

HASTINGS 2006

NORMAN WARRIOR COSTUME GUIDE



Written by The Vikings Authenticity Team

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 RATIONALE. Although 'THE VIKINGS' is a primarily a 10th Cent. Viking re-enactment society, this guide has been written to help members of the society and their guests who wish to take part in the Battle of Hastings re-fight (14-15 October 2006) as Norman warriors. This guide has been written specifically for the H2006 Hastings re-fight. Compromises have therefore been made with what is strictly authentic in order to maximise participation in this event.

1.2 WEAPONS & SAFETY EQUIPMENT. Any member or guest of the society who intends to take part in combat is classed as a warrior. As such they **MUST** have the correct safety equipment. Anyone who intends to engage in hand-to-hand combat must also have armguards and protected gloves. For men a protective 'Box' is strongly recommended, while women are equally strongly advised to wear Fencing Cups. ARCHERS are only required to have a helmet, but those who wish to put down their bow and engage hand-to-hand in the final attack, must have **all** of the equipment required.

1.3 COLOURS. All participants must remember that the colour of the clothes worn gives a good indication of a persons rank and status. Low ranks would only have access to pale coloured or even undyed cloth, while the wealthy would be able to afford rich reds, blues and greens. Whatever rank is being portrayed, clothing dyed black, white or purple should be avoided.

1.4 APPEARANCE. This is the premier re-enactment event in the UK with TV and press from all over Europe in attendance, and all participants must therefore make a reasonable attempt to look the part. Specifically modern hairstyles, must be covered and all make-up, jewellery and visible piercings must be removed. In addition, in order to comply with the English Heritage guidelines for such events, female warriors must dress entirely in male costume, and should make some attempt to hide the more obvious 'bumps'.

2. UNACCEPTABLE ITEMS.

The following is an (incomplete) list of items which will NOT be allowed onto the battlefield with the Norman army at Battle Abbey. a) Gjermundbu or Medieval 'Great' Helms. b) Live-role-play type weapons. c) Plate armour of any sort. d) Knitted 'String' mail. e) Any weapon NOT in common use in NW Europe in the Mid 11th C. f) Two Handed Dane-axes. g) Non-authentic or modern footwear. h) Sharp weapons of any description. i) Tartan or plaid of any description. j) Furry jackets or any form of Berserker. k) 'Rus' trousers. l) Viking Hangerok. m) Body armour made of Horn, Bone, Wood or any form of sheet metal. n) Celts, Cymric, Brythons (see 1e above). o) Shields that are not round, oval or kite shaped, or any made of Hardboard. p) All body piercings must be removed and participants must ensure that all tattoos are covered by their costume or masking make-up.

2.1 Special Items

2.1a Pouches

We would like to remind our guests that, overseas practice notwithstanding, carved leather 'box' pouches style are definitely not authentic for our period. Other styles including the circular and semi-circular drawstring type, the soft leather 'kidney' pouch as well as the ever popular shoulder bags are only ones that we are certain are authentic for our period.

2.1b Amber

Amber is a well-known and popular semi precious gemstone and there have been grave finds from both this country and Scandinavia. As its popularity however we are beginning to see a few pieces of unworked or 'rough' amber being worn. **This is wrong.** Without exception all of the pieces of amber from our period have been worked and polished into the form of beads or pendants. All of the unworked pieces that have been found pre-date our era by a minimum of **2000 - 3000 years**. If you are looking for alternatives, don't forget Jet (very popular in Northern England) and Carnelian (very popular everywhere). By the C10th, Amber was 'out of fashion' in Viking circles, and overwhelmingly more worked Carnelian is found than worked Amber. Amber was mainly worked into charms (such as gripping beasts, axeheads, or even birds of legs) or was worn in the shape of doughnuts or

wedges. Such beads as were worn were mainly faceted, not rounded.

2.1c Naughty Photographs!

Living in the real world as we do, we make certain allowances to enable our members to participate at shows with the minimum of inconvenience. In exchange we ask that all guests please be aware of members of the public carrying cameras, and do their best to avoid being photographed in costume whilst carrying, wearing or consuming blatant 21st century items. If you suspect that someone is deliberately trying to take a picture that compromises these guidelines, please inform the nearest Society Officer or Marshal who will speak to the person concerned.

