Medieval Weaponry

An Gaill Glais – Historical Recreation Group.

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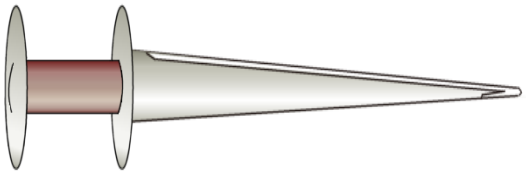
Medieval Daggers and Knives

Rondel dagger

A **rondel dagger** /ˈrɒndəl/ or **roundel dagger** was a type of stiff-bladed dagger in Europe in the late Middle Ages (from the 14th century onwards), used by a variety of people from merchants to knights. It was worn at the waist and might be used as a utility tool, or worn into battle or a jousting tournament as a side-arm.



Seax

Seax (also *sax*, *sæx*, *sex*, latinized *sachsum*) is an Old English word for "knife".[1] In modern archaeology, the term *seax* is used specifically for a type of sword or dagger typical of the Germanic peoples of the Migration period and the Early Middle Ages, especially the Saxons, whose tribal name derives from the weapon.[2]

In heraldry, the *seax* is a charge consisting of a curved sword with a notched blade, appearing, for example, in the coats of arms of Essex and the former Middlesex.[3]

Old English *seax*, *sax* and Old Frisian *sax* are identical with Old Saxon and Old High German *saks*, all from a Common Germanic **sahsom* from a root **sah*, **sag-* "to cut" (also in saw, from a PIE root **sek-*). The term *scramaseax*, *scramsax* lit. "wounding-knife" is sometimes used for disambiguation, even though it is not attested in Old English, but taken from an occurrence of *scramasaxi* in Gregory of Tours' *History of the Franks*.[4]

The name of the roofer's tool, the *zax*, is a development from this word.

Amongst the shape and construction of seaxes there is a lot of variation. The most frequent characteristics are:

- A tang in the centerline of the blade, inserted into an organic hilt (wood, horn)
- A large single edged blade
- The blade is worn horizontally inside a scabbard attached to the belt, with the edge of the blade upwards.

In the continental germanic area, the following types are defined for seaxes between roughly 450 and 800 AD, in chronological order:[5]

- **Narrow long seax**
- **Short seax**
- **Narrow seax** – Often have braided bands or snakes engraved in the blade, and frequently include metal bolsters and pommels. Both the edge and the back are curved towards the tip, which is generally located above the centerline of the blade.
- **Light broad seax** – Similar to narrow seax, but frequently lack metal hilt parts, and have simpler decorations on the blade, such as parallel lines. Both the edge and the back curve towards the tip, which is generally located at the centerline of the blade.
- **Heavy broad seax** – Have simple decorations on the blade if any, and long single-part organic hilts (>20 cm). Both the edge and the back curve towards the tip, which is generally located at the centerline of the blade.
- **Atypical broad seax** – Same as heavy broad seax.
- **Long seax** – Blades are 50 cm or longer, often with multiple fullers and grooves, patternwelded blades, and long hilts similar to broad seaxes. The edge is generally straight, or curved slightly towards the tip. The back either curves gently, or with a sharp angle towards the tip, which is located below the centerline of the blade.

Dirk

A **dirk** is a long thrusting dagger.[1] Historically, it was a personal weapon of officers engaged in naval hand-to-hand combat during the Age of Sail,[2] as well as the personal sidearm of the officers of Scottish Highland regiments,[1] and Japanese naval officers.[3]

Swords

Arming sword

The **arming sword** (also sometimes called a **knight's** or **knightly sword**) is a type of European sword with a single handed cruciform hilt and straight double edged blade of around 69 to 81 centimetres (27 to 32 in), in common use from the 11th to 16th centuries. It is a common weapon in period artwork, and there are many surviving examples in museums.

Claymore

The term **claymore** (/ˈkleɪmɔər/; from Scottish Gaelic *claidheamh mòr*, "great sword")[1] refers to the Scottish variant of the late medieval two-handed longsword. It is characterised as having a cross hilt of forward-sloping quillons with quatrefoil terminations. It was in use from the 15th to 17th centuries.

