

Kit Guidelines For Kirby Hall 2002

As you may know, at Kirby Hall this year we are staging an unusual battle, Larissa 1082. This is both outside our normal time period (793-1066) and, since it took place in modern Macedonia, geographical area.

History In 1071 the Byzantines suffered a major defeat at the battle of Manzikert. The Eastern army and with it the whole 'Thematic' system that supplied the Empire with its armies. About the same time, and following the events of 1066-70 many English Thegns, dispossessed of their lands in England, went overseas and entered into service with the armies of Byzantium. So many of them were taken into the famous Varangian guard that by about 1080 it was sometimes referred to as the 'English' guard.

Norman Invasion In May 1081 the Normans, under Robert De Guiscard, invaded the Byzantine Empire from their holdings in Southern Italy. The new Emperor, Alexius Comnenus had only been crowned the previous month and was still trying to reorganise the army following the disastrous battle of Manzikert in 1072. Nevertheless he led a force comprised of a mixed bag of newly raised regulars, English Varangians and Slavic mercenaries to face the Normans at Dyrrachium. Not surprisingly they were defeated, and another defeat followed at Joanina where Roberts son Bohemund led the Normans. The Byzantines were finally victorious at Larissa and the Normans were halted. Having stopped moving forward the Normans started disagreeing amongst themselves and soon the whole invasion fell apart.

At Kirby Hall we will be staging a battle between the Normans and the troops of the Byzantine Empire. We will be attempting to field three units of troops, Varangian Guards, Byzantine Peltastos and Slavic or Rus mercenaries. In addition, those members with a 'Norman' bent can fight along with Conquest and their guests in the Norman army. All the normal weapons and armour may be worn, but those who choose to dress according to the special guidelines below will be asked to accept being grouped together with other similarly dressed members in order to give the units a coherent feel. The numbers in parentheses () refer to notes at the end of this piece.

Specific Kit Information By Unit

1. Rus/Slavs This unit represents a group of mercenaries hired by the Emperor. As such they are the most irregular unit in the army and the least well equipped. This is the easiest option for all members. Normal Vikings and kit guidelines apply:

Kyrtle	Long or short, any authentic colour. Rus coats welcome.
Trousers or hose	OK
Belt and fittings	Any OK
Armour	Ring shirts only
Helmet	Any
Weapons	Any, but apart from NO Dane-axes we want a good mix for this unit.
Shield	Any. (There is evidence for shields not round or kite shaped amongst the Slavs, and anyone who wants to make one should contact the authenticity team to discuss their plans BEFORE starting work)

If you have even a single specific Eastern item of kit (e.g. pointed helmet or Rus trousers) plus a mail-shirt, you should consider the Varangian unit (below) instead.

2. The Varangian Guard. At this time the Varangians were a mixed unit of Anglo-Saxons, Anglo-Danes and Vikings of every colour. In broad terms they are a unit of veteran mercenaries, many of whom would kill someone else just to get a swing at a Norman. They were also the Imperial 'bad boys' often used for unpleasant duties like tax collection and Imperial executions. (According to one story, during his time in the Varangian Guard, Harald Hardrada personally executed a former Emperor). They were renowned for their main weapon, the two-handed axe, so we would like as many mail shirts and Dane-axes as possible.

Kyrtle	Long or short, any authentic colour. NO Rus coats.
Trousers or Hose	Hose or Rus trousers preferred, but any OK
Belt and fittings	Eastern or Anglo-Saxon preferred but any OK
Helmet	No Gjermundbus otherwise any
Armour	Ring shirt or leather body cuirass and scale armour. May also have steel vambraces and/or greaves
Weapons	Lots of Dane-axes and swords. Spears are OK but if possible we would like to concentrate the spears in the Byzantine unit below. Sorry but NO hand-axes as a main weapon please.
Shield	Round or Kite

3. Byzantine Peltastos This is the unit for those who want to try something different. They represent a newly raised unit of the regular army and will be given orders in Greek using the correct commands. Their regulation equipment is laid down in a contemporary military manual, the *Praecepta Militaria* which is dated to the second half of the 10thC. This details the optimum equipment standards for light and heavy infantry, archers, horse archers and medium and heavy cavalry.

	Armour	Helm	Shield	Weapon(s)	Other
3. Peltastos (Byzantine)	Kabadon (1)	Turban (2)	Round or Almond (7)	12' Spear (3) + Sword or Axe	Tunic and Hose

In the aftermath of Manzikert much of this would have been in short supply and as is often the case with regular troops equipment levels varied, so we are happy to see warriors with a lot less than full equipment. Although the minimum equipment needed is: Spear, Shield and Turban (2) (short spears will be placed in the front rank) see below for more details.

Kyrtle	Long or short, any authentic colour. NO Rus coats.
Trousers or Hose	Hose preferred, NO Rus trousers, but any others OK
Belt and fittings	Any OK
Helmet	Domed, conical or Turban (2) but NO Gjermundbus.
Armour	Kabadon (1) (this is probably the word perverted by later crusaders into Gambeson and we will use this term from here on) or Lamellar (see below for officers) only. NO Ring shirts
Shield	Kite preferred but Round OK.
Weapons	Spears, any length plus sword or hand axe. NO Dane-axes please. Since this is part of a scripted battle, this unit only has permission from the society-training officer and battle-captain to use spears up to 12' in length. Anyone with a spear pass (basic or advanced) can take part but they MUST attend a training session. Those interested should contact Pete James (see below) as soon as possible. Orders to this unit will be given in the correct medieval Greek.