3. MILITARY RANK AND OPTIONS.

For the purposes of this event we recommend that participants choose one of three basic options.

3a. The first of these, the **Soldier** represent the semi-professional but unarmoured infantry and replaces the previous class of **Arriere-Ban**. Some **Soldier** may be equipped as an **Archer**, a catch-all term used for those armed with bows or crossbows.

3b. The next, the **Sergens**, represent the Norman 'man-at-arms', the professional footsoldier, well-armed and equipped, the backbone of the Norman army.

3c. The last, the **Milites**, are the cutting edge of the Norman army. Supremely well armed, armoured and trained their mounted charge was reputed to be able to *"breach the very walls of Byzantium itself."* These men, both mounted and on foot, were regarded as the finest warriors in christendom. This term is applied equally to those on foot and mounted.

It is our intention to provide illustrations for these four types of warrior in the near future. When these are placed on the web an announcement will be made via the lists which are linked at the bottom of this webpage.

3d. **Others** - '**Vavasseur**' was the term applied to the teenage son of a noble, receiving his training-at-arms from another Noble or Miles. As such he would be indistinguishable from any other Milites. An **Amigier** was equipped exactly like a Milites but without the helmet, and is therefore not suitable for our battlefield. **Comes** are the senior members of the Norman military heirarchy. Their equipment was better than even that of the Milites.

3e. Given the nature of this event, anyone who wishes to portray a **Non-Combatant** (whether male or female) MUST be dressed as an Anglo-Saxon,

as such individuals would not be found amongst the Normans at the time of the 1066 invasion. A separate guide exists for female costume.

Anyone wishing to attend dressed as a member of the Church should register on the email lists linked at the bottom and then contact the Vikings Authenticity team to discuss the matter.

4. KIT & COSTUME GUIDE

Although the basic costume is similar for all social classes, dress must be consistent with the character being portrayed. The higher the rank, the better the quality of the garment and its decoration or ornamentation must be. Regardless of the rank being portrayed, all garments must be properly finished and hemmed. Serious inconsistencies like 'Sword-but-no-shoes' or 'Low-rank-with-lots-of-jewellery' must be avoided. The main guide is presented here as a 'check-list' and it should give you a good idea of what goes with what.

KEYX - Not an option for this character. O - Optional. C - Compulsory. * - Item or sheath must be decorated. # - Gloves and Helmets are not authentic for all ranks, but as they are compulsory for hand-to-hand combat they are expected and will be checked. @ - Armoured Gloves are **not** compulsory for archers who do not engage in hand-to-hand combat.

	Soldier/Archer	Sergens	Milites
Soft Kit			
Undertunic	O	C	C
Overtunic, Belt & Shoes	C	C	C*
Trousers	O	O	X

Hose and Braes (Breeches)	O	O	C
Cloak, Hat & Authentic Pouch	O	O	O
Jewellery	O	O	C
Embroidery or Tablet Braid	O	O	C
Metal or Bone Strap-ends	C	C	C

Armour			
Round Shield	O	X	X
Kite Shield	O	C	C
Gambeson	O	X	X
Coif & Arming Cap	X	O	O
Hauberk	X	C	C

Aketon & Hauberk	X	O	C
Faceguard for Hauberk	X	X	O
Elbow length Sleeves for Hauberk	X	O	O
Chainmail arms or Leggings	X	X	O
Helmet	C#	C#	C#
Armguards	O	O	O
Padded Leather or chainmail gloves	C@	C	C

	Soldier/Archer	Sergens	Milites
Weapons			
Langseax or Sword	O	C	C*
Hadseax, Seax or Knife	C	C	C*
Mace	X	X	O
Spear	O	O	O
Frankish Battle-Axe	O	O	O
Bow & Arrows or Crossbow	O	X	X

For those who wish to go the 'whole hog' the kit requirements for a **COMES** are the same as a Milites plus the following: 1) Integral hood for the hauberk 2) Chainmail Faceguard 3) The optional Chainmail arms and Leggings become compulsory 4) A Mace is compulsory