Longsword

A **longsword** (also spelled *long sword*, *long-sword*) is a type of European sword characterized as having a cruciform hilt with a grip for two handed use and a straight double-edged blade of around 100 to 122 cm (39 to 48 in)[1] Current during the late medieval and Renaissance periods, approximately 1350 to 1550 (with early and late use reaching into the 13th and 17th centuries)

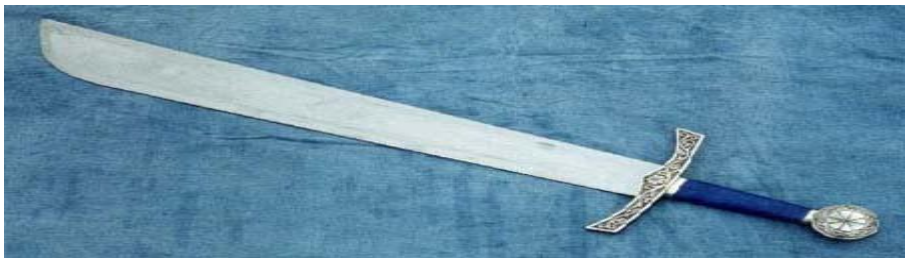
Basket-hilted sword

The **basket-hilted sword** is the name of a group of early modern sword types characterized by a basket-shaped guard that protects the hand. The basket hilt is a development of the quillons added to swords' crossguards since the Late Middle Ages. Also known as the **broadsword**,[1] the basket-hilted sword was a military sword, termed "broad" in contrast with the rapier, the slim dueling sword worn with civilian dress during the same period.

Falchion

A **falchion** (/ˈfɔːltʃən/; Old French: *fauchon*; Latin: *falx*, "sickle") is a one-handed, single-edged sword of European origin, whose design is reminiscent of the Persian scimitar and the Chinese dao.

The weapon combined the weight and power of an axe with the versatility of a sword. Falchions are found in different forms from around the 11th century up to and including the sixteenth century. In some versions the falchion looks rather like the scramasax and later the sabre, and in some versions the form is irregular or like a machete with a crossguard



Blunt or Cleaving Weapons

Battle axe

A **battle axe** (also **battle-axe** or **battle-ax**) is an axe specifically designed for combat. Battle axes were specialized versions of utility axes. Many were suitable for use in one hand, while others were larger and were deployed two-handed.

Axes designed for warfare ranged in weight from just over 0.5 kg to 3 kg (1 to 6 pounds), and in length from just over 30 cm to upwards of 1.5 m (1 to 5 feet), as in the case of the Danish axe or the sparth axe. Cleaving weapons longer than 1.5 m would arguably fall into the category of polearms.

Flail

The term **flail** refers to two different weapons: one a two-handed infantry weapon derived from an agricultural tool, and the other a one-handed weapon. The defining characteristic of both is that they involve a separate striking head attached to a handle by a flexible rope, strap, or chain. The two-handed variant saw use in a limited number of conflicts during the European Middle Ages.

The two-handed flail is a hand weapon derived from the agricultural tool of the same name, commonly used in threshing. Only a limited amount of historical evidence exists for their employment in Europe during this era. These were deployed in Germany and Central Europe in the later Middle Ages. This weapon consists of a hinged bar connected to a longer shaft.

Mace

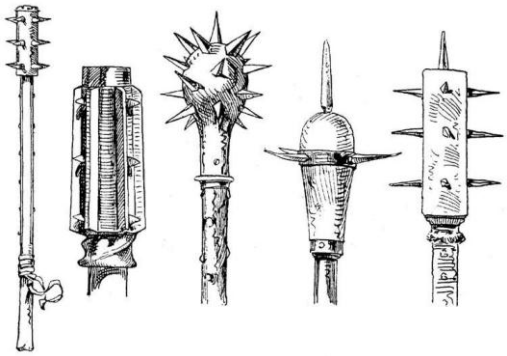
A **mace** is a blunt weapon, a type of club or virge—that uses a heavy head on the end of a handle to deliver powerful blows. A mace typically consists of a strong, heavy, wooden or metal shaft, often reinforced with metal, featuring a head made of stone, copper, bronze, iron, or steel.

The head of a military mace can be shaped with flanges or knobs to allow greater penetration of plate armour. The length of maces can vary considerably. The maces of foot soldiers were usually quite short (two or three feet, or 70 to 90 cm). The maces of cavalrymen were longer and thus better suited for blows delivered from horseback. Two-handed maces could be even larger.

Maces are rarely used today for actual combat, but a large number of government bodies (for instance the British House of Commons, the U.S. Congress), universities and other institutions have ceremonial maces and continue to display them as symbols of authority. They are often paraded in academic, parliamentary or civic rituals and processions.

