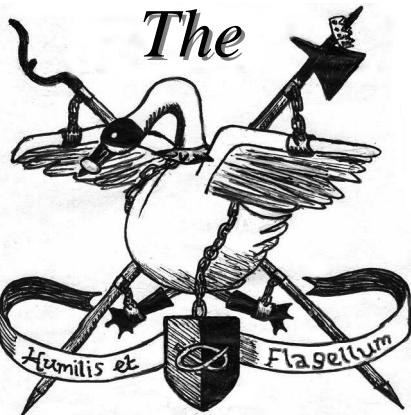


Swan

THE STAFFORD NEWSLETTER



Song

ISSUE 11, SEPTEMBER 2002

IT'S OFFICIAL: STAFFORDS ARE WORST RE-ENACTMENT GROUP!



By our Digging Correspondent

'RE-ENACTORS ARE BAD. THE STAFFORDS ARE WORSE'

These very words were reported to Harre Bokingham by one of his agents at Kirby Hall in July (see Diary, page 8).

This statement only confirms what has

been suspected among the re-enactment community for some time: that the Staffords are quite the scabbiest, scariest, meanest, smelliest bunch of *persons* that it is any uniformed-soldier-with-an-armoured-vehicle's bad luck to meet on a camping ground, or Wang's misfortune to meet on a battlefield.

Some of these scruffy miscreants are pictured above.

WHAT'S IN THIS ISSUE?

Owing to the editor's lack of efforts in the recent months, Harre Bokingham has forceably hijacked almost the entire issue for his Diary.

On page 2 we rush headlong into the near-farce that was Scarborough, when, despite Scarborough being a premier location for a siege, only the Staffords, Clarcenes and York City Levy turned out in force. However, *SwanSong* can report that good fun was ultimately had by all, despite the torrential rain that marred the second day.

Racing past the surreal event at Pilleth (Owain Glyn Dwr back from the dead, an English army that did not like bills and, most surreal of all, a sunny day in Wales), we jump feet first into Tewkesbury and the usual battlefield shambles (Master Taylor acted for us all when forcefully he laid bill upon the person of this idiot running in from our blind side. It is a pity that the idiot did not identify himself as a Marshall first. But never mind), followed by the usual shameless drinking.

A grand weekend of intrigue and in-fighting saw the Retinue break new ground in Muchelney with a murder-mystery penned by the Hunt-Howes pairing. Gracious thanks to the good Lady Guillaume for penning this.

Finally, we have a report into the historical salmagundi that is Kirby.

Thanks to the following for helping with this issue (in no particular order): Holly, Tee, Keith, Tony Roe, Chris, Ghost, Marcus, Andy H.

Duke Harre asks if someone would supply him with an Diary report for the event with King Richard at Middleham as he was unavoidably detained elsewhere on the day.

DUKE HARRY'S DIARY

Who have we been beating up so far this season?

SCARBOROUGH CASTLE 1–4 JUNE

I proffer my apologies to my loyal and blood-thirsty retinue for spending so long away from my diary, but I have been aiding my editor in the purchase of a new estate.

Many events have passed across the butcher's chopping block of time since I last wrote of your doings; many bottles of Tequila drained; many cakes baked and ripped to pieces by the masses; many wang-heads ridiculed and sent packing with a dented great helm; and many ...

But time I have aplenty, space, alas, I do not.

The first (and only) great Livery & Maintenance siege and drinking fest took place in Scarborough over what you know as the Jubilee weekend.

I am reliably informed that there was some fighting as well, although most of this was over who would be in 'pink' squad.

'RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!'

Simon



Who gave Tee some alcohol?
AGAIN ...
Tee teaches Helen to tango, Bucks-style.



The archers clear the battlements. Well, actually, the defenders were still having breakfast, but it pays to be careful.

The basic scenario was that a defeated Yorkist detachment post-Wakefield had taken refuge in the castle, and a Lancastrian force had arrived to request that they leave. The besiegers took pity on the defenders overnight, so they swapped places.

'SPARE ME!'

Simon



Master Swiss turned up and showed us that he is not afraid to be a man and wear a pink jack. He later demonstrated the incorrect way to tackle someone whilst wearing a kettle hat.