5. COSTUME DESCRIPTIONS.

5a) **UNDERTUNIC**. These should be made of linen (cotton is an acceptable substitute) or (for **MILITES** and above) silk. It may be either side or front and rear split and must have long sleeves, tight fitting at the wrist but looser on the upper arm. (Undertunics for **SERGENS** must be side split). It should also be edged in a contrasting colour around the wrists, cuffs, neck and around the splits. If armguards are to be worn under the tunic however, the sleeves must be loose enough to allow this. It should reach to the bottom edge of the knee, and have a round neckline with a small front split as an option. It may be decorated with embroidery to Norman designs with vines, leaves or animals and birds (both real and imaginary).

5b) **OVERTUNIC**. This was usually of wool and again had long sleeves, tight fitting at the wrist but looser on the upper arm. It must reach to just below the knee when belted and split front-and-rear. The splits should be from about 2 inches below the groin to the hem. As above, if armguards are to be worn under the tunic however, the sleeves must be loose enough to allow this. This must also be trimmed as the undertunic and **MUST** be embroidered. If a front split is worn it **MUST** have an appropriate, authentic fastening at the neck.

5c) DECORATION & BRAID. Modern reconstructions depict our dark-age ancestors as fond of showing off, and as the rank of the individual being portrayed increases, the amount and quality of the decoration and jewellery (see 5k below) must increase. **SERGENS** should have some sort of decoration (embroidery, inkle or tablet braid) on two out of hem, cuff and collar. **MILITES** and **COMES** must have decoration on all three.

5d) TROUSERS. Trousers should be straight legged down to the ankle. They were cut on the bias and while some were tight enough to resemble ski-pants others were looser.

5e) BRAES. Braes (Breeches) are a pair of knee-length shorts often with embroidery round the lower hem of each leg. They were tied with a draw string, no examples have been found with belt loops. While they were usually worn with HOSE (see below) they appear to have been worn on their own as well.

5f) HOSE. Hose sometimes had an integral foot, and would have been worn with a pair of knee breeches (see above). Burial evidence suggests that while the hose may have been tied to the waistband, they were also fixed at the thigh with small pins or brooches. This pinning may have been to a pair of breeches, or may have connected the hose to the belt in a manner similar to modern suspenders.

5g) BELTS & STRAP-ENDS. Norman belts come in two distinct types. The first (the 'Soft' belt) would be very similar to that worn by most warriors already and be about the same length with strap-ends. The second (the 'Armour' belt) would have been worn over chainmail and would have helped carry the weight. For MILES and COMES however this 'overbelt' had disappeared by 1066 however and the sword was now worn with just the hilt protruding through the hauberk at the hip. **MILITES** on foot may still wear the over-armour belt in order to carry a Seax or Mace. The belt must be between 20 and 35mm wide and 200 to 300mm longer than your waist and have both an authentic buckle and strapends. Although modern decorated belts are not acceptable, authentically decorated or painted sheaths, scabbards and belts are not only authentic but (for **MILITES** and **COMES**) compulsory.

5h) POUCH. Pouches fall into two categories, authentic and modern.

Authentic pouches, provenanced to the British Isles in the 10th-11th C should be worn over the tunic preferably on a belt dedicated to its use. Non-authentic or modern pouches (including and made from rigid thick leather with carved decoration) must be worn underneath the over tunic so that they do not detract from the overall appearance.

As a separate item all **SERGENS** and **MILITES** may also carry a small coin-pouch with a selection of reproduction coins. This may be highly

elaborate and decorated or plain and simple. They appear to have been worn on a long drawstring around the neck, either over or under the tunic.

5i) TURNSHOES. Norman footwear followed the pattern common to northern Europe and remained virtually unchanged from late Roman times until the 13th Cent. The majority were of a type known as 'Turnshoes' and had either a central upper seam, or a 'flap and toggle' arrangement.

5j) CLOAK. Most adults had a cloak of some sort. It varied from a simple blanket thrown over the shoulder, to a full-length, lined, fur-trimmed, embroidered gown that any one would be proud to own. Although differing in quality, all were fixed, normally at the shoulder, by brooch, pin or ties.

