

Hardy, Robert, *Longbow: A Social and Military History* (Cambridge: Patrick Stephens, 1976), 216 pages, illustrated.

This is a most interesting book. The author is better-known as one of Britain's leading actors, having appeared in several major films and television productions, but he is also an acknowledged expert on archery (and a member of the British Long Bow Society, the Royal Toxophilite Society, the Society of Archer Antiquaries and a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Bowyers!). The specialized knowledge of the evolution of the longbow has led to this beautiful production, in which en-

thusiasm and scholarship are delightfully inter-mingled. The subtitle: "A *Social and Military History*" succinctly describes his treatment of this weapon, and readers will naturally be especially interested in the *social* aspects within the narrative. Such aspects can be found throughout the book, although Chapter 8 entitled: "Playing with bows and arrows" may be considered as the most specific in a social context. Yet bows and arrows have been used since ancient times in hunting for pleasure; and even their military use has demanded practice in the art which often took the form of "competitive sport." In short, therefore, the whole book can be read by sport historians with pleasure and benefit.

This painstakingly researched work begins by describing the earliest known examples of the longbow from various places, and claims that it was in world-wide use at least 8,000 years ago. Its initial appearance in Britain, then its "curious temporary disappearance" before its return and eventual adoption as the supreme weapon in medieval England, is described in detail, up to its "coming of age" in the significant battles of Crecy, Poitiers and Agincourt. The archers themselves are well-portrayed, their backgrounds, equipment, training, life-style and terms of service. The Robin Hood legend is explored with great charm and wit (this romantic outlaw is "said to have died on December 14, 1247, aged 87"). One can also discover why the French never took to the weapon, its "devastating effects" during the War of the Roses, and the eventual decline of the longbow despite Henry VIII's efforts to maintain it. The British heritage of the longbow forms the major part of the text, but the tradition and status of the longbow as a hunting and sporting weapon in many other countries, some up to the present day, is also dealt with in some depth. The section dealing with the Japanese types of longbow accompanied by the picture of a Samurai warrior with a longbow, is particularly instructive.

Sport historians will already be familiar with Edmund Burke's *The History of Archery*, an overview of "ten thousand years" of this art throughout the world. This briefly-illustrated 1957 text has been of some use and justified to some extent the summary on its cover:

Through war and peace, necessity and sport, down through the ages the bow and arrow has called upon the keenest physical aptitudes of man. The sportsman-archer of today shares in the great tradition that makes this book the liveliest kind of historical reporting.

Unfortunately for the serious student, no footnotes, references, or even a bibliography were provided by Burke; whereas Hardy in 1976 is somewhat more generous. He supplies a useful bibliography of "a selection of some works consulted but not mentioned in the text," as well as a list of articles. He usually mentions the source for information quoted in the narra-

tive although he does not give exact page references. However, the illustrations in *Longbow: A Social and Military History* are numerous, well-chosen, and described with references. It is clear from the author's acknowledgements alone (pp. 7-8) that he has diligently obtained his material from many private collections, experts, (including E.G. Heath, probably the best-known archer-historian), libraries and museums, in several countries. As always in historical research, this conscientious and comprehensive approach is reflected in the authority of his opinions. The illustrations, in fact, are a good example of the author's honest gathering as the reader will find many illustrations not seen in any previous archery books. One picture of George, Prince of Wales, in the uniform of the Royal Kentish Bowmen "contains probably the best portrait of a longbow that exists," and was included in the book (p. 148) by "Gracious permission of H. M. the Queen." Another painting by Reynolds, in the possession of the Herbert family, is also reproduced, which depicts a longbow and composite bow (p. 151). Readers cannot help but be impressed, too, by the pictorial contributions of Hardy himself, labelled "Author's Collection," such as "gentlemen archers practise the gentle art of archery" (p. 143) and "Royal Tax Pavilion at Regent's Park with 'lady archeresses' " (p. 147). Specialists in women's sport will be particularly interested in the photograph on page 155 of "Lady Archers at the Olympic Games, 1908" from the Radio Times Hulton Picture Library.

American colleagues will obviously be interested in Chapter 9 entitled: "*The American Way*" (another rare photograph of "The First Tournament of the National Archery Association, Chicago, 1879," supplied by E. G. Heath) which gives information on the history of the sport of archery in the United States which this reviewer has not seen elsewhere. The very small drawing of Will Thompson which is found in Krout's *Annals of American Sport* (p. 164) is reproduced in a large full-page version here (p. 162). Also American readers will be intrigued by the Chapter's conclusion, which quotes at length from a letter dated February 11, 1776, to General Charles Lee, written by Benjamin Franklin. It is a plea for the use of bows and arrows in the war against the English, "written years later than any from the traditionalists on the European side of the Atlantic"!

When *An Essay on Archery*, by Walter Michael Moseley, was first published in 1792, it represented the first comprehensive work on the subject since the publication of Roger Ascham's classic: *Toxophilus*, two hundred and forty-seven years earlier. Moseley felt strongly that the importance of the bow should not be underestimated within history, and set out to trace the development of the art of archery "in all ages and nations." Happily, Moseley's book (with a new Introduction by E.G. Heath) was reprinted in a facsimile edition by E. P. Publishing Limited only three years ago "at a time when ar-

chery [was] enjoying a modern revival on an international scale." The study of sport history has also experienced a sort of international renaissance of late, and Robert Hardy's history of the longbow is a timely and significant offering worthy of attention.

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