
“FUNDAMENTALLY, THE MARKSMAN AIMS AT HIMSELF.” ~D. T. SUZUKI
(1870-1966)



The Medieval Archer's Reading List

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By Manigarm the Scythian

We all love to learn about archery during the Middle Ages, but sorting through the thousands of books and articles out there can be daunting. Drawing on a background in medieval studies and archaeology, I've compiled the following Medieval Archer's Reading List, categorized by topic, to help get you started. I've included the title and author, as well as a brief description of the contents taken from each book's publication synopsis. Books in each category are listed in alphabetical order.

If you are particularly interested in old or hard to find archery texts, I encourage you to check out **The Archery Library Online**: <http://www.archerylibrary.com>. This website archives a variety of old archery books and articles from 1545 to 1936. These resources are available to give you an overview of the development of archery through the ages, from use in wartime to its development as a high society pastime to the beginnings of modern target archery.

For further reading about a wide variety of topics in medieval history, you can also check out my [Medievalist's Reading List](#).

(Note: It is my intent that this reading list be considered a living document. If you have read a book or article that you feel is an important contribution to learning about traditional archery or archery in the Middle Ages and I have not included it here, feel free to submit the title and author (and a short description, if you like) for inclusion in the reading list at prolegomenon@gmail.com).

History of Archery

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Agincourt 1415: The Archers' Story, Anne Curry - This new history tells the story of the battle of Agincourt and Henry V's Normandy campaign from the perspective of the reputed commander of the English archers, Sir Thomas Erpingham. Anne Curry also addresses the role of the longbow and other battlefield tactics in the victory.

Arrowstorm: The World of the Archer in the Hundred Years War, Richard Wadge - This book chronicles the overwhelming importance of the military archer in the major battles of the late medieval period. The longbow played a central role in the English victory at the battles of Crecy and Agincourt, and dominated the less well-known Battle of the Herrings in 1429. Used with complete disregard for the chivalric code that governed war in the Middle Ages, the English longbow

completely undermined the supremacy of heavy cavalry on the battlefield, demanding a wholesale reassessment of the tactics that had gone before. Richard Wadge explains what made England's longbow archers so devastating on the battlefield and details the process by which their formidable armament was manufactured and the conditions that produced men capable of continually drawing a bow under a tension of 100 pounds. Wadge looks at the economics behind the supply of longbows to the English army and the social history of the military archer - what life was like in England in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and what were the advantages of joining the first professional standing army in England since the days of the Roman conquest.

Bowmen of England, Donald Featherstone - In the skilled hands of English and Welsh archers, the longbow revolutionized medieval concepts and traditions of war. From the 12th to the 15th centuries, it was the winning factor in every major battle from Morlaix in 1342 to Patay in 1429. Donald Featherstone's study of the English longbow from its early development until the Wars of the Roses is a notable reconstruction of the longbow's complicated history. Note his inclusion of an interesting footnote regarding the engagement in which the longbow was last used in France in 1940.

Bows & Arrows of the Native Americans: A Step-by-Step Guide to Wooden Bows, Sinew-backed Bows, Composite Bows, Strings, Arrows & Quivers, Jim Hamm – This book details the nearly lost art of handmade bows and arrows from a narrative interwoven with history.

Bows of the World, David Gray - This work surveys the multiple varieties and peak achievements of the art of archery from around the world, covering primitive, traditional and modern bows from the civilizations of North America, Europe, Asia, South America and Africa. Beginning with an account of how prehistoric human ingenuity developed the bow, the text examines why different societies produced different styles of archery, and gives particular emphasis to the distinction between bows for war and bows for hunting. Dimensions and construction materials are detailed for each bow examined, along with sidebars on arrows and quivers. This book also includes key shooting characteristics and performance facts, as well as an in-depth focus on the legends, folklore, and spiritual attributes that have developed around archery, from Native American myths to Zen meditative artistry.

Chinese Archery, Stephen Selby - Archer and Sinologist Stephen Selby collects and translates several views of traditional archery in China by historians, philosophers, poets, artists, novelists, and strategists beginning from 1500 BC to the 20th century. These translations primarily focus on bow building, archery, and crossbow technique over the centuries.

