

Swan



Song

The Stafford newsletter

Issue 6, September 2001

Wrecking Crew fight local crime!

By our Norfolk correspondent

In the past few months the Wrecking Crew have distinguished themselves with bow, sword, buckler, and, on occasions, frying pan and ladle. It was at Castle Rising in the uncouth shire of Norfolk, during one of their regular organized weekends of fighting, mayhem, and heavy



The Arresting Crew make a typically 'robust' arrest (PHOTO: DAVE HEMSLEY)

drinking, that a camp invasion was narrowly averted. As the camp was loudly roused from sleep at 2am the cream of Cromer's youth was last seen crapping itself at high speed through the village.

Apparently, during the course of being asked to leave by one Master Lane, a former hired assassin to a shady character known only as 'HM', one young 'man' had wisely decided to try and pick a fight with him, not knowing that slumbering behind thin canvas walls were, our sources estimate, approximately seventy heavily-armed men and women with access to the kitchen implements.

It was suggested to us that the miscreants had heard of the exploits of the well-loved Arresting Crew (pictured here), and had decided to try their luck. A full report will follow next issue.



Whats in this issue?

In Duke Harry's exclusive diary this month we bring you reports on what the Wrecking Crew have been up to at Tutbury (page 2); Old Sarum (page 3); and Tewkesbury (pages 4 & 5).

Amanda Greaves writes on mediæval clothing colours (What those red hose say about you) on page 6; and Marcus Petz reviews the *Atlas of Medieval Europe* on page 7.

If that was all too sensible for you, why not try the Buckingham's Retinue Questionnaire on page 8, to see if you are worthy of your Red & Black.

There was no space for reports on Kirby, Castle Rising, and Warwick so they are held over until next time (and until someone writes them!).

Pin-ups of the month

The Buckingham Arresting Crew. Fine lads one and all, I just wouldn't want them near my Secret Policeman's Ball, that's all.

(PHOTO: DAVE HEMSLEY)

Duke Harry's diary

Who have we been beating up this month?

Tutbury Castle

30th June-1st July

or

“Use mud next time girls”

“She’s weird, she dresses in strange clothes”

Simon Lane's views on the custodian at Tutbury, himself wearing a pair of hose (with codpiece), doublet, and a sword at his belt

“It was very disappointing to camp on a burial ground and not be allowed to excavate it”

Tee Gilmore

Delving back into the mists of time (circa Hitchin, 1994) we had a little-used and greatly-loved (it says here) scenario... yes, the fabled “Recruiting for the French wars” was back, bigger, better, and with more women slapping each other than ever before.

The weekend was enlivened by the sun, which came to see us and left its pink mark of love upon nearly each and every one of us, the wind, and the rain. We were visited by no less an august personage than Adrian Durkin, released from Dudley Zoo specially for the weekend, who impressed the public with his knowledge of all things medieval (just wind him up, point in the direction of public and release! for instant entertainment), and impressed us with his command of medieval jokes and bad puns (is that really what I mean?). Of course, most of you mere children don't even remember him... Good to see him again, though, and I hope he can find time to come back soon.

Sunday's staged brawl and fight between Andy, Catherine, Jock, Richard, Rachel, Sam, and Simon (anyone else involved? I forget) was a complete joy to watch – can I repeat the appeal for more mud next time, or possibly custard – and even had the custodian thinking it was for real. More next time, dear thespians. And what will the rest of us come up with?

Dave Hemsley

Friday night got off to the typical start with the tents being set up and once the majority of the group had arrived, the atmosphere of the local pub was duly tested, along with the quality of workmanship of the benches outside that particular local hostelry. I know at least one person was disappointed in the lack of real ale served, however the pub still did well out of our patronage.

The next morning got off to a later start than normal, with us going authentic at 11am as opposed to

the normal 10am. The displays on both Saturday and Sunday were very similar, the only change being the staged fight between the Stanleys involving a different scenario.

The first minor display of the day involved archery practice with the butt and netting actually being set up against the motte. The standard of accuracy of the archers is slowly improving and Alison showed promise in joining the Women's Archery Rank as Tony taught her how to use the longbow.