5k) JEWELLERY. Contrary to popular belief, our dark-age ancestors did not wear vast amounts of jewellery. As Christians, may have worn a cross or pendant of some sort and this might have a couple of beads on the same string. Brooches, cloak pins and finger rings were also quite common, and the richer the person, the larger the item, but no Dark-Age Mr.T's please.

5m) HATS are not mandatory, but any worn must be authentic and are a useful addition to any costume.

6) WEAPONS.

This is not intended to be a definitive guide, merely a brief description of the items worn or carried by the Normans. Readers are strongly advised to consult one of the many suitable references to the period. A fuller list of technical weapon specs will be issued later.

6a) KNIFE or SAEX. For the purposes of this guide the terms Scram, Scramseax, (not authentic terms), Knife and Seax are interchangeable and all refer the single edged weapon/tool carried by free men and women. This combined the usefulness of a basic tool with the symbol of being a free man. It must be less than 14" long and may be either a sharp working knife or a combat blunt. Seax's with a blade of more than 21" are called Langseax's and are a primary combat weapon. Regardless of the length of the weapon it must be carried in an authentically shaped sheath or scabbard. While the sharp knife must NOT be carried on the battlefield, the sheath may be.

6b) HADSEAX. Although Normans carried the usual Seax (Knife) and Sword or Langseax some used an intermediate weapon known as a HADSEAX. With a blade length of about 18 inches (45cm) it combines the advantages and disadvantages of both a Seax and a Langseax. Very useful as a close-quarters, finishing-off weapon with a very sharp point for punching through chainmail.

6c) SPEARS. Actually not that different from those used by both Vikings and Anglo-Saxons but ALL should be 'winged'. In an ideal world ALL **Soldiers** would be equipped with a spear, but this may not be possible for reasons of safety.

6d) MACE. Carried both as a mark of authority and a useful close-quarters steel-tipped club. Warriors must be aware that more than any other this weapon is most like that actually carried by the Normans in terms of weight, construction and method of usage. If carried, they should be as long as the users armpit to finger-tip and must have no more than 6 'delta-wing' shaped flanges. They may be made of mild steel and while the flanges should be the same thickness as a hand-axe blade, the ends must be no 'sharper' than the curve of a 1997 5p. The handle should be either ash or hickory and the head weigh no more than 1 pound (approx 450g).

6f) FRANKISH 'BATTLE-AXE'. This was carried instead of the more familiar Dane-axe. Although about the same length, and used in a similar fashion, the head had a completely different shape.

7. ARMOUR

The purists amongst our readers may balk at the following use of certain well-known words, but this has been done to achieve a measure of conformity amongst our readers. Firstly in order to encourage the use of the correct terminology, we have decided to use the term **Hauberk** instead of chainmail throughout this document. Next, for the purposes of this guide, a **Gambesson** is heavily padded, one-piece garment worn by itself. Finally, **Ahketon** is the word we use for the similar garment worn UNDER a Hauberk. A fuller explanation of these items follows.

7a) GAMBESSON. The Gambesson (probably derived from the Byzantine 'Bambukion') was an armour in itself. While obviously not as good as mail but an awful lot more protective than a couple of woollen tunics against slashing and crushing blows. It should be made from at least three layers of blanket-like material, and if the correct thickness and weight should be both waterproof and very warm ! It should reach to at least mid-thigh and have short sleeves (about where a T-shirt reaches). Apart from proper edging at the hem, cuffs and collar, any visible patterning on the body should be in the form of vertical lines, NOT diamonded.

7b) AHKETON. This garment (along with all padded armour) is commonly confused with the GAMBESSON (See above). It is specifically designed to go under a hauberk and should not be worn without. It must be at least as long as the hauberk it is designed to go over (with a front split), and have sleeves down to about the elbow. The neck should be round and quite close fitting. It must split full length at the rear and fixed with a series of leather

ties. These should be threaded through leather patches to avoid the material tearing or fraying. The last tie should be just below the wearers bottom giving an effective rear split. To keep it light while still offering some protection it should be stuffed with cotton 'tow' (the stuff quilts are filled with). The outermost layer should be calico or something very similar as this appears to give both the correct look and feel, (it's also washable.) Stitchwork or patterning may be either diamonded or in vertical lines.

