

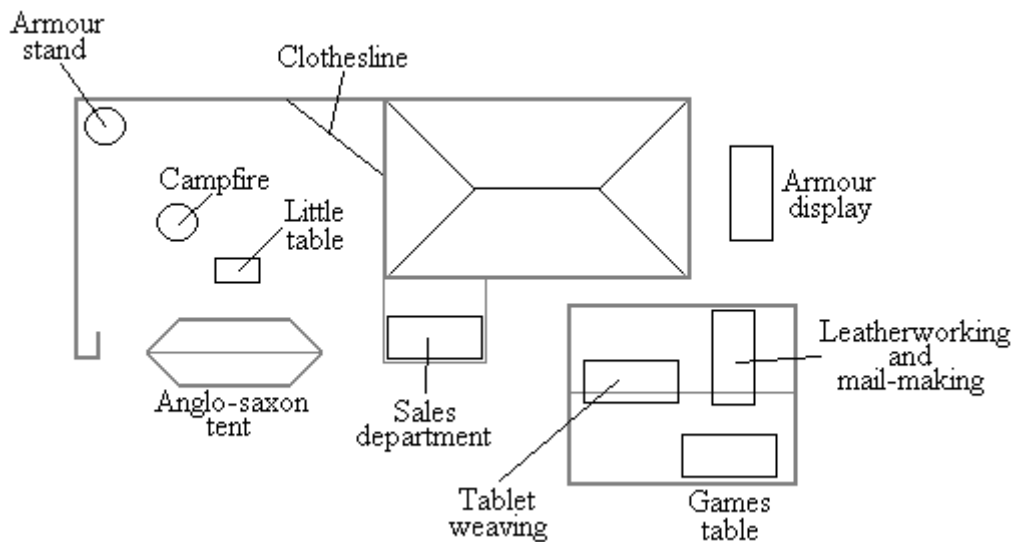
Brisbane Medieval Fayre 1999

This year, as every year (for a while, at least), certain foolhardy members of the AAF undertook the epic journey from Canberra to Brisbane to participate in the Brisbane Medieval Fayre. For those who don't know, this is an annual event where various medieval groups, and individuals, get together for two days to entertain the public. It incorporates the Brisbane Folk Festival, so after the medieval activities are over for the day, there's still plenty of music and entertainment to be had in the evenings (even if most Brisbanites do tend to go to bed when Humphrey tells them to). The event used to be called the Brisbane Medieval Fayre and Tournament, or BuMFAT for short, and there is no better way to annoy one of the organisers than to use this name.

This year's BuMFAT was a rather soggy affair. Constant rain during the preceding week made Musgrove Park damp in places, a quagmire in others. Most of us-especially those with long dresses-ended up looking particularly medieval after just a few minutes wandering about. Those of us with holes in our shoes ended up smelling pretty medieval, too (sorry). The wetness of the park did not put a dampener on the spirits of most medieval groups, however, and everyone seemed in high spirits (especially NEMMAS, or is that just high?) Despite the political problems that most medieval groups seem to have, everyone was at least civil to one another.

Each group set up their own display, and tried to entice the public to come and have a look (and buy stuff, usually). Most of these displays were pretty good, and certainly an improvement on last year. Everyone seems to have gone all out to put together a good static display for BuMFAT. Apparently there were several forges this year, although I must admit I noticed only one-that belonging to the Companie of Knights Bachelor (as it was banging away right across from our camp).

Most encampments had their own points of interest. The forge built in the swamp and the apothecary's tent built next to the swamp of CKB's site; the woodwork display of Saga Viking's site; and the amazing tent full of really shiny things of Comitatus. The AAF's contribution to nifty stuff at sites was our period encampment. Like last year, we had displays of armour, crafts, games, and a time for kids to try block printing (and a sales table of course), but the period encampment was new. For those who are interested, our site looked something like the map below:



The period encampment, on the left of the map (next to the pub, although that's not shown), was a fenced-off area in which we tried to recreate an Anglo-saxon camp site. Mike and Sarah's big blue Anglo-saxon tent formed the centrepiece of the encampment. It held Mike and Sarah's bed-based on the Osberg bed, although not quite finished yet-as well as various cowskins, sheepskins and the like.

Outside the tent was a campfire (not lit) with a cauldron and tools kindly provided by Tash and Jamie Spry of Europa. If you have any questions about how easy this cauldron is to transport, simply contact Sheen Mohekey.

Next to the campfire sat various items of nifty gear we own. A table held eating gear, and a chest held jewellery and sharp knives. A fully period tablet loom (including leather cards and homespun wool), and the pretty hnefatafl board donated to us by Sean Schloss were also on display. There were originally two triangular folding chairs behind the table, but Drew broke one when he sat on it.

In one corner of the period encampment stood an armour stand, cunningly rigged up by Steve Ware out of anything he could find, since we forgot to ask anyone to bring a real one. Here we displayed armour, weapons, and a shield. This was probably the least "in-period" section of the encampment, but naturally enough, it seemed to be the bit the public liked the best.

In the other corner we hung a clothesline, as this seemed the best way to show off costume apart from wearing it. Again, most of the stuff here was Mike and Sarah's, since they are the ones who have really concentrated on Anglo-saxon gear.

Around the walls of the encampment we hung lots of blurbs about what people were seeing around them. While these may have detracted from the period feel of the place, so did the aircraft noise, public address system, and the like. They certainly seemed to give the public a better understanding of what was going on, and several times we found the encampment full of people studiously reading.

Beyond the static displays put together by each group, there were fighting displays by those groups who do them (the AAF did two displays a day, as well as anything else we volunteered ourselves for), and a few large events involving all the groups present.

Straight after the AAF's first display of the day came the Dark Ages Battle: a simple, non-display fight between the NVG and Raefan, and everyone else. The NVG even won a couple of times.

Following on from this was the Grand Parade, in which all groups paraded about the park in their best gear and made a lot of noise. The AAF followed directly after the Knights Guild of Wessex and Mercia, and we were greatly entertained by their ducklings escaping (and the people behind us were entertained by our banner getting caught in a tree).

Later in the day, immediately after our second display (or five minutes before it ended on the second day) came the Roman battle, where everyone who felt like being a barbarian got to beat up some Romans. This was a great crowd pleaser, as most of the barbarians were at least semi-naked (including Nina from CKB, but let's not go into that).

The final event of the day, naturally enough, was the Grand Finale (everything has to be "Grand" doesn't it?) This consisted of all the fighters who were still walking getting together and storming the fort built on one side of the field of honour. It ended with a dragon slaying everyone and then wandering off. One medievalist in the audience was heard to mutter that the presence of a dragon just made us all look silly but, as Doug replied, if you can't laugh at yourself then you might as well just give up. Anyway, after seeing the video of the Grand Finale, the dragon really rounded it off, and it was pretty funny to boot.

So far as I could tell, the AAF contingent had a pretty good time at BuMFAT this year, and we would like to thank the organisers of the event, as well as Victor Connor and Bree Pardoe who helped us out when they didn't really have to, and Tash Spry for providing the cauldron.

Present at BuMFAT this year were: Sarah Arthur, Michael Brown, Nick Brown, Victor Connor, Ben Cook, Aimee McLeonard, Sheen Mohekey, Sarah Murray, Drew Ridley, Toby Stow, Dough Taylor, Anthony Urbancik and Steve Ware. Tim Jensma pleaded off the event because ickle bubby had a sniffoo.

Ben Cook