

## Society for Creative Anachronisms

By Clare Molloy

A Sunday morning, mid-September and the skies promise rain. I arrive at Lake Monger Primary School, site of the Society for Creative Anachronism's regular combat training, and it is deserted. I wonder if I have the right place, or have contacted the wrong group. A shiny dark Audi with tinted windows pulls up; the window rolls down and a man with blonde hair and ginger-tinted stubble turns off the ignition. Maybe I've confused them with the other SCA, Sexual Compulsives Anonymous? Then I recognise him from pictures as the Baron. He sits waiting, not looking at me.

Half an hour after the event is scheduled to begin, there are three cars in the parking lot, but nobody has got out yet. Then, as a silver hatch crawls up to the curb, doors begin to open. Men and women, mostly in their late twenties and early thirties enthusiastically open boots and begin getting armour out – shields, masks, dented silver helmets and gauntlets to cover the knuckles, which I later find out are the most important protection, along with kidney belts. I am reassured: I am in the right place.

The Society is a re-enactment group loosely based on the Middle Ages – their polished website explains it as “recreating the Middle Ages ‘as they ought to have been’”. In practice, this means they allow themselves the luxury of cars, although sometimes referring to them as ‘dragons’ or ‘chariots’, and everyone has a title – it's no fun being a pauper. Knights go into combat to defend their Baron's honour and the most skilled are paid the highest respect. Money has no value in Society; they want to share their passions for meadery and embroidery with each other, and the Mundane World.

This is the Barony of Aneala's last hurrah for their current champions – they have done their six months' service and will be replaced at the Championship Tourney in a few weeks' time. Today's event is an informal competition to honour the current champions in the three main Society fields: target archery, rapier and heavy combat. It is a big honour to be a champion – they are charged with defending the Baron and Baroness' nobility and territory and if they are beaten in competition, the challenger then wins the right to do battle against the Baron himself.

The couple that got out of the silver hatch are important Society members. He strides over to the chattering others, hands wedged into tight jean pockets. His longish silver hair is bundled up and pinned with a pink metallic clip. He shakes hands with me and his varnished thumbnail sits on top of my hand like a pearl. *Jean Paul de Sabre*, he says, letting the J rattle around his throat for a minute before leading the words from his mouth. Stepping back, he is wearing skin-tight flared jeans leaving little room in the front for producing heirs. His toes – again, varnished – peek out from red strappy sandals. He is, perhaps, a Blue Feather, the Household for Society members of ‘diverse lifestyles’, Households not being houses in the literal sense but loose support networks and associations of like-minded individuals. *Jean Paul is our champion archer*. The Baron claps him on the shoulder. To the woman with Jean Paul, the Baron kisses her hand with a flourish: *My dear Baroness*.

A man emerges from a battered white van wearing a torn black leather jacket, black fake-fur pants and matching fur hat. A woman gets out from the other side, her expansive breasts strapped into a cream corset. The couple look like the Society rebels, but I am informed they are just 'into Tudor', a more severe style of dress than the usual plain, floor-length gowns of most Society members. This couple, Donnchadh Baillie and Keridwen de Domus Vesania, met while they were protégéing under the same master for the Society services league, Liduina de Kasteelen van Valkenburg, from the Order of the Pelican. The Pelicans work for the good of the Society, organizing events and doing paperwork. The other two peerages, the Order of the Laurel (for the arts and sciences) and the Order of Chivalry (for Society knights) take apprentices and squires, respectively. I discover Donnchadh has recently undergone heart surgery and won't be participating in the competition.

They exchange banter; the previous weekend's Balingup Medieval Festival was a celebration for enthusiasts all over the Barony of Aneala, the WA wing of the Kingdom of Lohac (Australia/New Zealand). Everybody is gloating over the victory of several Anealan knights over those of the other Shires, particularly those from Dragon's Bay. There has been some animosity between the two groups since Peter du Gaunt Noir had a falling out with Aneala's current Baron, Lachlann Ioseph of Dunbar. Peter started his own Shire south of the river, taking some areas of the other southern Shire, Abertridwr, without protest. Peter was once the King of Lohac, and he and the Baron had been friends since the inception of Aneala; in fact the Baron squired under Peter before rising up to his current position of power. Details of the secession are shady – it is clearly not something talked about in-game.

