

The Swan Song

June/July 2001

Edition 5

A Buckingham's Retinue Publication©

Sadly it has been a long time since the last issue of the newsletter, mainly due to the Editor having to do examinations. There is now also something to write about since we've got a few events under our belt. It is my fondest hope that now our erstwhile Pilgrim has returned from his travels (you know who you are Dave) he will agree to take over the editorship and give me some rest (*yeah, right: Dave*). This Issue begins with some fine event reviews of Chester, Deal and Battle Abbey. There is also a review of the Battle of Knibley Green taken from the newsletter archives, since this may form the basis for the scenario at Kirby Hall this year. A little delving into the black years also finds us a fine article on Military Intelligence in the 15th Century. Thanks to Simon Lane, Marcus Petz, Dave Hemsley, Mark Hinsley and Brian & Jayne for their contributions this time around.

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Chester – A Day Trip To The Zoo

Word came down from on high (well Simon Lane) that for those of us who had nothing better to do there was a little event on at Chester which we might like to join in. As with all old re-enactors the folly of camping out early on in the season is well known and so the problem was avoided by turning it into a day trip. After having spent the last six months training religiously, Messrs Howell, Howell, Harley and Lane were all ready to give something a twatting, even WWII German Armour, by this point.

The day turned out to be a scorcher, an atypical Easter Monday, and the arteries of the Chester road network were failing severely. Master Harley and myself chose the smarter route and arrived in good time as the advance guard. No sooner had we arrived than we were ushered into the command tent of our friends in the Oxfords, where we were invited to change into kit whilst watched by a seventeen-year-old girl through the gap in the hangings. Master Harley still smiles in remembrance of the experience.

Our compatriots were just arriving as we were invited to join in a simple drill session, to which we didn't have time to prepare and sauntered out eagerly. A mistake we should have picked up on, when we noticed every other person there happened to be well armed! After describing our weapons and drilling, a quick melee was suggested to which myself and Master Harley formed one side with our friend from the "Old Yorkshire Gentlemen". I began to worry about his ability when he turned to myself and told me how he had to take it easy as he was recovering from a heart attack the previous year. He was never seen again by either of us once the fight started! The elation of finally having something fresh to hit overran all caution – none of us had jacks, sallets or gloves on – as we had finally been unleashed ... Messrs Lane and Howell laughed mightily as our opponents fell by the wayside, only the Oxfords remained and we had a most enjoyable melee with them. It took all the efforts of our "knight" to call us back before we left the other side of the arena.

Having set the tone, we enjoyed a very civil cup of tea at the Bowling Green clubhouse, and then armed up for the main fight. Our opponents initially gave us no trouble till the men on our right flank collapsed and we started getting rolled up. A quick end was put to this when the fight had to be broken off. (Mainly because one of the 'Tinnies' in front of us charged in and my bill happened to be planted in his leg, at which his face went rather pale.) After this, aggression was compulsory at all times. A severe beating of everyone else occurred and we all enjoyed ourselves immensely. Many nice comments were put about afterwards concerning our battlefield prowess and it was particularly uplifting to meet people from other groups who were nice to us! A 'wang'-tastic day out.

Deal Castle – Tudor Murder Mystery

Act 1 of the 2001 re-enactment season began noisily as we entered from stage left onto the impressive set of Deal Castle AD1534. The plot, contrived by the fevered midnight drooling of Master Harley, began, unsurprisingly, with the discovery of a body on Deal's rocky shore. It was quickly ascertained that the individual was dead and had been murdered. It also became apparent that most members of the cast had ample motive to commit said naughtiness and the shroud of suspicion fell upon everyone. From hereon the plot, without the aid of flour, thickened, thinned, spiralled, and took several memorable leaps of faith, until it finally sped out of control and was last seen racing up the Northbound carriageway of the M4 in a hijacked Morris Marina.

We (Jock, Richard Hunt, Andy Howes and myself) arrived at Deal after an uneventful four-hour drive from God's part of the Midlands. With a whistlestop tour of the fortification complete, ambush points noted in case of any possible future encounter of a military nature, our fellowship retired to the town for refreshments, picking up Master Hadfield on the way. After a pint or two we regaled each other with stories of long forgotten battles that one can usually only remember with beer. Such skirmishes as Tewkesbury '92, Mortimer's Cross, Stoke Field and, of course, the infamous battle of Pitchcroft where we lost what was left of our innocence – I digress.