7c) HAUBERK. Norman Hauberks differ slightly depending on the wearer. That worn by SERGENS should have shorter sleeves and reach to at least mid-thigh length when belted. It should have a front split **ONLY**. Hauberks worn by MILES and above should reach to at least mid-knee when belted, have elbow length sleeves and be split front-and-rear. All Norman hauberks have straight edges (no pointy bits!) although a decorative band of no more than five rows of links may be added at the hem and/or wrist. MILITES and COMES may also wear separate arm pieces mail leggings. These were a single sheet of mail reaching from wrist to elbow or ankle to about mid-thigh and were tied in place in a fashion similar to greaves.

7d) HOODED HAUBERK. These did not become common until after the 1st Crusade so are included as an option for COMES only.

7e) COIF. These 'Chainmail-balaclavas' are only worn with a Hauberk and, like the Hauberk, there are slight (but noticeable) differences between those worn by those on foot and horseback. That worn by the cavalry was close-fitting and fully enclosed around the throat in order to protect against upward thrusts. The face guard only covered the face up to about the top lip as any higher would restrict vision too much. The infantryman's version was much looser fitting and had a high flap that came up to just below the eyes. Both however spread out around the shoulders so that there was no gap between them and the hauberk.

7f) HELMETS. Whilst we realise that not all warriors (especially the SERGENS and ARCHERS) would have worn helmets, they are compulsory for safety reasons. There are four forms of acceptable helmet:

i) The first is the authentic, quarter-braced conical helm with nasal guard so often depicted in artworks. This must be made of steel, and have no visible spinning marks. This is the version required for all MILITES and COMES and may be worn by others. It may also have a mail 'ventail' at the back covering the top of The neck.

ii) The second consists of a semi-spherical, spun dome covering the head down to about the ears. It is often worn as a 'hidden' helm completely hidden by a fabric cap, often in the 'Phrygian' style, but many other versions are acceptable. Fur-trimmed 'Viking' hats will NOT be acceptable. It may also be worn as a dome helm on its own, in which case it must have no visible

spinning marks and be lined with fur or heavy cloth to provide additional protection.

iii) The final option is an all-leather helm. This should be made in 4 sections and then fixed with leather 'bands' in a manner very similar to the authentic metal version. The leather from which it is made should be at least 6mm thick. **NB types ii) & iii) are not acceptable for MILITES or COMES.**

7g) GLOVES AND ARMGUARDS. As with helmets, we realise that these items are, for the most part, not authentic, but they are required for safety purposes. Gloves should be stout leather gardening-type gloves (but not gauntlets or bright red or green) with leather or mail reinforcing covering the whole of the back of the fingers and hand.

Armguards may be constructed in one of two ways: Firstly they may be made from a sheet of stout leather at least 6mm thick and then laced up the inside of the arm. Alternatively they may be made from rigid plastic drainpipe and then lined to absorb some of the blow. In both cases they must cover the area of the arm from the elbow to the wrist. Tunics should be made extra wide on the forearm and wrist in order to accommodate these items.

7h) The BROIGNE In the last few years there has been a find of a single 'plate' supposed to come from a very early coat-of-plates in South central France. Certain French documents refer to a 'Broigne', which appears to be a leather coat with steel or iron plates fixed to it and it This has been dated to the 10th or 11th Century.

The provenance for this garment remains very tenuous however, and any reconstruction so speculative, that we would prefer it if they were **NOT** worn at Hastings 2006.

7i) SCALE or LAMELLAR ARMOUR The only possible characters that could have access to such armour are Sicilian Norman noblemen. and it is important that the whole kit match the armour. Please contact a member of the event Authenticity Team before travelling with any armour of this type.

FURTHER HELP AND YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

If you have any further questions on authenticity, or need help getting your gear together please go to the [Hastings 2006 List](#) and subscribe to the Yahoo mailing list set up for discussion ahead of the event.

Since the main list may generate a lot of emails, if you wish only to be kept informed of important announcements please go to the [Hastings 2006 Announcement List](#) here instead. This list will only carry postings by event Officers

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