Another man joins the by now reasonably-sized group. He is wearing entirely leather shoes, little more than flaps tied on top like a moneybag. I learn that these are turn-shoes, made inside out with three layers of leather hammered to the bottom for a sole. They are based on a fourteenth-century design found in the peat of London, preserved since being lost there by their original owner. The longhaired man wearing them is Nathan, a White Scarf, the highest honour given to rapier fighters. He and his partner Catherine have been involved in the Society for close to a decade, and she is, apparently, a veritable font of knowledge on the Middle Ages.

Catherine is sitting toward the back of a freshly-erected tent cross-stitching a unicorn; there is a twitch in her left eye and her chin is pulled up, as if she is about to burst into tears. On hearing Nathan explain the turn-shoes, she becomes animated, chattering about the style of buckles and straps of women's shoes, the ridiculous points on men's shoes which naturally develop a bend like a winklepicker and the introduction of heels to women's shoes. Catherine is wearing a brooch and a necklace with unicorn charms, and the bottom of her red dress is decorated with winged unicorns on yellow diamonds. These are part of her 'device', basically a coat of arms within the Society. There is a long approval process for devices – each one is subject to scrutiny from Society officials and members the world over. New devices cannot be too similar to those already in use by Society members of permission letters must be signed by both parties.

The owner of the tent we're squatting in, Catalina de Gata, a Spanish emissary visiting the Kingdom of Lohac, is impressed with the waterproofing of the thirteenth-century-style tent she bought from a Civil War re-enactment supplier via the Internet.

Catalina, appropriately, is all about cats, and her device features three red lions on a yellow background (the 'field'), with dark stripes along the top and bottom (the 'charge'). She found the Society through studying medieval costuming and, like Catherine, can talk endlessly on the finer points of embroidery styles and weaving technique.

But the first order of the day is signing in. A man in a bonnet is seated behind a card table. He takes fees from everyone and places them in a silver EverQuest tin, the side of which brags "Where dreams come to life". Everyone here has a Society membership card with their name, date joined and authorization for the activities they are permitted to take part in. These cards not only ensure that all competitors are fully trained and informed of the safety precautions, but verify their position in Lohac, should they travel outside the Kingdom.

To open the day's events, the Baron and Baroness invite everyone to their tent to explain the rules. Everybody kneels or sits at their feet. The Baron swallows nervously behind his rather large teeth. "Holding court" is a daunting task for a guy who installs security systems. He briefly goes over the rules, simultaneously shy yet basking in his Baronial glory. Finally, he signals to someone inside the chamber: *Can you ask Columb to prepare my bow?* The archery competition is about to begin.

Jean Paul walks out onto the field, hair now tucked up beneath a red-feathered velveteen cap, complementing his puffy, midnight-blue pantaloons. His archery bow stands nearly as tall as he, slightly curved and tightly strung. *Lords and Ladies, archery challengers to the field, please!*

Aneala's six target archers line up at thirty yards. One, unshod, in a blue-grey shift, belt dangling to around her shins, yells to someone off-field, *Can you bring me some sticky tape and a tent peg, please?* They begin their practice shots, arrows spinning through the air and thwumping into the target. These are the real deal: metal-tipped wooden arrows from laminated wooden bows, the force of which could do some damage. These are not to be confused with the often snapped, and thus cheaper wooden arrows with rubber tips used on a Society battlefield. Jean Paul made the target himself, a wooden frame with cardboard sides, covered with shade cloth and stuffed with plastic supermarket shopping bags. The target board is replaced after each tourney.

Competition pauses for a moment while a white-haired lady of about sixty years, out on her morning constitutional, crosses the primary school sports oval with her dog, casting confused and somewhat anxious glances at the brightly-dressed archers. Rain scatters across the field; everybody gathers their belongings and hurries to the tents around the boundary. While there is a break, the women take drinks to their men in traditionally-made cups of wood or clay. Once the clouds pass, the Baron re-emerges: *Lords and Ladies, a challenge has been issued...*

In the final challenge to the champion, Jean Paul, the challenger gets one in the red ring, which is the second from the centre. He takes his final arrow from the ground and taps it on his boot to remove the dirt. Fitting it to his bow, he pulls it back and takes aim. His shoulders are tense, the fingers pulling on the bow string are white from pressure. He releases the bow and it slams into the gold centre of the target. There are a few surprised noises from the crowd and an *Ooh, that's an upset* from the

bonneted man standing behind me. The Baron walks back from the target with the other two competitors. *The challenger did score fourteen.* The crowd are as one: *Huzzah!*

*And the champion did score eight.* A less enthusiastic *Huzzah* from the crowd.