After unloading kit and making beds we joined the emerging musical ensemble of Masters Hadfield and Cuthbert in the kitchen. Five hours and a bottle of cheap whisky later, only a handful of stalwarts remained. Those brave few who forsook the challenge of sobriety that evening will remain anonymous (except master Cuthbert of course who led the celebration). Needless to say, the tables groaned under the weight of our best dancing clogs, and our voices filled every chamber of the fortification with song, lulling the rest of the retinue gently to sleep.

I awoke early next morning and joined Master Cuthbert in prayer at the Shrine of saint Ralph.

There are too many memorable moments to mention from the weekend, but I feel compelled to point out that I have never, even in military life, ever before shared a room in which every person snored loudly and constantly throughout the night, and may I congratulate those individuals (you know who you are) for that achievement. May I also take the opportunity to congratulate Master Harley for devising a plot that would have given Poirot reason to retire, and I look forward to many similar events in the future. A very successful and enjoyable event.

Best quote of the weekend from master Hunt: "Behold ... Death!!!"

Simon Lane

Battle Abbey - Report From The Southern Watch Tower

The 1485 Battle of Bosworth re-enactment held at Battle Abbey was excellent. Battle Abbey is now a girls school, to which I can attest having watched some of them playing tennis. The resident Norman and Saxon, who meandered about all weekend looking for the rest of the Fyrde, added to the historic atmosphere of the place. The American tourists, known for their clear grasp of history (U137, Patriot and undoubtedly Pearl Harbor) found it particularly confusing. The announcements about Queen Victoria at the May festivities, in the square, made it a little difficult trying to tell them that Bosworth is somewhere else and happened at a different time. The May festivities culminated outside

the 1066 (our preferred local hostelry). Here a mediæval fair entertained the crowd with a fool, fortune telling, and fine goods such as turned bowls and Quince jelly (very nice). The Border Morris side added to the pageantry of the May Queen procession. Though Master Hadfield felt he would have made a more beautiful May Queen. Will he be petitioning English Heritage for the right to wear women's clothing? Will we be applying for a restraining order after having already seen him in a corset at Dartmouth!

Another crowd enjoyed themselves inside, watching the excellent training methods of the heroes in the Stafford livery. Undoubtedly the battle prowess of the Duke of Buckingham's

Retinue ensured that over 4000 people paid for the privilege of seeing a side that took no blows on the Saturday, but still had to lose the battle. However, a small party of us left after the beginning (having played Norfolk's position) and turned coats (becoming the Stanley's who were the last to join at the original battle) on the Saturday. We passed under the hail of the archery storm, to arrive just after the cavalry charge had been stopped and King Richard downed by the Woodvilles.

Despite concerns from more fractious groups in the line with regard to fighting in a ditch, we took pointed delight in doing so (even big Cleggy) and on Sunday even battled up hillock! When Richard III was finally killed on the Saturday he was found to be wearing Calvin Kline's. After complaints over lack of authentic braes the stripping was more thoroughly carried out on Sunday and he was paraded slung over his horse without any covering of anachronism. One of our warband complained about being struck on the back by a sword, but how Master Potter so suffered this while not running from the enemy has still to be explained.

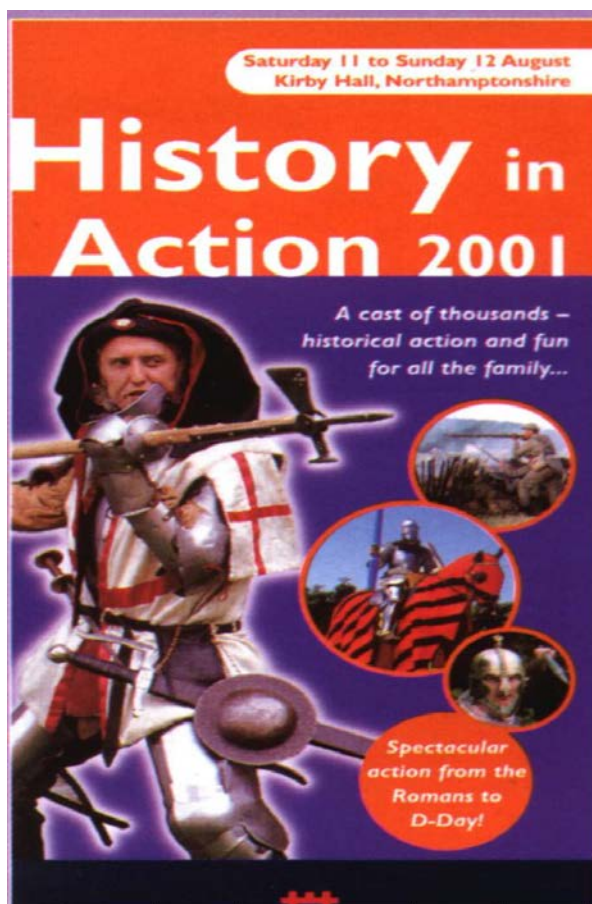
In the Lancastrian Camp there were a few people selling reenactment gear. Phil Frazier noted for his arms and armour did a brisk trade in sharps for eating with. Why the public were content to let their children play with these knives, but not the blunt swords, is a mystery still to be explained. Phil also sold a rather excellent short sword. It was just the right length and there is more than one member of the group who wished they had coughed up the £85 for this combat worthy weapon. See Jo for a feel! Although he had another on show it was just a little too long, though he is willing to do commissions if anyone is wanting.

