



# Meet 13<sup>th</sup> Century Weaponry

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This is a short introduction to each weapon that existed in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. We train with and fight with some of them at Dawn of Chivalry (of course, we are not talking here of the sneaky head butt or stool frequently used as weapons by Sir George).

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### One-handed sword

Mythical weapon of the middle-ages, the sword does not need introduction. It must be noted however that blade, cross and pommel designs changed significantly over the centuries (as identified by the [Oakeshott Typology](#)) and a sword of the 13<sup>th</sup> century will be significantly different from one typical of the 11<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century.



Figure 1 - Le Mans BM MS.157 Soissons Psalter, Folio 27v, Dated 1200-1297, France (exact location unknown).





### Longsword

With the advance in armour design, one-handed swords became less and less effective. Advances in metallurgy allowed larger swords to be made but these necessitated the use of both hands. Thus longswords appeared in the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century (see [here](#)). They were designed to provide the combatant with increased penetrating and cutting power to try and defeat improving armour. Use of a longsword prevents simultaneous use of a shield, thus lowering the combatant's defensive ability and requiring new fighting techniques to be developed.



Figure 2 - UBH Cod. Pal. germ. 389 Der Welsche Gast, Folio 55, Dated 1256, Bayern, Germany.



Figure 3 - Burrell Collection, Glasgow, Dating circa 1270-1330, this sword has a blade length of 36.5", is a river-find in excellent condition and without serious pitting.





### Dagger

Several types of daggers appeared throughout the middle-ages (e.g. rondel, baselard, bollock, etc.). In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the design was still quite simple (see [here](#)) that allowed both a thrusting and cutting action. Medieval manuscripts exist that were written by master at arms and that describe techniques for dagger combat.



Figure 4 - Morgan M.638 Maciejowski Bible, Folio 34, Dated 1244-1254, Paris, France.



Figure 5 – 13<sup>th</sup> century dagger.



### Spear

The spear is a very cheap weapon to produce and can be very effective (keeping an opponent with a short weapon out of reach of their weapon but within reach of yours). For this reason, they may have been popular among peasant levy troops. They are however depicted being used by armoured combatants, suggesting that even highly trained and wealthy soldiers chose to use them (see [here](#)).



Figure 6 - HBA MS.13 Aschaffenburg Golden Gospels, Folio 18v, Dated 1225-1275, Mainz, Germany.





### One-handed axe

This weapon in its simplest form is a tool that is repurposed for war (peasant levy troops for example). It can however also be found with blade shapes that are clearly designed uniquely for war (see [here](#)).



Figure 7 - Bodley Auct. D. 4. 17 Apocalypse, Folio 11v, Dated 1250-1260, England (exact location unknown).



*Figure 8 – Axe head, circa 1250.*





### Two-handed axe

The two-handed axe appeared well before the 13<sup>th</sup> century (it is depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry for example). The long shaft and heavy blade allows for a more powerful blow compared to one-handed axe but it also prevents the combatant from using a shield for defence.



Figure 9 - Bodley Ashmole 1511 The Ashmole Bestiary, Folio 18r, Dated 1200-1225, Peterborough, England.





## One-handed falchion

Falchions are single-edge weapons, closely related to swords. Similarly to swords, numerous falchion designs exist from their first appearance in the late 12<sup>th</sup>/early 13<sup>th</sup> century. Two main falchion designs are known in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The Type 1a was a cutting weapon while Type 1d/2 was probably designed to restore a thrusting ability lost in the previous type.



Figure 10 - BNF Français 2630 History of Outremer, Folio 198v, France, 1250. Type 1a.



Figure 11 -BNF 95 Histoire du Saint Graal / Histoire de Merlin, Folio 099v, dated 1280-1290, Northern France. Type 1d/2.

