



Dawn of Chivalry

Introducing Dawn of Chivalry

An Introduction for beginners and Prospective Members



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First of all, thanks for your interest in Dawn of Chivalry. If you are interested in joining the group, I believe you have made a good choice, we are very proud of our setup and achievements and we have a really good fun re-enacting medieval combat.

Introduction

Dawn of Chivalry is a medieval re-enactment group, more precisely a traveling knights' tournament in the year 1280-1285 CE¹, under the reign of Edward I who was a great supported of tournaments and the associated pageantry (In France, king Philip III The Bold (son of St Louis), at the Vatican Martin IV (who died in March 1285 CE), in the Holy Land, John II of Jerusalem (who died in May 1285 CE), and in the Holy Roman Empire Rudolf I are in power).

The two main guiding factors for the group are development of combat skills for show combat and historical accuracy.

Show Combat

Our show fights are usually done in the context of knights' tournaments or a joust, i.e. where several knights and their household would gather on locations (in a castle) to compete with each other, show their skills at arms to other lords and the populace and win fame and fortune.

In this context, our fights take the shape of one-v-one or two-v-one combats. They are not choreographed and are as martially sound and realistic as possible. The aim is to achieve realism (depicting real skills) while staying safe for combatants and entertaining to the public.

On occasion, we take part in big group combat (although we do take part on occasions in big multi-group battles and other combat-oriented displays, such as the re-enactment of the Battle of Evesham in 2015).

¹ The equipment owned by group members occasionally allows us to take part in multi-group re-enactment events that span the 1066-1315 period if needed (e.g. Battle of Hastings, Battle of Evesham, etc.).



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Historical Accuracy

In terms of historical accuracy, everything we use and wear must be OK'ed by our Authenticity Officer (or deputy) as being representative of the late-13th century in Western Europe. We do not push the requirements to have hand-sewn clothing as it would be too inaccessible to most people but we have otherwise high standards. The equipment

that can be seen at our shows is researched by our authenticity officer as much as possible, trying to give the impression that the visitors have really stepped back in time.

Our requirements are dictated by two factors. First of all is the ambition of being educative as well as entertaining and we therefore need to be able to display the equipment as closely as possible to what it would have looked like in the 13th century. We have built a reputation in this regard that the group is trying to maintain and improve. The second reason is that we are under contractual obligations from our clients (for example English Heritage) to display a high level of historical accuracy.



Figure 1 - Sir William (Vert with Gold chevrons) against Sir Thomas (Azur) during the grand melee at Belsay Hall, 2016, under the watchful eye of Sir Richard (Azur, far left).

Membership

The group has two main types of members, combatants and non-combatants:

- ❖ **Combatants:** these are the members who are trained to fight in armour with a range on close quarter weapons, the most iconic being the swords, maces and spear but that also include others such as axes, falchions, etc.
- ❖ **Non-combatants:** these are the members who do not take part in the close quarter combat but take part in shows, providing the living history aspect of the shows, running some activities and helping combatants.

All members are expected to display the same level of historical authenticity.

Combatants

We have three ranks for combatants: levy, serjent-at-arms and knight. A new member starts at bondsman during their 5 week probation period (see below). These ranks are based, etc on equipment owned and combat skills, i.e. the training officer and authenticity officer work together to allow members to progress regularly to a higher rank.



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The group's Training Officer has developed an extensive curriculum of skills in various weapons (e.g. one-handed sword, two-handed sword, mace, axe, falchion, one-handed spear, two-handed spear), both in their offensive and defensive use. Associated to that are general show combat skills that are gained through training such as blow reaction, leaving openings, surrounding awareness, combat flow, etc. Regular training sessions are therefore required for a member to gain all the competences that are necessary to reach a specific rank. Although we do not fight competitively on the show field for showmanship reason, our off-season training includes some semi-competitive work to make it fun and further develop weapon control.

