

A FUNNY THING HAPPENED TO ME ON THE WAY TO THE CONFERENCE (OR I WOULD DRIVE 500 MILES)

-by Ælfwinē of the Mountainside

HAVING DUMPED THE LADS AT PARRAMATTA PARK for the bus to Maldon, we returned home to pack. In defiance of the Second Law of Thermodynamics, we managed to fit an entire roomful of costumes, tents, armour, wooden limbs etc. into the boot of the car and set off into the night.

We arrived early next morning (in time for the Tavern opening) and set up camp at Roley's chosen site (not quite as exposed to the wind as everywhere else) in howling winds only to discover that our tent had shrunk. The first event was a weapon skills workshop which displayed and discussed various fighting styles throughout the ages. This led to a lunch of selected meats, cheeses and fruits. During lunch the 1066 buses were reported to be in Maldon and heading down the road to the local Correction Centre, although whether this was a pick-up or a set-down was never made clear. Lunch was followed by the arrival of the buses, unpacking, combat and polite but insistent requests by Alveric that we remove our cars. This resulted in AAF getting bogged. Yet again. Having un-bogged AAF, we proceeded to the High Table to register and, due to great skill and taste in the field (and a small bribe), I was appointed as a judge for the brewing competition. We then went to trade blows on the field with MMAASS (Jim's Lads) and AAF, where it was decided to allow our lads to train with metal weapons on the morrow. Our lads were given praise all weekend for their safety and degree of weapon control. The only complaint was the light force of their blows and lack of aggression (hardly damning).

Having tired of the blood-shed we retired to our tents. Michael, Cory and I decided to dress for dinner

in the long tent. This gained us the reputation as either:

a) A group which will go to all lengths for historical accuracy;

or

b) A bunch of raving nutters.

the meal consisted of soup, crumbed fish, peas and boiled carrots. Dessert was fruit with entertainment provided by singing from the Tasmanian Viking Society. The three blue Celts retired to the showers, shaking. Once we were in a more traditional style of dress, we were surprised by the evidence of how cold we really were. This was partially relieved by the NVG's discovery of hot water (they claimed it was due to a friendly Druid!).

Saturday began all bright and breezy (Force Seven through to Force Nine) and our lads, having proven safety with metal weapons in training, were permitted to use them in individual and mass combats on the field by the dam. I see no reason not to continue this.



A bunch of hairy Celts. We ran out of wood (the blue colour is due to the weather).

The process took two hours, a large amount of blue paint, some white mud and a lot of patience. As a concession to the cold, we relented and wore cloaks and trousers as well. Thus attired we went to dinner



A large pile of armour we found outside our tents on Saturday morning. Note the piggy little eyes.

The lads joined up with Jim's lads and the AAF for a pounding and ended up winning often enough to look good. Some poor individuals had to travel many miles to secure provisions for the thirsty troops and we rewarded ourselves with Devonshire teas.

We returned to witness the carnage of the mass mêlée. Some of it unfortunately was real: one mind-

less individual tool it into his thick head to deliver full-force blows overhand to people's backs with the edge of his sword. Their armour was all that saved them from needing better repairs than we could manage on the field.



Roley gets it in the end. These combatants were on the same side; the enemy copped worse.

Lunch followed the combat but was far overshadowed by the resurrection of *New Hedeby* (subscriptions only \$14.00) and there was much rejoicing.