*The challenger is the victor.* The crowd murmurs as some negotiations take place on the field. *A challenge to the Baron has been issued!* The Baron nods to the bonneted man: *Columb, fetch me my bow.* Columb Finn mac Diarmata hurries into a tent and emerges with a simple and unadorned bow, beautifully carved with a dark gleam to its grain.

The Baron shoots terribly, at one point scoring zero to the challenger's fourteen. He plays up his disgraceful performance with comments to the Baroness: *Your grace and glory are not reflected in my aim, my dear. I shall do better this time – I shall cheat.* After all, he is the Baron, and nobody can challenge his position until the six-monthly Baronial Tourney, and even then not many Society members would be willing to shake up the political landscape. Nobody wants to be the new Peter, so for now, the Baron is secure.

Jean Paul is under a marquee full of food and drink: *Lords and Ladies, Your Excellencies have partaken of the feasting table and now invite you to join them.* Everybody tucks in to the spread of Baker's Delight pullaparts, Lebanese bread, cheeses and condiments. For the sake of authenticity they probably should make them all at home, but everybody admits that they just don't have the time. As well as this, experimental medieval dishes aren't always culinary delights – everybody remembers Catalina's scorching hot chilli chocolate.

*Your Excellency, may I congratulate you on your new helmet?* Jean Paul is looking toward the Baron, who is wearing the foam from inside a bicycle helmet, covered with duct tape. Put on backwards. They both snigger. Over the food, conversation switches to television – Buffy, Angel, anime; fantasy books and film seem to be a shared interest. Most members generally seem to avoid talking about the Mundane World, and only give me sparse details of their jobs, family and social lives. One man, Andre de Montsegur, has been in Society on and off for nearly twenty years, longer than his current job as a detention centre guard. He says he drifted away from the Society about six years ago, but the riots and hunger strikes at Woomera and Baxter encouraged him back. The students from the College of St Basil's, the UWA wing of the Society, sit in their own group, although still remaining in character, under the security blanket of a Society identity.

*Lords and Ladies, rapier challengers to the field!* Jean Paul has returned to the field after making another costume change, this time into a rapier helmet and the green sash of a journeyman's rank in the Guild of Defence. The Guild of Defence is separate from the regular Society peerages: it's a rapier school based on a historical model and relies on correct technique rather than the amount of 'kills', as in the regular Society rankings (published in a ladder format on the website). Different colours of sash are worn around the waist to indicate the number of weapons mastered. The White Scarf Nathan has around his arm is a separate honour given for proven prowess on the battlefield, rather than for technique. Knowledge of these rankings sharpens the eye to the subtle hierarchies of Society – most accessories are symbolic of some sort of membership or status, if you know what to look for.

Knowing this information gives a feeling of being in on some elaborate secret, and this is what draws many members into the Society. I can feel myself being sucked in.

The cat-and-mouse of rapier fighting is fast and slick; it's edge-of-your-seat for spectators and sweaty work for the competitors. Donnchadh is the current champion, but everybody jokes that because of his heart surgery – he is now part bionic – he's not allowed onto the battlefield. In reality, the Society are very conscious of Mundane World law, and even I was required to sign a legal waiver concerning my safety, despite my not participating in any combat. Although serious injuries are rare, bruises and sprains are common and there have been cases of broken fingers and wrists. Several years ago Nathan had his rib snapped off his sternum, although consensus is that it was largely his fault for fighting without protective clothing. Injuries, however, are more common in the heavy combat, the no-holds-barred finale of all Society meets, where rattan axes, pollards and large protective shields are used to 'kill' opponents. Kills are measured by blows to the head and torso; anywhere else and the victim merely loses the use of that limb. Marshals are on-field at all times to ensure blows are honoured and armour is of Society standard.

Although Society's swords are made from high-carbon stainless steel, which holds its edge better and gives extra flexibility, most use regular fencing masks and similar weapons. Catalina checks the outfit of one of the newcomers, Edwin Wordsworthy, to ensure he has the mandatory protection: four layers of clothing on torso, box, gloves and mask, before gently pushing him onto the field. He is a skilled challenger, and soon wins the right to fight the Baroness, who is better at rapier than the Baron. Their swords chink under the brief afternoon sunlight, and the Baroness deflects his blows with a shield the size of a dinner plate; it has rolled edges to catch the sword's tip while she stabs at his chest with her other hand. Despite her skill and the advantage of her defensive tool, she loses; Wordsworthy is now front-runner to become rapier champion.