Crécy 1346: Triumph of the Longbow, David Nicolle - The Battle of Crecy was the first major land battle of the Hundred Years War. It pitted the French army, then considered the best in Europe, and their miscellaneous allies against the English under King Edward III and the 'Black Prince', who as yet had no great military reputation. The Genoese crossbowmen were outshot by the English longbows and the pattern was set for the rest of the day. The French cavalry were committed piecemeal in fruitless charges against strong English positions, losing perhaps 10,000 men in the course of the fighting. After almost a millennium in which cavalry had dominated the field of battle, the infantryman, and particularly the longbowmen, now ruled supreme.

Die Armbrust, Egon Harmuth, Originally published in German in 1975, this crossbow handbook served as a follow-up to Payne-Gallwey's 1903 The Crossbow. It covers the general history and culture of the crossbow.

Encyclopedia of Native American Bows, Arrows & Quivers: Volume 1: Northeast, Southeast, and Midwest, Steve Allely - Native Americans and their elegant weapons have provided an undeniable mystique for archers, history buffs, collectors, and anyone who appreciates traditional skills. Authors Allely and Hamm have brought together the most exceptional archery pieces from eastern tribes such as the Mohegan, Mohawk, Cherokee, Seminole, Chippewa, and Winnebago. Detailed pen-and-ink drawings give dimensions, decorations, and construction details on more than a hundred historic bows, scores of arrows, and two dozen quivers. The running commentary is drawn from research conducted in museums around the world, and gives insights into who used these instruments and how.

English Longbowman 1330-1515, Clive Bartlett – This book details the English military ascendancy from the mid-14th to the early 15th century and focuses primarily on the English longbow and its effectiveness as a weapon of the Late Middle Ages.

European Crossbows: A Survey by Josef Alm, Josef Alm - Alms's survey was originally published in Sweden in 1947. It provides a detailed survey of the development of the European crossbow.

Hunting the Hard Way, Howard Hill - Archery conjures up many images-Robin Hood, the American West, wild safaris in Africa, and the simplicity of nature on a brisk October morning. Howard Hill brings to life all of these images with exciting stories about the thrill of the hunt, oneness with nature, and the adventure of the great outdoors.

Hunting with the Bow and Arrow, Saxton Pope – This book details the glory and romance of archery culminated in England before the discovery of America. There no doubt the bow was used to its greatest perfection and it decided the fate of nations until the crossbow and the matchlock supplanted the longbow when Columbus sailed for the New World.

Korean Traditional Archery, Thomas A. Duvernay - A general history of traditional Korean archery including discussions of horn bows, thumb ring techniques, shooting postures, philosophy, and etiquette.

Kyudo: The Essence and Practice of Japanese Archery, Hideharu H. Onuma, Dan De Prospero, Jackie De Prospero – Kyudo, the Way of the Bow, is the oldest of Japan's traditional martial arts and the one most closely associated with bushido, the Way of the Warrior. After the Second World War, Eugen Herrigel introduced the concept of kyudo to the West in his classic Zen in the Art of Japanese Archery but until now, no Japanese kyudo master has published a book on his art in English. Written with both novices and advanced students in mind, the book is presented in simple, straightforward language and features hundreds of detailed illustrations, supplemented by rare photographs of Master Onuma, clearly demonstrating the fundamental techniques and daily practice of this form of "standing Zen."

Longbow: A Social and Military History, Robert Hardy - This revised and expanded edition chronicles the history of the longbow from the earliest known example used 8000 years ago, through its coming of age at the battles of Crecy, Poitiers and Agincourt, to its use as a hunting and sporting weapon, and its present-day status in Britain. This book contains the first authoritative account of the archery equipment found in Henry VIII's warship the Mary Rose; describes the archers themselves, their equipment, training, uniform and terms of service; examines the fact and fiction of the Robin Hood legend, the reasons why the French never took to the longbow and the devastating effect of longbow against longbow in the Wars of the Roses. This book also offers a detailed account of how to make a longbow from scratch, including all the tools and materials required.

