

To the Men and Women of the Raven, Greetings.

Hello All,

Apart from a little rain, and the only shelter when we arrived being a hessian tent which for some reason was still being made, the weather was nice and hot at Pinhoe; it did of course rain on Hrothgar's Saga, but with Roger at the PA, what else could we expect. Their show information gave us a choice of churches for the Sunday, which Hannah and Robert found useful, but listing the hairdressers before the pubs did appear a little different. Perhaps we may not have read any further had things been listed in a different order. Not quite the numbers at our normal Majors, but everyone appeared to enjoy themselves, as Paul Murphy said 'You're right, it is a lot further than Old Sarum'.

As the action moved around, so the crowd followed, even applauding the acting and all leaving nice and quietly after the final battle. The organisers apparently broke even, which was their intention. There was a reasonable amount of interest from local schools for future events which should keep our local Vikings busy over the next few years. Kath's cooking was superb, coming back to the camp and finding various dishes and breads, cakes, and the like was very welcome. Thank you Kath, I look forward to the next time.

Sandra's report from Old Sarum follows:

Friday

Finished work early so we could get clear of Oxford before the evening rush got too heavy - we then had an easy run on the A303 into Devon. Rain pelted down much of the way which brought back memories of Chippenham. Roger had also done the site visit for this one - had Cormac managed to explain the difference between campsite and swimming pool to him in the intervening year?

This had to be the easiest to find show in years with AA signs meeting us as soon as we reached the edge of Exeter. Some confusion at the last minute when we appeared to be heading for a Viking flower festival but this turned out to be part of the same event. The rain stopped and sun appeared almost as we drew onto the field - a very nice, grassy but empty looking field. Helped throw up the tent and then went on to investigate the LHE - also empty looking, consisting of 2 tents, a somewhat damp Cormac and a relieved looking Dave Hall who had been mistaken for someone who knew what was happening and given responsibility he was keen to avoid.

The putative arena appeared to be U-shaped and the original design encompassed a small shrubbery. Just as I was admiring that, the church appeared to go up in flames. It subsequently turned out that they had taken advantage of a break in the weather to light a beacon in front of the building - apparently with the aid of about 20 gallons of lighter fuel.

By this time a few more people had started to drift into the plastic camp, we retired to the pub for an hour or two then returned to discover that numbers had started to look a bit more respectable. The evening was mild so for some reason we all clustered round Beowulf who didn't seem to mind being used in lieu of a campfire.

Saturday

By now the numbers had got passed dire and made it to poor but the LHE was looking quite respectable - mainly due to the collective acreage of tentage owned by Chloe and Manaraefan. List of attendees was distinctly strange - apparently groups from the East were prepared to haul across to Devon but those from the West and Midlands all thought it too far. All a bit bizarre. The sun was blazing down so Draum left early to go to Exmouth for a paddle.

Roger finally produced a copy of the timetable - in which acting at 2.30pm was clearly listed. "Who's in charge of that" we asked. "Err, no-one" appeared to be the reply. Richie rummaged in the depths of his car to try and find an old script we could cannibalise - for one interesting moment it looked like we could be doing the Battle of Orgeave but at that instant Alley Reynolds made the mistake of crawling out of her tent. She was immediately tasked with the job of coming up with an idea, writing a script, casting it and organising a rehearsal - and then performing it 4.5 hours later. All that in between the PA which was actually what she had come to do.

Experienced marshals were also in short supply but Dave Hall, Helena Kane and Kath Barry agreed to join me in forming the B team. We started with the Kiddie Vike - most of the regular army were missing but William is an old hand by now and lead his troop with nonchalance and aplomb. Roger brought the visitors' children in early but one little boy was too scared and sent his Mum in instead. All made a nice photo opportunity for the local paper. Hrothgar's story lead on from that, and coincided with the only rain of the 2 days. Byrthnoth and Olaf Trygvansson replayed the entire Battle of Maldon from under a testudo of shields. The rain stopped just as they finished and the sun decided to immediately do blazing hot again, causing the ground to steam gently.

Draum failed to make it back from their paddle in time for the skirmish and other late arrivals were still erecting tents etc so the script was largely thrown away and the very reduced numbers were instructed to run around a lot - presumably so the organisers couldn't focus on them and count heads. It seemed to go down well since most of the participants were experienced hard core who can show fight and put on a good display when needed. Next came the acting and Alley had done the impossible - my congratulations to both director and performers for the miracle they achieved in the time allowed - especially since 90% of them had also taken part in either the archery display or Hrothgar's as well as the skirmish beforehand.

All this was being broadcast on Devon radio. Having sent Millie over to be interviewed, I was asked to find a male warrior. Colin was an obvious target but requested a short recess. Failing to realise this was actually live radio and not a taped interview I cheerfully informed the interviewer that he would be available as soon as he had finished on the toilet - at which point he quickly made do with the vicar.

By the time of the main battle the numbers were respectable - the marshals did an excellent job of ensuring that anyone wearing male kit and breathing was on the field. The plot followed a local story/legend about the Viking invasion of the area and actually featured a local vicar although the present incumbent of the post turned down our offer of playing this role and a substitute was found instead. The natural acoustics of the arena worked well for once, with the exchange of insults being plainly heard by the audience which by now was quite large. The lob shots by the archers brought the usual gasps from the audience (and the recipients) especially as the noise they made as they hit the shields at speed was plainly audible all round. The refight was brief - what the Vikings lacked in numbers in comparison to the Saxons they compensated for in experience (not to mention the fact that the Saxons left a gaping hole in their line which the Viking army casually strolled right through).

