

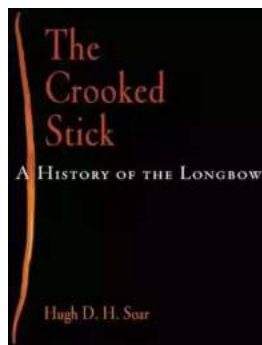
The Crooked Stick: Uncovering the Fascinating History of the Longbow

Step back in time to the era of knights and castles, where skilled archers wielding their trusty longbows played a crucial role in battles and warfare. The longbow, with its powerful draw and remarkable accuracy, has left an indelible mark on history. Let's delve into the captivating tale of the crooked stick and uncover the secrets of its origin, design, and impact.

Origins of the Longbow

The longbow's story began in ancient times, with evidence suggesting its existence as far back as the Paleolithic era. However, the iconic longbow that we recognize today found its zenith during the medieval period in Europe.

Its origins can be traced to the Welsh, who created their unique variant called the "yew longbow." The Welsh longbow was crafted from yew wood, which provided the perfect combination of strength, flexibility, and durability. This sophisticated weapon took years of training and immense strength to master, earning its reputation as a fearsome force on the battlefield.



The Crooked Stick: A History of the Longbow

by Hugh D. H. Soar (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 4050 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled

Word Wise : Enabled

Print length : 254 pages



Design and Construction

The longbow stands apart from its counterparts due to its exceptional size, typically towering over six feet tall. Crafted mainly from yew, the bow's characteristic curved shape, emphasized by the term "crooked stick," enabled increased draw length and shot power.

Precision engineering played a vital role in the longbow's creation. The outer layer of the yew bow stave, known as the sapwood, was carefully removed, leaving only the inner layer, or heartwood, intact. This process was crucial to ensure that the bow would be strong and resilient, capable of withstanding immense tension when drawn.

Stringing the longbow was no easy feat either. The archer would typically use their foot as leverage to bend the bow and attach the string. A skilled bowyer would meticulously adapt the longbow's weight and draw length to suit the individual archer, optimizing their accuracy and comfort.

Rise to Prominence

During medieval warfare, the longbow's influence cannot be overstated. Whether during the Hundred Years' War between England and France or the Wars of Scottish Independence, the longbow was a game-changer on the battlefield.

The immense range and piercing power of the longbow allowed English archers to decimate enemy ranks from afar. In the Battle of Crécy in 1346, for example, the English longbowmen inflicted heavy casualties on the French knights, ultimately leading to a decisive victory for the English forces.

However, the longbow's effectiveness was not limited to the battleground. Its substantial impact on hunting and recreation transformed the cultural fabric of societies. From providing sustenance for communities to being a sport enjoyed by kings and noble elites, the longbow became an integral part of daily life.

Legacy and Evolution

As firearms began to gain popularity in warfare during the 16th century, the longbow's role on the battlefield diminished. However, its legacy endured and continues to captivate enthusiasts and historians to this day.

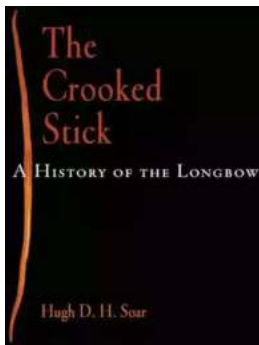
Modern archery owes a great debt to the longbow's design principles. The recurve bow, commonly used in the Olympics, draws inspiration from the longbow's curved shape, using advanced materials to enhance performance and accuracy.

Archery as a sport has seen a resurgence, with longbow competitions attracting fervent participants worldwide. The traditional feel and shooting techniques associated with the longbow have struck a chord with individuals seeking a connection to ancient practices and a simpler way of life.

The Magic of the Crooked Stick

The longbow's crooked stick holds an allure that transcends time. Its history of raw power, supreme accuracy, and association with medieval legends piques the interest of both history buffs and enthusiasts of archaic weaponry.

So, as you venture into the realm of the longbow, remember the passion and skill required to master this elegant weapon. Pay homage to the countless archers who once roamed battlefields, forests, and hunting grounds, wielding the crooked stick that would forever leave an indelible mark on history.



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The Complete Story of a Legendary Weapon

"Spendidly enthusiastic. . . . Soar's book is indispensable."—Bernard Cornwell

"A fascinating study of a forgotten weapon. . . . For centuries the longbow dominated battle, affecting the fates of nations"—Wall Street Journal

"Bowyers, bowhunters, target archers and students of archery history should all find cause for celebration with Hugh Soar's concise but authoritative text." —
Traditional Bowhunter

On a clear July morning in 1346, a small force approached the walls of Caen for battle. The attackers rode to the field on horseback, banners and pennants fluttering in the light breeze. Behind them marched bowmen in tightly ranked units. At the sound of a crisp battle horn, they halted. A twinge of apprehension rippled through the thousands of Norman defenders as they looked down at the opposing army, for precision archery formation had long since disappeared as a military concept in medieval France. Here was not the expected rabble of unrated bucolics cowed by the might of France; confronting them was a quietly

determined group of trained soldiers armed not with the familiar arbalest but with a new and strange weapon of great length. The defenders of Caen were about to meet the English war bow and its deadly battle shaft. For the next 100 years, this weapon, the "crooked stick," would command continental battlefields, etching its fearsome reputation at Crécy, Poitiers, Agincourt, and Verneuil, while establishing England as an international power for the first time.

Although the longbow is best known for its deployment during the Hundred Years' War, its origins lie with ancient Saxon seafighters and Welsh craftsmen, while today the bow is a vibrant part of the traditional archery scene. In *The Crooked Stick: A History of the Longbow*, historian Hugh D. H. Soar pulls together all of these strings, presenting the engaging story of this most charismatic standoff weapon. After a careful consideration of Neolithic bows and arrows, the author describes the bow's use in the medieval hunt and its associated customs. The longbow made its deepest mark in warfare, however, and the author 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. Although soldiers reluctantly gave up the longbow for firearms, its recreational use became immensely popular, particularly during the Regency and Victorian periods. In the twentieth century it appeared as if the longbow would disappear into the fog of legend, but a new interest in traditional craft and expertise gained hold, and the pleasure of using this ancient instrument is now firmly part of archery around the world.

Through a remarkable command of manuscript and printed sources and a judicious use of material evidence, including his own important collection of rare longbows, Hugh Soar establishes the deep connections of this bow to England, Scotland, and Wales. Figures in the past like William Wallace, Edward III, and Henry V appear alongside detailed descriptions of bows, strings, arrows, and

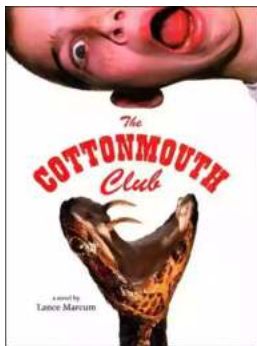
arrowheads, while the rise of institutions and craftsmen devoted to the longbow are presented to show how knowledge of this weapon was carried forward across the centuries. Today, those in the sport of archery and military historians will find that *The Crooked Stick* will enhance their own interests in a weapon of legendary status.

In addition to the illustrated text, the book contains appendices detailing the history and design of bracers, tabs and tips, quivers, and arrowheads associated with the longbow.



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