Medieval Warfare: A History, Maurice Keen - A comprehensive anthology of essays by a number of British academics that survey military development in the Middle Ages including the history and use of the bow.

Mounted Archers of the Steppe 600 BC-AD 1300, Antony Karasulas - For more than 2,000 years hordes of mounted nomadic archers from the vastness of the steppe and from Central Asia poured into China, the Middle East, and Europe. Feared and reviled, they were a formidable threat to the lands they invaded. Their influence on military history is incalculable: the whole foundation of late Classical and Medieval Western and Middle Eastern military thought was based on the reality of a highly mobile, tough and unconventional foe, one which could strike almost anywhere at will and with highly effective long-range weapons.

North American Bows, Arrows, and Quivers: An Illustrated History, Otis Tufton Mason - Otis Tufton Mason, the founder of the Anthropologist Society of Washington, details the history of the archery tools used by the native peoples throughout the North American continent. Hundreds of line drawings showcase the many varieties of bows, arrows, and quivers they crafted, and numerous rendered images display tools and materials. Sketched diagrams demonstrate how the arrowpoints were mounted and the bows assembled. Nearly all the illustrations are accompanied by an explanatory page of authoritative information.

Secrets of the English War Bow, Hugh D. H. Soar - Dominating medieval battlefields for more than two centuries but requiring long and arduous practice to command, the English war bow and its battle shaft became the symbols of British power in Europe. Despite being crafted for hundreds of years and wielded by generations of archers, the sole surviving examples of these powerful weapons—the military version of the longbow—are those recovered from the Tudor warship Mary Rose. Now, expert craftsmen use all available evidence, including applied archaeology, to unlock the secrets of the English war bow. In addition, this book demonstrates the complete manufacture of a bow from tree selection to stringing and how specialized arrowheads were forged and attached to shafts. Secrets of the English War Bow provides information on the actual performance of the war bow, including the bow's effectiveness against various materials and, for the first time, its use against moving targets, since these bows were often drawn against mounted soldiers.

The Book of Archery: Being the Complete History and Practice of the Art, Ancient and Modern, George Agar Hansard - This book is produced from digital images created through the University of Michigan University Library's preservation reformatting program. It covers the history of archery from Europe to China and includes biographies of famous archers (including a chapter specific to famous female archers), as well as details of equipment, techniques, and regional archery practices (namely Greek, Roman, Welsh, and French).

The Book of the Crossbow, Ralph Payne-Gallwey – This work includes a facsimile reprint of The Crossbow published in 1903 by Longmans, Green, and Co. in London. Payne-Gallwey also includes surveys of the history of the crossbow with comparisons to the longbow, shortbow, and handgun as well as the construction and management of medieval and modern crossbows. In later chapters, he also discusses the ancient and medieval siege engines that stand in evolutionary relation to crossbows.

The Crooked Stick: A History of the Longbow, Hugh D. H. Soar - Although the longbow may best be known for its use during the Hundred Years' War, its origins lie with ancient Saxon seafighters and Welsh craftsmen. In this book, historian and leading expert on traditional archery, Hugh Soar presents

the history of the longbow. Starting with Neolithic bows and arrows, he describes the bow's use in medieval hunts and associated customs. Soar also follows the weapon's development and tactical deployment from the hand-bow of William the Conqueror's campaigns to the continental set-piece battles between England and France. In later chapters, Soar continues with the history of archery during the Regency and Victorian periods as well as the resurgence of traditional archery in the 20th century.

The Crossbow: Its Military and Sporting History, Construction and Use, Ralph Payne-Gallwey – This historical exploration of a weapon used for centuries will fascinate historians and enthusiasts alike. The crossbow, probably introduced to England by the Norman invaders in 1066, was once considered so barbarous that it was prohibited as a “weapon hateful to God and unfit for Christians.” Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey, an accomplished engineer, describes military and sporting crossbows and their dimensions, components, and ranges; provides hard-to-find information on crossbow construction; gives details about modern crossbows such as bullet-shooting crossbows and bolt-shooting crossbows; and offers a peek at unusual crossbows like the Chinese repeating crossbow.