'QUARTER!'

Yes, Simon, again



The gallant besieging force defends the castle against ... hang on?

Note Marcus atop his eyrie, ready to launch one of the four plaster rocks on the attackers.

(PHOTOS: HOLLY SCRATCHED)

Mistress Ribbins ("Mumsy") led the way from the front and showed everyone present how to handle a good wine.

'NO I'M NOT DRUNK, I'VE ONLY HAD THE ONE ... BOTTLE!'

Kathryn on her taste for the claret during cooking.

The Wrecking Crew At Large

Summer 2002

Scarborough
Pilleth
Tewkesbury
Muchelney
Kirby Hall
plus
Caption competition

'ITS ONLY SMALL BUT ITS A HAND AND A HALF FOR ME!'

Lian (from Gloucesters) describing her long dagger

'OUR JUGS ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN OUR LIVES'

Another one of the Gloucester women, assigned to the defenders as a water-carrier

Duke Harry's Diary – Scarborough

Show-and-tell time in the Stafford camp.

Mark Hewitt and Simon Clegg hold the crowd while they describe the group's weaponry and armour.

It is worth noting that we are one of the few C.15th groups that regularly invite audience participation, which must contribute to our popularity with custodians.

The priest was also popular at Scarborough, and I can testify that he also told a good story.

What was the Clarence/Gloucester camp like? See below ...

You can almost see the tumbleweed.



'LETS RUN THIS WAY!'

Simon, yet again



'DO WE DIE NOW OR HAVE WE GOT TO FIGHT SOME MORE?'

Cast ensemble

Marcus demonstrates his Jedi abilities while Simon taunts him with a falchion. Seconds after this photo was taken a large transit van took Simon in the back of the head, disarming him completely. Unfortunately, it also ran over Marcus.



'DO YOU THINK WE GOT AWAY?'

All Simon, as reported by his ever-faithful 'friends'

General attack on the castle defenses. I don't know how it looked to the crowd, but 20 blokes attacking along 100 feet of ditch seems daft to me ...

Duke Harry's Diary – Tewkesbury

THE BATTLE OF PILLETH 23 JUNE

'WE ARE NOW ENTERING WALES. PLEASE LOCK ALL DOORS AND REMAIN INSIDE THE VEHICLE AT ALL TIMES'

Captain Howell

Somewhere in the wild, lawless mountains that border the western flank of England on 22 June 1402, an English army under Edmund Mortimer was crushed by Owain Glyn Dwr and an army of, I scarce dare say it, Welshmen.

The English, despite losing many of their (Welsh – who would have thought it?) archers through desertion at the beginning of the battle, charged uphill into superior numbers and received a right royal arse-kicking.

On 22/23 June 2002, the Welsh forces (all, except Glyn Dwr himself, wearing red and black) beat off a determined assault by a huge army of a dozen English.

I am reliably informed that it was a fun day out for all the family, although no Stafford took part in the 'find the ferret' game.



Apparently, they were siamese twins. It took doctors five hours to separate them – our Simon got the beer belly and dress sense, and his twin got the rest.

TEWKESBURY 13–14 JULY 2002

This year, as per usual, my Retinue turned up on a field outside Tewkesbury in the middle of the English Summer to settle the score and make sure that the Yorkists won the field again. As in every year before, my Retinue spent much money browsing the many trading stalls, including the ever-present yellow-and-black wheel tent known to sell such fine drinks as 'Maniac Mead'.

My bill block, dressed in my colours of red and black, marched on the field accompanied by the encouraging chant of 'Bondage Duck, Bondage Duck, watch her while she brings us luck' – the Camp Followers had decided to make the bill block even hotter by dressing up as the Stafford Cheerleaders, in some cases wearing very little at all, but all properly displaying the livery colours.

After the battle, many of the women decided to brave the showers that had been provided for one of the first times in the years that I have been doing Tewkesbury, and they were deemed 'best things since sliced bread', or at least I believe that was a suitable paraphrase!

The evening entertainment in the beer tent was provided by a mixture of fire-breathers and what I believe to have been members of the Black Bear wearing coloured bin bags as they attempted to hold a 'fetish' party near the beer tent. All that I shall say on the matter is that in years gone by, they would have not have been noticed actually on the field during the battle!

