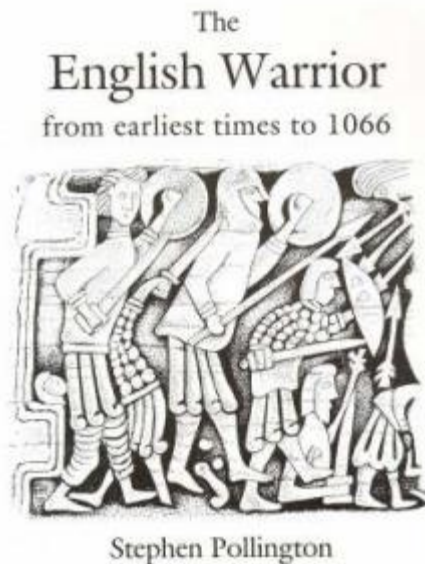


'The English Warrior: From Earliest Times to 1066'
By Stephen Pollington
Review by Rob Morgan

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.

In his book, *The English Warrior*, Pollington gives a description of the Anglo-Saxon warrior beginning on the Continent during the first century, through the migration to England, and the eventual downfall at the battle of Hastings in 1066. His book is concerned primarily with three aspects of the English Warrior: their role in Anglo-Saxon society, weapons and equipment, and their The English Warrior: From Earliest Time to 1066, by Stephen Pollington, Anglo-Saxon Press, 1996, (reprinted in 2002). Within the Warrior, there is lots concerning th The English Warrior from earliest times till 1066 by S Pollington, 2002, 255 pages plus appendices. This is quite an easy read and there is quite a lot to enjoy. 1066 is considered one of those dates in Medieval England which is difficult to forget. At the start of 1066, England was ruled by Edward the Confessor. By the. This was a time when powerful men who were victorious in battle were respected; so a child like Edgar had little chance to impress those who held power in England. The most powerful nobleman was Harold Godwinson and he was Earl of Wessex. He was not a blood relative of the king but he was heavily supported by other noblemen in the Witan (a council of England's most powerful nobles). Harold of Wessex, as king of England, led the English army into battle against William the Conqueror in 1066 at the Battle of Hastings. Harold; Medieval Kings and Queens. Medieval England was lead by eight Medieval kings and one queen. When the English king Edward the Confessor died on 5 January 1066, no fixed procedures were in place to decide who should succeed him on the throne. The Witan (a spreme council of wise men) had to make the decision, and they had four candidates to choose from. Edgar the Atheling, closest blood claimant to Edward. Edgar, a Saxon prince and nephew of Edward, was a sickly fourteen year old boy. Harold Godwinson, powerful noble in England, a good soldier and a gifted politician. The Viking warrior had some initial success, defeating English forces at Fulford, on the outskirts of York, on 20 September 1066, before seizing York itself four days later. Both Harald and his invasion met their end the following day, however, when King Harold and his men defeated the Vikings at the Battle of Stamford Bridge. 5. Svein Estridsson. Svein, King of Denmark, was Harold Godwinson's cousin but believed that he may too have a claim on the English throne because of his own connections to Hardicanute, who was his uncle. It was not until William was king, however, that he seriously turn In the early morning of 14 October 1066, two great armies prepared to fight for the throne of England. On a hilltop 7 miles from Hastings were the forces of Harold, who had been crowned king nine months earlier. Facing them on the far side of the valley below were the troops of Duke William of Normandy, who believed he was the rightful king. By the end of the day, thousands lay dead on the battlefield, and the victorious William was one step nearer to seizing the throne. Read on to find out what happened at the most famous battle in English history. Duke William of Normandy had had plenty of time to prepare his forces since landing at Pevensey over two weeks earlier. An invader in hostile territory, William's intention was to force a decisive battle with Harold.

In 1066 William, the Duke of Normandy, began to gather an army to invade Britain. The pretext for the invasion was William's claims to the English throne. He was related to the king who died in 1066. According to the English law it was the Witenagemot that chose the next king. He called upon all the Christian warriors of Europe to help him gain his rights to the English throne. No pay was offered, but William promised land to all who would support him. William also asked the Roman Pope for his support. He promised to strengthen the Pope's power over the English Church. And the Church with the Roman Pope at the head blessed his campaign and called it a holy war. In his book, *The English Warrior*, Pollington gives a description of the Anglo-Saxon warrior beginning on the Continent during the first century, through the migration to England, and the eventual downfall at the battle of Hastings in 1066. His book is concerned primarily with three aspects of the English Warrior: their role in Anglo-Saxon society, weapons and equipment, and their *The English Warrior: From Earliest Time to 1066*, by Stephen Pollington, Anglo-Saxon Press, 1996, (reprinted in 2002). Within the *Warrior*, there is lots concerning the *The English Warrior from earliest times till 1066* by S Pollington, 2002, 255 pages plus appendices. This is quite an easy read and there is quite a lot to enjoy. The event that began the transition from Old English to Middle English was the Norman Conquest of 1066, when William the Conqueror (Duke of Normandy and, later, William I of England) invaded the island of Britain from his home base in northern France, and settled in his new acquisition along with his nobles and court. William crushed the opposition with a brutal hand and deprived the Anglo-Saxon earls of their property, distributing it to Normans (and some English) who supported him. The conquering Normans were themselves descended from Vikings who had settled in northern France about 200 years... Bilingual word lists were being compiled as early as the 13th Century. SOUND CLIP. In 1066 Tostig Godwinson invited Harald to join him in rebelling against his brother Harold Godwinson to secure the English throne. Edgar Atheling - Edgar and his father, Edward the Exile, had been invited back to England from their exile in Hungary by Edward the Confessor in 1057. It seems possible that Edward wanted an Anglo-Saxon prince to succeed him. Political realities. Harald Hardrada - Harald was a famous Viking warrior and skilled commander. He already had secure control over his own land. Edgar Atheling - Even though Edgar was the closest blood relative to Edward, he was only a teenager when Edward died. He was not considered strong enough to hold the kingdom together in 1066. Who had the strongest claim according to the different factors? Promises.

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