Another old friend was Les from the Isle of Wight. He was spotted wearing Stafford Livery and spent a long time talking to a couple of us about the glorious past and disseminated a few training tips "taught to me by a man-at-arms". No doubt Hans Talhoffer himself. He had a collection of arrows and rusty armour which, like Cinderella's slipper, didn't fit anyone who tried it on.

The weekend did not pass without a few bumps in the night. Master Potter would like to appeal for a scarf following a recent outbreak

of vampirism. Perhaps Tee can help?

Does this man have no shame?



(Picture thanks to Brian & Jayne Ashton)

Master Harley wishes it to be known he will no longer be giving autographs or doing stills photography, after he was picked to appear on the front of this year's Kirby Hall Leaflet. Our own dear cannon Gwynifer has also appeared in the spot light as the star of Meridian TV's nightly news report.

Lastly, Sapper was very grateful for the return of the Banner, which two noble "Staffords" (you know who you are) gave back. Apparently it was left unguarded and found its way to the BR camp. Banners should be looked after carefully and kept with the owning group to avoid any trouble.

Marcus Petz

Orgreave - A Pit Too Far

(or "For goodness sake don't let Cleggy have a longbow")

It was a warm, sunny day in 1984. The miners gathered outside the coking plant to protest against pit closures were stripped down to their T-shirts, while the waiting lines of police sweated like ... in their uniforms.

Of course, in re-enactment things don't always go to plan. Sixteen years later the moisture dripping down the policemen's legs had just come down from the skies, not out of glands, and the miners who were foolish enough to strip down to T-shirts were candidates for hypothermia.

But did the members of Buckingham's Arrestinue (otherwise known as the Bucks Beaver, sorry, *Snatch*, Squad) mind, as they charged onto the field ready to bring down and beat mercilessly any denim-clad degenerate? What about the three sartorially-challenged, "Coal not Dole" badge wearing aforementioned degenerates? What do you think? There was a battle to be had! Duh!

Following instructions, we duly arrived at sunrise (plus a bit) in the rain to start our weekend of paid queuing and waiting. Most of us were to be policemen (Chris, Phil, Simon, Darren, Marcus, Allan, Tony, yours truly) leaving only Paul, Cleggy and Richard to learn the difficult mining chants (who can forget such classics as "Maggie Maggie Maggie, out out out", or the prescient "the miners united can never be defeated"??).

The police contingent quickly learned that no-one wanted us in their group (possibly the other coppers had refused to fight with us), but, no worries mate, our old pal Howard Giles put us in our own group (PSU 22, "Arrest and

Reception", take a bow). Probably he had ideas of keeping us away from causing possible affray or committing an offence, but very soon our fearless (self-?) appointed Sergeant (now be honest Chris...) was leading us into battle behind a shield wall (apart from Tony "Greyhound" Roe who was way way out in front of the shields). By this time, you see, we had "developed" our role to the extent that we had to plunder someone else's line to provide a reception and holding group for the people we brought back.

Out in the field, group captain Hadfield was getting worried about holding back his "block" of real miners (he also was loosely responsible for Cleggy, the only stone throwing miner to hit another miner, not to mention a camerawoman and the assistant producer in the back of the head) from getting the "Vietnam flashback effect". I think he succeeded, since I didn't hear of any real arrests.

I'm not going to tell you about the fight itself, since all you have to do is buy one of us a drink and we'll recount the whole thing from our point of view. Talking about point of view, everytime I turned round Allan was giving another interview. How does he do it??

