

N·A·R·e·S



National Association of Re-enactment Societies Guidance notes for arms and armour

Permission is given for member groups to copy and disseminate.

Definitions

A re-enactment is a physical representation, or reconstruction, of historical events. It may take the form of either military, or non-military activities. A battle re-enactment shall be a representation, or reconstruction of an historical form of combat.

An edged weapon is one that is designed to have a cutting edge, or point, or is capable of such an edge or point being put upon it (i.e. sharpening a rebated weapon), or had such an edge or point in its original historical model.

A blunt force weapon is one that is not designed to have a cutting edge or point, and was not designed so in its original historical model. Together, these types of weapon when hand held in use are known as melee weapons. More detailed definitions are to be found on page 4, under the term "melee weapons", but they cover:

- a) All hand held weapons or sidearms
- b) All hand-and-a-half and two-handed weapons
- c) All hafted weapons such as polearms & staves
- d) All "defensive" weapons, such as shields & bucklers

Safety

Personal Safety

Persons involved in re-enactment must be made aware of the risks and possible dangers to health involved with this pastime. They must also accept responsibility for, and attempt to minimise, all such risks and dangers to health related to their own actions whether those risks and dangers affect themselves or others. (N.B: In some cases these responsibilities are enforceable by law). Specifically it is recommended that persons involved in melee combat, or likely to be struck by projectiles, should wear an appropriate amount of armour or protective clothing.

Weapons should only be carried at the times and places officially designated by the Society, or its designated officer. Outside of performance times, all weapons and equipment must be properly secured. All reasonable precautions are taken to ensure that the general public cannot take hold of any weapon without proper supervision.

Each member society of NAReS shall have a Safety Officer or other designated person, who will be responsible for all aspects safety. Safety Officers, or those designated persons, whose responsibilities include this area, must make regular inspections of all items used in re-enactments. They should have the power to insist upon alterations, or repairs, to such items or, if necessary, prohibit their use.

Each member society of NAReS should appoint an officer responsible for training. This officer should have the power to prohibit any activity, or use of equipment, by persons who (in the training officers judgement) are not competent to carry it out.

Any weapon that is broken whilst being used, unless it is specifically designed to do so as part of a "choreographed" combat display, must be immediately discarded to a place of safety. The combat should not recommence until the combatants have ensured that the defective weapon is in a safe place.

Public Safety

A minimum safe distance must be maintained between the public and any re-enactment activity and/or equipment that may represent a hazard. When in doubt, member groups should assume that all equipment activities may represent a hazard. For these purposes activities may be considered to fall into three categories, each with its own required level of safety.

Static Living History - The public should be kept an appropriate safe distance, sufficient to prevent them from handling equipment without permission/supervision and to protect them from accidental contact with tools etc. This distance should be enforced by a barrier. As a minimum the public should be required to refrain from handling equipment without permission/ supervision either verbally or in a printed notice.

Melee combat - The public must be kept a minimum safe distance from any activity involving combat or the use of melee weapons. This distance may be increased at the Safety Officers discretion where hazards such as long weapons or horses are involved. This distance should be

enforced by a double barrier an appropriate safe distance apart. These barriers should be reasonably conspicuous. The public should be requested to refrain from crossing either barrier either verbally and/or in a printed notice. Safety Officers in the combat area should attempt to ensure that neither participant, nor any of their equipment crosses the barriers.

Projectile weapons - The public must be kept an appropriate safe distance from the above (and targets where projectiles are being used). This distance should be enforced by double barriers. These barriers should be reasonably conspicuous. The public should be required to refrain from crossing either barrier, either verbally and/ or in a printed notice. Safety Officers should attempt to ensure, that neither participants nor any of their equipment crosses the barriers. Members of the public must not be down range of any projectile weapon (i.e. in the same direction, from the weapon as its intended target).

Melee Weapons

Definition

A melee weapon is one intended for use in hand to hand combat and therefore originally designed to inflict damage by means of an edge, point, blunt impact surface or some combination of these features. For the purpose of re-enactment combat, edges should be rebated and points rounded to a degree acceptable to the Safety Officer.

A sidearm is any type of melee weapon primarily, or solely intended for single handed use. This includes shields, bucklers, other blunt force weapons, 'hand and a half' and 'double' handed swords - quarter staffs could be considered in this category.

A polearm is a weapon intended primarily, or solely, for two handed use, consisting of a wooden haft fitted with a metal head.

Construction

Melee weapons should be constructed of materials that were, in essence, available during the period from which the historical model is derived. Inappropriate modern materials and finishes are not recommended. The use of inappropriate grades or types of apparently suitable materials makes weapons more prone to breakages and should be avoided.

A weapon intended for combat use must be designed and constructed for trial purpose and must be rebated (blunted) to the satisfaction of the Safety Officer and constructed of appropriate good quality materials. It is recommended that such weapons are obtained from appropriately skilled and qualified makers. Original historical weapons or "reproductions" intended primarily for display are likely to be too fragile for combat. Since weapon breakage is a hazard, their use is not recommended.

