

To the Men and Women of the Raven, Greetings.

Hi Everyone,

At the beginning of March, Steve, Emmaline and I went to the Hersirs' Meeting and I have written a report on what was said and decided, I was also asked to write an article for the next Runestaff ("Who's Having Fun") but you can get to read it first, as it is included with this Raven's Wing.

On our western borders, there is a new Vike group about to come into existence; Karl and Tony from Manaraefan with Gregg and Merlin, both provincials, have got together with the Regia, Ex Regia and Ex Vikings of Middle England people and about half a dozen new people to start a Devon and Cornwall based group. The new Lethang will be known as Rafenslith (Raven's Troop) and Karl will be it's first Sturaesman. I'm sure you will all join me in wishing them good fortune. On Saturday 11 March Steve, Dave and myself drove down to Honiton to help them train and we had a good session with about fifteen people taking part. Their main concern was the formation combat and Steve and I took them through everything except hunting groups; we were also able to bring them up to date on some of the items discussed at the Hersirs' Meeting. They are very keen for help and advice getting their Lethang started and I am happy for us to give all the help we can. We will probably arrange the occasional joint training session, because of the distances to travel it might be best to make them weekend events with a party.

Ravenslith have put in a bid for the Exeter show on the 3/4 August; if they are successful then they will need some help, as they have plenty of warriors but no LHE.

The next training session at Old Sarum is on Sunday 17 March and then its the first major show of the Season at Battle Abbey. The Runestaff is already out of date as it says there will only be one "skirmish" – there will be two.

Between the two, we have our shield-making session at Steve's work in Four Marks. This will be from 10am onwards, on Sunday 24th March. If your shield is in need of replacement, or you can spare a couple of hours to help make group shields, then please come along. The idea is that group shields can be swapped, on a one-for-one basis, with old shields that are falling apart, so it is in everyone's interests to help – you could be making your next replacement!

See you all there

Roger

REPORT ON THE HERSIRS' MEETING HELD ON SUNDAY 3 MARCH 2002 IN LEEDS

Before the meeting those that arrived on Saturday went out for a meal and to the pub. It is the general idea that spouses and partners be encouraged to attend to make the affair a nice social event. It was not possible for us to have the meeting on Saturday and this had a knock on effect to the social aspect.

Three Manaraefan representatives attended the meeting;

Roger Barry - Hersir
Steve Allen - Hersir
Emmalynne Downing - Cavalry Thegn

1. The phase of the scripted battle that was called the "Un-scripted Phase" is to be renamed the "Hersir Led Section". The reason for this is that warriors seemed to think that it was where they could do as they pleased and confusion reigned. Also warriors were not sure what to do in the case of getting hit. It was always the intention that the Unit Leaders from each side should get together before the battle to plan what they would do, this would mean that the two sides would have a mutually exclusive battle plan just as in real life. The Unit Leaders will be reminded of this at the Unit Leaders Meeting before the battle. The aim is then for the two armies to try to defeat the other by having the best plan. If a warrior takes a hit they should behave as if wounded and make their way back to their start line where they will be rallied back into the unit when the phase ends. If a unit is defeated in this manner the enemy are to hold back from completely massacring them as they are needed for later phases.
2. For those interested in acting the new Acting Thegns are Gavin and Jose. If you are a Hersir/Unit Leader and an actor make sure you tell the Acting Thegns that you are already committed to one of the armies. Also if you are contacted by the Battle Captain for a command job and are playing a role in the drama tell the Battle Captain what side you are on. The idea here is to prevent a repeat of the ludicrous sight of Geng being a Welsh king and a Viking war leader at the same time. Some acting roles carry on onto the battlefield, if you have one of these roles make sure you talk to the Unit Leader of the unit you are attached to, it is they that will run the unit, you are a figure head and will only issue the orders they tell you to.
3. More use of horns will be made this year. Last year the horns were only used to signal the end of the "Un-scripted Phase", this year they will be used to signal the start of a phase and the end. Basically if you are standing around doing nothing and you hear the horn be ready for your Unit Leader to give you an order. If you are fighting and hear the horn you must break contact and fall back on the command of your Unit Leader. If you hear the horn make sure your Unit Leader knows as he may not have heard it.
4. Some people thought that when we break contact we were too good and should make it more ragged, we are after all not supposed to be Roman Infantry. Most of us at the meeting thought that those of this mind must have been at a different show! At the end of the discussion it was agreed that the Hearth Troops should break in a

professional manner and that the other Units should not. This seems to be the status quo so we shall see.