It being a glorious evening, we decided to play at tourists and Richie took us to visit some of the scenes of his childhood which included a stroll up a hill decorated with strangely shaped rocks - Millie (ever the romantic) pointed out their resemblance to elephant poo which rather spoiled the moment if not the view from the top. We then went on a Murphy tour of seaside towns i.e that was Dawlish we just drove through at high speed, we shall now race on to Teignmouth. For some reason, we were not allowed to go to Torquay. All of this was followed by a rather decent curry in Exeter.

Sunday

Another hot day which started with breakfast in a seafront cafe in Exmouth. Calculation of expenses then took me up to first skirmish time so we kicked the warriors into a semblance of activity and headed down into the arena. It was just unfortunate that Alley took a break from speaking just as Richie gave the order "Form a tight circle chaps, my trousers are falling down" - a moment which was shared with most of the Viking end of the audience. By this time the organising committee were ecstatic since Heather (chief

organiser and PCC member) had announced they were in danger of making a profit from the event - and presumably that was just the gate. They had yet to figure in the takings at the Vicar and Donkey (beer tent to non-attendees). She had also been collecting quotes from the audience for publication in the parish magazine - "awesome" appeared to be one of them.

The final bash was equally successful and very well received by the crowd. The refight was even shorter since the Saxons appeared to be having a committee meeting and failed to notice that the Vikings had started without them until they were all dead. The audience rapidly dissipated after that - the vicar hurrying them along with a suggestion they all stopped for evensong - and we were free to pack up and set off for home.

A very well organised and fun show and while it would have been nice to have had a few more attendees, I don't think it would have improved the quality of the show though it may have given those who did take part time for an occasional rest. My thanks to all those who did make the effort to drive all that way and I'm just glad the weather made it worth our while and paid off all the efforts of the organising committee.

See you at Kirby

Sandra

Show Cancelled

Matt Boyle, had been arranging a on July 27th, in Pirbright for the Families Fete. This show has unfortunately had to be cancelled by the organisers.

Shows coming up

Exeter Living History Weekend, 4th-5th August Northernhay Gardens, Exeter City Centre

This is a Medium show, with Manaraefan, Hwicce and Ouskjarr. They are after quite a few bodies for this one, so all available hands welcome.

The time scale has been fixed as 878, when Alfred captured the banner of the Vikings, camped at Athelney, won his victory at Eddington, and took the submission and baptism of Guthrum (in/around Exeter). The living history area is a little limited on space, but we are planning on providing a full military encampment for this one. Anyone thinking of taking any extra L H tents, please check first. We should be able to provide food over the weekend, if people are prepared to muck in and help cook it. Camping available on-site from Friday afternoon until Monday morning. We're open to the public from 10am each day, and the site closes at 5pm.

The council have a web page about the event at: <http://www.exeter.gov.uk/leisure/arts/livinghistory.html> but this currently has less information than above. A map is attached

Old Sarum

A multiperiod event at Old Sarum will be using AmaDrakkon for the Dark Ages. These guys are from Northumbria, and are joint members of the Vikings. Note that this is the same weekend as Caerphilly Castle. We have been invited to join them if we so wish for the weekend as we are right on the doorstep. We won't be taking any living history, so if you fancy a bit of fun, and so long as we don't swamp them with numbers, the pop along. if nothing else you should be able to get in for free and have a nose at all the other stuff.

Luccombe Village Fete Nr Minehead? Somerset

There is to be a small local show for the Luccombe Village fete on the 22nd September (Saturday). They are looking for Living history and fighters. For full details you'll need to call Steven (Sven) from the Wolves of Andred on (01892) 540949, or email on 7samurai@supanet.com. He wants to have some idea of the numbers so that they can arrange food and stuff for you.

Training

Training in Salisbury is now on Tuesday nights 6:30pm at Old Sarum CASTLE. The barriers and no entry signs are just to stop the public going in, so please put them back in place. If it's raining too hard, then we'll be in the pub across the road. If people still want to do training on the Sundays we will do that on request. We are getting quite a few people turning up now on a fairly regular basis. Where people are only getting to shows, could I ask them to try and get in as much training as possible there. We do have quite high safety standards to maintain, and I don't like accidents happening. If you're unsure what's going on with regards to training either call me, Cormac on (01980) 594953 or Roger on (01722) 504775 and we'll make it up as we go along.

Although a cavalry date for the weekend after Pinhoe (21st/22nd) had been briefly talked about, due to lack of riders, this was cancelled. There is still no fixed date for the next Cavalry training session, as soon as I am aware, I'll let you know. The next event that will have horses will be Kirby Hall. As the horses tend to be shared at this event, training time may not be available. For those of you new to fighting cavalry, a few quick pointers.

Fighting Cavalry

1. Never hit the horses.
2. The horses are not fully trained warhorses; they do not appreciate you shouting or waving weapons and shields in their faces.
3. Always attack from the side, and listen to what the rider is saying. Look scared and back away from the horses and they are much more likely to follow you, and you more likely to get a fight with the rider.
4. The riders can easily be 'killed' as their attention is mainly with keeping the horse under control. Give them good clear targets, and telegraph your shots against them. A horse is a display weapon only.
5. Riders should not be dismounted unless this is scripted and your team know what they are doing.
6. If a horse becomes stray, remove your shield and put down weapons before even attempting to approach. There should be enough people with experience of this sort of thing to deal with it.
7. Do not 'die' under the feet of horses and keep the paths used by them clear of cor.
8. Always remember rule one.

If you want to write something for the newsletter, give it a go - please

All the best,

Cormac
Sturaesman of the Manaraefan