Donnchadh and Keridwen are standing on the sidelines in a quiet embrace. She has her eyes closed and he is watching the rapier, enraptured. Catalina comments to Catherine: *I spoke to Keridwen the day of his surgery and she didn't sound too good.* Catalina replies, *Yeah, I think she's finding it harder than Donnchadh, even. He's looking much better now, though; he's got some colour back in his cheeks.* His face is flushed from the excitement of the competition, but Keridwen remains latched to his front, eyes closed.

Catalina invites me back to the Championship Weekend scheduled for the Queen's Birthday long weekend, promising period garb, mead and games. I wouldn't admit it to anyone back in the Mundane World, but I'm excited at the prospect. The Society members seem so diverse and even Jean Paul's lifestyle is accepted; although I don't usually engage in cross-dressing and computer science, I appreciate the acceptance the Society offers and secretly I yearn for their respect – I want to be the Champion Archer, the best weaver, the fairest maiden. I toy with the idea of showing up in full garb of my own accord. But respect must be earned in the Society. Spending vast amounts on period regalia is no way to popularity without knowledge of weapons and techniques, the most accurate way to braid hair and produce high-quality mead. For the men, well-worn and weather-beaten armour is a sign of high rank and they regularly bond over drinking games like Tablero, which involves pillaging your

opponent's liquor supply. The women swap weaving and dress patterns and wrap each others' hair in different medieval styles. Keridwen tells me it is this, more than anything, that appeals to Society members: the choice of levels of involvement – it can be an occasional escapist fantasy or 'another part-time job'. Society members are not necessarily the most ordinary of characters in the Mundane World – there is a high percentage of self-confessed computer nerds and sci-fi geeks – but in Society, everybody knows the rules and starts from scratch.

Several weeks later, preparations are underway for Day One of the Championship tourney at Ern Halliday Holiday Park. I recognise the Society campsite by the colourful devices flapping in the morning sea breeze and the occasional spotting of a fellow wearing a man-dress. Catalina looks me up and down as I approach the barbecue area from the parking lot in my jeans and t-shirt. *We'll have to get you some garb so you don't stick out like a sore thumb.* She marches me off to her tent. Columb emerges from his tent, gripping a silver stein. *How are you feeling this morning, Columb?* Catalina asks. He smiles and rubs his eyes: *Not too bad, actually.* Catalina's eyebrows are raised. *Was that you last night? Purging?* He clears his throat. *Oh, yeah, that was me.* He doesn't look embarrassed, more defiant. He must have earned his stripes at Tablero.

The area is guarded by trees; peeking through them to the East is a panorama of development – tiled rooftops of housing estates as far as the eye can see. A car pulls into the cul-de-sac; as it turns around, a child's face appears wide-eyed in the rear windscreen. Perhaps the child thought it was seeing history, and the car had eased past the built-up suburbia of Hillarys and stumbled upon a hamlet preserved from progress. Occasionally a Coast Guard chopper will fly over or a car is heard speeding past, but these are the only fleeting threats to the Mundane World's impinging on the Society meeting.

Harpichord music pumps out of a CD player in the communal kitchen, almost lost on the breeze amidst the twittering birds and bustling activity. I recognise Liduina from her Pelican pendant and her involvement in three conversations at once. She has a stall selling various homemade pieces of medieval jewellery, bags and accessories. The Baron approaches her stall: *We need some positions filled. We've lost Kirstin today; she can't carry my water when she's got a ledge for it.* He mimes a pregnant belly. *So I need a new lady-in-waiting. Also, someone needs to put walls up in the Baronial chamber.* Liduina puts her Pelican skills to use by yelling towards the camping area: *Any volunteers for the Baronial chamber? Come on guys, it has to be done.* But she needn't worry – help isn't far away when it's for the Baron.

Columb places two glasses on the kitchen table with a brown jug. One is smaller than the other – Baroness Jane thought it was appropriate that she have a smaller one, in keeping with period. Columb pours Coke into the jug to be taken to the Baronial chamber while they hold court to welcome everyone to the Tourney and go over the day's schedule. He pours a glass for himself and empties a packet of Chicken Twisties into a bowl. Twisties: the preferred midnight feast for programmers, engineers (of which Columb is one) and gamers the world over.