After the traditional practice at the butt, a small drill display was put on. This involved Captain Howell arriving with a number of troops to join with the troops already present in Tutbury Castle, commanded by Master Allan. After this, various archery and handgun talks were put on for the information of the paying public, with Master Adrian doing the group proud.

Other displays during the day involved the traditional dancing, with Mistress Kracke leading the talks, and the dancers and the musicians reaching a draw, despite chants of “one, some, lots, many” to confuse the musicians. The Stanleys, with the addition of some of the women did another roleplay session involving the typical staged punch-up, which set the stage for a practice skirmish between the two troops of the Duke of Buckingham.

It has been noticed that the number of dogs within the group is slowly increasing - soon we should have enough for an armoured dog troop. It was nice of them to take Bracken away from the camp to play.

I was going to make some comment about the archaeology of the Castle, but for a variety of reasons such as (a) amongst all my books, I am unable to find a plan of the Castle, and (b) I forgot to actually explore the Castle so I can't make any informed comment. The only comment that I will make is that it was very disappointing to camp on a burial ground and not be allowed to excavate it.

Tee Gilmore

Old Sarum

3rd-5th August

In accordance with normal English Heretic logic, it was decided that L&M would lay ‘siege’ to a castle that had in actual fact been abandoned for approximately two hundred years come the Wars of the Roses.

The scenario for this event was very similar to that done at Kenilworth last year. The first display wasn’t until 1pm, when the Yorkist and Lancastrian troops faced each other for a couple of rounds of the ‘buckler game’. It had previously been decided that the Yorkist garrison, commanded by the infamous Willow, would cheat. This led to a nominal siege in which Captain Howell, commander of the Lancastrian troops refused to let the Yorkists leave the inner bailey until the ‘cheating’ captain had been handed over.

This siege formed the basis of the second and third displays of the day. However, as everyone knows, all good plans are doomed to failure, especially by intervention by the typical English weather. Rain prevented our men-folk from play but failed to prevent the Australians from winning the cricket (again). Master Hemsley was heartedly disappointed in the fact that Australia scored over 40 runs in the time it took his first major war wound to be stitched in Salisbury A&E. I’ll save him boasting again by mentioning that the bill thrust that he stopped with his chin required two deep and six normal stitched and has consequently left a rather nice scar (now fading, unfortunately, editor).

Sunday proceeded in very much a similar fashion, with the scripted displays as mentioned earlier, with the added finale of the Yorkists escaping the castle and being butchered (yet again) by those charming people in red & black. The final skirmish saw the entry of the Stafford Archery Rank, seven times larger than the Gloucester Archery Rank, including the first battlefield experience of ‘12 year old Ernie’. Suffice to say that the Yorkists were well and truly creamed by the Lancastrians. I hope the Gloucesters are getting used to being beaten by those valiant billmen in red & black, as it’s becoming a regular occurrence.



Enough about the daytime activities and on to the night time ones.

Friday evening took a while to get going due to the majority of the group arriving from the Midlands. A lot of spirits were lifted after the long drive by the welcome sight of a yellow pavilion...the Drunken Monk had returned. Somehow, due to reasons unknown, Mistress Wetton ended upon a quilt with five Clarendons. It’s good to see she hasn’t lost her touch.

Saturday night involved the celebration of several birthdays – Master Brown, Master Hemsley, Mistress Gilmore, and Master Clegg. This celebration involved the eating of plenty of cake and drinking of real ale and singing of songs under the cook shelter. A certain verse of ‘Come landlord (Phil?)’ was dedicated to young Master xxxxxx after he and a certain young lady had disappeared for an explore of the cathedral ruins. There were no reported vampire attacks on Saturday night despite rumours to the contrary. A gold medal should go to young Mistress Service for her valiant efforts to keep Binky out of the Red & Black camp and for her assistance in helping Mistress Wetton retrieve her sleeping bag from the Clarence camp the following morning.

All in all, Old Sarum was a fun event.

Tee Gilmore

This week’s competition:

What is Allan doing behind the table?

Answers on the back of a campaign tent to the editor.