5. Identifying the warriors apart is, and was historically, a problem. There are two solutions which may be used. In the past it was documented that warriors would fix to their helmets some sort of "battle mark" to identify themselves, what these were is not usually recorded. Another method was by the use of a "battle cry". There was no decision made on battle marks but the use of a battle cry is to be encouraged, at the Unit Leaders meeting before the battle the Unit Leaders will be told their battle cry. When each army advances they will chant their battle cry. Naturally when the fight begins the warriors will save their breath for fighting, if you get "turned around" and are not sure who you are facing shout your battle cry. This will identify you to those you face, you will soon know if they are friend or foe as the latter are likely to hit you!
6. Too many people are going out for the parleys. Only the Army Commander (usually the Unit Leader of the Hearth Troop) his Standard-bearer, musician and the Battle Captain need go forward, the other Unit Leaders are to take the opportunity to brief their warriors or give them a pep talk. If Body Guards are required they are to stand well back from the commanders, about ten paces. All weapons are to be sheathed and the those parleying are not to take long axes or spears with them. Parleys are to be called for by the Vikings raising a white shield and the Saxons raising a branch.
7. We discussed a number of things about the other activities that go on, on the battlefield, corpses or lack thereof, wounded and the warriors' state of mind. See the attached article that I was tasked to write for the Runestaff.
8. The Cavalry representative, Emmalyne, expressed some concern about the people behind the shieldwall when cavalry were about. For safety reasons sometimes the cavalry will go round the rear of the shieldwall, this puts at risk those standing to the rear. If cavalry attack then all the "hangers on" at the rear must close up tight behind the shieldwall, they will then be safe from the risk of being run over. Because of the natural fear of the horses – they don't like running into solid walls – the cavalry are therefore most likely to engage in combat with the flanks of the shieldwall, so anybody wanting to fight the cavalry must be deployed there. This is another reason why some of the cavalry end up behind the shieldwall. We also discussed for some time the possibility of a Cavalry assessment for the infantry. We only want those that have done some training taking part in the "stunts", we will still train people on the day for specific stunts and allow them to fight the cavalry. Also standing in the shieldwall and fending off blows is not very tasking. The aim is to have an assessment that will reward those that have done a lot of work with the cavalry.
9. Geng was very keen that we use more spears on the battlefield in the early stages. We don't want to go down the same route as Regia but spears were the most widely used weapon of the age. The idea is for whole units to be equipped with single handed spear and use them for the first or second clash. As the fighting continues they are discarded until only those using two handed spear remain. This was agreed to be a good idea but no one wanted to force people to use them.
10. In relation to the above point looting was discussed. What to do with all the spears left lying about, looting them and making a big pile of discarded weapons was the

suggestion. Added to this could be the collection of shields and, after the combat ends, helmets. These would be piled together as a sort of trophy by the victors. Warriors should be able to identify their shields and helmets, it may be a little more difficult with spears and javelins so it is recommended that some identifying mark be made on them.

11. It was announced that we would be making more use of the Kiddy Vike for watering the warriors. Only those children of twelve years and above are to be used, they must have helmets and there would be an adult on the field supervising them. When the armies start to advance they are to be chased off to the rear; though this is the responsibility of the designated adult, any adult seeing a child still on the field must chase them off. If you see a child on the opposite side where they shouldn't be tell a warrior opposite you to deal with them.
12. Hwicce offered to change side during the re-fight pretending to be mercenaries. This was greeted with bemusement to mild opposition. The offer wasn't perceived to be a general problem provided it was only done to balance up the sides. No one saw the point of a large group of warriors changing sides so as to crush the smaller side remaining. While this is a perfectly acceptable activity in real life, it was felt not to be in the spirit of fun that we like. It's one thing to lose a good and fair fight but to lose because you were crushed by overwhelming numbers following a betrayal may cause some bad feeling.
13. We discussed what we were to do with the Battle Captains portion of the training weekend. We intend to fight a number of pitched battles with emphasis on the drill of the units. The units will be drilled in Shieldwall, Shieldburh and Boars Snout. These will then be used in the battles so as to get them right in combat situations. Other things will also be done but these were thought to be our weak points. We also want to encourage people to go to the Training weekend even if they do not have any assessment they wish to take.
14. At the end of the re-fight on the first day of a show and the second day if there is to be a third day of fighting, the Unit Leaders are to meet the Battle Captain on the battlefield near the PA for a debrief. This is already the policy but some people are slow to get there; Unit Leaders are to excuse themselves from any conversation with other members of the Society or the public and attend the meeting.
15. Frania asked if anyone else would like to write battle scripts. No one was forthcoming but the other Welsh present pointed out that Geng had written some good scripts in the past and badgered him into volunteering! Geng has taken a book of old scripts and may well write some.

We had chili for lunch made by Neil, everyone seemed to enjoy it, especially Owain. It was generally felt the meeting had been productive particularly if we can practice what we preach.

Roger Barry

WHO'S HAVING FUN

The number one aim of The Vikings is for its members to have fun. If you look at the members of The Vikings at a show it is not long before you notice that people are smiling and laughing as they go about what we all consider a fun hobby. It is even possible to see warriors on the battlefield having a laugh and a joke together and here lies a small problem.