General Safety

A melee weapon should be maintained in a clean and safe condition. Rust, sharp, edges, burrs etc., should be removed after each combat. Weapons should be regularly inspected for fatigue cracks and other damage that could lead to a breakage.

It is recommended that weapons thrust into the ground, either accidentally or on purpose, should be made clean before use again.

Projectiles and Projectile Weapons

Definition

A projectile weapon is any device, except a firearm, which acts as an energy store used to shoot or throw an object. A projectile is any object that is thrown or shot. This includes bows, crossbows, slings, siege engines and their ammunition and all hand thrown projectiles.

Construction

Projectile weapons should be constructed of materials that were, in essence, available during the period from which the historical model for them is derived. Inappropriate modern materials and finishes are not recommended.

General Safety

Any projectile weapon used for shooting of projectiles, at an individual person, should be

constructed so as to minimise the hazard to persons struck by those projectiles. Projectiles intended to be thrown, or shot, at individual persons should be so constructed so as to minimise the hazard to persons struck them. Specifically, arrows must have large flights to slow their flight and restrict their range (not flos). Arrows and quarrels/bolts must have blunt rubber tips fitted over blunt ended shafts (not speed blunts).

Spears, axes, hammers, etc., used for throwing must be of lightweight construction.

Slingshot must be of soft/lightweight material (e.g. wet papier mache, soft mud/clay).

Artificial rocks for throwing should have a soft outer layer of latex etc., around the central core. They should be no heavier than necessary for accuracy.

All projectiles must be aimed and shot with proper regard to the safety of the public and participants. Non-combatants and vulnerable persons (e.g., those without armour/in a precarious position/handling explosives etc) should not be targeted.

Volleys of arrows shot from a distance should be clout shot or lofted so as to fall as vertically, as possible on to the target. Direct shooting/throwing of projectiles must occur only at ranges where good accuracy can be achieved.

Persons above a user of projectiles should not be aimed at directly. Where possible directly aimed projectiles should be targeted at the lower body.

Where targets are so close that full draw shooting would be hazardous bows ought to be used at partial draw, and crossbows ought not be used. It is not recommended that ballistae bolts or artificial rocks shot from catapults should be aimed at people. Instead a specific target area should be marked out, the weapons targeted upon it, and participants warned to stay clear of it.

Due consideration must be given to personal safety (i.e. the public must not be allowed beyond the firing line, and adequate provision made for overshooting of any projectiles).

Any targeted person must be properly trained in the use of appropriate armour, protective clothing, safe distances etc. They should also know how to react, and fall, realistically when struck by a projectile.

Armour

Definition

Armour consists of those items which are primarily intended to provide protection to the user.

Construction

Armour should be constructed of materials that were, in essence, available during the period from which the model for it is derived. Inappropriate modern materials and finishes are not recommended. The use of apparently suitable materials such as thin leather, lightweight quilting, sheet steel under 16 gauge etc., reduces the protective value of the armour and should be avoided.

Armour must be well maintained at all times in a safe condition. It ought to be constructed and maintained to offer minimum risk to the user and other parties involved.

Display Equipment

Definition

Display equipment are those items of equipment, of all kinds, that are intended for use solely as display items in a static or moving context.

Construction

Display equipment should preferably be constructed of materials that were, in essence, available during the period from which the model for it is derived. Inappropriate modern materials or finishes are not recommended.

Equipment intended for display purposes only may be constructed to different safety standards from general re-enactment items. A higher degree of authenticity, appearance, design and finish is required. Control of their display shall be the responsibility of the Safety Officer. Display and use of such equipment requires a higher degree of responsibility, supervision and discipline.

Living History Displays

Definition

A Living History Display is a re-creation, other than a mass combat, of the culture and time period that a member group wish to re-create.

Construction

Such items should be of materials that were, in essence, available during the period from which the model for the item is derived. Inappropriate modern materials and finishes are not recommended.

Safety Officers, or other designated persons, must make regular inspections at events, of those items used and the circumstances in Living History Displays. They should have the power to refuse, or remove, any items or practices they consider unsafe or inappropriate.

An adequate distance, relevant to the display or activity must be maintained between the public and the participants. Other measures to ensure the safety of the general public should be considered and maintained.

Special care in the use and storage of sharp implements, used on Living History Displays and Exhibits, is required. It is the responsibility of the Safety Officer, and the collective responsibility of all personnel working on the site to have due regard to the public's safety.

Disclaimer

NAReS guidance notes are based on what is believed to be current good practice. They are not intended to be exhaustive in their content and are open to revision.

These notes are intended for guidance only and should not be construed as being mandatory, or applying to all circumstances which may arise. They are designed to work in conjunction with any member groups' own rules, regulations or recommendations.

NAReS cannot be held responsible for the actions of other official bodies, or for the imposition or effect of any legislation/regulation of which it was unaware at the date of issue of this guidance note.