

# The Swan Song



THE STAFFORD NEWSLETTER

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## BATTLE LOST



### By our perplexed correspondent

At the end of September, on the fair field of Blore, 200 hundred re-enactors got lost in a field of what can only be described as a bank of un-fog.

According to spectators, one moment all was going well, Audley had just met his end, and possibly his beginning as well, and the Lancastrians were all set to sweep all before them, when a thick peasouper descended and caused chaos.

It is reported that in the confusion several archers actually recorded hits, although this cannot be confirmed, since no-one believes

them.

Said Bloodheart Axhammer, leader of the Oslo chapter of the House of Phun, "Woah, I seem to be in the wrong office, can you show me where I can book the Stena ferry?"

Eventually, a spokesperson for the Federation was able to state, "It was dark, no light, what was the question again? I've got a bit of a headache, see, great Wang party by the way, you should have been there."

We are able to report that the battle was found again the next day, although for some reason it had boarded a charter flight for Dubai.

### What's in this issue?

Event reports (thanks to Ben Service and James Green for reports)

Archives

A religious primer (thanks to Jenn Scott for this)

Making an arrow bag (thanks to Heath Barlin)

Web Forum

Don't forget the Bucks' Web Forum; everyone is welcome to join in:

<http://www.1485.org/bucksboard.html>

Next month, I hope to have an early report of events for 2005 and news of this season's feast. The venue is already booked, and the cooks are well into their planning.

Apologies are due from the editor for the lack of SwanSongs this summer ... I've had a busy year editing and proofreading, and after you've spent all day reading a computer screen editing a book, the last thing you want to do is stare at it some more and edit something else!

You might think that this issue is somewhat smaller than usual. You are right! This is part deliberate and part due to circumstance. Firstly, I'm trying to reduce the size of the newsletter to take up less bandwidth. Secondly, I've truncated this issue, because I'm just about to go away for a few days *again*, and I thought the newsletter do more good being read than sitting in my PC memory for another week!

Don't worry though – there is enough material to put another one out almost immediately. *David*

# DUKE HARRY'S DIARY

## Why are all fire engines called Dennis?

Dear Duke Harry,

I would like to report the following, as the newest recruit to Buckingham's Retinue, following my first outing at Wrest Park. Through very kind donations from several groups in Livery and Maintenance and considerable eye lash fluttering from myself, (to all of the right people) I have managed to acquire numerous items of clothing, if this continues on its current rate I will have more than my favourite uncle Allen by the end of the year!



You were very correct in your assessment of the breasts in the group, I have plenty to keep me occupied, but you were right to remind me that breasts can prove to be quiet a distraction from my task. I did try to use my talents as a baby as much as possible at the weekend as was able to get many innocent looking gropings and suckings, much to the jealousy of many of the males in the group! Sir I will endeavour to make sure this will not have a detrimental effect to our future plans. My male bonding has been going well. Several of the men have offered to train me to be a good billman, (how little they suspect!).

One would most like to report that the indoctrination to the ice cream cult has been very successful as can be seen in the portraits I have attached to this report. My apparent addiction to ice lollies has been successfully incorporated into my baby persona, I have also found the crying at the top of my lungs at random periods helps me to get whatever I want and need, I think it is a very good tactic that I will continue to us until they catch on, it reminds me of one of your Grace's favourite sayings "resistance is futile".

Although those strange people that speak to us from time to time did ask some very unnerving questions like "is it a



real baby?" etc, but luckily those in Buckingham's Retinue seem very used to those type of questions and my acceptance into the group has gone very well and no-one suspects my true motives – WORLD DOMINATION – for your Grace of course sir, as I would not have any of those lofty aspirations for myself at all, no sir!

Well your Grace I will have to go before someone catches an innocent baby writing this first reports on Buckingham Retinues activities.

Your loyal servant  
Benjamin Service



## WREST PARK 24–25 APRIL

Such a long time ago. I humbly apologise for not having put pen to paper, but I was having problems with the tenant farmers in Brecon. Ah, why should I protect him, my editor was away working on some probably inconsequential translation for some gentleman called Woodville.

First thing to say about Wrest was 'It was hot', secondly, there were not many of my retinue present, in fact almost as many went on a pilgrimage to the abbey at Whitby. Again. I am humbled by their devout attention to their faith.