The Great Warbow: From Hastings to the Mary Rose, Matthew Strickland - The Great Warbow is an exploration of the bow and arrow as weapons of war. From before the Domesday Book, through Anglo-Saxon England, medieval Wales and Ireland, the Crusades, Bannockburn and the Wars of the Roses, until the time of the Tudors, this book follows a wide-ranging journey through history. Tactics, myths, origins, defense and armor are all discussed; as are the different types of bows; shortbow, longbow, composite bows and crossbow.

The History of Archery, Edmund H. Burke - Illustrated with photographs and old prints, Edmund H. Burke, the founder of the Society of Archer Antiquaries, authors this work on the 10,000 year history of archery. He includes everything from the factual history of the making of bows and the art of fletching as well as accounts of famous battles (such as Agincourt, Poitiers, Crecy) in which archers played decisive roles. Burke also addresses Native American archery and the character of Robin Hood.

The Medieval Archer, James Bradbury - This book traces the general history of archery in the medieval period, from the Norman Conquest to the Wars of the Roses. James Bradbury focuses primarily on the role of archery in both medieval society and military tactics until the invention of the rifle.

The Romance of Archery: A Social History of the Longbow, Hugh D. H. Soar - In a tradition extending back for centuries, and eventually becoming part of English law, all boys were to be provided with a bow and two arrows at the age of six to begin archery training. When the longbow gave way to firearms in the 16th century, the ancient statute was relaxed. At that point, rather than disappear, the longbow began a new life as the centerpiece of recreational archery. Initially men-only, archery clubs in the 18th and 19th centuries began accepting women members. It was then, as Hugh Soar relates, that the longbow literally became an arm of cupid, with recreational archery providing a setting for prospective partners to meet in a socially acceptable environment, a ritual known from the time of Jane Austen to Edith Wharton. With the participation of women, the longbow opened up another phase in its centuries-old career, with women welcome to shoot in the Olympic Games.

The Witchery of Archery, Maurice Thompson – The Witchery of Archery, written in 1878, this was the first book in English about hunting with a bow ever published. Its full title is ***The Witchery of Archery: A Complete Manual of Archery. With Many Chapters of Adventures by Field and Flood, and an***

Appendix Containing Practical Directions for the Manufacture and Use of Archery Implements. Long considered the first important book about archery written in the English language.

Traditional Archery from Six Continents: The Charles E. Grayson Collection, Charles E. Grayson; Mary French; Michael J. O'Brien - As a major hunting tool and weapon, the bow changed human history around the world, and its diverse forms reflect the cultures that adopted it. This book presents color photographs and descriptions of some three hundred items, including quivers, thumb rings, and more, from the Charles E. Grayson Archery Collection. The artifacts are organized by region, taking in equipment from Asia, the Middle East, Africa, the Americas, and Europe used over the last five hundred years.

Toxophilus: The School of Shooting in Two Books, Roger Ascham - Originally published in 1544, The School Of Shooting comprises of two books combined together: The First Book of the School of Shooting and The Second Book of the School of Shooting. These books are written in the form of a dialogue between Toxophilus (A lover of the bow) and Philogus (A lover of learning). In the discussion, Toxophilus justifies his love of archery as a pastime, puts forward his reasons for retaining the bow as a weapon of war instead of the newly invented hand gun, and he gives practical instructions on the technique of shooting the bow.

Yahi Archery (1918), Saxton Pope – This article follows the story of how Ishi, the last Yana Indian, practiced archery, including descriptions of how he made his bow, his arrows, arrow points, and quiver. This short pamphlet details the history of the archery practices of one tribe.

Shooting Methods, Philosophies, and Techniques

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Archery Anatomy: An Introduction to Techniques for Improved Performance, Ray Axford - Knowledge of the interrelationship between the anatomy of the human body and the anatomy of the bow is fundamental to improving archery skill and technique. The detailed drawings and clear, descriptive text in this book explain how the skeleton and muscles should be used to improve overall performance in a natural way without artificial or coached movements.

