

Brings to life the world of the medieval knight in a witty yet informative guide

Knight

The Medieval Warrior's (Unofficial) Manual

Michael Prestwich

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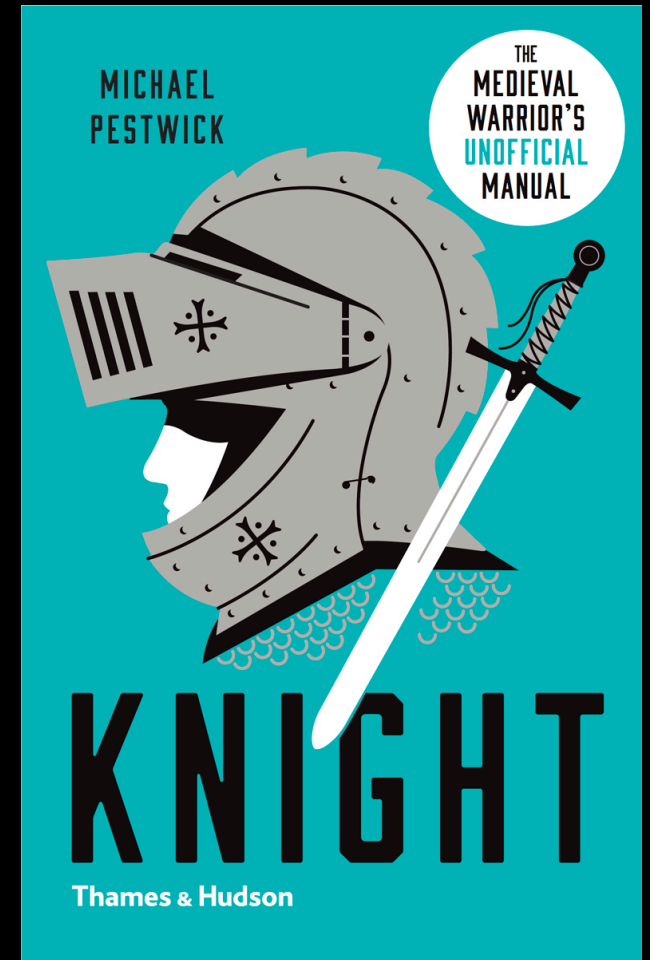
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Key Sales Points

- One of two books in Thames & Hudson's popular 'Unofficial Manual' series being reissued this autumn in B-format paperback
- Combines history and entertainment in its irreverent but revealing look at the past
- Packed with entertaining anecdotes and quotes from the knights themselves, and illustrated in colour and black and white with entirely contemporary images to give the feel of an authentic medieval military manual
- Written by a respected medieval scholar in a direct, entertaining style

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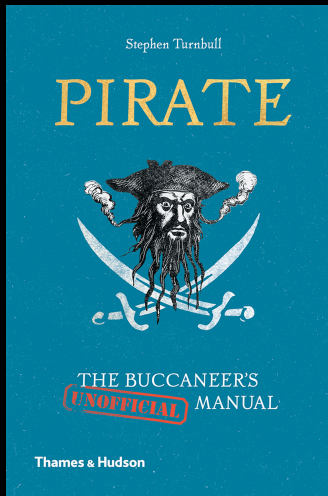
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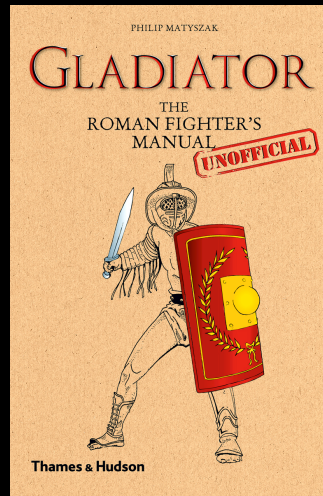
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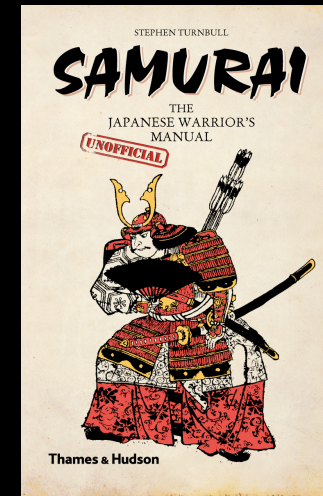
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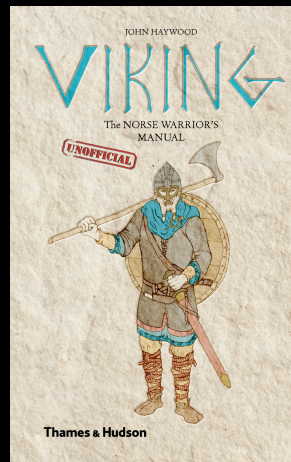
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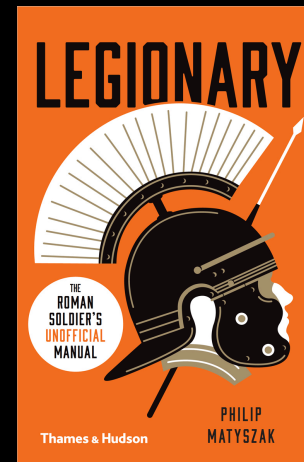
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ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD

And at this feast be ordained a thing new and unused by the crown, choosing sixty of the barons and knights, who swore faith and company together with the said king, under a certain order of their life, and of their activities and vestments . . . And it was called the Company of the Knot.

