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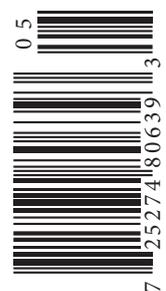
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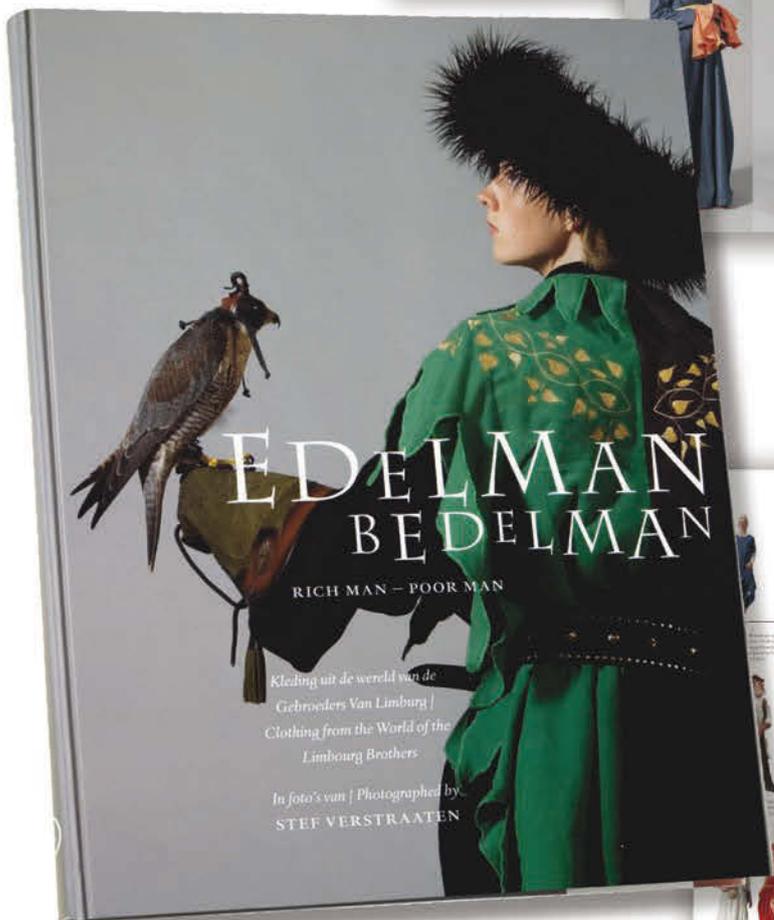
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Contributors: Erich B. Anderson, Arnold Blumberg, Ian Brandt, Scott Forbes Crawford, Ronald Delval, Filippo Donvito, Robert Holmes, Sean McGlynn, Lucas McMahan, Alex Querengasser, Paul Walsh, William E. Welsh, Thomas Williams

Illustrators: Shen Fei, Luke Forwoodson, Carlos García, Julia Lillo, Mirco Paganessi, Giuseppe Rava, Fabrice Weiss

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Editorial office

PO Box 4082, 7200 BB Zutphen, The Netherlands
 Phone: +31-575-776076 (NL), +44-20-8816281 (Europe), +1-740-994-0091 (US)
 E-mail: editor@medieval-warfare.com
 Customer service: service@karwansaraypublishers.com
 Website: www.medieval-warfare.com

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THEME: Naval warfare and piracy in the middle ages

The medieval era is not usually known for its naval battles, but the Vikings, Byzantines and many others showed the value of taking to the waves.

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Unlike in later periods, early handguns were primarily used in siege warfare.

News & Letters



© Ruben Meuwese

There's something in the water

Is it a bird? Is it an airplane? No, it is the newest issue of *Medieval Warfare*. I have been editor of this magazine for two months now, and I'm finally starting getting used to the daily grind. After all, I have done most of the work at least once and that helps a lot. However, it didn't go entirely smoothly, nor without me doubting everything would be done on time. Well, if you're reading this, that means the magazine is out and it ended up being fine, but it didn't go quite as planned. But the show must go on and, ultimately, the magazine has to go to the printers. So you stop complaining and start working to make it happen.

This doesn't mean that I want to quit or don't appreciate your emails and posts on Facebook with your reactions. I love reading your suggestions and ideas for the next themes and I'm looking forward to see which ones will end up becoming the themes of next year. But that is all in the future. This issue features no airplanes and maybe a only few birds, but it definitely has a lot of ships in store, as the theme is 'Naval Warfare and Piracy'. These are two phenomena that neither live with nor without each other throughout the Middle Ages.

As you'll read in the historical introduction written by Scott Crawford, the perceived gap between these two concepts was minimal. Pirates could be, or were, soldiers and the other way around. The article's main character, John

Crabbe, for instance, used to be a pirate but was granted pardon to fight during the Hundred Years War. Sometimes you have to break the law in order to do good, or in this case: get food.

But the most famous medieval sea raiders were, and still are, the Vikings. With their unexpected raids and longships, they were famous barbarians then, and of course they still very much exist in today's popular culture with the TV-show 'Vikings' and numerous films, games and (comic) books. In this issue, they show up in Filippo Donvito's article on the siege of Paris and in an article about their famous ships written by Thomas Williams. In Paul Walsh's article about the Irish king Murtaugh the Great, they have an important part to play as well. But in the end even they weren't just raiders who showed up, pillaged, destroyed and left again. They settled down, at first only during the winter but later permanently, and founded famous cities such as Dublin and Cork. The Vikings didn't just destroy, they were creators too.

So not everything is what it seems on the surface and people may always surprise you. This doesn't only apply to modern times, but to medieval history as well. The latter wasn't always what it seems on the surface, but contains a lot of interesting surprises when you dig a little deeper.

— Erin van der Pijl
Editor, *Medieval Warfare*

Vikings - In it for more than just the money

On January 6, 793, the monastery on the island of Lindisfarne, off the east coast of England, was raided by the Vikings – the first recorded attack by the Norse on the British Isles. The Vikings killed many of the monks, enslaved others, and looted their religious relics.

Historians have put forward many ideas on why the Vikings began raiding throughout Western Europe in the late eighth-century, including a reaction against encroaching Christianity, a desire for land overseas, or just to make money in order to pay for the cost of marrying women back at home. While making a fortune was certainly a factor for the Vikings, one historian suggests that fame and

glory were also important reasons for traveling long distances to attack faraway lands.

In his article, 'What really caused the Viking Age? The social content of raiding and exploration', Steven P. Ashby, a medieval archaeologist and lecturer at the University of Cambridge, outlines the many factors that would have prompted Norsemen – both the elites and the regular men – to conduct their raids across Europe. He believes that while economic reasons were important, "one must consider the possibility that the rationale was the desire not for wealth that was falling into short supply in Scandinavia, but rather for a form of wealth or prestige that had not been –