The idea of celebrating St. Georges day, and the games we played, was an interesting

## The Wrecking Crew At Large

Wrest Park  
Blore Heath  
and all points  
North, South,  
West and Castle  
Rising  
April to September  
2004

one. The two periods chosen were mediaeval and Victorian (I am reliably informed that you have this period of history yet to come, lucky you), although the mediaeval camp outnumbered the Victorian camp. Our own Mistress Wetton excelled herself by pouncing on those (perhaps unfortunate?!) members of the public who stopped for the arms and armour talk being given by young Adam (the Neville) and Master Green.

I was very interested to see this new-fangled 'fil-um' process. The filming of the games was interesting, with the best part standing in the crowd to watch the 'foot ball match'. The film man stood suprisingly still I thought, considering the combined teams charging at him, with the other man (I was told that he was a sound person, although I had little time to judge his character) looking decidedly nervous behind him as he dangled nis sock on a stick.

The set show of St. George and the Dragon with the 'Sheep Pyramid' and 'Sheep steeplechase' over the fence of the showground away from the Dragon was very

# Duke Harry's Diary

good. Our own Mistress Wetton was the 'Virgin sacrifice'.

I kid you not.

I felt sorry for the Dragon for he had a long walk in the costume that only allowed about a one-foot step, or should I say shuffle, each time he moved.



## HOLDENBY

### 1-2 MAY

After the glorious sunshine of Wrest Park the week before, Holdenby was a shock to us all. The Fast Cart left the Parish of Somercotes on Saturday with the household equipment in lovely weather, we then hit the rain, or should I say it hit us, at about Northampton and that was it, it looked like the sea was trying to reclaim the land by air drop. We arrived at Holdenby to be met by young master Adam, who informed us that it had been raining for a week, so as soon as a wheel touched the ground, it turned to mud!

Despite a few problems, the camp was eventually set up, although there were some interesting muddy foot prints reported on the canvas (one tent had one on the inside of the roof!).

Sunday was lovely and dry, even the mud was drying out. My archers had great fun with 'Shoot the Bill line', even some of my brave lads who went into the bill block reported to have enjoyed it (but then they are strange men). Special mention must be made of Captain Howell who first carried the flag at the second advance, once he fell young Adam grabbed it to save it from the ground, once he was killed it was then carried in turn by two Canterburys.

One of my archers comments that the only downside was the lack of a clear 'fast or stop shooting', which resulted in a member of the public getting a ricochet off someone's armour. But it would be nice to see

more done with this, such as stakes defending billmen, and so on.

Then came Monday - it was a Bank Holiday - need I say more? It was wet.

Breakfast was courageously cooked by Mistress Green without the use of safety net, umbrella or lifeboat!

Packing down the camp was fun as well, since the Fast Cart developed a new side-ways gear, making several of my retinue leap for their lives.

Cleaning off the mud and drying out canvas was the major game for all, with Master Hemsley informing anyone who would listen over the next day or so that it had been lovely and sunny in Somercotes.

He shall be dealt with ...

## LINCOLN CASTLE 29-31 MAY



## CASTLE RISING 24-25 JULY

A great murder mystery, with the plot turning this way and that. It was set inside a castle under siege.

I was very impressed by the recruitment



efforts of my officers. I must say that the turn-out took me by surprise, for there were 60 eager persons to cater for. The stalwart cooks were hard-pressed but managed to turn out great food, which was well received. Adrian made a welcome reappearance, and even brought a cannon along, which was captured both days and so allowed both sides to Play With Black Powder. Well, it keeps them out of more serious mischief I suppose.

## BERKELEY CASTLE 30 JULY-1 AUGUST

We made a first visit to this event and can recommend it to all. It was a well run site - toilets (cleaned regularly), bins emptied and even showers with hot water were all gratefully received!

The market had some good traders present, with some catering more for the historically minded, and others appealing to a

# Duke Harry's Diary

wider audience. The highlight for many was music performed twice a day by the Medieval Baebes - once for the public during the day, and once at night in the large beer tent for us.

The set-up of the event meant that there was something happening all day in one place or another, with two smaller battles in place of one big battle, which seemed to be easier on participants. There was some good pyrotechnics arranged to coincide with cannon fire, but it did seem that more communication was needed for when it was safe to advance.

I would recommend everyone to give this event a try, and Master Green, while writing these notes for me, commented that, given the choice, he would prefer to attend this event in place of Tewkesbury.