*Lords and Ladies, Your Excellencies are preparing to hold court. Please make your way to the Baronial Chamber.* Columb enjoys his role as Constable. As well as

making sure everyone's signed in, he's responsible for the group's adherence to the laws of the Mundane World (fire exits, safety barriers). The smoother the events are run, the better the Baron appears, and Columb is more than happy to serve. The Baron is dressed in full regal garb – midnight-blue and gold-matching pantaloons and dinner jacket, and white pointed shoes that look like they've seen a few nights out on the town. Although I'm wearing borrowed garb and appear to be a Society member, I still don't have a name or history and so I always stand at the back, not entirely sure of the requirements of the ceremony. A hungover man in sunglasses and trackpants, Galin Wulfric, is slumped on a rock next to me. Because this is the Baronial Weekend, once the Baron opens Court, it stays this way for the entire three days, everybody under the constant watch of the Baron and Baroness. I find this rather daunting, but nobody else seems worried. The Baron declares a Village Soccer Match.

The Baron is getting ruddy-faced; he takes off his elaborately brocaded jacket and plays in pantaloons and pirate-style shirt – drawstring collar and big, drooping sleeves. He goes for a throw in, shouting *Go long! Header!* He throws it into the scrum and a curly-haired man who is visiting Aneala from Bacchus Wood in Brisbane, Richard, jumps towards it. *Oh god, I wasn't serious! You'll hurt yourself,* the Baron warns. I now realize that they're playing with a medicine ball. Richard laughs, but when the Baron turns back to the game, he casually rubs his neck. Just like any backyard soccer match, the men jostle each other and laugh sadistically while encouraging the kids. The barefooted archer from the previous weekend sits on the sideline; she takes a packet of Dunhill Blues from a pocket in her slate-coloured gown, offers one to the still-puffing retired soccer star next to her, and lights up.

There is a festive white feather in Donnchadh's hat today, and his blue Guild of Defence sash says to the world: I may not be fighting today, but I am the most skilled rapier knight here. A shiny pink scar shows beneath the v-neck of his shirt as he talks casually to a man in jester's pants about his check-ups – everything seems normal, a relief to Keridwen. Lady Rosalind de Clochard, dressed in one of her Elizabethan outfits (she's also into Tudor), has her inkle-weaving loom out and is making an orange and purple band to use as detail on a tunic. She explains that the shuttle on her loom, the piece used to tighten the weave, is slightly too wide because her husband made it, at the last minute, out of a piece of walnut from his ship-building off-cuts. Of course. The shipbuilding off-cuts. Inkle-weaving and tablet-weaving, involving square cards with holes in the corners through which the strands are threaded, are the two most common weaving techniques in the Society and are used to make belts and straps, headwear and decorations. Rosalind says she's looking at investing in digitising software so she can make her own designs.

Back at the soccer match, the Baron's shirt has come untucked and dark patches have formed under his draped sleeves. He calls time out, jogs to the sideline and drinks from a gilded, stoppered bottle. *Our team is going to have to hire a professional scorekeeper!* His opponents look downcast. Smells waft from the kitchen, promises of a feast scheduled for 1pm. By this time, Columb has strapped on his bonnet and entered the game. He soon stops a goal causing the game to descend to stacks on, the children screaming and Columb writhing beneath the pack. He rolls out from underneath and excuses himself from the game. The delicious feast smells are slightly clouded by the sound of presumably Galin throwing up in the cavernous men's

facilities. A minute later, Columb sheepishly emerges. He must have gone too hard on the field. I remember the Chicken Twisties.

The Baron scores a goal, sees me watching and winks, adjusting his pantaloons. Three women, including Catherine, play music on wooden recorders under a canvas canopy. Catherine can't get the first few notes right and the leader, considerably younger and seated down the other end of the bench, is critical of her performance. Catherine blinks heavily under the pressure. The lady in the middle is wearing a bonnet with a large brim at the front, the likes of which I haven't seen on anyone else here, but she is a newcomer to Society. She follows the music argument with the closeness of a tennis spectator, her sad face shrinking into her enormous hat with each barbed comment. She suggests changing the timing of the piece to match Catherine's playing; the younger girl smiles and mutters, *That's not the point*. An icy silence falls. The middle lady turns a page in the book and begins a new piece, looking straight ahead. Eventually, the others join in. I squash myself further into my corner.