Ideally at least two members will be dressed as Byzantine officers, and they will be in nominal command of the unit (although a Society Hersir will remain in actual control of the unit). Members wishing to dress the part of a Byzantine officer should study the extra guidelines below and then contact Russell Scott or Pete James. Extra 'officers' can be attached to the Varangians or the Rus/Slavic unit as translators!

	Armour	Helm	Shield	Weapon(s)	Other
3a. Lochagos or Dekarchos (NCO)	Gambeson (1) or Lamellar (4). If Lamellar may also wear steel vambraces (5) and greaves (5)	*Turban (2)	Round or (6) Almond	Spear plus Sword and/or (7) Mace	Normal Viking kit. NO Rus trousers.
3b. Kentarchos or Pentekontarchi (Officer)	Lamellar (4), Scale (4) or Breastplate. May also wear steel vambraces (5) and greaves (5)	Conical or *Turban (2)	(6) Almond or none	Sword and/or (7) mace	NO trousers

We also hope to have a fully dressed 'Emperor' on display plus a correct tent. Invitations are invited from suitably dressed volunteers (especially Varangians) to guard the Emperor.

Other Sources of Information. Anyone who wishes to put together the Byzantine kit for this show is directed to the Levantia website maintained by Tim Dawson here: <http://www-personal.une.edu.au/~tdawson/contents.html> There are pictures of both an infantryman and a cavalryman fully equipped according to the *Praecepta Militaria*. Another starting point is the Osprey men-at-arms book Byzantine Armies 886-1188, but as usual be careful with these sources.

4 & 5. Norman Infantry

The normal kit guidelines for 1066 – dated shows will be used for this event, with a few extra items allowed

4. Norman Heavy Infantry	Ring-shirt, Scale (4) or Lamellar. May also wear steel vambraces and greaves or chain mail cuisses.	Conical	Kite	Sword. Mace (6) and/or spear optional. NO hand Axes	Normal 1066 Norman kif.
5. Other Normans	None, Gambeson or Ring-shirt	Conical or Dome	Kite or round	All weapons (NO Dane-Axes	Normal 1066 Norman kit.

Note that Norman heavy infantry are allowed Dane-axes for this event only. The Normans were sufficiently impressed by the Anglo-Saxon use of this weapon that some of them did adopt it.

6. Cavalry

While the Normans would wear the equipment shown in 4 above, for those who would like to try the Byzantine approach the authentic kit is different again.

Another of the Levantia pages here: <http://www-personal.une.edu.au/~tdawson/prokoursator.html> shows what could be achieved fairly easily if desired. He wears a ring-shirt, pointed Eastern helmet and is armed with a sword, mace and round shield. Yet another page here: <http://www-personal.une.edu.au/~tdawson/archer.html> shows a horse archer wearing the alternate *Klibania* or Lamellar armour for Byzantine medium cavalry.

10th C Byzantine *Kataphraktoi* (heavy cavalry) are described in the *Praecepta Militaria* as wearing helms with 2 or 3 layer mail hangings covering all but their eyes, *Klibania* with splinted upper sleeves, lower sleeves and skirts of padding faced with mail, and splinted grieves. In the 10th C they still used small round shields in conjunction with a lance, sword and mace. Anyone turning up in this kit is probably completely mad and deserves some praise.

While the padded under garments are not absolutely required for our event, if anyone wants to try this please talk to Pete James or Russ Scott **FIRST**.

7. Archers

For archers on both sides normal kit guidelines apply (numbers 1 or 5 above). Byzantine archers could have one-piece re-curve bows, but they will need to meet the requirements of the society archery rules before they can be considered from the authenticity point of view.

Notes

- 1 This garment is described in the *Praecepta Militaria* as having detachable arms, but anyone with a padded gambeson with sleeves of any length is welcome, but no ring-shirts in the Byzantine unit please.
- 2 The standard headgear in the *Praecepta Militaria* is described as: “*a turban over a thick felt cap*” and is of the low-fronted type. It can be re-created by winding a length of plain silk, cotton or linen around your normal helmet, (not Gjermundbus please) and tucking the end in at the back. Ethnic material shops are a good place to start.
- 3 12' spears. These are the correct length for Byzantine infantry in our period and there are plans for training with them at most events before Kirby Hall. The front rank will probably have one-handers (5'6") with shield, the second rank two-handers (7'6") and the third rank 12'.
- 4 Anyone with a lamellar or scale shirt is also welcome even if it hasn't got a padded undergarment. Although worn by Byzantine cavalry for many years, they only started being issued to infantry towards the end of the 11th C. Anyone with this armour may be scripted as a Byzantine officer (*Kentarchos* or *Pentekopntarki*) but, unless an existing Hersir will be directed by one. Normans are also known to have worn these types or armour.
- 5 Vambraces and greaves which cover the lower arm and leg with steel strips may be worn if a ring-shirt, lamellar or scale is being worn, but please speak to a member of the authenticity team BEFORE starting to construct these items.
- 6 Almond-shaped shields are smaller than a normal kite shield (about 32" x 22" max)
- 7 Maces may only be carried or used on the battlefield by those who have taken the mace assessment.

Finally. This is an unusual event with many different options for members. So **PLEASE DO NOT** start on a potentially expensive item or option without speaking to a member of the Authenticity Team first.

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