It is good that the warriors are having fun but it is perhaps not desirable that the audience sees this. There are many emotions that a warrior about to go into battle may experience and for some that may well be joy. Those that are experiencing a euphoric battle lust would express that joy in a much more manic style than displayed by a pair of warriors laughing about Friends, Father Ted or the News Quiz. Some other warriors that may appear to be happy are those covering their fear with false bravado and laughing long and hard at awful jokes, their laughter is false and forced.

Most of those about to risk their lives will feel some degree of fear, those about to go into battle for the first time may well be more afraid of letting their mates down than of facing serious injury or death. Those at their second or third battle are afraid of what they now know to be a nasty business but they may well appear calm and in control of their emotions; some of this group will be terrified and showing it. The next category of warrior is the grizzled veteran who has seen everything, he stares at the enemy with a steely gaze, gives advice to and steadies the nerves of younger warriors. But even the veteran has his limits, the horrors of war build up inside a warrior and though yesterday he showed no fear, today he suddenly remembers a prior engagement, he may start to show fear outwardly, he may just fall out from the ranks and walk away or, when the order to advance comes, he may just stand rooted to the spot.

Now we can't have everyone in the army suddenly playing one of these poor souls, we won't have much of a battle. Mostly I am asking you not to look like you are completely unconcerned about what is about to happen, I know it goes on because not only have I seen it but I am one of the worst offenders. Try to look as if you are a little worried or grimly determined, if you want to portray a warrior whose nerve is gone check with your Unit Leader first, that way when you fail to advance on command you will know the abuse hurled at you is as much an act as your apparent fear.

Warriors on a battlefield often do more than just fight, many will find an excuse to be elsewhere as indicated above. If a wealthy warrior is injured a less well off warrior may try to curry favour with a possible patron by helping him to safety and tending his wounds. If a warrior kills a foe that is better equipped he is going to want to lay claim to his weapons, a warrior in this circumstance will stop and defend the corpse until it is safe to loot. Having defended the body and commenced looting he may then find his victim is still alive and not that badly hurt, if the victim looks very wealthy he may well be more valuable as a hostage, the well prepared warrior would be advised to have a short length of rope handy just in case! If you have thoughts about actually taking a prisoner or two make sure the victim is amenable and let the Battle Captain and relevant Unit Leaders know first, this will save you from his mates rushing to the rescue and returning the favour!

Warriors from the better off social classes will remember their duty, if their leader is killed they will defend his body from their social inferiors (regardless of which side they are on) who may wish to rob him of his property. They will avenge their lord by slaying all his enemies or die trying, should they win they will take up his body and all his possessions and march back to their camp. Here his body will be prepared for burial, his women will wash his body provided he is not too ticklish!

Many people have complained that we don't have enough bodies on the battle field early in the fighting, they are quite right to complain but you can understand the reluctance of a warrior to die early on in the fun. We say that we can recycle warriors, getting them to their feet to fight again but this often doesn't look right. It will make a little more sense if when you go down in the early phases of the battle if you act wounded. When you first fall lie still because if you move your foe will just rain blows down until you stop, when the psycho wanders off start to move around a bit but holding some part of your body as if it hurts. When rescue finally arrives it will make a lot more sense to the audience as they can see that you were only wounded. It will further help, as Geng has suggested, if those going to the rescue of the fallen have some bloody bandages with them, these are easy to make, a roughly torn strip of cloth, any colour, three to four feet long with dabs of "dry" gloss red paint. The gloss red looks as if it is wet and if dry will not stain your clothes as other fresher blood substitutes might. If you carry one of these bandages yourself and think that the "medics" are taking their time getting to you, you could bandage yourself and then stagger back to your shieldwall.

This season we will be trying to involve our younger members in more activities on the battlefield, our main concern with this is their safety so those of you with children pestering you to let them take part please be patient with us. Our first step is to allow children aged twelve and above to act as water carriers for the warriors. They must have a helmet complying to the Society's safety and authenticity standards and will be under the supervision of an adult. They will be encouraged to march into the arena with the warriors but as soon as combat commences they must retire to the inner safety barrier where casks will be set up for them to refill their water bottles etc. When the armies break contact for parleys and single combats they will be asked to take water to the warriors, as soon as the horn sounds to single the start of the next combat phase they must again retire to their water point at the safety barrier. The adult in charge of them will be responsible for chasing off to the water point but any adult seeing a child near the warriors after the horn has sounded must send them to the rear. When you are in contact with the enemy if you see a child near the fighting on the other side tell the warrior you are engaged with to chase them off, any tactical advantage you might be able to take by that warrior's absence should not be taken.

I hope that this article will help you get more out of our battles, there are probably many other things that you could do to enhance the visual appearance of the battle and increase the fun, next time we kill Black Bob we could strip his corpse!

Roger Barry