(PHOTO: KATHRYN RIBBINS)

Look out Buffy! Sunday at Old Sarum saw the entry of our very own ‘Wasp Slayer’: none other than Mistress Mathers. Mistress Kracke took on the role of ‘watcher’ and let others do the tricky slaying. Mistress Ribbins joined in the fun as well and became the ‘Rogue Slayer’ (although I didn’t notice ‘Buffy’ Mathers dying to cause her activation, *Duke Harry*)

So, in the future, if we are plagued by as many wasps as we were at Old Sarum we have nothing to fear - our Slayerettes will come to the rescue.



Rare opportunity to observe the quaint Clarence / Gloucester tradition of burying their dead, found within the castle walls at Old Sarum on Sunday morning. Note the offering to the spirits of ale in the jar and the pretty pattern on the death shroud, thought to represent the bindings from which the soul is released after death.

(PHOTO: DAVE HEMSLEY)

“Aaahh ouch!”

Man wearing Blue and White who became quickly and unexpectedly acquainted with Simon Lane's arm amour after attempting to charge into us

“I have to do one handed lunges, he keeps hitting my hands!”

Wang-head with a bardiche

“I fell down a hole and couldn't get out”

Dave Hemsley explaining why he disappeared at the start of the battle and then reappeared again at the end looking rested

“I'm alright, I'm just a bit sweaty”

Man with blood pumping out of his neck, just before Emma escorted him to St Johns Ambulance

“Oh F*!!!”**

Man about to receive a Bucks' column attack as reported by front rank

“I enjoy you all”

Maria Fanfani - I'm sure that's a name from a “Carry On” film?

“It's clearing from the West”

anon

“There's too many spears”

A wang-head

“They've captured C3PO”

Captain Howell, referring to man in brass armour

Tewkesbury

from a Greek point of view

The need to conserve the history and the glorious past of Britain was I suppose the spur to the creation of Buckingham Retinue long ago and of all the other medieval groups. I hadn't been to a re-enactment before in my life and when Marcus Petz suggested that I come to this one and explained me the reasons why, I was more than thrilled to start packing up.

Tewkesbury has turned into a festival as I've seen with a lot of trader stuff from all medieval ages. I was very proud to buy my first medieval mug to drink my Greek coffee in the morning (sorry, I couldn't avoid that guys!) and carry it in the battlefield to quench the Retinue's thirst. Some people from the group were buying their second or third pair of shoes, some were buying leather for their kit, additional equipment such as swords and arrows or even sheeps fur. I have regretted the fact that we didn't buy a fur in the first place and I had to experience the chill at nights after the fire was blowing out.

What a pity I had only one sleeping bag and no

loose. Well, I saw lots of loose girls filming the battle on the second day. They must had been technologically educated and equipped in their era (hehe!). What's wrong with loose then? What a nice feeling to get to listen to songs around the fire, about Matilda (fortunately, not the cartoon character) and lumberjacks that I had never heard before in my life, except for the song ‘I will survive’ that was sung in a remix! And the stars were shining so we could clearly distinguish between the Big and Small Arctus and see Venus, the brightest star.



Another exciting day in the kitchen (PHOTO: MARIA FANFANI)



Good to see Bob back in action (PHOTO: TONY ROE)

duvets as I thought that it's summer time and it's not gonna get cold. But, unfortunately I was saying that while at home with all the comforts around and apparently with the heating turned on (it's always turned on in my place). The kits are wonderfully made as besides just seeing them worn, I had the chance to wear one with the invaluable advantage of ... you know what I mean!

I was told not to let my hair down not to be called

The whole thing reminded me of my childhood when I used to be a Scout, (and not a Guide, because all kids in Greece, no matter their sex, can join the Scout groups) setting up good camps in deserted beaches and having to wake up from 7 o' clock to chop onions and potatoes for the lunch to end up singing songs around the fire before going to sleep at nights. Well, the Buckingham Retinue's friendly ‘scouts’ are grown-ups, they eat a lot of sausages and bacon in the mornings, they have this ‘double-meaning’ humour sense that I have to say from what I understood was very neat and they play the bongos to pray to their pagan gods not to rain again!