The Sunday did not see the return of the cheerleaders, much to the disappointment of both my bill block but also the other bill blocks on the field. However some old members of my bill block did return, including Master Bob, Master Rob and Master Ernie, the latter pluckily carrying the standard.

I must commend the stalwart water carriers on both days for making sure that



'Isn't it killing time yet?'

Damn, my wrist has stopped.'



'Why didn't I bring a bow?'

*The crowds gather to watch the nutters beat six bells of sh*t out of each other.*

All in a day's wanging.

Was that really a Sutton Hoo burial mask I saw? And leather trousers?



Duke Harry's Diary – Tewkesbury

my brave soldiers did not become dehydrated and miss the yearly blood-fest that is Tewkesbury.

Finally, my scouts ‘intercepted’ a letter after the person delivering it was found drunk beside a hostelry in the town. I think it tells better than I can what the battle was like for the common soldier.

*Wid bin charsin this Lancastrian armay
oo woz trying tow cross this big river
intow Wayels, oy think it moyt ave bin the
seven.*

*Any road up we cotched em up just
beforwer thed got chance tow escarp, and
gid em a royt ole tearterin.*

*Wen I woz foytin wiiv me bill oy day
see this won chop in a blew an woyt liv-
eray an E bashed may royt up the side on
me yef, Jaysus Chryst it day alf airt, oy
sid stars, ani the twong it med on meyatl
naylay med me def.*

*So oy day bovver no mower tow troy
and foyt an oy left it tow me moits oo wos
baskin the Lancastrians intow the middle O
next wick.*

*You woodor never ave belayed sum on
the things they woz dewin tow them pewor
blows, an if thed nowed wat woz gunnerap-
pen tow em thed never av stopped tow foyt
that bottle, it wor a royt ole shambles.*

*Any road up, after wid gid them Lan-
castrians summat tow think abart, mey an
may mayts an ower kid went up the towon
for a few jugs o Bayor, in the nayerst
Inn.*

*The 'Cot an Rot' oy thin it woz called.
We woz torkin abart wot as append am
summon the things wid dunn, if owor Mof-
fors cus a sid us royt theyor an then they
wood never av belayedved it woz uz coz they
lived us and wooda smocked us round the
ayeroles an sent us tow bod wi now tay.*

*Wim gonna bay comin up Dudlay sewen
an oy got yow a new spewon coz its gonna
bay yowor borthday sewon.*

*Oy ope folks will remember this ayor
blaydin bottle wiiv just fowet downon ere at
a little towon called Chokesbury.*

*Oy luv yow with all me art Ethel, an
oy op them brotts of owon ay bin playin
yer up.*

*Loweds of luv xxxx
ANDCH. WERT*



Cheerleading chants to be recorded for future use:

‘Bondage Duck, Bondage Duck. Watch her while she brings us luck’

‘Captain Howell, He’s our man. If he can’t lead us, no one can!’

‘Bucks are Brave. Bucks are Strong. Bucks can **** all day/night long’

‘Hey Richard, you’re so fine, you’re so fine, you blow my mind. Hey Dickon’

‘Souvente Savene. Souvente Savene. We will beat that French queen’

Notes to Anoch's letter

The Battle of Tewkesbury written in the form of a letter to his wife from a Black Country lad – Dudley to be precise.

I have never written for the Stafford's rag. I find it easier to hide behind this Black Country sing-song drawl and pretend to be someone else.

Hope you like it. If so, Anoch Wert may write home more often. Ta!

Duke Harry's Diary – Muchelney

MUCHELNEY ABBEY 27–28 JULY

This weekend saw the arrival of two noble households (Stanleys & Staffords) at a quiet monastic retreat in the middle of deepest, darkest Somerset (well, it was by the time the horseless carriage containing all the households' possessions arrived on the Friday evening!). Once the households were set up, the quietness of the retreat was shattered as members of the households went about their business, greeting each other and grave-hunting!

The first day of the meeting between the two households began with tragedy, a murder that needed to be solved. However at least the investigations were not done on an empty stomach thanks to the pancakes supplied by Lady Elizabeth, and the breakfast cooked by Mistresses Hilary and Kathryn.