Levies are free men who have been commandeered by their lord to come and fight for them and they are asked to bring their own fighting equipment, that usually consist of a cheap to make gambeson and trades tools that are useful for combat (axe, spear). Serjent-at-arms are professional soldiers, leaders of a garrison or squad on behalf of their lords. They have better training and better equipment (e.g. maille armour). Knights are wealthier land owners with extensive training and top military equipment who pay serjent-at-arms, commandeer levies to go to fight.

To be able to be a combatant in the group as a levy, only a few training sessions to learn the basics of combat and its safety, plus little kit (hose, braies and medieval shoes as the group has other equipment that can be borrowed such as sword, shield, helmet, gambeson, gloves) are required.

If they are knowledgeable enough when not fighting combatants are encouraged to interact with the public at the armoury, educating children and adults about the use of weapons in the (late) 13th century. There is also plenty of work to do in the armoury in between activities under the supervision of the armoury bod.

Non-combatants

Although non-combatant do not take part in close quarter combat, they have a very important role to play in the group and we try to get them involved as much as possible in as many activities as possible. Basically, non-combatants contribute to making the camp look like a real traveling knights'

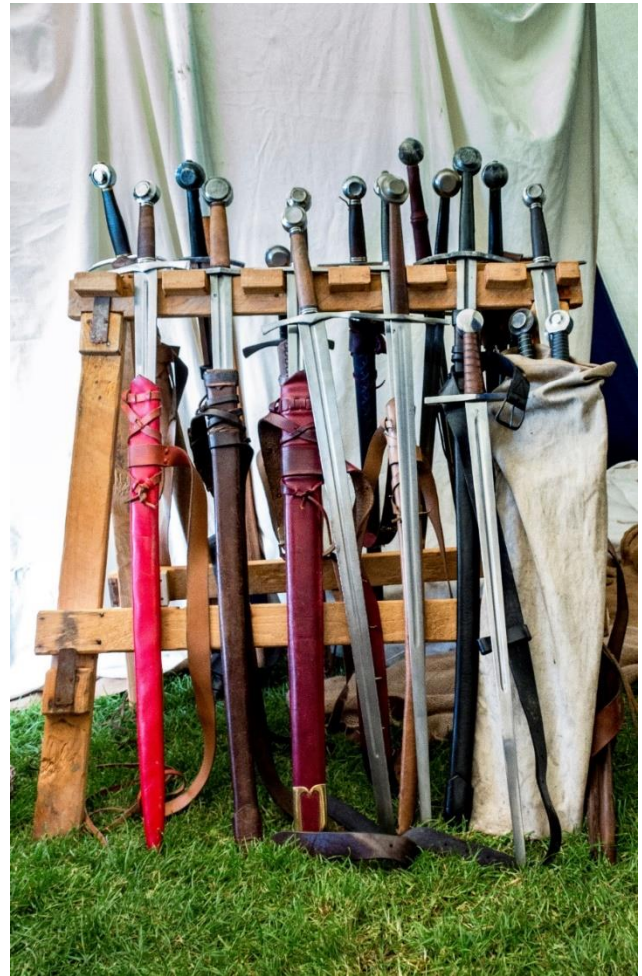


Figure 2 - One of the few weapon racks in the group, full of swords that need preparation before the fight. This one holds the swords owned by the different members.



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camp, help run the group and run some activities such as archery contest and Have-a-go Archery. Non-combatants are not of course training for combat but they need to own their own civilian medieval clothing to be allowed in the camp.

Cost Of Membership

The cost involved in being a reenactor can vary. These are the costs to expect:

- Membership fee (yearly cost, higher for combatants)
- Kit: to start, only civilian clothing is required. Combat equipment (weapons, helmets, shields, armour) is provided by the group's spare equipment. For combatants, progress through the ranks will involve investment in your own weapons and armour.