Liduina the Pelican approaches the front of the marquee and says conspiratorially, *The Baron's chosen a new lady-in-waiting*. The recorders stop, the tent goes quiet. A voice from the back says *Who?* Liduina relishes the moment: *Eloise*. Mouths tighten, backs straighten. An inkle weaver says, *If I'd known he was choosing a new one, I would have brought one of my daughters, y'know?* Lunch is called and the tent is abandoned for the dining room.

Preparations are underway for the Championship archery tournament – Jean Paul is hammering posts into the beach volleyball court with casual ineptitude. The favourite for this year's archery champion, Lionel Blackhurst, approaches my bench. *My lady...* He watches Jean Paul and clears his throat, *would you do me the honour of being my consort in this afternoon's tourney?* Lionel is tall and slim with a straight-backed but pleasant nobility to him – quite a catch for an unsure maiden such as myself. He is a member of St Basil's. I accept and when the Baron opens the competition, I am presented to him by Lionel: *I will be competing for Lady Clare of Mount Lawley*. Although nobody says anything, I am somewhat embarrassed of my amateurish Society name. Being a consort, I find out, involves little more than standing on the sidelines holding my knight's cape. The afternoon sun is warm without a bonnet, but I don't want to be a disappointment. And a girl about my age from St Basil's is standing amongst the spectators, scowling at me whenever Lionel asks me to pass him something.

A game of Kubb continues into the evening's dying light, a cold wind whips off the ocean and the children are sent off to gather wood for the fire. Kubb is a medieval game involving throwing blocks of coloured wood around, much like an unrefined version of Boccé. The growing fire is eventually deserted for the candlelit warmth of indoors as the evening feast is laid out. The Baron comes and sits at what would be the head of the table, were it not for the cramped space of the demountable dining room. Lionel takes a seat, flirtatiously situated between the scowling girl's and mine. She brushes his arm and for a second I prickle with jealousy. Then I catch sight of my reflection in one of the sliding doors, dressed in medieval garb over my Mundane clothes. How did this happen?

Columb and his partner, Lady Wendy de Arc, are opposite me, next to the Baron and Baroness. Columb brings back two plates of food; one for him and the other for the Baron, who gives him a *Cheers* without turning away from his conversation with Jean Paul. There is a minestrone-type soup, a thick meaty stew with dumplings, cold meats and cheeses, wine, cider and mead (of course). Enough to fuel the Society through the long night of Tablero, singing and dancing that is still to come. The conversation turns to the future of Aneala, and Wendy casually talks, past Columb, to the Baron: *Has Columb told you he's thinking of going down to Dragon's Bay?* The Baron throws his head back and laughs, third cider still in hand. Columb's head jerks up; he looks at Wendy wide-eyed. The Baron has stopped laughing. *You're kidding, right?* The Baron searches the face of his right-hand man. Columb plays with the tassel on his shirt. *Uh, y'know, yeah, no... I was just thinking of maybe...* The Baron puts his bottle down. *Oh. Well. Okay.* Despite conversations around them, time between them has stopped; the Baron smiles pleasantly but his eyes betray his hurt. He excuses himself. Columb looks at Wendy. They don't say anything. She puts her hand on his knee.

After dinner, a Bardic Circle is scheduled; when I realize this is an excuse for drunken medieval poetry and singing, I prepare to leave. At Catalina's tent, she carefully hangs my garb back up over her ropebed. I make my way out through the campsite, past Nathan's quietly tended fire where Galin's lolling on a bench with a longneck of cider; past the Baronial chamber, site of my official presentation to the Society; on past Donnchadh and Keridwen, wrapped up against the cold in an embroidered blanket, dark as the night; past the deserted volleyball pitch, target still propped up like a drunken salute. *Until next time, Lady Clare of Mount Lawley!* The Baron waves through the kitchen window.

Returning to the Mundane World is difficult – I wait for ten minutes for someone to let me into the steady stream of traffic on Mitchell Freeway; there has been a crash and the flashing red and blue of all three emergency services illuminate the road. Cars speed past towards the illumination of the city, eager for drink-and drug-fuelled Saturday nights. I already miss the quiet chivalry of the Society knights, the earnest enthusiasm of the Ladies and the sense of belonging they bring to all their members, and briefly, to me. I might not be a member of Society, but perhaps part of me still lives in Aneala. Lady Clare of Mount Lawley has found a home.