Master Clegg said to me that when the unforgettable weekend is over the first thing he was expecting me to do was to phone back home and say “You will never believe these English people...”. Well, I have to say I did it, only you have to arrange for some more people next time as my friends got really excited about re-enacting.

Maria Fanfani

Tewkesbury

14th-15th July

“No, they’re not the droids they’re looking for”

Simon Lane



Buckingham's wrecking crew resting between wang-heads
(PHOTO: TONY ROE)

“Uneventful event for me, can't think of anything really exciting that happened. PeasCod were average in Beer Tent, though do recall Rachel, Fiona Kay, Vicky Howell and Claire Holliday pole dancing in the beer tent”

Darren Brown

“So is it true about Greek men preferring Greek men?”

Phil Howell



“The red and black arrows and now the helicopter gunships”

anon

“Well yes in ancient times...”

Maria Fanfani

Blue and white arrows... the jovial men of the Boroughs, our allies in several scraps this year. Pictured here before going off to ‘find’ their dinner in the Tewkesbury Chicken Farm
(PHOTO: MARIA FANFANI)

“ Mmmmm I know that island, not that I've been myself, but I've got friends who have”

Phil Howell

“I nibbled the end, then I pushed the rest in my icecream”

Sam Kracke, as heard by Emma Atkinson



“Straighten that line - do we want to look like a rabble?”

Simon Lane

“Get your finger out of the hole, I can't push it in”

Wendy Mills allegedly talking about a stopper

At least the line is straight: the muster at Tewkesbury
(PHOTO: MARIA FANFANI)

Duke Harry thanks Maria Fanfani for her article and pictures, other contributions from Simon Lane, Tony Roe, Marcus Petz, Darren Brown, and Emma Atkinson. I'll be back next year at Tewkesbury, good people, to kick some more mediæval butt; Keep up the good work.

What those red hose say about you

Medieval ideas and perceptions of colour

Next time you are proudly striding around resplendent in new kit, take some time to think what messages you are sending out.

A M A N D A GREAVES takes a look at the colours that were available to the 15th century person, suggests what they meant about your status, and offers some hints as to how you would go about creating them.



For those of you reading in black and ϵ white, the crossbowman on the left, and the one reloading have red hose. It's all a bit pointless now, isn't it?

Okay, we all know that to the modern eye, a man in pink is gay and a habitual black-wearer is either a misery-guts or a goth. But what - if anything - did the colours you wore mean in the 15th century? Try to lose modern perceptions of colour when you are choosing medieval clothes, and bear in mind that there were different ideas about which colours go well together, and what was an everyday colour to wear in the street.

But beware - paintings are not always a good source, as pigments used for painting were used for effect, and were entirely different in nature and cost from cloth dyes. Hence, a common farmer in a painting may be wearing a gorgeous red and green outfit simply because it makes the painting a bit more colourful. And in the period when many men were engaged in a contract of livery and maintenance, you had to make sure you didn't allude to the wrong heraldic or livery colours. Imagine wearing blue and murrey in a Staffords-only bar.

Heraldic colour combinations may also have carried over into civilian wear. Any heraldry student will know you don't place a metal on a metal, or a colour on a colour - but who in their right mind would wear yellow (gold) and white (silver) together anyway! Remember that men liked to 'peacock' themselves as much as possible, and were not afraid to wear bright colours.

A tip for any would-be dyers - most natural dyes don't last very long, and are sealed in with delightful substances such as human urine.

Get collecting those pisspots...

Black

We've all seen those fabulously posh portraits of English and European royalty in very smart black clothing, trimmed with black fur, embellished with gold jewellery and embroidery, and often wearing a rich red to complement the look. In fact, black clothing was supposed to symbolise humility, and for this reason was associated with the church. Black as a colour was also associated with darkness and death. A mix of the three basic dyes: madder, weld, and woad, with alum, could create a black. Acorns allegedly used as black dye, as were 'galnuts' or oak apples, also used to make ink.

Grey

Possibly a commoner version of black, using

exhaust dyes. Associated with monastic life and the clergy.

