

RAVEN'S WING

25th June 2002

To the Men & Women of the Raven, Greetings.

Hi Everyone,

I have just about recovered from the journey back from Amlwch! It wasn't bad, just a long way and I had to go to work the next morning. I think everyone who went had a good time especially Kath Hall; she had such good time Saturday night that no one saw her on Sunday!

Mo and I left Salisbury at 17:30 and had a reasonable drive up arriving at 23:30. The LHE was packed and we spent 20 minutes looking for a suitable place to pitch camp, we had just finished when it started to rain. It rained for about two hours but neither of us got wet.

Saturday was over cast but gradually brightened, we had some showers in the morning and one during the first battle script but people just ignored it and carried on with the fight. Mo had a dodgy knee so he was Manaraefan standard bearer and did a great job of following me around, every time I turned around he was there. Maria did a short stint as standard bearer as well; I had to present some prizes for the local junior schools' Viking art competition and she allowed Mo to rest.

The main battle script called for me as the Viking leader to be killed by the Welsh Prince at the end of the battle and every one else to die around my body. Steve, who had been running the Viking Hearth Troop when I was out arguing with the Welsh, made sure many warriors did. Simon also set a good example by standing over my body to defend it, this seemed to confuse some of the Welsh who couldn't understand why he insisted on standing over me rather than attack them; eventually they got the idea that they should attack him!

After the battle we processed behind the long ship to Amlwch Port and found a pub to drink in until it was time for the funeral. Cammie, as usual, played the role of dead Viking chieftain, as usual we suggested that he stay in the boat while it burned, as usual he said rude things and got out! Those that have been to Amlwch before will not be surprised at the apparent chaos of this part of the show as Titch tries to co-ordinate the Fire Brigade, lighting the torches, getting people in position and music. This time the torches seemed reluctant to light and when they did the strong winds on the headland blew many out. Some how we managed to keep most alight most of the time by relighting from those still alight. After the usual scramble down to the port we threw our torches into the long ship and stood around to watch it burn, then as it collapsed in on itself we slowly made our way back to the pub or camp site.

The weather on Sunday was much better and I for one caught the sun. On Sunday we did a Kiddie Vike which went well though we have decided no more "Bouncy Castle". In the arena a small village had been built and at an appropriate time during the script it was to be

burned. This went according to plan but made the final phase of the battle more interesting as warriors had to avoid the roaring inferno; a strong wind blew large quantities of thick black smoke across the battlefield and gave Mo a headache.

As soon as the battle ended we started to pack up and Mo and I left at 17:00. I haven't missed an Amlwch show yet and they have never disappointed me, if you can I recommend you go to the next one in 2004.

The next event in our diary is the Exeter show run by the new west country Lethang, Raefenslith on 3/4 August, if you can go but haven't been before give Tony a ring on 01305 775307 for details of how to get there. It is right in the centre of the city near the railway station and not hard to find.

Hope to see you there,

Roger



The Welsh finally realise that the Vikings have put their village to the torch.

Report on Hounslow Show

Neil and I arrived on Thursday afternoon to an almost deserted campsite and the realisation that the show was so close to home that, for once, we could have commuted!

Friday morning dawned grey and drizzly, but we joined Temesvike at our allocated spot on the show site and waited for the hordes of kids booked in for schools' day to arrive. Given that the first groups were due to arrive quite early, the setting-up process was punctuated by frantic stewards asking whether we could move our car yet! Eleven o'clock arrived, kids had been spotted on site, but so far not one had come anywhere near us! A slightly panicky Russell materialised to tell us that apparently we weren't there – Howard Giles (despite having walked past us earlier in the morning) had told him that no-one from the Vike had turned up. Once that little misunderstanding had been cleared up, groups started to come our way, to discover the mixed joys of Viking food, weaponry, bone and antler-working and medicine.

By Friday night, the drizzle had turned into a downpour. Neil and I watched from the comfort of our caravan as new arrivals got stuck in the mud and tents got flooded. One person I spoke to over the weekend described a small tidal wave of water entering his tent just as he was about to go to bed! A very wet Em took refuge with us as she waited for a delayed Ash to arrive with a tent and dry clothes. The rain continued throughout the night and, by Saturday morning, memories of Chippenham were starting to surface. (The mud... the mud!!!!!!)

Fortunately, it dried up and Saturday got off to a promising start. Unfortunately, the punters didn't seem to have noticed and stayed away in their droves! This didn't prevent the warriors from having a great time playing in the motte and bailey. There were three battles each day, with credit due to warriors for taking turns at boosting the Norman numbers. On Saturday night, we were treated to the "X-rated" version of the "underwear through the ages" display normally given to the public, which occasioned a great deal of bawdiness and mirth, followed by a mass retreat to the beer tent.

The lack of visitors - unfortunately, the trend continued over both days – gave us a better than average chance to get a look at some of the other groups. The Roman gladiatorial display was excellent, played up for all it was worth and motivating even the limited audience to cheer for their favourites. The Greek Hoplites, new this year, after 18 months of intensive research and kit-making, were superb. It's hard to believe, but their armour is even shinier than the Romans'! Hopefully, they'll be at Kirby Hall, so get a look at them if you can. The WW2 display was, inevitably, noisy, as were the English Civil War drums; these drew a fair few threats on Sunday morning, as hangovers made their early start less than welcome in the Viking camp!

By the end of Sunday, most of the mud had dried, so we packed and went home. For the re-enactors, the show was definitely enjoyable. It was a nice site, a convenient location (at least for us Southerners), the motte and bailey added interest and, though the traders'

market wasn't as big as at Kirby, the opportunity to do a little shopping is always welcome. Oh, and there was a whole *village* of portaloos! Although the public numbers were estimated at around 4,000 over the whole weekend (out of an estimated 20,000 plus), apparently the show's sponsors were sufficiently pleased that the show looks likely to happen again next year – this time with more of a budget for advertising and not scheduled against Wimbledon, the British Grand Prix and other major events.

Hounslow has the potential to rival Kirby Hall in years to come; it was a thoroughly enjoyable weekend and deserves our support if it is repeated.

Maria



The Vikings celebrate the destruction of the Normans' motte and bailey.