Morning star

A **morning star** is any of several medieval club-like weapons that included one or more spikes. Each used, to varying degrees, a combination of blunt-force and puncture attack to kill or wound the enemy.



War hammer

A **war hammer** is a late medieval weapon of war intended for close combat action, the design of which resembles the hammer. The war hammer consists of a handle and a head. The handle may be of different lengths, the longest being roughly equivalent to the halberd, and the shortest about the same as a mace. Long war hammers were pole weapons (polearms) meant for use against riders, whereas short ones were used in closer quarters and from horseback. Later war hammers often had a spike on one side of the head, thus making it a more versatile weapon.

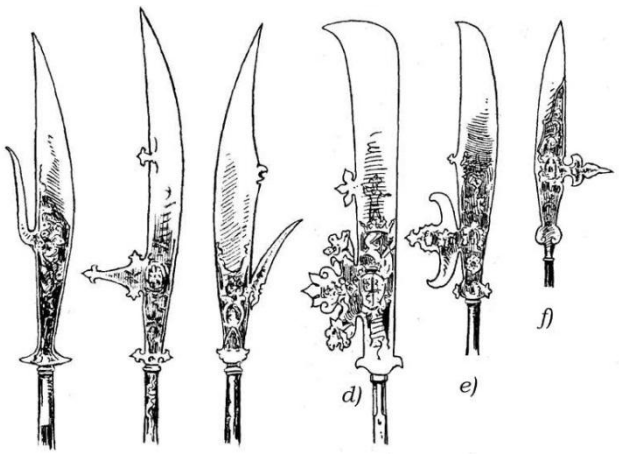
Spear and other Polearm and Poleaxe Weapons

Glaive

A **glaive** is a European polearm weapon, consisting of a single-edged blade on the end of a pole. It is similar to the Japanese naginata and the Chinese guan dao.

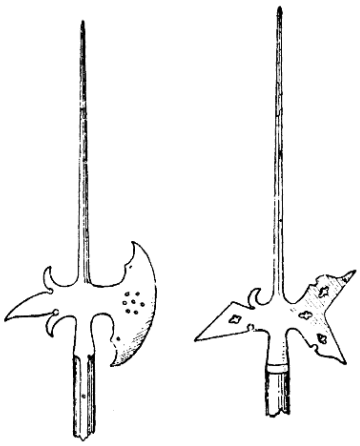
Typically, the blade was around 45 cm (18 inches) long, on the end of a pole 2 m (6 or 7 feet) long, and the blade was affixed in a socket-shaft configuration similar to an axe head, rather than having a tang like a sword or naginata. Occasionally glaive blades were created with a small hook on the reverse side to better catch riders. Such blades are called glaive-guisarmes.

According to the 1599 treatise *Paradoxes of Defence* by the English gentleman George Silver, the glaive is used in the same general manner as the quarterstaff, half pike, bill, halberd, voulge, or partisan. Silver rates this class of polearms above all other individual hand-to-hand combat weapons.



Halberd

A **halberd** (also called **halbard**, **halbert** or **Swiss voulge**) is a two-handed pole weapon that came to prominent use during the 14th and 15th centuries. The word *halberd* may come from the German words *Halm* (staff), and *Barte* (axe). In modern-day German, the weapon is called a *Hellebarde*. The halberd consists of an axe blade topped with a spike mounted on a long shaft. It always has a hook or thorn on the back side of the axe blade for grappling mounted combatants.[1] It is very similar to certain forms of the voulge in design and usage. The halberd was 1.5 to 1.8 metres (5 to 6 feet) long.[2]



Lance

A **lance** is a pole weapon or spear designed to be used by a mounted warrior. The lance is longer, stouter and heavier than an infantry spear, and unsuited for throwing, or for rapid thrusting. Lances did not have tips designed to intentionally break off or bend, unlike many throwing weapons of the spear/javelin family. They were often equipped with a vamplate, a small circular plate to prevent the hand sliding up the shaft upon impact. Though perhaps most known as one of the foremost military and sporting weapons used by European knights, the use of lances was spread throughout the Old World wherever mounts were available. As a secondary weapon, lancers of the period also bore swords, maces or something else suited to close quarter battle, since the lance was often a one-use-per-engagement weapon; assuming the lance survived the initial impact intact, it was (depending the lance) far too long, heavy and slow to be effectively used against opponents in a melee.