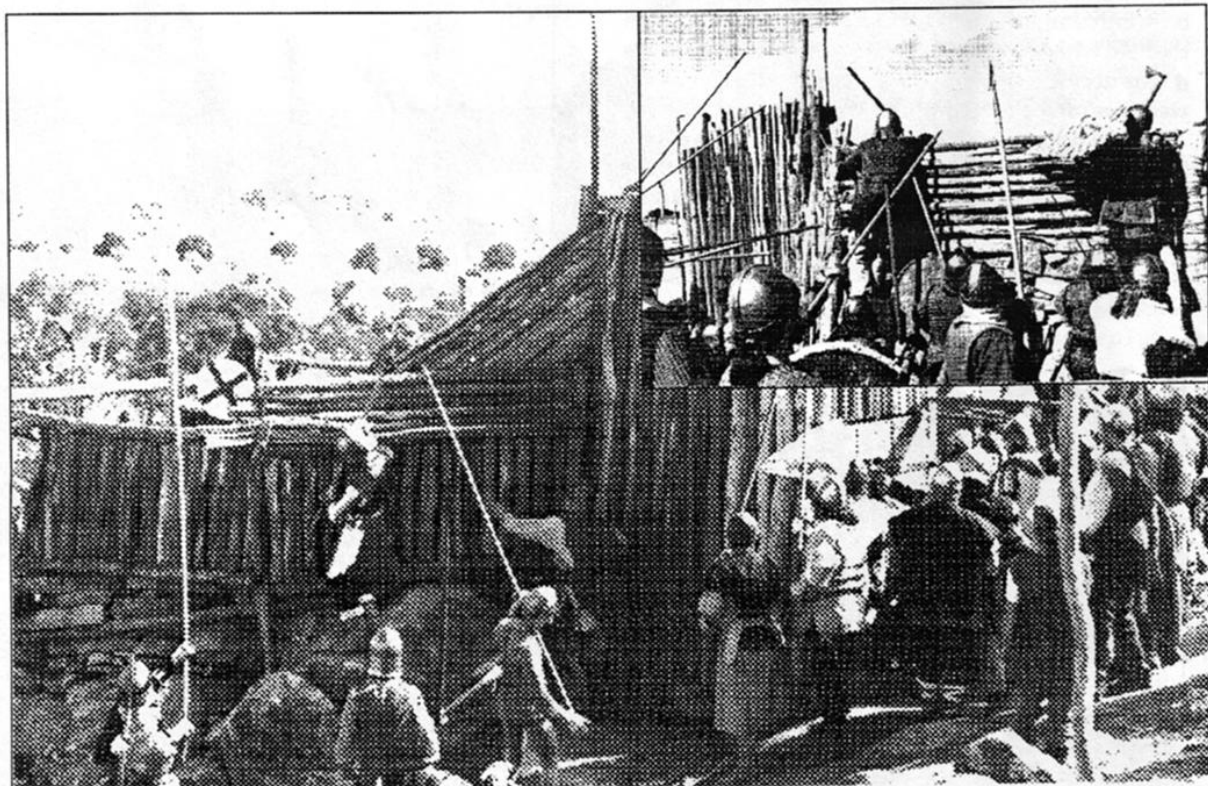
Combat followed lunch, this time up at the hill fort. **Wolfshead** once again came up with an act others could only try to copy: we marched to the top of the hill under the banner of the White Horse. **The Routiers** almost immediately began to copy us, with **1066** straggling, out of step, behind them. After a twenty minute delay to allow the **Routiers** to regain their collective breath, battle was joined with the various **Varangian Guards** inside the fort, and we, **MMAASS**, **AAF**, the

Routiers, **1066** (and all that) and assorted **Independents** attacking.

Once inside the fort, some of the **Varangians** forgot any prior conditions they had made and started poking people with the pointy ends of spears - which only proves that 'he who holds the Hill Fort makes all the rules'. **Wolfshead** made a creditable showing, both in the attack and, later, the defence - Matthew and Chris being among the first to go over the wall. The fort fell before our valiant efforts. It was then our turn to defend but, unfortunately, as the **NVG** made the **Routiers** a better offer these latter changed sides. Our lads, being considered expendable, were stuck with covering the largest hole in the wall; a position they held for a large part of the battle, until they finally fell. The proof of our gear was shown when Matthews shield was used as a ladder for four fully armoured knights. It was here that the second unfortunate incident of the day occurred when an idiot armed with a halbard went totally feral and was beaten down by Simon Fowler [1066].

I left the field to give a calligraphy lecture in the long hall, which went well despite a lack of paper and ink. I found out later that our lads had contested the field with **AAF** and had managed to win at least half the time. Saturday night's banquet was attended by all in their finery, the talking point being provided by my getting carried up a rocky hill on my shield in the dark and being met by a large hairy Saxon who pressed a drink into my hand. The banquet went for eight courses; we lasted five.

The bardic competition was held in the breaks between courses. Entries for the contest were many and varied, from Richard Robinson's (no relationship



Above: the Hill Fort

Inset: Chris going 'over the top'.

admitted by either of us) fire eating through an excellent rendition of A.A. Milne's *"The Knight Whose Armour Never Squeaks"* to an unpopular chanting of *'In Taberna Quando Sumus'* by Alveric.