MATTEO VILLANI, *CHRONICLE*, 1352

Deople enjoy belonging to clubs and organizations. It gives them a sense of belonging, and a shared identity. Knights are no different in this respect. There are a large number of orders that you may be able to join, which will provide you with comradeship and a feeling of importance. Their rituals will help to reinforce your chivalric ideals. You should, however, be wary of who you sign up to.

Religious orders

You are unlikely to want to join a knightly order such as that of the Hospital, whose members are part monk, part knight. Such orders are in clear decline, and you would probably not enjoy the monastic discipline involved.

It was in the early days of the crusades, in the 12th century, that the orders of the Temple and Hospital were founded. They served a valuable purpose when there was a Latin Kingdom in the east, before the loss of its capital, Acre, in 1291. The Order of the Temple was destroyed early in the 14th century. It owned a lot of land in Europe, and had developed into a



There are many orders to join, but you cannot become a Templar, as the Order of the Temple is no more. It was destroyed by King Philip IV of France in the early 14th century. Here, some Templar knights are being burned to death for being heretics.

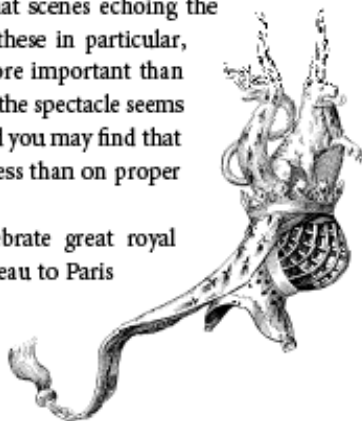
major banking institution. Not surprisingly, Philip IV of France had his eyes on its resources. The Templars were put on trial, with accusations of heresy and vice brought against them; the knights were said to be guilty of blasphemy, of worshipping idols, and of committing an impressive range of sexual misdemeanours. The charges, however, were not always very convincing. They included the following:

Item, of the third class, which is about the worship of cats, there are two articles; no witnesses testified about this in England.

He said that after he made the single beds of the Templars, on the next day he would very often find signs of two of them, as if they had slept together.

The fashion for staging tournaments with historical or mythological themes probably started in the Low Countries, where they developed as civic festivals. If you attend an event billed as a 'Round Table', however, you will probably find that scenes echoing the Arthurian past are played out. At these in particular, drinking and dancing are much more important than fighting. Increasingly, the show and the spectacle seems to be taking over from the sport, and you may find that you are spending more on fancy dress than on proper equipment.

Tournaments are used to celebrate great royal occasions. The entry of Queen Isabeau to Paris in 1389 was marked by much pageantry, and by a tournament involving 60 knights. Unfortunately the horses' hooves kicked up so much dust that it was hard to see what was happening, even when the ground was watered for the second



OF TOURNAMENTS AND JOUSTS

The king of Hungary gave three villages to a knight as compensation for three teeth he lost in jousting.



King John of Bohemia is said to have chosen his second wife because she gave him such fine presents when he won tournaments.

Edward III summoned 500 noble ladies to attend a tournament in London in 1342.



In 1375 Edward III's mistress Alice Perrers led those participating in a tournament in procession at an event in London.



In 1383 the count of Savoy broke 47 lances in a joust.

RIGHT It is important to look your best at a tournament – this is a prime opportunity to impress damsels.

OPPOSITE If you want to show off, you can wear an elaborate crest on your helmet. These are for jousts and tournaments, not for war.



day's events. The conclusion, however, was more satisfactory, for it took place indoors, in a great hall built for the purpose. There Boucicaut and other knights entertained the ladies by jousting for two hours.

Prizes

You should not expect to win much in a tournament, save glory and, if you are really fortunate, the hand of a fair maiden. You might get a title. Giles of Argentein became the knight of the Greenwood as a result of one of his many tournament successes; he was later rated the third-best knight in all of Christendom. Examples of prizes include:

- ‡ London, 1390. A horn with gold mounts; a greyhound with a gold collar; a gold circlet; a gold belt.
- ‡ Florence, 1406. A silver-gilt lion and a velvet cap; a helmet with a silver dragon's head; a jousting helm with two wings decorated with coloured feathers.