Well, we enjoyed the weekend (apart from the waiting, did I mention the waiting?) and the girl in the second food wagon to the right was a treat to enliven our mealtimes (which, by the way, were superb). Best of all, we got paid for doing what we love most, namely handing out a good beating to anyone in our way. If we get on TV all the better.

Dave Hemsley

Publicity Re: Orgreave

Wherever we go and whatever we do no one quite understands, until they have seen us and joined in. For some this scares the hell out of some of them and they think we're nuts. For others they wonder what they've been doing wasting their lives and can't get enough of it. However, in order to keep re-enactment from becoming a banned hobby we always need to watch how we are publicised in the media or we run the risk of becoming noticed.

The press were full of reports about the re-enactment at Orgreave, and upon page three of the Guardian there was a lovely photo of a

miner being charged down by the mounted police with the short shield units coming up behind. I was happily reading through the article when I came across a quote from an actual former miner who said, "We'd have done better on the day if we'd had these lads on our side". He then went on to say, "I was with a medieval lot and they usually fight in armour, they tell me. Even without their swords and whatnot, they definitely know how to get stuck into a scrap."

I can't think who on earth he's been talking to...

Medieval Intelligence

Throughout the history of warfare commanders have made plans for defeat of their enemies. These plans have at their foundation a knowledge of opponents' strengths and weaknesses. At a strategic level a commander needs to know things such as enemy alliances, finances and political objectives. At a tactical level a commander needs to know about position, terrain, enemy composition and equipment. All this information, once it is processed, is called "intelligence". Great military thinkers such as Sun Tzu, Marlborough and Hitchin have detailed the necessity of intelligence in peace and war.

At a strategic level the medieval commander had many reliable "sources" at his disposal. The Anglo-Saxon chronicle records that blood was seen bubbling from the earth in Berkshire, which apparently foretold the death of William Rufus in 1100. Also, in 1193 the sky went so red that it seemed to be on fire, obviously indicating the imprisonment of Richard the Lionheart on his journey home from the Third Crusade. The prime "source" used by the English was that of spies or agents. Richard III had a comprehensive spy network, encompassing the camps of his friends and enemies. He had advance warning of Buckingham's betrayal, but concealed this knowledge until he had completed preparations to defeat him. Betrayal of associates was a recognised way back into royal favour. One of the conditions of Richard's pardon for Robert Clifford was that Clifford would keep him informed of conspiracies.

During a siege, agents within the walls who would busy them themselves poisoning wells and opening gates were the effective weapons of siegecraft.

On a tactical battlefield level, a commander's "sources" were limited. A request for information from a higher formation would be in the form of prayers. There were no accurate maps, so knowledge of the surrounding countryside and of the enemy's movements was supplied by scouts, local informers and deserters. It was not unusual for armies to fail to locate each other

and this was one of the main reasons why commanders sometimes sent out heralds to find the enemy and offer battle at a particular place on a set date.

The Turks favoured the use of POWs. The skin would be flayed from their still live half-severed heads until they talked. Unfortunately, the English hadn't developed the art of keeping prisoners alive and missed out this valuable asset.

When a force camped down, sentries would be placed to detect any attempt to attack at night. In 1314, Sir James Douglas' men donned cowhides and approached Roxburgh Castle on all fours, deceiving the watch until they were close enough to throw up their grapnelled scaling ladders. Obviously, sentries should be of the highest calibre as it takes great skill to detect a number of armoured men, crawling along the floor carrying a leather sheet, several weapons and a scaling ladder.

It was, and still is, essential to locate the enemy's vulnerabilities and weak points (although WWI commanders spent most of their time attacking strongpoints). John Talbot, one of England's greatest generals, mastered the use of lightly-armed, fast-moving mounted archers who would move at great speed day or night, locate, engage and defeat numerically superior forces, by attacking an enemy that was still in the line of march and unprepared to defend itself. Talbot's plans revolved around the use of scouts and spies to keep him well informed of enemy movements. Before the main battle, Talbot would send "60 archers and 60 Burgundians" who on sighting the enemy would leave their horses "half a mile to the rear" (a safe leg-it distance) and engage the enemy while the battle manoeuvred at speed to their rear.

The early detection of an enemy would necessitate the use of these mounted scouts or "scurriers" who would act as long-range recce, searching for and then monitoring enemy movements. Scurriers would also be used to ride ahead of the vanguard to recce the terrain for roads, bridging or fording points and to act as early warning of ambushes.