No insurance is required to be a member, Dawn of Chivalry has a covers for some forms of accidents occurring during shows. However, it is recommended that members contract their own insurance for injury they could sustain (e.g. loss of earning).

Shows

The show season usually extend late April to Late August. Our biggest pride is to perform for English Heritage since 2014. It's one of the highest achievements a re-enactment group can aspire to and it's a testament to the efforts of all members, especially the training officer who's developed and is maintaining a realistic set of combat skills and the authenticity officer who makes sure we depict medieval life in a knights' camp as accurately as possible. All members enjoy the opportunity to perform in front of a fantastic audience in some of the most iconic castle in the country.

Beside the fighting in the arena for combatants, here are some of the public-oriented tasks expected of the members: run various activities (e.g. have-a-go archery, have-a-go sword), talk to the public at our armoury's show and tell, coin striking. Other tasks not public-facing but necessary: weapon and armour maintenance in the armoury, camp setup and take down, cold



Figure 3 - The camp at Warkworth Castle, April 2017. In blue and white on the left is the armoury. In white in the centre is the kitchen/communal tent. On the right are the authentic tents belonging to members where they sleep. The fighting arena was not yet set



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lunch preparation, water carrier.

For a 2-day show at weekends, camp setup (for members who can make it) takes place on Friday afternoon. Some members arrive later in the evening or Saturday morning. Most members own an authentic tent and sleep on Fri and Sat night on the castle ground. Members who do not own an authentic tent can either borrow authentic tents, or sleep in the armoury or plastic camp (modern tent but it sometimes has to be put up and taken down so as not to be seen by the public). Some members even day trip, i.e. turn up in the morning before the show starts and go home in the evening.

Joining Dawn of Chivalry

If you decide to join as a combatant, training is required to be safe on the show field. We train every Sunday, 1pm to about 3pm, get in touch with us for the latest training venue. Training is free.

We have a 5-session probation period for training. During this probation period, prospective members do not have to become members (i.e. pay the membership fee). This allows people to make their mind up about joining the group or not. It also allows us to decide if the prospective member display a suitable membership ethos, in particular around combat safety and respect.

Of course, we don't expect everybody to be there every Sunday. It is down to the training officer to decide who has had enough training to be allowed on the show field.

To start training with Dawn of Chivalry, you don't need any specific equipment as we have spares for beginners, such as gambesons, helmets and swords but you must be over 18 years old. Over the years, members slowly buy their own equipment with guidance from the authenticity officer. We try to make it very accessible to combatant beginners, to take part in shows newest members do not need much equipment, only hoses, braies and medieval boots. We welcome both female and male combatants. However, female combatants will have to hide their true gender on the show field and pretend to be men, as it is believed that only men were combatant in the period in question.

If you decide to join as non-combatant, a simple set of 13th century civilian clothing is enough.

In all cases, the kit needs to be checked by the authenticity officer.

Roles at Dawn of Chivalry

For those who join the group, a lot of roles either as main officer, as deputy or volunteer are available to make sure the group can run smoothly. As you can guess, a lot of work is required to bring Dawn of Chivalry at a castle near you.



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Director

Our director keeps an eye of the smooth running of the group, initiate actions and monitor progress.

Treasurer

Holds the keys to the chest where our gold coins are kept.

Quartermaster

In charge of the equipment the group owns, making sure they are safe and maintained in a good state of repair.

Event Officer

Decides and organises our shows with our clients, making sure we fulfil our contractual obligations but also that we maximise our fun doing the hobby.

Training Officer

Guardian of the fighting curriculum and graduation of the combatants.

Authenticity Officer

To make sure the looks of the group is as close as possible to historical clothing, armour, weapons.

Media Officer

Manages our online presence to help grow our reputation and recruitment pushes.

All Members

All members have the same rights in the group, regardless of combatant rank, seniority or official role. They can therefore suggest changes to the group. Dawn of Chivalry is run as a democracy and important changes are subjected to a vote.