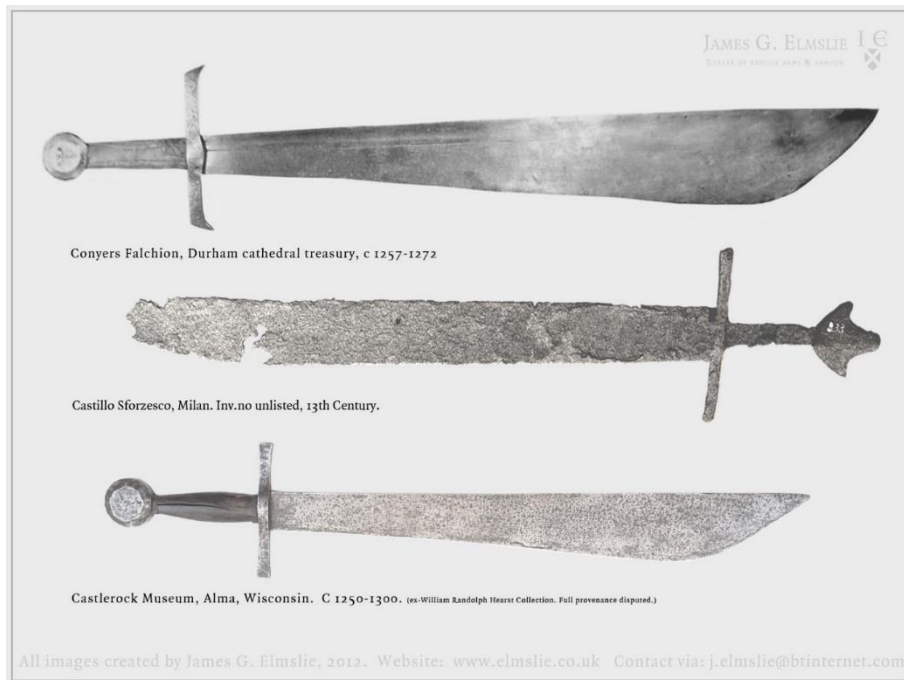


Figure 12 – Three 13<sup>th</sup> century falchions of type 1a.



Figure 13 - Falchion of type 1d/2. Note that the weapon is shown with the cutting edge at the top and the back edge at the bottom (reverse the usual practice of having the cutting edge bottom).





## Two-handed falchion

Similarly to swords, falchions seem to have had their two-handed equivalent, probably to increase striking power but with concomitant reduction of defensive power due to the loss of the ability to use a shield.



Figure 14 - Type 5a falchion from the Maciejowski Bible.



Figure 15 – Type 1c falchion from the Maciejowski Bible.





### Mace

Numerous designs exist for the mace, from a simple metal ball to a more elaborate shape (spiked, flanged) designed to overcome armour such as maille and gambesons (see [here](#)). Cutting weapons such as sword had limited efficacy against maille armour. Maces were probably popular due to their ability to crush bones even though this type of armour.



Figure 16 - BNF Français 344 Histoire du Saint Graal, Folio 118r, Dated 1250-1275, France (exact location unknown).



Figure 17 - BL Yates Thompson 12 Histoire d'Outremer, Folio 109v, Dated 1232-1262, Northern France.





## Glaive

The glaive is a single-edge blade on top of a shaft, in some kind of cross between a falchion and a spear.



Figure 18 - Morgan M.97 Psalter-Hours, Folio 015v, Dated 1265, France (exact location unknown).





## Bardiche

The bardiche resembles a two-handed axe with a much longer blade.



Figure 19 - Morgan M.730 Psalter-Hours of Guiluys de Boisleux, Folio 78, Dated 1246-1250, Arras, France.



## Bow

The bow is also an iconic weapon of the middle-ages that does not need introduction.



Figure 20 - Morgan M.969 Bible with prologues, Folio 282v-2, Dated 1275-1299, Northern France.



## Crossbow

The crossbow is also an iconic weapon of the middle-ages that does not need introduction. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the bows tended to be made of wood or horn while steel bows appeared later in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.



Figure 21 - BL Royal 12 F XIII The Rochester Bestiary, Folio 11v, Dated 1225-1250, South-Eastern England.