Simon Lane (1995)

The Battle Of Nibley Green

On the morning of the 21st March 1469 the armed retainers of William, Lord Berkley and Thomas Talbot, Viscount Lisle met at the village of Nibley Green, Gloucestershire, a bloody confrontation in a family feud that began in 1417 and was not resolved until 1609.

The feud began with the death of Thomas, Lord Berkley in 1417. His only daughter and heir Elizabeth, the wife of Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, laid claim to all of the Berkeley inheritance. She was opposed in this by James Berkeley, Thomas' nephew. James' claim was upheld by a jury and, as his uncle's male heir, was granted the castle of Berkeley and the manors, which made up the barony.

Elizabeth died in 1422, yet the Earl of Warwick continued the feud until his death in Rouen in 1439. It was then continued by one of his daughters, Margaret, Lady Shrewsbury the wife of John Talbot, hero of the French wars.

In 1440 Lord Talbot had a subpoena served on Lord Berkeley, then residing at the manor of Wotton. The unfortunate messenger, one David Woodburne, was beaten and forced to eat the summons – parchment and wax – Lord Berkeley clearly showing his disregard for the law and Talbot. The following eight years were interspersed with violence and intimidation on the parts of both Lords and their retainers; they were frequently bound over to keep the peace.

Wotton Manor had obviously passed into Talbot's hands during this period for Lady Shrewsbury was present there in 1451 when Lord Berkeley attacked and pillaged the house. In retaliation, her son, Viscount Lisle, with the help of one Richard Tewe, keeper of the keys of Berkeley Castle, entered and seized it. Lord Berkeley and his four sons were captured and imprisoned for eleven weeks until they agreed to release all the manors in dispute and any other claims at issue between them.

The Hundred Years War in France was coming to disastrous end not only for England, but for both branches of the family. Talbot, his son Viscount Lisle and Lord Berkeley's second son James were all killed at Castillon on the 17th July 1453. With their deaths the

quarrel subsided for a number of years with Margaret and Lord Berkeley agreeing on the 22nd October 1463 to cease all lawsuits and live in peace for the rest of their lives. The peace was not to last – James Berkeley died in November. His son and heir, William, swiftly revived the feud by attacking the manor at Wotton.

Lady Shrewsbury died in 1467 leaving all the disputed manors and claims to her grandson, Thomas Talbot, Lord Lisle, who was then 19 or 20 years of age. He soon settled into life at Wotton with his wife, a daughter of Herbert, Earl of Pembroke.

In early 1469, Lisle was to plot with one Thomas Holt, keeper of Berkeley Castle and Maurice King, the porter, to give the castle up to himself and his retainers. At the last moment King had a change of heart and betrayed the plot to Lord Berkeley. Holt quickly fled to Wotton and the safety of Viscount Lisle.

Lisle was so enraged by the failure of the plot that he challenged Lord Berkeley in a letter written and delivered on 19th March 1469. Berkeley replied the same day resolving to settle the issue by combat the following day at Nibley Green, a point midway between their two manors.

The following morning, Lisle and his men began to descend from the hill at Nibley Church on seeing Lord Berkeley and his host issue from the confines of Michael Wood. The armies met in the field known as "fowleshard". Berkeley took the initiative with his archers, sending a deadly storm of arrows into his opponent's ranks. The exact course of the battle is not known, but was reported to have been short and bloody. Viscount Lisle was shot by an arrow in the left side of his face (his visor being up) by one "Black Will", a forester of Dean, and was finally killed by a blow from a dagger. With his death Lisle's men began to flee up the steep lane that led from the green towards the church. Berkeley's men harried the fugitives all the way to Wotton, which they sacked and pillaged.

The feud continued until 1609 when it was finally resolved by law and not arms.

Mark Hinsley (1995)

News

Rachel's party

Those of you who know Rachel Reeves well should be aware of this, but in case you aren't she has issued a general invite to people in the group for her 18th birthday party. This will be taking part the weekend after Tutbury at her new home in Tuxford near Mansfield. For more detailed directions be sure to contact the lady herself. There will be many people outside re-enactment going, including her family, so if you are interested please call her first to let her know you're coming.

List of events

Just in case some of you are still confused over what events we are doing I have included a brief list of the remaining events for the year. The only one that is not confirmed is Barley Hall, which should be done shortly. Thankfully it appears we are going to be unaffected by Foot and Mouth for the rest of the season, meaning we have got away relatively well, all things considered.

