

How a Man Schal *REALLY* be Armyd

(A rabbit hole of research by Brian Chabot <bchabot@gmail.com> (also known as Brian of Stonemarche in the SCA))

NB: This is a set of rough notes at the moment, but I hope to eventually turn it into a proper academic paper eventually.



You've probably seen the image and read the translation. It is a pretty famous piece among medieval enthusiasts... but have you ever tried tracing the origin?

The most common reference is cited as Hastings MS. [f. 122b] or:

Hastings Mss of miscellaneous tracts on chivalry
Archeologia 57, Vol. 1

Don't try looking to locate some manuscript called "Hastings MS" as you'll just get lost. The second reference provides a much better description as the famous passage is published in *Archeologia*, a book published in 1900.

The ORIGINAL manuscript seems to have been in the private collection of Lord Hastings as of the presentation of that paper, in December, 1899. Hence the reference. I spent some time looking to locate the manuscript, but the digital transcription to Archeologia I did find.

I originally found it by Googling a phrase in the Middle English version on one of the websites with a copy of the essay. This led me to a wonderful free scan at Google Books. The famous passage begins on page 43. Here is the link:

[https://books.google.com/
books?id=rFVIAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA43](https://books.google.com/books?id=rFVIAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA43)

Come to find out the whole book is of some interest in chivalry of the age. The author cites Albert Way in the 1847 edition of the Archeological Journal. Way's paper can be found here:

https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archiveDS/archiveDownload?t=arch-1132-1/dissemination/pdf/04/004_226_239.pdf

That of course, leads to an even deeper rabbit hole..

In the mean time, I did locate the proper citation for the famous essay. It is:

[Pierpont Morgan Library. MS M.775 fol. 122v](#)

...et al.

They do not have it properly digitized. Or even improperly. In fact they only have a handful of low res images online. If you contact them and ask, they will send you a few high res images, but anything more gets really pricey. As of February 2023, I have ordered a digital copy of the entire microfiche of the codex. It'll only be black and white but at least it will contain the other sections of the book that might be relevant or related.

This is my transliteration of the famous essay text shown and following that, my modernization and an idea for a tournament/deed based on the research I found.

How a man schall be armyd at his ese when he schal fighte
on foote

He schal have noo schirte up on him but a dowbelet of ffustean lynyd with satene cutte full of hoolis . the dowbelet muste be strongeli boūdē there the poyntis muste be sette aboute the greet of the arme . and the b ste before and behynde and the gussetis of mayle muste be sowid un to the dowbelet in the bought of the arme . and undir the arme the armynge poyntis muste be made of fyne twyne suche as men make stryngis for crossebowes and they muste be trussid small and poyntid as poyntis. Also they muste be wexid with cordeweneris coode . and than they woll neythir recche nor breke. Also a payr hosyñ of stamyn sengill and a peyre of shorte bulwerkis of thynne blanket to put aboute his kneys for chawfyng of his lighernes. Also a payre of shone of thikke cordewene and they muste be frette with smal whipcorde thre knottis up on a corde and thre coordis muste be faste sowid un to the hele of the shoo and fyne cordis in the mydill of the soole of the same shoo and that ther be betwene the fettis of the heele and the fettis of the mydill of the shoo the space of thre fyngris.

To arme a man.

ffirste ye muste sette on Sabatones and tye hem up on the shoo with smale poyntis that wol breke. And then griffus & then quisses pē the breche of mayle. And the tonletis. And the brest. And pē vambras. And pē rerebras. And then glovys. And then hange his daggere upon his right side. And then his shorte swerde upon the lyfte side in a rounde ryng all nakid to pulle it oute lightli. And then putte his cote upon his bak. And then his basinet pynid up on two greet staplis before the breste with a dowbill bokill behynde up on the bak for to make the basinet sitte juste. And then his long swerde in his hande. And then his pensill in his hande peyntid of seynt George or of oure lady to blesse him with as he gooth towarde the felde and in the felde

The day that the Pelaunt and the defendaunt shall fighte what they shal have w' hem in to the felde

[A (3-line drop cap)] tente muste be pight in the felde
Also a cheyre
Also a basyn
Also .vj. loves of breed
Also .ij. galones of wyne
Also a messe of mete flesshe or fische
Also a borde and a peyre trestelis to sette his mete and drynke on
Also a borde clothe Also a knyf for to kutte his mete
Also a cuppe to drynke of
Also a glas with a drynke made
Also a dosen tresses of armynge poyntis
Also an hamyr and pynsones and a bicorne
Also smale nayles a dosen
Also [a spere] a longe swerde shorte swerde and dagger
Also a kerchif to hele the viser of his basinet
Also a pensell to bere in his hande of his avowrye.