Archery: Steps to Success, Kathleen Haywood - Master the archery skills essential to shooting straight and true. This book provides progressive instruction with accompanying illustrations for each phase of the shot—sighting and aiming, shooting form, and anchoring—for all forms of archery.

Become the Arrow, Byron Ferguson and Glenn Helgeland – Part of the On Target archery technique and teaching series containing a variety of recommendations for improving basic shooting techniques.

Beginner's Guide to Traditional Archery, Brian J. Sorrells - Traditional bowhunters must be close to their quarry before they take a shot, and that nearness is what makes the hunt so thrilling and personally rewarding. This book is a good beginning for any new archer looking to understand the basics of traditional bow hunting.

Instinctive Archery Insights: Revised Edition, Jay Kidwell - Instinctive Archery Insights is an archery technique based on principles from applied psychology. Dr. Kidwell communicates many unique insights designed to accelerate learning and enhance performance, including discussion on consistency in both physical processes and mental processes. The new edition also details Dr. Kidwell's work on the development and treatment of target panic.

Kyudo: The Way of the Bow, Feliks F. Hoff – This book is a guide to the technique and philosophy of the ancient art of Japanese archery. Originally a samurai discipline, kyudo integrates technical skill with the development of a focused and disciplined mind. Influenced by Shintoism and Zen, kyudo is a path of self-development and meditation that requires the archer to cultivate precision, a clear mind, and freedom from fear.

Precision Archery, Steve Ruis and Claudia Stevenson - Written by top coaches and competitors, this instructive resource covers all archery disciplines, including recurve, compound, and barebow archery. Whether you're a target archer, field archer, or bow hunter, you'll find in-depth instruction to perfect your stance, body alignment, muscle use, and shot sequence.

Shooting the Stickbow, Anthony Camera – This book was the first comprehensive treatise on shooting modern recurves and longbows. Topics include equipment choices (bow, arrows, strings, shooting gloves and tabs, arm guards, arrow rests and sights), shooting form (proper anchoring, shoulder alignment, back tension, breathing and more), tuning (four methods are described and compared), aiming (five aiming methods are explained and contrasted), physical and mental aspects of becoming a proficient archer (functional anatomy for the archer and how it relates to shooting and the mental game of winning are discussed and exercises are provided to enhance both physical and mental performance).

Teaching Archery To Kids, Jim Fanjoy – This is an archery book specifically designed for teaching archery to kids. Whether you're a new camp counselor that's never held a bow, a parent wanting to teach your child about a new and exciting activity, or a learning archer looking for a concise reference about the sport, this book is for you.

Zen Bow, Zen Arrow: The Life and Teachings of Awa Kenzo, the Archery Master from "Zen in the Art of Archery", John Stevens – This book details the teachings of Awa Kenzo (1880–1939), the Zen and kyudo (archery) master who gained worldwide renown after the publication of Eugen Herrigel's cult classic Zen in the Art of Archery in 1953.

Zen in Motion: Lessons from a Master Archer on Breath, Posture, and the Path of Intuition, Neil Claremon - From basic breathing techniques to shooting from horseback, the author illustrates the Zen path of awareness.

Zen in the Art of Archery, Eugen Herrigel - Eugen Herrigel, a German philosopher who went to Japan and took up the practice of traditional Japanese archery, gives an illuminating account of his own experience.

Traditional Bowing and Fletching

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Billets to Bow, Glenn St. Charles - Share the experience of archery with bowyer Glenn St. Charles. From the 1920's to today, these chapters are packed with nostalgia, history, and a rare kind of knowledge that comes from years of hands-on experience. This book shows you how to make a hard-hitting yew bow and covers everything from cutting the tree to final testing and shooting of the bow.

Bow Accessories Book, Volkmar Hubschmann - Every dedicated traditional archer longs for equipment that completely matches his own concepts and needs. In this book, you will find everything from an entire range of personal equipment (finger guard to belt pouch), accessories from tension spring to string holder, ten different types of quivers, the making of bowstrings, traditional armguards, targets, and demonstrations of the most varied fittings and equipment.