At the moment we are currently trying to book venues for next year's events. As it stands only Tewkesbury and Blore Heath are permanent fixtures. So if you want an event near you and know of

30 th - 1 st July	Tutbury	Siege
14 th - 15 th July	Tewkesbury	Battle
4 th - 5 th Aug	Old Sarum	Siege
11 th - 12 th Aug	Kirby Hall	Multi-period
18 th - 19 th Aug	Castle Rising	Siege
25 th - 27 th Aug	Warwick Castle	Festival
15 th - 16 th Sept	Barley Hall	Living History
22 nd - 23 rd Sept	Blore Heath	Battle
20 th - 21 st Oct	Dover	Firepower

somewhere suitable please contact me (Phil Howell) with the site details. We are interested in all possible venues, both for small and large-scale events, medieval or Tudor, etc.

Medieval tentage

As mentioned in the last issue there may be a certain lady who can supply us with good quality, low cost Tentage, the problem we have at the moment is finding out how capable she is. Once we know she is ok then I'll begin talking to people about buying new tents,

though whatever the situation don't bank on seeing one till next year now. Tents are notoriously difficult to get hold of and normally it's a good idea to order a season in advance to insure arrival. For those who want to find out a little more about tents please visit these sites that Simon Lane has recommended (sorry those of you who don't have internet access).

Please note the designs of the tents, and also the abundant use of colour in all the illustrations, including those of English tents. In fact the only place where entirely white tents exist is in the black and white illustrations. It seems quite clear from pictorial evidence that coloured, or at least part coloured tents, were common in England for our period. For us this means that we perhaps need to think about the appearance of our Tentage and how what kind of camp we should be working towards.

Excellent site, have a look around the rest of it too:

<http://baphomet.uchicago.edu/pavilion/illustrations.html>

Some existing tents & pictures:
<http://www.adelphi.edu/~sbloch/sca/tents/pictures/de.machinis.html>

<http://www.greyclay.org/pavilions/basel.html>

Tewkesbury

For those people who are bloodthirsty and are keen to exercise their martial skills we will of course be attending Tewkesbury *en masse* this year. As such we'll be taking a van for group equipment, Tentage and also cooking this time round. So can anyone who is free and wants to join in please make every effort to attend! This is an excellent opportunity for us to show the rest of 15th century re-enactment

what a great group we are and also to imprint upon them a few of our bill shapes! Tewkesbury is on the 14th and 15th of July and there will be a large trader market there this year, making it the perfect time to buy that much lusted for piece of new kit. There will also be the customary trip to the tearoom in the morning to allow everyone to have a nice sedate drink and to also allow myself to gorge on clotted cream as per last year. Then in the evening we'll be doing a spot of drinking and plenty of dancing in the beer tent, which was excellent last time around. What more could one ask for from an event! Though with regard to the actual battle can I just remind anyone who intends to go on the field that helmets are now compulsory for everyone and the group will have to give priority to those people who intend to fight.

Construction Projects

For those with a lust for anything that requires electricity or has a motor a few marginally wet weekends were spent at Sam and Andy's house making new equipment for the group. Much repair work was done on the cannon and also the tables. The cannon has now been christened Gywnifer, mainly thanks to the large engraving down the side of the carriage. A number of stakes were also made, which we have yet to use properly, for archery drill. Two rather handy archers' mauls were also made to complement the stakes, whilst Paul Hadfield also made a beautifully painted pavise. Sam Kracke has also sewn together and painted two superb banners, which were seen blowing in the breeze at Wrest Park. In order to cater for the ever-increasing ranks of vegetarians and also those gluttons such as myself, some new cooking equipment was also purchased. We are still working on getting some new benches, boxes and an awning for the fireplace, which should be completed during the season. If anyone has any ideas for next year on what we should be making then please let the committee know, if you're lucky you just might get it. Though can Master Harley please stop asking for that set of Milanese armour! Sorry, it just wouldn't suit you.



Wanted:

Richard III by Paul Murray Kendal (out of print)

Quotes of the Month:

"Please go easy with those truncheons"

*Mike Figgis, Hollywood Director,
possibly after watching Buckingham's
Snatch Squad make a "robust" arrest.*

"Come on then, hit me! What are you scared of?"

Master Lane at Wrest Park

Buckingham Pin-Up Of The Month

Whilst those of who were bearing up and doing events down on the south coast, some of our northern clan were bearing all for the purposes of entertainment. Perhaps you might wish to ask Mistress Atkinson exactly what she was doing behind that screen?

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Could anyone with any contributions please send them to the address above, the next issue will hopefully be ready sometime around August.