Modernization by Brian Chabot

How a man shall be armed at his ease when he shall fight on foot

He shall have no shirt up on him but rather a doublet of fustian lined with satin cut full of holes. The doublet must be strongly bound. There the points must be set about the great of the arm and the breast before and behind. And the gussets of (chain)mail must be sewn on to the doublet in around the arm and under the arm. The arming points must be made of fine twine such as men make strings for crossbows and they must be tied in small bundles and tipped with points. Also they must be waxed with cordewener's code so that they will neither stretch nor break. Also a pair of linsey-woolsey cloth hosen with a supporting strap and a pair of short pads of thin blanket to put about his knees for chafing of his legs. Also a pair of shoes of thick leather and they must be fretted with small whipcords with three knots along each cord and three cords must be securely sewn on to the heel of the shoe and fine cords in the middle of the sole of the same shoe and that there be between the fretts of the heel and the fretts of the middle of the shoe the space of three fingers.

To arm a man.

First, you must put on sabatons and tie them on the shoe with small points that won't break. And then greaves & then cuisses then the breeches of mail (breyette). And the tonlet (skirt). And the breastplate. And then vambraces. And then rerebraces. And then gloves. And then hang his dagger upon his right side. And then his short sword upon the left side in a round ring all nakid to pull it out lightly. And then put his surcoat upon his back. And then his bascinet pinned up on two great staples before the breast with a double buckle behind up on the back to make the bascinet sit just right. And then his long sword in his hand. And then his pennant in his hand painted of Saint George or of Our Lady to bless him with as he goes toward the field and in the field.

The day that the Challenger and the defendant shall fight what they shall have with them in to the field

A tent must be erected in the field

Also a chair

Also a basin

Also .6. loaves of bread
Also .2. gallons of wine
Also a platter of meat or fish
Also a board and a pair of trestles to set his meat and drink on
Also a table cloth
Also a knife to cut his meat
Also a cup to drink from
Also a glass with a drink made
Also a dosen tresses of arming points
Also a hammer and pliers and an anvil
Also small nails, a dozen
Also a spear, a long sword, short sword, and dagger
Also a kerchief to hold up the visor of his bascinet
Also a pennant to bear in his hand of his heraldry.

Need to also follow up with the reference transcribed here:

https://archive.org/stream/cu31924029810862/cu31924029810862_djvu.txt

A more modern Reconstruction Tournament idea for the HEMA/SCA/Reenactment Battlefield or Deed

Each fighter shall come to the field with at least two support people.

A 10 foot or so pavilion is to be set up near the battlefield. It shall be marked with the arms of the fighter, either with a banner or pennant or some other easily recognizable, medieval fashion.

In the shade of the pavilion shall be a sturdy chair for the fighter (or others) to rest.

Within or near shall be set up a table with tablecloth spread out on it. Upon the table shall be placed:

- A flagon, pitcher, or other serving container of “wine” (or a non-alcoholic beverage such as Gatorade, lemon-aid, juice, cider, etc.)

- A flagon, pitcher, or other serving container of water
- A platter of savory snacks. (Cold meats, preserved meats, fish, pickles, pickled vegetables, cheeses, etc. are suggested, depending on any dietary restrictions of the fighter and support.)
- A presentation of breads (or gluten free equivalent for people who so require)
- Cups and glasses for the fighter and support.
- A knife to cut the meat and cheese

Modern addition: Label the food and drink!

Under the table shall be stored a supply of the above foods and beverages to replenish as they run out.

Nearby on a smaller table or trunk shall be an appropriate assortment of tools and supplies for field repair of armor and weapons.

The fighter shall arrive in “soft kit” clothing appropriate to their station and fit for an appearance at court.

At their pavilion shall be the fighter’s full kit of armor (plus any spares they may want), a longsword, an arming sword, a mace, a shield, a buckler, and a poleaxe.

A Viewers’ Gallery shall be erected on one (long) side of the field. The regent(s) seated in the center, and in order of precession, alternating right then left of the regent. Each position is the highest of the viewer or the fighter they represent. Viewers not attached to a fighter take their places as they will in the wings or elsewhere around the field.

Servants ensure the viewers are amply supplied with snacks and refreshments throughout the tournament.

Order of Events

1. Regent orders the herald to call forth the combatants
2. Each combatant is heralded onto the field and gives a (very!) brief introduction, bows, and takes their place in line on the field, beginning in the center then also alternating to the Regent’s left then right (Fighters’ right then left, facing the regent.)
3. Regent thanks the fighters and bids them to prepare. They are to return to the field in one hour properly arrayed for the first pass.
4. While fighters prepare, entertainment takes place on the field - music, actors, comedy, acrobats, etc.
5. Fighters take the field at the appointed time. As they enter the field they are inspected by authorized marshals to ensure their armor and weapons are safe.
6. (Various passes, singles, teams, mass melee, etc)

7. When the passes are complete, the fighters may doff their gauntlets and helms, and get some quick refreshments, but shall return to the field in a quarter hour.
 8. Fighters return to the field. Regent thanks them and calls for the gallery to have their say, present tokens, and thank the fighters and entertainers. Regent may specify OP or reverse OP.
 9. When the gallery has had their say, any special announcements are said.
 10. Regent gives final thanks and bids fighters to return to their pavilions and the viewers to go and celebrate with the fighters as they armor down and prepare for the feast.
 11. Volunteers lay out the tables for the feast.
 12. At the appointed time, people are let in and everyone eats!
 13. Clean up and sleep.
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On Arming Points

Much has been said in the armored fighting community about arming points and you're all WRONG! (OK, I'm just kidding here.)

OK, maybe not all, but there is a lot of guesswork and trial and error going on that has no basis in historical evidence. What evidence DO we have? Not much. We know what the metal tips were like because we have found a lot of those. They are of thin metal, often brass, about 32 ga or 0.23 mm or 0.009 inches thick or thereabouts. They were rolled in a cone or tube shape and attached to each end of the cord. There is pictorial evidence of many clothing ties, but fewer arming points, which, coincidentally, look much the same. The cord is usually shown as about 2-4mm thick, wound, twisted, and tied in a square knot for most armor OR, especially after the mid 15th c. as a braided decorative cord or ribbon tied with a single bow like clothing ties of the time.

“How a Man...” gives the most famous description:

the armyngge poyntis muste be made of fyne twyne suche as men make stryngis for crossebowes and they muste be trussid small and poyntid as poyntis. Also they muste be wexid with cordeweneris coode . and than they woll neythir recche nor breke.

Or modernized:

The arming points must be made of fine twine such as men make strings for crossbows and they must be tied in small bundles and tipped with points. Also they must be waxed with cordwainer's code so that they will neither stretch nor break.

Let's break down these properties:

- **Fine twine, such as men make strings for crossbows:** Practically no one today used natural fibers for crossbow string, but it is said the originals used the highest quality flax or hemp fibers.
- **tied in small bundle:** Pretty self-explanatory.
- **Tipped with points:** This part is pretty well documented.

- <https://www.livingstonjewelers.com/library/AigletsSCA20150425.pdf>
- <https://fingerloop.org/aglet.html>
- https://historicenterprises.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=101_135&products_id=1738
- **waxed with cordwainer's code:** Code (or coad, cood, or coode) was used by shoe makers (cordwainers - cobblers only repaired shoes) to wax the threads they used to sew the leather. The exact recipe seems to have varied both from shop to shop and also by the season. Today, it is better known as "cobblers' wax" even though it was used by the makers not the repair people and it often actually contained no wax.... It seems to be commonly used in bagpipe repair and fly-tying. It seems to be made of some combination of pitch, resin, rosin, tar, and/or sometimes a little beeswax, tallow, or olive oil to make it softer.
 - <http://www.thehcc.org/forum/viewtopic.php?f=11&t=1028>
 - <http://wherearetheelves.net/making-code/>
 - <http://www.raisedheels.com/blog/?p=1149>
 - <https://companyofthestaple.org.au/making-coad-for-shoe-making/>
 -
- **so that they will neither stretch nor break:** This is pretty obvious, but the cordage needs to be sturdy and not stretchy. Cheap string and hippy hemp need not apply.

So braided for looks, twisted for fighting. "Wax" it with cobblers wax. Add tips.

I have obtained some code. It is HARD. So I tried my hand at making my own. It seems to come out in two flavors: Rock hard and brittle or sticky, putty like and sticks to EVERYTHING. If you fight with points run through this I 1000% guarantee they won't come untied. Ever. Just cut them when you're done.

If you want to use historical reagents and still be able to tie and untie your points, I'd recommend using tarred hemp marline and running it through beeswax. This keeps the tar on the inside and the wax on the outside. I've used them and they work really well. In a pinch, use wood glue to keep the ends from fraying if you don't have time for proper metal tips.

Still need to research:

- Crossbow String construction
- Cobblers wax (more)
- How to sew on the cords on the shoes. - REPAIR SOLES!
- Aglet production
- Arming doublet of fustian lined with satin
- "a payr hosyñ of stamyn sengill"
- Fighting boots with cords
- How to run a tournament of foot.
- Verify transcription of MS M.775 (Digitize if possible?)