LEFT Make sure you go to a tournament well prepared – you may have to fight with daggers as well as your sword and lance.

BELOW Nowadays it is increasingly common for knights to challenge each other to fight on foot, reflecting the reality of warfare. A range of weapons can be used; the illustration shows knights fighting with poleaxes.

test of your skills in the use of weapons, but be careful. This sort of fighting can be dangerous, and perhaps because of this, challenges often end in lengthy arguments rather than actual combat.

In 1400 an Aragonese squire, Michael d'Orris, issued a challenge to the knights of England. He had vowed to wear an uncomfortable piece of leg armour until he had fought an English knight. He set out the terms of the fight in detail.

Ten strokes with the battle-axe, without intermission, and when these strokes have been given, and the judge shall cry out 'Ho!', ten cuts with the sword to be given without intermission or change of armour. When the judge shall cry out 'Ho!', we will resort to our daggers and give ten stabs with them. Should either party lose or drop his weapon, the other may continue until the judge shall cry out 'Ho!'.



After the fight on foot, the two opponents were to joust until one fell, or was so wounded he could continue no further. John Prendergast accepted the challenge, but, there being no postal service, letters were delayed, and arguments ensued. Insults began to be traded. 'I hold your conduct as very discourteous and ungentlemanly', wrote d'Orris. Prendergast finally demanded £333 expenses from the Aragonese, and, some four years after the initial challenge was made, the matter was dropped. No fight ever took place. It is better not to get into such arguments to begin with.

Spectacle and propaganda

Tournaments are sometimes disapproved of by governments and the Papacy; they can be seen as a dangerous distraction. That is the English king Henry V's view today. Even Edward I, a keen participant in tournaments in his youth, prohibited them when he considered that they were drawing knights away from his war against the Scots. It was impossible, however, to prevent such popular events from taking place, and in 1316 the Papacy gave up trying and withdrew its objections. In 1338 Philip IV of France banned tournaments during the war with the English, but Edward III, in contrast, gave them his full encouragement. He considered them a way of encouraging knights and nobles to join in his royal enterprises. Alfonso XI of Castile was another enthusiast for tournaments, regarding them as useful practice for war; one was to take place at every meeting of his knightly order of the Band.

There is a strong dramatic element to many tournaments:

- ‡ In 1331 a tournament was held in Cheapside in London which began with a procession in which maidens led knights dressed as Tatars through the streets.
- ‡ In 1359 Edward III and his sons, together with a group of nobles, dressed up as the mayor and aldermen of London for a tournament.
- ‡ In 1362 a Cheapside tournament saw seven knights dressed as the Seven Deadly Sins jousting against all comers.

You may find it difficult to remain mounted in the confusion of battle. Pedro IV of Aragon, in his early years, charged into battle in Sardinia. He quickly lost his lance and was unhorsed, but continued to fight on foot. He was struck no fewer than 19 blows, but once he got hold of his sword, which he called *Villardelle*, the enemy began to fall back in disarray.

Fighting on horseback can sometimes work well. The French cavalry triumphed at Cassel in 1328, and again at Roosebeke in 1382, when French and Burgundian cavalry defeated the townspeople of Ghent. At Poitiers it was the cavalry under the Gascon Captal de Buch who dealt the final hammer blow to the French. There are, however, major potential problems if you do choose to fight in battle in this way.

The failure of the mounted knight

Worryingly for knights, recent history shows that you are more likely to face defeat if you try to fight on horseback:

- ‡ The battle of Courtrai in 1302 saw the Flemish townspeople, fighting on foot, defeat the flower of French chivalry.
- ‡ At Bannockburn in 1314 the English cavalry were cut down by Scottish spearmen.
- ‡ Swiss troops fighting on foot, with long halberds, were successful against knightly cavalry at Morgarten in 1315.
- ‡ The Swiss infantry were successful against aristocratic cavalry at Laupen in 1339.
- ‡ The English broke the French cavalry in spectacular fashion at Crécy; archery was one key to their success, but in the *mêlée* it was the dismounted English knights and men-at-arms who won the battle.
- ‡ At Nájera in 1367 the Black Prince's troops were successful against the cavalry of Henry of Trastámara, the claimant to the Castilian throne.



This imaginative picture of the battle of Neville's Cross in 1346, from a manuscript of Froissart's Chronicles, shows mounted knights in the foreground, fighting with lances and swords.

- ‡ At Aljubarrota in 1385 English dismounted forces, including archers, assisted the Portuguese in their defeat of the Franco-Castilian army.
- ‡ At Sempach in 1386 the Swiss infantry defeated the Austrian cavalry.

The crusading battle of Nicopolis in 1396 was the final demonstration of the failure of the mounted knight. There, Boucicaut fought with exceptional bravery. He spurred his great charger, his sword in his hand, and rode

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