## STAFFORD CASTLE 14-15 AUGUST

Master Green notes to me that this was a small event, but with a respectable turnout by my retinue. One of the more memorable items was watching Allen having a pattern cut out around him for new hose, his face was a picture when Sam had the scissors cutting near the place that makes males wince! The weather was pleasant with various groups running different arena events, with an archery competition running over the weekend with all the Bucks giving a reasonable showing, with Sam doing very well. On Saturday evening, many of us moved up to practice with bows. Two of our lady members seemed to get the bug, with Verity even talking about buying her own bow, so we may yet start to get a bow block to go with our bill block.

## BOSWORTH 21-22 AUGUST

What can one say about Friday night, it felt like Holdenby revisited! Allan and young Adam were hard-pressed to try and get people to get onto the right area of the site, with the site rangers doing sterling work with their tractor to get stuck carts and horses out of the mud. But after that start the weekend was lovely weather, with the



show being well organized. There was good a good market and beer tent, with a live show Saturday night.

The archers against billmen was run again with the Canterbury's on the first day acting as defence, but got bored and joined the attack on the Sunday as they had nothing to do on the first. Our master Cleggy throwing his bill down to run and being hit was memorable. The same could be said about Master Phil attacking the Canterbury's on his own on Saturday.

There are some areas which could do with some more work on communication: such as having a horse rider stopping his horse only just off the line of a loaded cannon, although some quick-thinking by those around prevented any untoward happening.

## DARTMOUTH CASTLE 29-31 AUGUST

I can't remember the last time I sent two retinues out! A small number of of my retinue travelled the many miles to Dartmouth to run a murder mystery penned by Master Brown, and the rest journey just down the road to Kenilworth. Dartmouth was again a fun event with various murders, with again just the one soldier 'guarding' things (this time it was Master Green).

Master Brown was a bit harried trying to keep each day running to plan, but we did manage to keep the public there. While it was not quite so busy as last year, we arrived as the regatta was finishing and did

see the good ship Sir Galahad depart. A more scurrilous member of my retinue wanted to fire off the last cannon charge at it, but was wisely overruled in case we should attract unwelcome attention from the authorities!

The Bucks Barracudas made their appearance again. The water was just as cold ...

On the last day, Phil acting as castle captain decided that mistress Sarah had not been doing her maid duties very well and had Master Green whip her, much to the delight of the party of daycare children who had arrived. Mistress Louise was most disappointed that it was not her ...

The food was great, the evening spent in town was also great and we did dance, drink, and definitely were merry.

## BLORE HEATH 25-26 SEPTEMBER

Last event of the summer season, there was a good turn out, mainly I think due to the it being the last fight of the year for the Buckingham's bill line.

There had been a lot of thought put into the running of the event and battle. A fashion display seemed to attract a reasonable amount of interest from both public and re-enactors. There was a safer melee, not quite so many hurt, the sword fight seemed to have more injuries on the second day. But those who took part had fun.

There was the firepower display, with lots of noise from the guns, and a very large spread around the target from the archers. But as usual, when it came to moving targets, when the billmen were advancing, the lure of armed men attacking seemed to do its magic and as before no billmen made it. But our Master Cleggy made a good attempt on the second day, if only he had charged on the last bit he may have got his wish to hit some archers.

Master Green notes to me that Kathryn's chocolate cake being to die for, even though it was devoured for breakfast.

It was almost the end of the year, for fortune had a surprise in store. More next time! *Harre Bockingham*

# Once Upon A Time In The Staffords & York City Leby



Continuing the archive theme of the archive page, pictures clockwise are from left to right, and to be observed right way up in a darkened hutch with a stiff whiskey and a limp gin.

Chris enjoying his role as server and Allan just enjoying himself are at St Briavels (25/11/95), Bolton Castle block and breakfast rabble (sometime around 1993 I think) – get those hoes tightened!, Castle Rising bruises (28/7/96), Bolton again, aerial view of the camp at Porchester in 1994 (1/5/94), and finally a right pair at the American Embassy in 1994, flying the flag for English Heritage at a cultural event. We did manage to get weapons inside the American Embassy ...



Embarrassing  
blank  
space



# A RELIGIOUS PRIMER

For the majority of us in secular Britain, religion plays little part in our daily lives but for our counterparts in 15<sup>th</sup> century England it was an essential part of life. Thinking about the Middle Ages without talking about religion is a bit like talking about modern life without mentioning television.

For most people in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, a belief in God and the actual existence of heaven, purgatory (a sort of celestial waiting area) and hell was at the centre of their world view. The physical world was seen as reflecting God's purpose. This meant that natural disasters, victory or defeat in battle were not seen as products of chance or the



Whitby Abbey today. It used to be a bit bigger ...

work of man but as the result of the intervention of God – punishing the sinful and rewarding the just. The possibility of eternal damnation was real and could only be avoided through following the teachings of the Church. Most people expected to spend time in purgatory as they suffered for sins they had committed in life before hopefully going on to heaven. Therefore ensuring as short a time as possible in purgatory was important – this could be done through good

## The Seven Deadly Sins

Pride, Anger, Envy, Avarice, Sloth, Gluttony and Lust

works; pilgrimage and the living praying for the souls of the departed. Wealthy people or guilds often paid a priest to say masses for their souls for this reason. Henry VII requested that 10 000 masses be said for his soul.

One of the important areas of religious life for ordinary people were the guilds. The guilds were generally dedicated to a particular saint. Membership might be drawn from a specific job e.g. tailors or an area – membership of most guilds was open to men and women but the very poorest would often be excluded as members were expected to pay fees. The idea was to give a good funeral to

## Ave Maria

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum, benedicata tu in mulieribus et benedictus fructus ventris tui Jesu.

Sancta Maria, Mater dei Oro pro nobis peccatoribus nunc et hora mortis nostrae. Amen

any member and to pray for them to reduce any time they might have to spend in purgatory.

The church was everywhere - literally. A traveller approaching a town or village would see wayside shrines, crosses marking a pilgrims' way and in the distance the great spires of the churches. The medieval Church was a well-organised machine for the delivery of God's Grace to man. The clergy were the means by which this was delivered – the priest's main power came from his ability to say mass, through him the bread and wine (the Host) became the actual body and blood of Christ. Often several masses would happen at the same time in a church, a bell would be rung as the Host was lifted for everyone to see and people would rush from one mass to another to see it. Seeing the host and participating in that miracle would, it was believed reduce the amount of time spent in purgatory.

The religion of our ancestors was not a private matter. Everybody worshipped together, Christmas and the other holy days were community efforts. In a time when

## The Sign of the Cross

IN nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen



The medieval Church of-

Byzantine triptych. It represents an imaginary, heavenly conjunction of the dead Christ and His sorrowful mother. To the left stands Saint Francis of Assisi, the founder of the mendicant order of friars known as the Franciscans. On the right is St Mary Magdalene, the repentant prostitute who was present at the Crucifixion and was the first person to see the resurrected Christ.

Dated c.1501, from Crete.

they really did have to make their own entertainment, the Church provided most of it – through social worship, church ales and plays about the stories of the Bible and the lives of saints. Going to Mass each was as much as social experience as a religious one – you were there to see and be seen. Although most people would go to Mass at



Modern day medieval splendour at St George's chapel, Windsor.

## Our Father

PATER noster, qui es in caelis, sanctificetur nomen tuum. Adveniat regnum tuum. Fiat voluntas tua, sicut in caelo et in terra. Panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie, et dimitte nobis debita nostra sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris. Et ne nos inducas in tentationem, sed libera nos a malo. Amen.

least once a week, and many would go more often, you were only expected to confess and take communion once a year normally at Easter.

ferred protection and help from cradle to grave, without it you were cast into the unknown. This is not to say that everyone was excessively pious but that the Church and religion were an essential part of medieval life.

# MAKING AN ARROW BAG

By Heath Barlin

Images of the article known as an arrow bag can be found in Froissart's Chronicles<sup>[1]</sup> when he depicts the battle of Poitiers<sup>[2]</sup> and Najera<sup>[3]</sup> (Figs 1 and 2). Whilst these events occurred earlier (1356 and 1357 respectively) than our period, the illuminations of this copy depict equipment and dress of the 3rd to 4th quarter of the 15th Century. This is quite common during the period with many historical or mythological events being presented in this manner long after our period, as evidenced by paintings such as Caravaggio's *The Calling of St Matthew*<sup>[4]</sup> and Teniers' *Deliverance of St. Peter*<sup>[5]</sup>, and despite the emergence of the depiction of artists such as Fra Bartolommeo<sup>[6]</sup> and in the very late 15th/early 16th century depicting biblical events in generic costume.



As such,

Fig. 1  
Poitiers

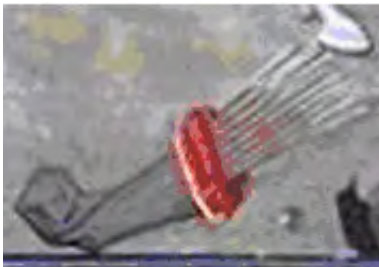


Fig. 2  
Najera



Fig. 3  
Reconstruction

the arrow bag I have chosen to reconstruct is one that does not have any framework. The body of the bag is obviously soft, as the end has bent over the body (see Figs 1–3) and the fletching cover is designed to fold back over itself. There appears to be some kind of tie attached to the lower edge of the cover, which I have chosen to interpret as being an upper closure for the bag. The bag appears in a white or grey colour. The inside of the bag is depicted in a different colour in both illuminations, but could be to illustrate that the bag top has folded over to expose the inside. I have chosen to make this assumption and

therefore have not made a separate lining for the bag. There appears to be no ties on the bottom of this particular style of arrow bag, and therefore would not be suitable for broad heads as the rearward point would catch upon their attempted removal from the bag. This is of interest as the Poitiers archers are depicted with barbed arrows, but the Najera archers appear to have bodkins of some description that would not catch on the spacer. It is possible that the bags (or some of them) did not have a spacer at all, but I have chosen to include one as I will not be using broad heads.

## Construction

*Spacer:* The first step involved the constructing of a spacer. The Mary Rose spacers were the only examples that I was able to find, none of which are contemporary. In the lack of other evidence, I decided to use these as examples taking measurements from two spacers in particular, items 2244 and 2246 from the Mary Rose database<sup>[7]</sup> using 4 mm thick leather. **NB:** Whilst I tried as best I could to match the holes on photograph (Fig 4) and extrapolated that positions of the remaining holes as logically as I could (Fig. 5), further research has indicated that the Mary Rose spacer has a much more irregular spacing than I originally thought. My conclusion is that you might as well bung them in as best you can.



Fig. 4

Mary Rose spacer 2244

Once the spacer has been made I set the arrows that were to be used in the bag, inside and measured the distance from the point where I wanted the spacer to sit (below the beginnings of the fletches) to the points. I also measured the distance from this same point to the ends of the nocks. You will need two extra measurements to make the bag,

They are the external circumference of the all the vanes of your arrows when arranged in the spacer (arranged circumference) and the diameter of the same (arranged diameter). The first can be found by wrapping a string loosely around the arrows.

The Mary Rose spacer had stitching on the edge<sup>[8]</sup>, but I could not see any visible stitch marks on the upper smooth surface of the spacer itself. As a result I have edge stitched the spacer beginning underneath the spacer (flesh) and travelling out of the edge of the spacer.

*Arrow Cup:* It became obvious after handling 24 arrows with their points in my hand that some kind of preventative measure would be necessary to present the points from exiting the bottom of the bag. After some consideration, a small thin leather cup was produced that was then sewn into the bottom of the bag. It's construction involved measuring the diameter the arrows covered when grouped together, drawing a circle on the leather, then drawing a second outer circle with the radius increased by the amount you wish the leather to rise up the side (Figs 6 and 7).

## Bag

The bag needs a number of measurements, as indicated in Fig. 8. As individual arrows are different, I have included the method I used to calculate these measurements. I recommend writing all these down first before beginning any construction.

The other measurements on the diagram are:

A: Length between spacer and point

B: Length between spacer andnock end of arrow

C: Circumference of arrow spacer + seam allowance

D: Circumference of arrow cup + seam allowance

E: Half the arranged diameter, plus 5 cm + seam allowance.

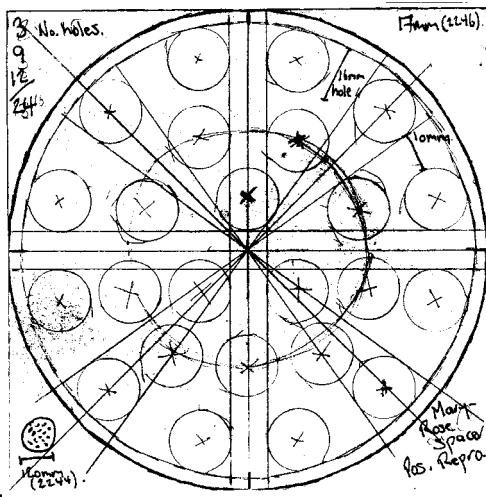


Fig. 5

Plan of possible reconstruction of Mary Rose spacer (by author)

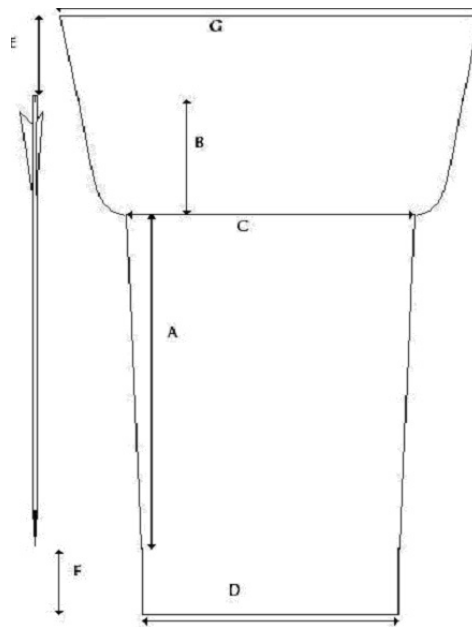


Fig. 8 (left)

Arrow bag plan, showing principal measurements

Fig. 9 (right)

Diagram showing construction with cup in bottom, spacer below fletches and cover folded over with ties

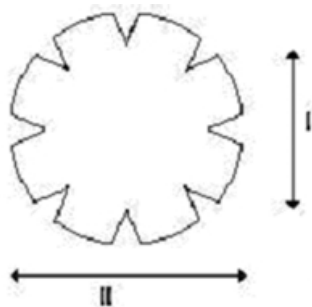
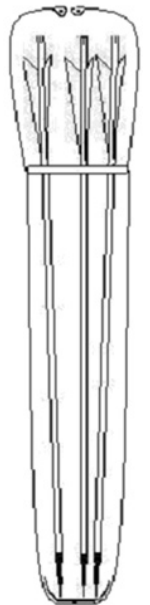
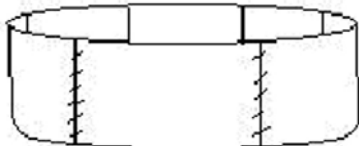


Fig. 6 (left)

Plan of arrow cup

Fig. 7 (below)

Completed arrow cup



F: Half the diameter of the arrow cup + generous seam allowance

G: The arranged diameter of the arrows + a very generous allowance to allow it to go over the fletches without catching (mine ended up being 600 mm across using  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch high flights, but in future I would allow at least 100 mm more).

## Assembly

Draw your pattern onto your linen using Fig. 8 as a guide. Don't worry if the angle at the top is not as steep as the diagram as it is a guide only.

Cut out and blanket-stitch the edges to stop fraying.

Sew the spacer into the bag at the correct height from the bottom (which will be A + F).

Sew the body of the bag down to the end of A. Sew in the arrow cup using the top of the cup.

Sew under the cup and close the bottom drawing it together like a drawstring pouch.

Take a piece of linen at least 200 mm longer than measurement G. Fold over and sew into a thin piece of linen to use as a tie. Alternatively use leather thong.

Fold over the top edge of the top edge of the cover and sew leaving room for the tie. You might want to have the tie in place when you do this to avoid having to thread it through later. If you fold the linen inwards, you might want to cut two holes through which the tie can emerge to the outside.

Sewn the remaining edge up to the top of the cover.

Place arrows inside. Draw tie tight. I have tied the ends so that no one can pull it through and so that, if necessary, I can sling it over my head to carry the bag.

## References

1. Jean Froissart, *Chronicles, 15th Century*. (BNF FR 2643) commissioned by the Flemish nobleman, Louis of Gruthuse, around 1470–1480.
2. An image of this illumination may be found at [http://www.bnf.fr/enluminures/manuscrits/aman1/i3\\_0028.htm](http://www.bnf.fr/enluminures/manuscrits/aman1/i3_0028.htm)
3. An image of this illumination may be found at [http://www.bnf.fr/enluminures/manuscrits/aman1/i3\\_0038.htm](http://www.bnf.fr/enluminures/manuscrits/aman1/i3_0038.htm)
4. The Calling of St Matthew, (1599–1600) by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571–1610)
5. The Guardroom and Deliverance of St. Peter (1645–47) by David Teniers the Younger (1610-1690) from Osprey's *Soldiers of the English Civil War: 1 Infantry* by Roberts, K (1996)
6. Fra Bartolommeo (1472–1517) <http://www.getty.edu/art/collections/bio/a775-1.html>
7. A searchable database located at <http://www.maryrose.org>
8. <http://www.florilegium.org/files/ARCHERY/quivers-msg.txt> mentions the stitching.



Fig. 10 (above)

Completed bag with cover closed

Fig. 11 (below)

Bag with cover folded back