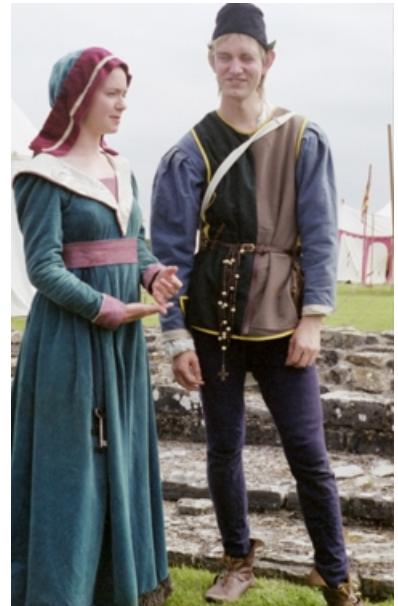
Before the public arrived, the initiation of Brother Marcus had to be performed, so out came the scissors and razor to provide him with a 'very realistic wig' and a new brother for the Monastic house was born.



Archers managed to severely miss the straw target and puncture a wheel tent, luckily no one was inside at the time.



'De Fray out for a pleasant afternoon threatening: 'Remember, my Lady, you saw nothing, you heard nothing ... or else.'



'And my Lady says that it goes green and itches at night.'



The investigations lead to Master Lane being committed of the murder, and to a trial by combat between Senschal De Fray and himself, with the Senschal being ultimately victorious. A significant number of billmen were required to carry the body off the field.

The evening saw much drunken debauchery, levels of which had not been seen in a while, with certain gentlemen reaching new heights of drunkenness. But, as I am reliably informed, they were not the only miscreants on holy ground. Much singing occurred, so much in fact members of the public who lived nearby commented the next day that they heard us enjoying ourselves late into the night!



'Was that delicate piece of Jewellery meant to go "Boink"?'

As the day went on, investigations and subplots were being revealed. The murdered man turned out not to be a man but a woman, and a noble woman at that. Tensions in the Stanley Household became clear as Captain Harley forced his soldiers to choose whether they served him or the Senschal De Fray (Jock) and Vintner Brandt (Ghost). Mistress Emma, leader of the Stafford camp followers made a significant profit both 'pimping' Mistress Louise and having her palm crossed with money in exchange for information. During the archery display, one of the Stafford

"... he ripped off her shift with one twist of his manly hands ..."

My goodness, I don't think this is Deuteronomy any more.'

Emergency replayers: 'Oh Lord, we beseech thee, resanctify thy ground upon which much debauchery has taken place.'

Duke Harry's Diary – Muchelney

As the second day dawned, it was revealed that a second murder had occurred after the evening banquet that the higher ranking members of the cast had attended. Captain Harley was no more, a new Steward had turned up for the Stafford Camp, a new Stanley soldier (who had apparently spent the previous day ill in his tent) appeared, and was there to help investigate the murders. The initial evidence pointed to Lady Elizabeth being the Captain's murderer, and so the second day had a slightly different set up, with the Lady Elizabeth being prosecuted by Seneschal De Fray and defended by the new Stafford Seneschal.

performed and the Stanley household left the site with a much depleted retinue consisting of the Lady Margaret, myself, a new Seneschal Horsfield and Mistress Helen. Whereas the Stafford Household had nearly doubled in number!

Lady Guillaume



'You do look familiar, Master Hastings.'

The morning got off to an interesting start with strange noises and panting coming from numbers of the women as they discovered an interesting way to keep cool, a method which many of the soldiers volunteered to assist with. The women had decided to have a wet shift competition while still wearing their gowns and kirtles. It was with the addition of the water down both the fronts and backs of the gowns that the soldiers were keen to assist with.

Another sight that pleased many of the men in the group for various reasons was the sight of the Lady Elizabeth in manacles, and dressed only in a kirtle!

As the day went on, the evidence for the prosecution became weaker and weaker, especially with the defection of the majority of the Stanley soldiers to the Stafford Livery. When questioned on the change of livery, they replied that they did not want to work for a murderer!