Pike

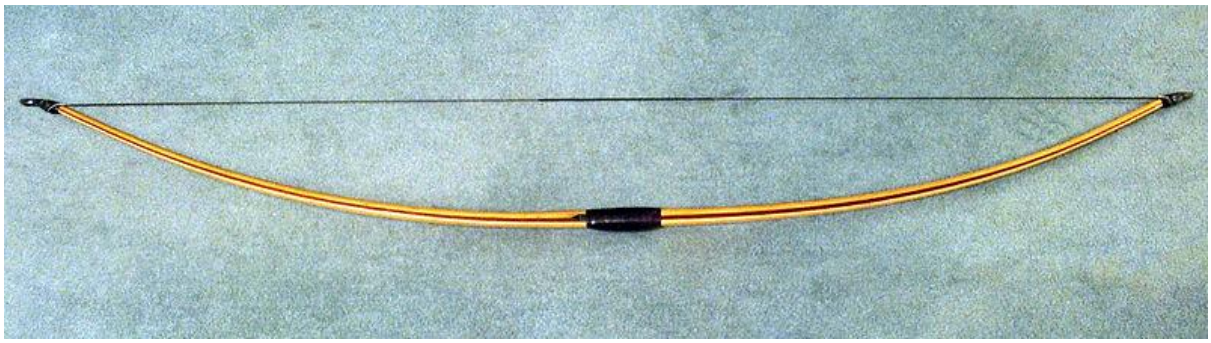
A **pike** is a pole weapon, a very long thrusting spear formerly used extensively by infantry. Unlike many similar weapons, the pike is not intended to be thrown. Pikes were used regularly in European warfare from the early Middle Ages[1] until around 1700, and wielded by foot soldiers deployed in close order. The pike found extensive use with Landsknecht armies and Swiss mercenaries, who employed it as their main weapon and used it in pike square formations. A similar weapon, the sarissa, was also used by Alexander the Great's Macedonian phalanx infantry to great effect.

Ranged

Longbow

A **longbow** is a type of bow that is tall (roughly equal to the height of the person who uses it); this will allow its user a fairly long draw, at least to the jaw. A longbow is not significantly recurved. Its limbs are relatively narrow so that they are circular or D-shaped in cross section. Flatbows can be just as long; the difference is that, in cross-section, a flatbow has limbs that are approximately rectangular.

Longbows have been made from many different woods by many cultures; in Europe they date from the Paleolithic, and since the Bronze Age were made mainly from yew. The historical longbow was a self bow made of wood, but modern longbows may also be made from modern materials or by gluing different timbers together.



History

The term "longbow" is coined ca. 1500 in reference to the English longbow, to distinguish the simple self bow from the shorter composite bow. In medieval times in Britain the weapon was usually known as a "hand" or a "lug" bow, distinguishing it from the crossbow.

In the Middle Ages the English and Welsh were famous for their very powerful Welsh longbows, used to great effect in the civil wars of the period and against the French in the Hundred Years' War (with notable success at the battles of Crécy (1346), Poitiers (1356) and Agincourt (1415).[3]

The first book in English about longbow archery was *Toxophilus* by Roger Ascham, first published in London in 1545 and dedicated to King Henry VIII.

The average length of arrowshafts recovered from the 1545 sinking of the Mary Rose is 75 cm /30 in.

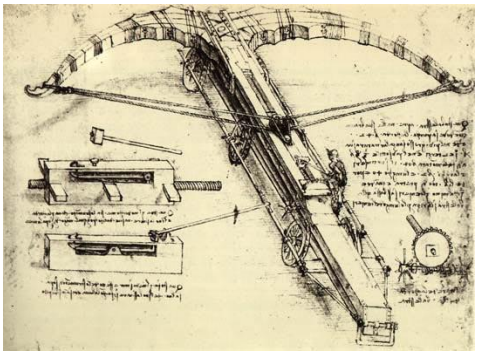
Although firearms supplanted bows in warfare, wooden or fibreglass laminated longbows continue to be used by traditional archers and some tribal societies for recreation and hunting. A longbow has practical advantages compared to a modern recurve or compound bow; it is usually lighter, quicker to prepare for shooting, and shoots more quietly. However, other things being equal, the modern bow will shoot a faster arrow more accurately than the longbow.

A claymore and a longbow were the weapons carried by Lt. Col. