



Michelham Bowmen

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INTRODUCTION



Welcome to Michelham Bowmen

We are a historical archery and re-enactment group situated in the picturesque grounds of Michelham Priory.

Named after the Augustinian Priory founded in 1229 by Gilbert de l'Aigle, we invite you to join us in mastering the art of traditional longbow shooting—once considered the most powerful weapon in medieval warfare. You can also engage in traditional crafts, enjoy games, and have a delightful chat with fellow enthusiasts.

The Longbow

The medieval longbow was usually made from one of four different woods. Elm or wych elm was the favoured wood of the Welsh bowmen, with Gerald the Welshman writing in the twelfth century “the bows these Welshmen use are not beautifully formed or polished, quite the opposite; they are rough, but stout and strong nonetheless, not only able to shoot an arrow a long way, but also to inflict very severe wounds at close quarters.”

Other woods used were ash and laburnum, but the best was always yew, with the heartwood resisting compression and the sapwood resisting tension, it resulted in a perfect wooden spring, which could accumulate, store and release energy with greater efficiency than any other wood. Longbows are taller than the archer by at least 4 inches and are made with the archers ‘draw length’ in mind; a ‘draw length’ refers to the measurement from your bow hand (the hand you hold the bow in), to the nock point of the bow string at full draw.



Types Of Longbow Bows



Single Stave Bow

Merchants of Menace

Single stave bows represent one of the most genuine forms of English bows. As the name implies, these bows are crafted from a single piece of wood that combines both sapwood and heartwood, effectively creating the necessary tension for optimal performance.

These bows tend to have a relatively short life span and can last as little as 18 months.



Double Laminate Bow

Irondale Longbows

Double laminated bows are crafted using two distinct pieces of wood to replicate the natural tension found in single stave bows. The wood is meticulously cut and glued together, after which the assembled piece is shaped to achieve the desired form.

Single stave, double and triple laminate bows will vary in price but will start at minimum £120.



Triple Laminate Bow

Bickerstaff

Triple laminated bows are crafted using three different types of wood, following a similar method to that of double laminates. The wood types can vary and may include combinations such as purple heart, ash, elm, and even bamboo.

Both double and triple laminate bows are very common with most reenactors, as they will tend to last a lot longer than a single stave bow.

Types Of Bows



Yew Bows

Red String Longbows

The Yew Bow: The Ferrari of English Archery
The yew bow is often considered the Ferrari of the English bow realm. Historically, most bows were crafted from yew, typically sourced from England, though imported wood was also common. Its remarkable ability to store and release energy makes it an ideal material for bow making.

In today's market, a lightweight yew bow typically starts at £1,000 or more. Since these bows are made from a single stave, they come with a limited lifespan.



War Bows

Exhibited on the Mary Rose

The Ultimate Fighting Weapon

For centuries, nothing compared to the English war bow as a formidable weapon. It reigned supreme until the introduction of the flintlock rifle. However, even then, the war bow consistently outperformed the rifle in terms of shooting range and speed.

It was a true powerhouse of history, and the impact it had on the battlefield, along with its skilled archers, was immense, with an average draw weight of between 95 lbs-170 lbs.



Everyday/Hunting Bows

These are the types of bows most reenactors prefer, with draw weights ranging from 25 lbs to 70 lbs. They offer greater versatility and were historically used for hunting and home defence.

When purchasing a bow, focus not just on the maximum weight you can pull once or twice; keep in mind that you'll be drawing your bow repeatedly throughout the day. Therefore, it's essential to choose a draw weight that you can comfortably sustain.

Arrows

We utilize traditional arrows crafted from wooden shafts, feathered flights, and are 'self-knocked'—this term refers to the end of the arrow that fits onto the string, which simply features a deep notch cut into it. Fletchings were typically affixed using skin glue, often blended with beeswax and other additives to prevent insect damage during long-term storage. They were then secured with silk or linen thread in a technique known as 'whipping.' This crafting method remains largely unchanged in the re-enactment community, except for the use of modern glues. Based on historical illustrations, popular fletching shapes included parallelogram, triangular, and parabolic forms, among others.

The points used in archery today differ from those of the past. We employ bullet points, target points, bodkins, or 'top hat' historical points, all of which are designed to be safe and not damage the targets.

You can acquire traditional arrows from various companies, starting at around £100 for a set of six. Many of our members choose to create their own arrows from scratch or commission a fellow club member. We provide informational guides and offer demonstrations and informal workshops for those interested in learning this craft.



Re-enactment Kit

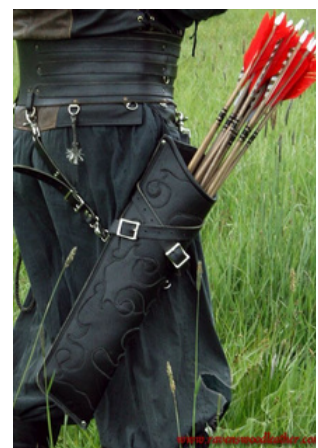
The term "re-enactment kit" refers to our individual attire and accessories, which include shoes, eating utensils, bows, arrows, and more.

It's important to avoid viewing this as a 'costume'—something to wear for a special occasion or fancy dress, but rather, simply as clothing. Items that represent the practical, everyday garments worn by our ancestors in their daily lives. From peasants tending to the fields to craftsmen, traders, soldiers, and the affluent, all engaged in their work, battles and duties. Each piece of clothing and accessory served a specific purpose; be it brooches, knives, or belts, these were items of necessity..

Your kit is a deeply personal collection, often made up of many handcrafted pieces, including your clothing, shoes, and accessories. All of these require maintenance, mending, and proper storage to ensure their longevity.

This is NOT Historical

There are thousands of options available for 'medieval', 'Historical' or 'Viking' attire and accessories. However, 95% of these are unsuitable for historical re-enactment; we are not Game of Thrones or Assassin's Creed. If that's what you're seeking, then LARP (live-action role play) might be a better fit for you.



Neither Is This



PLEASE

All of the options mentioned above are visually appealing; however, please note that these WILL NOT be allowed in our club. Therefore, ****please refrain from rushing out to make purchases****, as these items can be quite expensive and may ultimately lead to unnecessary spending.

Your three-month membership serves not only to determine if you enjoy archery but also to consider whether you want to invest in assembling a historical kit. During or after this period, once you are certain about continuing with this style of archery, feel free to discuss your plans with us. Together, we can decide on the time period and social status you wish to represent, and then you can conduct your research. We have access to books, websites, and knowledgeable individuals who can help you make informed choices.

Creating a historical kit requires both time and financial investment, so it's perfectly acceptable to build it gradually. There are several essential items you'll need to establish a starter kit. A leather belt, bracer, and shooting glove are excellent initial steps in gathering your equipment. However, ****once again, please seek guidance before making any purchases.****

Male/Female Kit (Starter)

These items are crafted from cotton, a non-authentic material. While they are suitable for beginners and can last for a season (about one year), they provide a great opportunity to reflect on which century you wish to represent going forward.

After a shoot season, and if you wish to continue, you will be expected to start working on upgrading your clothes to authentic standards.



Basic Men's Tunic

A simple tunic that can be worn over your everyday clothing is a great addition to your wardrobe. Ensure that it is larger in size to comfortably fit over thermals and multiple layers during the winter. Stick to a plain and straightforward design for versatility. You can add a long leather or fabric belt.



Basic Women's Dress

A straightforward dress made of solid color and fabric is ideal for beginners. Additionally, ensure that it is roomy enough to accommodate warm layers underneath during colder weather.

A simple long leather or fabric belt will help bring the look together.



Trousers and Shoes

At this stage, trousers should be a solid plain colour, (we recommend black or brown). The same goes for shoes; they should be durable and as simple as possible, preferably in brown or black.

Male/Female Basic Kit (authentic)

As a historical re-enactment club, the importance of authentic clothing and accessories cannot be overstated. You can gradually build your collection by sourcing, creating, or adding items over time, considering that authentic gear can be costly. Suitable materials to use include wool, linen, leather, and bone, among others. Styles, details and fabrics will change depending on the era, culture and social status you choose to represent, so please do research and ask for advice.



Under Garments

Linen

Undergarments crafted from soft, durable linen are essential for historical attire. They not only provide an additional layer for warmth but also create a barrier between your skin and the often itchy wool fabrics. Most would have been an undyed natural shade of beige, pure white was mainly used for wealthy people.

Outer Garments

Wool

Most outerwear is crafted from wool, although silk can be seen for the affluent. The quality of the weave often reflects one's wealth. Additionally, styles, colours, and details can vary greatly based on culture, era, and social status. Outer garments include tunics, hoods, cloaks, cotes etc.

Hoes and Trousers

Wool, Silk, Linen

Regardless of whether they are single-legged hoes with braids, joined hoes, loose trousers, or leg wraps, the styles, colours, and materials will vary based on the era, status, and culture.

Historical Shoes

Leather

Footwear tends to be one of the last items people purchase, as it can be quite costly and often less comfortable compared to our modern shoes. Nonetheless, it is essential and should be prioritised above items like swords and similar accessories.

Different Centuries and Cultures

Our focus spans from the Anglo-Saxon period to the 15th century, but we also invite our members to share their own cultures and interests. Each culture and era offers a rich array of styles and statuses to explore; here are just a few examples.



Anglo-Saxon



Anglo-Saxon



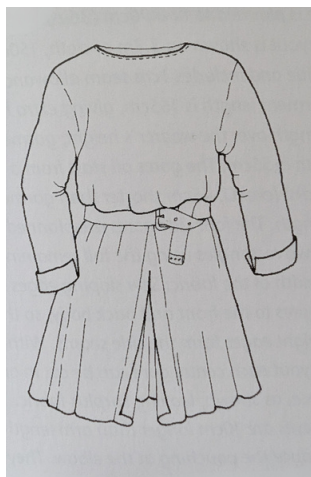
Viking



Viking



12th Century



12th Century



13th Century



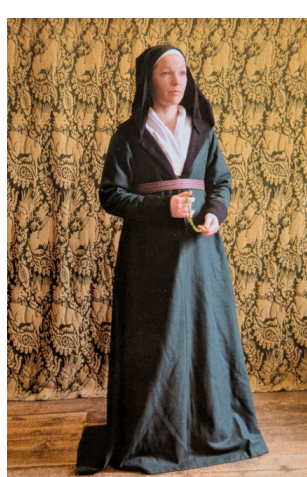
13th Century



14th Century



14th Century



15th Century



15th Century

Low, Middle and Upper Classes

A very brief look at 14th century ladies dress.



Historical Accessories

All accessories should be historically accurate and align with your selected time period and social status; made using the correct materials such as bone, appropriate wood types, leather etc. Items such as belts, pouches, knives, quivers, and bracers not only represent the era but also reflect the individuality of the wearer.



Make Your Own

Many re-enactors create their own costumes, and it doesn't have to be complex. A straightforward T-shaped tunic or dress can be quite simple to make. You can find books and patterns to help, or feel free to seek advice from one of our knowledgeable members—most of whom had never stitched anything before joining the club, so if we can do it, then so can you!

We also recommend several fabric suppliers who specialize in historical materials and offer reasonable prices.



When choosing material, remember to research what colours would have been around during your chosen time period and select fabrics that would have been available such as linen and wool.



If this is your first time making clothing, we would recommend keeping it simple, and if needed, asking for advice from our members.



Not in to Archery?

Not all of our members want to, or are able to shoot. Some bring added interest with crafts such as fletching, spinning and leather work, while others simply want to come and have a cup of tea and a natter.



Traders and Suppliers

Archery

Nick Toy Longbows - nicktoysclassicbows.weebly.com

Irondale Longbows - www.irondalelongbows.com

The Longbow Shop - www.thelongbowshop.com

Heritage Longbows - www.heritagelongbows.com

Shire Archery - www.shirearchery.co.uk

Black Arrow Longbows - www.blackarrowlongbows.com

Carol Archery - www.carolarchery.com

Fairbow UK (bow, arrows and arrow making equipment, right wing feathers) 07771 866133
www.fairbowuk.com (outside

A Piece of History - Facebook

Quicks Archery - www.quicksarchery.co.uk

Richard Head Longbows - www.english-longbow.co.uk

Clothing and Fabrics

Viking Dragon - www.thevikingdragon.com

Get Dressed For Battle - www.gdfb.co.uk

Mike The Hat -

Linen & Needle -

Sally Green (off-the-peg medieval clothes) www.sallygreen.co.uk

Cloaked and Daggered (period clothing) www.cloakanddagged.com

Herts Fabrics (cloth merchant, cotton & linen) www.hertsfabrics.co.uk

Bernie the Bolt (cloth merchant, wool & linen) www.calltoarms.com/bolt/

Phil Fraser (shirts, braies, bags, belts, knives, bows etc) www.philfraser.com

Mulberry Dyer (authentic dyer & dye stuffs) 0121 2882115 www.mulberrydyer.co.uk

Traders and Suppliers

Leather and Shoes

Merchant Of Menace - www.merchantofmenace.co.uk

Pinchmill Leathers (leather merchants) www.pinchmillleathers.co.uk

Lyon Leathers (leather merchants) www.lyonleathers.co.uk

Andy Burke Shoes (historic shoe, boot & clog maker) www.andyburke.co.uk

NP Historical Shoes (authentic period shoes) www.np-historicalshoes.com (Facebook store)

Phil Fraser (budget shoes, belts bags) www.philfraser.com

Ana Period Shoes (authentic period footwear) www.anaperiodshoes.co.uk

Tents

Past Tents (period tents) 01280 850386 www.past-tents.com

Heritage Tents (medieval tents & pavilions) www.heritagetents.co.uk

Metalwork, Arms and Armour

Todd Cutler (authentic hand-made weaponry) www.todsworkshop.com

Hector Cole (Arrowsmith, hand forged authentic arrow heads, etc.) www.hectorcoleironwork.com

Lionheart Replicas (pewter replicas, dress accessories, badges, spoons, etc.)
www.lionheartreplicas.co.uk

Bayley Heritage Castings (bronze artefacts, buckles, etc.) www.bayleyheritagecastings.co.uk

Traders and Suppliers

Jewellery & Other Useful Stuff

Glitter beards (handmade Viking and Anglo-Saxon jewellery and accessories)
www.glitterbeards.co.uk

Potted History (historically accurate replica ceramics) www.Pottedhistory.co.uk

Annott's Pots (reproduction pottery) email annottspots@hotmail.com

Bohemia Beauty (historic bohemian glassware) www.bohemiabeauty.co.uk

OhSewScandi (Viking tablet weave) www.etsy.com/uk/shop/OhSewScandi

Spellowcroftcraft (handmade re-enactment odds and ends, mugs, pins, spoons, etc.)
www.etsy.com/uk/shop/Spellowcroftcraft

Our membership year runs from 1st of January to 31st of December and the subscription includes public liability insurance.