Red

A strong colour, frequently illustrated as a preferred colour of the richer sorts. According to some sources, red was seen as the colour of charity. Pinkish-red was also fairly common as a dye, being made from madder root mixed with chemical ingredients, such as alum, although the richest and darkest reds would take extra dyeing. Brazilwood was used widely in the manufacture of red fabric. Some sources state that boiled crabshells and urine made a red dye. A deep brownish-red resin called dragonsblood was imported from India to make a red dye, but would have been expensive.

Pink

Quite easy to make from madder root and/or brazilwood, and would have been produced relatively cheaply. A good candidate for 'poorer' colours, but still flashy enough to be worn by the better sort of person. Pink was even used on a few liveries. Ladies' dresses are frequently illustrated in pink, which raises the question as to whether it was a 'girly' colour even in the middle ages. However, men are often shown wearing pink hose in medieval paintings.

Green

Green was popular for house interiors, and embodied youthfulness, (as in the colour of the Spring and Summer landscape), health-giving qualities and (ahem) fertility. 'Giving a girl a green gown' means doing things that would, er, get grass stains all over her dress. Green may also have had an earthy, rustic association (as in the Robin Hood folk-tales and Chaucer's Yeoman). Oddly enough, green was also regarded until quite recently (even by the Irish) as an 'unlucky' colour, symbolising the decay after death, and even the supernatural. Green seems to have been popular as a contrast to red, instead of blue. Blackthorn berries are claimed to be a source of 'sap' green, and walnut hulls could produce a green dye.

Blue

The most likely candidate for a 'rich' colour. It

was the most expensive colour in painting and, although blue dye from woad was one of the basic dyes, it needed around nine months of processing. According to mediæval commentators, blue was extremely pleasing to the eye, and had celestial connotations. It was not unknown for *lapis lazuli*, a very expensive painting pigment, to be used in dying. The colour was used for the gown of the Madonna, and was therefore seen as a 'virginal' colour. The lust for blue drove many farmers to ruin - they could grow woad very easily, and make a fast profit - but the plant stripped the land of its salts, and left it barren. As a result, laws on woad farming were introduced in France and Italian states. Indigo from India was also used, but was expensive.

Orange/Russet

Orange as a colour is neither illustrated nor talked about very often in mediæval sources, although it could certainly be made. Russet seems quite popular in many levels of society. The colour works well as a contrast to blue (think Mowbray livery).

Yellow

Made from natural plant dye weld, or madder root, yellow must have been easy to come by. It was supposed to signify dignity. However, others think it could also represent treachery or envy, as Giotto painted Judas Iscariot wearing yellow. A fellow re-enactor claims yellow was a stereotypical colour of miserable people, trying to look cheerful. A few mentions have also been made of a mediæval association between yellow and Jews. Certainly, Jews were from time to time forced to wear a yellow star or badge to identify themselves. 'Saffron' was also used to make yellow - but whether this was true saffron (the dried stamen of an oriental crocus), or native European *crocus* (also passed off as saffron, even for cook-

ing), is subject to debate.

White

Means purity - which is odd, because I'm sure Allan has something white. White sounds like an obvious 'poor' colour, but seeing as wool is not naturally a pristine white, it may have been reserved for the better-off. There would be little point in wearing something white just to get it really scruffy. White was also worn within some ranks of the clergy.

Purple

Anathema to re-enactors! Imperial or Byzantium Purple was the stuff of Roman (and Holy Roman) emperors, extremely senior churchmen, and the king. Did you know it takes 10,000 murex shellfish to create just one gramme of the colour? Thought not! The trade in the colour ended in the 1450s with the fall of Constantinople. Having said that, dusky violets, and lilac-greys would be possible to make from the basic red and blue dyes. English cheapskates also used whelks and other shellfish to create purplish-red and purple dyes.

Brown

Brown could range from an uninspiring beige to a rich mid- or dark-brown, taking in kinds of hues and shades. A good variety of natural dyes could be used to make browns and, therefore, variations were open to many classes of people. An interesting colour combination is brown and yellow - this appears in a number of illustrations, and appears to represent a medieval 'contrast'. Brown also had humble and rustic associations.



