**Carham Equipment**

**Helmets**

A picture containing nature, rain

Description automatically generatedBy the time of Carham helmets had become much more popular than previously, frequently being the only piece of armour a warrior would wear. The most common helmet was the nasal helmet, with the one single strip of metal that covered the nose, protecting the face. The more intricate helmet is known as a Spangenhelm; in German Spangen refers to the metal strips that form the helmet’s frame, with helm meaning helmet, we get Spangenhelm - framed helmet. The frame connects three to six steel, bronze, horn or even hardened leather panels. This can be seen clearly in the **Norse Gael warrior** and **Northumbrian Fyrd** drawings. The front of the helmet may include a nose protector like the nasal helmet. Some Spangenhelms included cheek flaps and in addition also eye protection in a shape that resembles modern glasses, these are sometimes called ‘spectacle helmets’. Some very elaborate Spangenhelms included a full-face mask, as seen in the Sutton Hoo helm. High Status warriors wore a neck-guard to shield the neck and shoulders. A multi-piece Spangenhelm was inexpensive to produce but was less durable than the nasal helmet. There is some evidence to suggest that warriors often had different animals engraved or painted on their helmets to give them a distinct identity.

**Tunics and trousers**

Tunics came to the knees in the 11th Century, worn with a leather girdle. For extra protection a surcote went over the tunic, there is evidence that surcotes were padded, this can be seen in the **Northumbrian Fyrd** drawing . Only high-status individuals wore cloaks, as seen in the **Northumbrian noble warrior** drawing.

The men would wear trousers under the tunic, sometimes their legs were covered with a primitive sock; tubes of cloth held at mid-leg by garters. Shoes were soft leather, with no left or right fitting.

A picture containing armor

Description automatically generated**Mail**

Mailcoats were made from chainmail, which is linked rings of metal, these are shaped into a shirt. The mail shirt was used as far back as Roman times, meaning they would be available at the time of Carham. They were very expensive to acquire and maintain, therefore they would only be worn by high ranking and experienced warriors. There is evidence they were also worn for formal and ritualistic occasions. A mail coat was very heavy, which slowed down the movements of the warrior on the battlefield; evidence suggests that most 10th and early 11th Century warriors chose not to wear mail whilst fighting, they wanted swift and unrestricted movement in battle. However the weight of the mail is distributed around the body, particularly if supported by a waist belt, highly trained warriors could fight effectively in a mail shirt. The **Norse Gael warrior** is an 'elite' warrior, his mail shirt is of a shorter style than that of the **Nortumbrian noble** whose longer shirt is split fore and aft. The splits may be for riding, as elite warriors rode to battle before fighting on foot. High ranking individuals, such as the **Northumbrian noble** would have bodyguards who would operate as a unit, the addition of banners would make them a target on the battlefield, making the extra protection more important than swift movement.

Chainmail was very effective against edge weapons such as swords and axes, effectively blocked any cutting blows. Chainmail was much less effective against sharp weapons such as spears and arrows as it could often be pierced. It is possible that at Carham some warriors wore leather armour, which consisted of overlapping flaps cut like scales or leaves. Leather amour became popular in the period after Carham as it was cheaper and lighter than mail, but still provided effective protection.

**Shields**

A person wearing a costume

Description automatically generatedA close up of a tree

Description automatically generatedSimple to make shields were widespread but very basic, with multiple pieces of wood held together in a circular shape. The artist has shown this clearly in the **Northumbrian noble warrior** drawing.

The shield was most frequently made from maple, oak or ash. The front of the shield was usually covered with leather, for additional protection and to give a uniform surface for decoration. Smaller shields were used in small scale skirmishes or single combat, being easier to manoeuvre. The larger battle shields would be used for the shield wall in full scale battles, such as Carham. Usually bronze, but sometimes other metals were used for the central boss and sometimes the outer rim.

**Axes**

The axe was a domestic item which would be used on the battlefield, used mostly as a tool rather than a weapon. In Old English, the axe was referred to as an *æces*, from which our modern word derives. Most axes found from the period are fairly small with a straight or slightly curved blade. It is unlikely they would be used as a throwing axe, as these are smaller and have a different design.

**Bows, Arrows and Slings**

There is no evidence that bows or slings were used on the battlefield, used for hunting there would not be enough archers or slingers to make their use effective against large bodies of men.

**Seax**

A picture containing music, sitting

Description automatically generatedThe Old English term for a knife was a *seax*, these were single-edged knives that had a blade length from 10 to 30cm, the "long-seax" which had a blade length of 50 to 75 cm was effectively a single-edged sword. Like the axe, this is a domestic item which would be used on the battlefield

**Spears**

A row of wooden posts

Description automatically generatedSpears, along with the seax, were the most common weapons in the 11th Century, being cheap to make, and needing little training to use in battle. The wooden shaft, usually made from ash (but other woods have been found) would be from 1.6 to 3 metres long. The head was tipped with a hollow iron cone that fitted over the tip, although some solid cones have been found. In the shield wall the spear would be held either over or under arm and thrust at the enemy. The shorter spears would be thrown as a javelin, to disrupt and slow down an enemy charge, as shown in the **'Pictish' light infantry** drawing. A small number have been found with barbed heads; these would be used especially for throwing, as a spear that struck in a shield would be very difficult to remove, making the shield difficult to use. This gave an added advantage as unlike the non-barbed javelin, it could not be pulled out and used by the enemy.

**Swords**

A close up of a box

Description automatically generatedThe swords used at Carham would be two-edged, straight, with flat blades. The 80 to 100cm long shaft (or Tang) of the blade was covered by a hilt, which consisted of an upper and lower guard, a pommel, and a grip by which the sword was held. Many blades also had a fuller, which was a shallow groove that ran the length of the blade, this reduced the blade's weight but did not reduce the thickness. Pommels could be elaborately decorated with a variety of styles, some have been found decorated with inlaid gold.

The sword would be held in the *scēaþ* (Old English for scabbard). The scabbard was made of wood or leather, and the inside was often lined with fleece or fur, which would have been greased or oiled to prevent the sword from rusting. By the time of Carham the sword would be worn from the belt at the waist, rather than at the shoulder. Swords would demonstrate the high status of the individual, and many had mystical symbolism attached to them. Although not rare, as they required training, they would mostly be used by the higher status and experienced warriors.

**Tasks**

* Read the information carefully, then on a copy of a drawing, label the warrior, describing the equipment shown.
* For each of the four warriors shown in the artist’s drawings, describe the equipment shown. Write a detailed paragraph for each warrior.