It turned out that De Fray had engineered the murders, with the assistance of the Acting Captain Brandt, the Surgeon Hewitt and Master Taylor. The executions were duly

Stafford Captain and Vintner dicing for who gets to tackle Mistress Emma next.



Try as I might, I cannot come up with a caption for this one. Hmm ...

Duke Harry's Diary – Kirby Hall

KIRBY HALL 10–11 AUGUST

or ‘Where’s the Tractor?’

Once again, my troops were encamped on the lands of one of my country houses, Kirby Hall, for a weekend of display and drinking. They were not alone though in this task as approximately 3000 other people in strange attire were there (I believe they muttered something about time travel?). The arrival of so many people meant that the mechanical oxen had to be used in force to negotiate the churned up mud on entry to the camping arenas.

The first evening went off as planned with the pitching of many tents and *en masse* relocation of my troops to the beer tent, where much fun and drunken debauchery was had, for the first time that weekend (though not, I may add, the year).

‘BUT I’M NINETEEN!’

Little Dave to Claire after being identified as a ‘child’ in the head count.

The first day of display went fairly well, with a demonstration of the Battle of Northampton, which unfortunately meant my men could not slaughter the opposing Yorkists, seeing as ‘the script said we must yield’. Despite the opposing archers using our standards as an aiming point, they left the field intact. I believe my men enjoyed the fighting over barricades, as it allowed them to demonstrate their skill at arms. A brief display of the Battle of Bosworth was done – and I do mean a brief display. My trusty water carriers almost missed it by looking in the other direction.

‘IS THAT A BATTERING RAM?’

Member of the public pointing to Gwynifer

The rest of the day involved much shopping as the traders market had returned, time travelling wandering about the site admiring the clothes and camps of different periods.

Saturday ended with the traditional Grand Parade, Civil War drumming bands, dancing, Mexican Waves, and my men standing out in the middle of a field as the heavens opened while they waited for further instructions.

It was decided that one of the new recruits, Master Cameron would be allowed to stay a member of my retinue as he cooked a



marvellous meal Saturday evening, involving Bambi, amongst other ingredients. As on the previous night, the rest of the evening was spent tartsing, drinking and socialising with as many of these other strangely clothed people as possible. Fleeting glimpses of Death were also seen in the Beer Tent.

‘HELLO DEATH – GIZ A SNOG’

Tee

‘I COULD QUITE GO FOR SOME OF THOSE NUNS WITH BEARDS, IF ONLY THEY HAD MORE SCARS ABOUT THE FACE’

Hadfield on the cross-dressing nuns

‘WE’VE GOT SO MANY CAKES, WE’LL LOOK LIKE THE GLOUCESTERS SOON’

Anon

Ewart ignoring the English Heretics ‘no joy-riding’ rule.



Duke Harry's Diary – Kirby Hall

Sunday went better than the previous day, with glorious sunny weather, more shopping and a similar display in the morning, just sans the Battle of Bosworth. The weekend was brought to an close by the Grand Parade, finishing in true Kirby Style by a long parade/walk of people, up and down both sides of the hill, culminating in the huge multi-period clash, where the billmen proved that theirs was the ultimate weapon.

All that was left to do was dismantle camp and return to the rigours of everyday life, after effort was expended leaving the vehicle encampment, as mud was the order of the day. Those people from WWII (anyone know which world they are talking about) managed to prove that they just don't make 'cars' like they used to, as they had great fun assisting these 'cars' out of the vehicle encampment.



'JOCK, KEEP CONTROL OF YOUR HELMET!'

Tee after being hit on the ankle by Jock's helmet

Re-enactment – it's an exhausting job being the worst. It makes it easier if you can find a willing pillow.

I am fain to bring my diary to an end this month. Lincoln, Old Sarum and Blore next time.

Harre Bokingham



A handful of photos from the Tudor event at Lincoln Bishop's Palace (17–18 August) and Old Sarum (24–26 August).

Above, Richard Hunt plays a very convincing King Henry (the best, in my opinion, since Paul Hitchin) in an event that reportedly contained Scottish-Mexican Kings, hobby-crocodiles and tequila.

Below, and below right, Chris does his 'He-Man' impression, shortly before the Stafford troops were massacred by the public. Rabban watches with interest ...