Sunday was met *in taberna* with coffee, biscuits and licorice offered from a brown-paper bag by Alison ap Rhys. A smutty comment was made about brown-paper bags and she congratulated me on how well I had my "little boys" trained. Sunday, being a holy day, was commemorated with the raising up of the great god "Phuch" to the pantheon of mediævalists' gods. He was invoked upon retreat or whenever a particularly awesome bit of bludgeoning was seen on the field; called upon as a balm whenever the victims of said bludgeoning were having unguents and ointments from the Orient poured on their hurts; or upon kicking a largish sarsen in the dark; or, as evidenced on Friday night by three hairy Celts, His name was chanted as a mantra to ward of the cold.

was a treacherous round set in rough country, yet surprisingly few arrows were broken and none were lost. My groupings were all six inches across but unfortunately they were in the lower right corner of the target. The competition was well won by Anthony Fowler [1066], with Steve Nicol [NVG] second and third being disputed due to incorrect scoring. The lecture, on the Knights of the Temple of Solomon, was held at the same time; it started only five minutes late (and this was only because it had to be announced four times to the combatants on the field). I didn't attend this lecture, but was told that it was only good press for the Order: is this a Masonic plot to undermine all held dear by me? (Probably not...)

Pierre [the Routiers] then gave a 'Father-to-Offspring' chat on the future direction of the movement. It was pleasant sitting in the sun by the tavern listening to his message, which roughly went: "Even if you are throwing up in the back of the banquet hall, look



A group of devil-worshippers invoking the new god.

The market started early in the morning and entertainment was provided with a greasy-pole climbing competition, a fencing workshop and, of course, my own incomparable selling style.

We sold many items, including belts, hoods, car stickers, knives, Phillip and Chris (twice each! ...Al-right, we payed them to take Phillip). A dull spell was relieved by the Routiers invading the market-place, with muskets blazing and missing everybody until someone said "One, two, three", and everone fell over. What an eccentric performance! The ensuing pike charge was easily repelled by myself and a few brave remaining stall-holders because they wouldn't aggle.

The treasure hunt was held during and continued after the market for anyone who thought they could decipher riddles; but as it really needed either a map or local knowledge most people went to lunch. The obligatory meats, cheeses and fruits were followed by more combat and the archery competition.. This latter

authentic doing it." He also challenged us: "If you can't find evidence for something, don't do it...don't try to make up something to fill a gap." We walked down the hill to reflect and watch more fucking combat. Later, a contest was held between seven archers and seven gunners for accuracy over a given time. The archers scored thirty-one hits and the gunners fifty, although they were double-balling, and most of the archers ran out of arrows, and the gunners had to discharge their loaded pieces after the time was up. So much for the superiority of the gun.

we retired to our tents to prepare our entries for the arming, armouring and costume competitions. Judging began in the failing light. The brewing competition had two entries, one ale and one Turkish mint cordial. Both were of very high quality and the judging was difficult. The ale finally one; although, I think, only because it was a more familiar taste. I imagine the other competitions were as hard, especially as they

were interrupted by 1066 putting out their gear for the night's banquet. The hall was cleared and the banquet began.

Somewhere between the eighth and eleventh courses, Jim and I stood on our chairs (Alveric, being Herald, was the first person in four years to use my mediæval name, and did so without prompting) and announced the co-hosting of the next conference near Cataract Dam; and there was much rejoicing.

The 'Most Virulent Curse' competition was held later, in which Cory came second with an oath that seemed to be based on wrinkled or hairy scrotums. However, even this was not good enough to beat:

*"You could curdle mucus, you afterbirth of a
deceased canetoad...In short, you are a
Norman!"*

Howls of laughter greeted this gem.

The evening began to wind down from this, and apart from a pyrotechnical display by **Wolfshead** and **MMAASS** which legend has blown out of all proportion (tee hee) and a 2 a.m. raid on the kitchens by the Routiers, the night passed quietly.

The competition results follow:

BREWING Steve Nicol [NVG](Melb.)
ARMOURING Phil Barnes [1066]

ARMING Phil Barnes [1066]
COSTUMING Sheena Rigby [1066]
BARDIC Peter Radvan [AMMAS]
CURSING Bill Dowding [NVG](unat.)
ARM WRESTLING Tarran Nicol [NVG](Melb.)

There was little ill-feeling between clubs this conference as there was no attempt to regulate fighting styles at the *Althing* (or *Shit-Fight*, as it is more commonly known). If anything, I feel that the lack of an *Althing* went further toward uniting the movement than having one.

Early Monday morning we started to pack; a process that went surprisingly quickly considering that we had nine people getting in the way. We somehow managed to fit everything into a smaller space than before.

We waited until the buses were about to go and went to make our farewells. Twenty minutes later we drove off and passed the buses near the front gate - people kept forgetting things. Our trip passed uneventfully for ten hours averaging 110 km/h, with a further two hours at 7.5 km/h thrown in for good measure.

The tale goes on with 2 a.m. 'phone calls from Mittagong and 4 a.m. drives to Harris Park via Parramatta; but I feel that these may be better left in the mists of time. We arrived home safely in the not-so-small hours of Tuesday morning with a memento of our journey: *Maldon Flu*.



More fucking COMBAT!