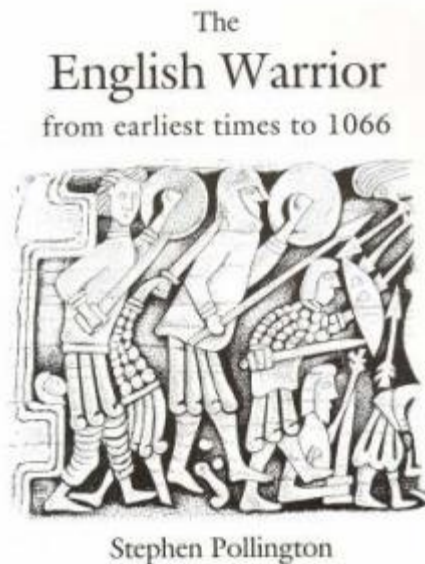


'The English Warrior: From Earliest Times to 1066'
By Stephen Pollington
Review by Rob Morgan

This is an old title now, published in 1996 by A-S Books, 267 pages in paperback and the ISBN 1-898281-10-6. Our library's just taken over one of the old extra-mural sites, and this came with the contents of that library. I'd never encountered the book before, and though I'd like to have seen it better illustrated (there are only 20 or so illustrations in the whole book), it is very interesting, and worth some consideration. It *might* crop up on one of the eBay sites, and if you are an early medieval wargamer, this is a book for you! 'Earliest times,' incidentally, means more or less Beowulf and so, to me at least, this is a truly medieval title.



A remarkably well-written book, divided into three parts: the warrior, weaponry, and warfare. It completely covers the wars of the Anglo-Saxons, is fascinating and readable. The first section of the book deals with the complex status and elaborate rituals of the warrior, and even contains a brief section on shield-maidens, the women who fought with and against men. It is comprehensive, and the war bands, the Fyrd leadership and, amazingly, the life of warriors in exile are all dealt with. The section ends with the topic of later Anglo-Saxon military organization at the time of Hastings and Stamford Bridge.

The weaponry section which follows is intricate and informative, with sections on the development of the sword, and on the spear, the principal Saxon weapon. The axe, in several versions, is also dealt with, as is the defensive gear of the warrior ó shield, body defences and helmets ó and all well-written. The Sax, that odd, single-edged blade, naturally follows, and the bow, which, as Pollington suggests, was more widely used and more useful than most modern sources are prone to admit. He makes little mention of the sling however, but the few pole weapons known, the standards borne in battle and even the war-horn are included here.

In the final section, the book covers the 'nature' of war in Saxon lands and across the borders, the strategy and tactics of forces and armies. He calls it

the experience of the field of battle. Here, the book ventures into the subject of wounds encountered in combat and their effects, which is most interesting, and the use of horses, always a contentious issue in Anglo-Saxon warfare, and wargames, I realize. He also mentions the use of wagons, not a thing I've ever encountered anywhere. The Anglo-Saxon wagon! Is there a model of one?

Pollington concludes with some consideration of early fortifications and what he calls "strongholds." From a wargamer's point of view, I thoroughly enjoyed the notes on "Hall Attack" (very Beowulf, eh?), which offered an interesting potential for a raid or skirmish wargame, I thought.

Overall, this is useful, and an interesting book.

Using Old English and Old Norse documents together with archaeological and linguistic evidence Pollington discusses the warrior's role in early English society, his rights and duties, rituals of feasting and duelling as well as weapons and equipment, the social and legal nature of warfare, strategy and military logistics. Appendices give original translations of three important military poems; the battles of Maldon, Finnsburh and Brunanburh. "synopsis" may belong to another edition of this title. Buy Used Condition: Good USED BUT OTHERWISE OF GOOD QUALITY Learn more about thi

At the same time, royal government continued to develop, notably in the field of royal financial accounting with the emergence of the 'exchequer'. Henry's only legitimate son drowned in a shipwreck in 1120, and when the king died in 1135 the succession was again uncertain. Henry's nephew, Stephen, count of Boulogne, seized the crown. Matilda, Henry's daughter, challenged Stephen's position. At the same time, it remained a notably hierarchic society, and the process of conquest itself strengthened the role of lordship. The Domesday Book, the product of William I's great survey of his realm in 1086, shows that the 11 leading members of the aristocracy held about a quarter of the realm. Another quarter was in the hands of fewer than 200 other aristocrats. The Norman invasion of England in 1066 described through the images of the Bayeux Tapestry. The English fought defensively while the Normans infantry and cavalry repeatedly charged their shield-wall. In a time when the vast majority of the population was illiterate, the Tapestry's images were designed to tell the story of the conquest of England from the Norman perspective. It focuses on the story of William, making no mention of Hardrada of Norway nor of Harold's victory at Stamford Bridge. The following are some excerpts taken from this extraordinary document. King Edward sends Harold on a Mission. King Edward sends Harold on a mission.