This event also contained tequila.

September's Caption Competition



'Marcus' breakfast time surprise'

Answers on a self-addressed kumquat to the editorial office. Please retain proof of posting in case of dispute.



Group News & Views

2003 EVENTS

Next year's events program is shaping up a little differently to this and previous years. Event booking is a difficult task and there are a number of factors to balance when setting up the program so that everyone will have something to enjoy. The main criteria are event type, location, fee, site type and date. The aim is to have different events at a range of locations north and south throughout the year. It all looks simple on paper but is fraught with difficulties.

A number of factors have become very clear over the last few years. The first is that our highest turnout is at battle events; whilst I shy away from populism I have begun to feel that someone is sending me a message! For that reason I propose we visit Bosworth next year. I know a few people from the group went along this year and I am interested to hear if it has improved.

Many people have asked about foreign events in the past and they seem to behave like buses as we have interest from three sites at present. I think no more than two will be practical but I hope to keep you informed. I have heard excellent reports about the fantasy battle in Holland (no rubber swords) and suggest we give it serious consideration.

We have at least one siege as an option for next year and two is a good possibility. However, L&M is now so small I am looking for our own large-scale events which we can run ourselves; it was only due to quick-thinking on the part of some senior members at Scarborough that our reputation with EH wasn't permanently damaged by the tiny turnout for such a major event highlight.

Following on from that we still need to book a murder-mystery and we have a couple of sites interested in show-and-tell events – and I haven't even considered Tutbury or a recent invite to Kenilworth. Suffice it to say we almost have a season worked out for next year. All I need to do is ensure we get the best events for us.

Chris

That's all for issue 11 (doesn't time fly). If all goes well I shall start putting together the next issue in October. Therefore, if you feel inspired to write anything topical – and I'm missing an event report for Middleham – please get it to me by the middle of the month. As usual, you can e-mail it to me on:

David@purpleardvark.freeserve.co.uk

Postal address in the last issue. Cheers!

Dave

PIN-UP OF THE MONTH



ANOCHE WERT

Anoch is approximately 550 years old and is from picturesque Dudley. Married with 326 children he is on the lookout for his 18th wife.

Although a birth defect means that he has to wear a pottery tankard to cover his disfigured and unfeasibly long nose, he has a 'really engaging' personality, and can apparently touch the tip of his nose with his tongue.

MEDIAEVAL HERALDRY

SwanSong was forwarded the following question some time ago regarding later mediaeval battlefield heraldry. Perhaps one of the group's more knowledgeable members could help provide an answer?

While I was a teacher I did a project on knights in armour and how this developed and tied it in with some work on heraldry - this involved labelling pictures,

UNCLAIMED KIT

At Blore and at the Feast there will be opportunities to reclaim your lost kit from the group stuff. Any unclaimed items remaining will be auctioned at the end of the feast.

If you have lost something and are unable to attend either event, please let one of the committee know what it is you are missing (Tee, we KNOW there are no skeletons) and they will do their best to locate it.

FEAST 2003

As *SwanSong* goes to press, Kathryn says that she is hopeful of booking the Llangollen YHA for a weekend in late January. This depends, however, on anyone there actually being interested in taking a booking from her and returning calls ...

Watch this space!

LIVING HISTORY EVENT AND TRADER'S FAYRE

On Sunday 6 October 2002 there will be an international living history event with traders fair at the Royal Armouries, Leeds. Entry is £2.00 adult/£1.50 under-16s for the event, but free for the main museum. Parking is £3.

The Royal Armouries is just off Junction 4 of the M621 in Leeds. Follow the brown burial mask signs. It is also a short walk from the railway station, although the website doesn't say if it is signed – I assume it will be.

naming parts etc. One of the kids asked me why the earlier knights (11th, 12th, 13th century) all had heraldic devices to identify them but after the introduction of full plate armour there was apparently no heraldry or any kind of distinguishing marks at all. To this I didn't know the answer – or is it just how illustrators choose to portray them?

Any information?

Leigh

Although the question is a little old now, it could still form the basis of an interesting article in a later issue. Over to you!

Answers to last month's caption competition: You know, I plain forgot what they were. Never mind – I can report that the ones I heard made me laugh.