as many wildflowers as possible: daisies, periwinkles and violets for a start. This was often called a 'flowery mead'.

The main pleasure garden is to have some giant game boards: chess, merels, fox and geese, and possibly the medieval form of hopscotch. At one stage it was suggested that we have a live chess board in this section, but it takes up too much room and would be out of scale with the remainder. We found a couple of references to live chess in period, but none to over-sized games. We found heaps of pictures of people playing chess, or dancing, or playing ball games, in their gardens, but no big pieces. We propose to take this licence as it will make for an interesting pastime, including for older children. The well-known Brother Cadfael garden at Shrewsbury has a giant Merels set.

The fountain garden should be a shady and contemplative place. The main structure of the fountain will probably be the best commercially available option, but we might be able to top it with a special sculpture. Cristoval's vision for this is an early medieval unicorn, more like a goat kid than a horse, in black stone. Yes, this is reminiscent of a past Rowany Festival t-shirt. We might get a government grant to hire a sculptor, in which case we could get a couple more beasts made up to go on top of brick columns at the entry gate. We could get some more pictures of beasties out of the

bestiaries and bake their designs into some of the large pavers on the main pathway. The artwork should be a little irregular, not too smooth and not reminiscent of mystical fantasy valleys.

The garden walls will be put up by Cristoval, to be repaid from a donations box. Once the garden is established, we will put out a book on the design and contents of the garden, which will also raise funds. It may be necessary to create one garden compartment at a time, as the financial support and volunteer effort become available.

If you have any suggestions for this garden, including plant lists and offers of assistance with the implementation, please send them to Cristoval. He will be changing internet providers soon, so please send anything to his [crossroads@crossroads.org.au](mailto:crossroads@crossroads.org.au) address.

**About the Author** (As was included when article originally published)

Master Cristoval joined the SCA in Stormhold, before anyone in that group got an Award of Arms. He has been active in Dark Skies, Politarchopolis and most recently Torlyon. He is a certified permaculture designer and is a bit heavy handed with a pruning saw. He was a founding member of the Crossroads Co-operative, and is currently their Secretary.

## **Humulus Lupulus – Hops from The New Herbal of 1543 by Leonhart Fuchs (Translated by Heinz Warnecke) – Sigurd Trygvarsson**

– Article slightly modified for web – see “Web Amendments” under for details

### **About Hops**

#### **Names**

The Greeks called Hops Bryon, in Latin it was Lupus Salictarius, in the Apotecten, Lupulus and at times also Humulus. The reasons for the names are found in the Latin Herbal Book.

#### **Gender**

The Herb has a dual gender, domestic and wild, which we like to announce. The domestic is cultivated at many places with lots of care. The wild herb just grows in the fields [W1].

#### **Shape**

The domestic Hops grows young buds which are round, brown red, and have many leaves. As soon as the growth is the height of a man the stalk will have thorns. The leaves are dark green, similar to (StickRoot) on the stalks grow small yellow-white blossoms similar to those of grape stock, only different in size. The blossoms grow into little clusters, which contain the brown seeds which are round. The wild hop is similar to the domestic plants.

#### **Growth Areas**

Domestic Hops are grown in Germany in places where grapes do not grow, in gardens and fields for beer. The wild plant grows on fences, hedges, poles and walls or wherever it can hang on.

#### **Time**

In spring the buds come out and the growth is on high fences, in mid summer it will blossom. In late summer to autumn the hops is harvested.

#### **The Nature and Complexion**

There are many that write that Hops are of a cold nature. Others say that it is in the middle, neither

cold nor warm. But both are not right because the Hops are very bitter and have a strong odour, it has to be warm and dry in another way. The roots too are of a warm nature.

### **The Activity**

Hops purifies the blood and drives out impurities from the galls. Infections are removed. It is good against dropsy. The juice of Hops, taken raw, has a strong action on passing the bowel's contents. When boiled it cleanses the body in general without the strong bowel cleansing action. If the extract is added to the earth it will help to remove what it contains and remove the odour. Hops makes passing urine easier and has the action of other bitters. The roots in particular remove blockages from the Liver and Spleen

### **Web Amendments**

[W1] Sentence amended as word herb was omitted. Original: The wild just grows in the fields