This book also includes extensive features about arrows, including shafts, feathering, arrow making tools, and unique arrows. Learn how to make your own archery equipment from such natural materials as leather, wood, antler, and bone. Note that, although this book is thorough and covers a wide variety of subjects and skills of interest to the modern traditional archery, bow building is not covered.

Hunting the Osage Bow, Dean Torges - A triumph for bowyer Dean Torges. This book is full of useful information, from cutting your own wood to the final finish.

The Archer's Craft, Adrian Eliot Hodgkin – The author begins his history of the craft of bowmaking with a history of archery by quoting extracts from various historical sources on its rise and fall as a military weapon, its revival, survival, and dismissal under the various Kings and Queens of England. He describes the basic types of wood for used bows and arrows and gives detailed reasons for each choice. The second half of the book describes the simple methods of bow and arrow making at home. The last part of the book deals with hunting with the bow and the various techniques learned through listening and observing.

The Art of Making Primitive Bows and Arrows, D. C. Waldorf - Learn how to design and cast flatbows, recurves, self bows, and other primitive archery equipment. Includes great information on quivers, arrow making, and more.

The Bent Stick: Making and Using Wooden Hunting Bows, Paul Comstock - Paul Comstock is a self-bow expert and specializes in white-wood bows. While reading this bow building manual, you'll learn how to make simple and effective self bows from many of the more common woods available. This book is intense yet written in a style that anyone can understand and follow.

The Bow Builder's Book, Flemming Alrune, Wulf Hein, Jurgen Junkmanns, Boris Pantel, Holger Riesch, Achim Stegmeyer - Experienced bow builders and practical archaeologists describe the history, evolution, and construction of European style longbows. For the beginner, clear, uncomplicated instructions are offered, including descriptions of construction techniques, tools, materials, and shooting styles. For more advanced bowyers, there are tips on choosing wood and adhesive, and explanations of the evolution/adaptation of bow design, including precise dimensions for replicating special historic bow types, from Stone Age bows to modern laminated longbows. This book also offers

The Flat Bow, W. Ben Hunt – Originally published in 1936, this book covers the construction of a Native American flatbow, bowstring, and traditional arrows. Hunt also briefly discusses shooting techniques related to this type of bow.

The Traditional Archers Handbook: A Practical Guide, Hilary Greenland - This book is packed with information for all those interested in traditional archery, from the basics involved in taking up a traditional bow for the first time, to clear concise guidelines on making your own arrows, strings, and bows (specifically English and American longbows).

The Traditional Bowyers Bible Volumes 1-4, Jim Hamm - Many archers and bowhunters will be surprised to learn that a wooden bow, whose ancestry dates back thousands of years, will shoot an arrow as fast and as effectively as the most modern fiberglass-laminated bows. This book contains detailed instructions and information on how to make bows and arrows from natural materials. The authors thoroughly explain every facet of the process, from choosing wood to applying finishes, making construction easy even for the first-time bowyer.

Traditional Archery, Sam Fadala - The tools of traditional archery, the longbow and recurve bow, have remained virtually unchanged for tens of thousands of years. In this fully illustrated guide, archery expert Sam Fadala presents a detailed examination of this sport, including careful attention to bow and arrow selection, equipment tuning and maintenance, shooting techniques, accessories, safety, history, and traditional archery resources.

Traditional Bowyers Encyclopedia: 2nd Edition - Revised and Updated, Dan Bertalan - Bowhunter and archery traditionalist Dan Bertalan has compiled one of the most complete bow making texts available today. By traveling across the United States and consulting America's top bowmakers, he has gathered detailed information on how to build your own recurve longbow, improve your hunting skills, care properly for a bow, and more.

Traditional Bowyer, More Unnecessary Fun, Jack Harrison - In these pages you'll find the essence of bow building, traditional bowhunting, bow shooting, arrow building, and more. This book includes a discussion of bow theory with detailed descriptions of steps and numerous photos. It also contains charts and graphs of calculations to help everything make sense.