PS. For anyone mad enough to try it, Byzantium Purple dye costs £55 for 25 milligrams.



The brave Yorkist soldiers fight tooth, nail, and left knee to deny the Lancastrian scum access to the local bus service into Wales.

(PHOTO: TONY ROE)

Book review

Atlas of Medieval Europe

Edited by Angus Mackay with David Ditchburn (1997)

This book was quite good as a basic undergrad or A level text and has lots of simple maps which cover from the fall of the Roman Empire to the War of the Roses inclusive. It covers a range of topics with short texts explaining the maps, such as 'The growth of the Burgundian state'. Although useful as a basic introduction, it is by no means as comprehensive on our period as I would have liked.

It isn't all battles and frontiers: for example, 'The troubadors and journeys of major Italian artists' make an appearance in the sections on culture. I would recommend not buying it at the moment, but awaiting a more comprehensive second edition coming out. All the maps are in black and white.

A CD ROM in colour with the ability to add updates would be ideal.

The maps are also sometimes frustrating, for example not showing places mentioned in the text. They are also sometimes limited in scope, for example the War of the Roses map doesn't show battles outside Britain. One good point is that maps are never divided between pages and the size means they would fit onto one A4 sheet.

For an eclectic look at medieval life divided the book isn't bad. Even though terms aren't always explained - what exactly are the differences in heresy between Lollardism, Albigensians and Waldensians? - a good sketch is given. If you want more detail you wouldn't be buying this wide-ranging book.

Marcus Petz

Buckingham's Retinue Questionnaire

For new and existing members

Please answer the questions below and then refer to the end for results.

-
1. What do you think of when someone mentions Red & Black?
A Mars bars
B A policeman and the knife in your hand
C Nice colours you might like to wear
D Unstoppable power
 2. What is Grass?
A Something in the garden you mow at the weekends
B Something you smoke
C Something that covers large parts of the countryside
D Something soft to sleep on

3. What is your favourite film from the following list?
A *Pretty Woman*
B *Saturday (K)Night Fever*
C *Robin Hood Prince of Thieves*
D *Jabberwocky*
4. When a bank holiday comes along do you?
A Go to the seaside with the kids
B Visit castles with your partner
C Go drinking with your mates
D Put up your canvas tent in a field
5. When you have had a fight, does this mean?
A You don't talk to your partner for week
B You are banned from attending football matches
C You won
D You clean your bill
6. What is outside?
A Somewhere frightening that you travel through to work

- B An area without television
C A place full of history
D Mine to conquer
7. Who is Henry Stafford?
A Don't know
B A man of importance
C Duke of Buckingham
D Son of Lord Humphrey Stafford, and Margret Beaufort
8. How would describe yourself?
A Insane, fearless
B Eager, intelligent, stalwart
C Forceful, independent, robust
D Friendly, likeable, kind
9. What does medieval history mean to you ?
A Roundheads, Vikings, and hobbits
B An 'O' level (or GCSE)
C Knights, chivalry, maidens and killing dragons
D Points, doublets, battles, bows, and politics

10. What are Hose?
A Pipes for watering the garden
B Letters after M and before P
C Tights
D Woollen leg coverings

You gain 0 points for all A answers, 1 for each B, 3 for each C and 5 for any D answers you pick; except question 8 which is reversed with 5 points for answer A and 0 for D, etc.

TOTALS:

- | | |
|-------|--|
| 0 | Go away |
| 1-10 | The nearest knitting circle is in France |
| 11-30 | You should consider the Woodvilles |
| 31-40 | Try the Clarences |
| 41-49 | Sign here and join the Staffords |
| 50 | Your name is Allan Harley |
| 51+ | You can't count |

Devised by Simon Lane

Sir Taysn D'Eth



"As a professional soldier I rate discipline very highly"



"It keeps order, ensures soldiers knows their duty..."



"...and gives us something to look forward to after a hard day's fighting"

Thanks to everyone who took time to write something. Your labours in the cause of the general good are much appreciated (your reward is in heaven, however...). More scribings please! Send to Dave Hemsley
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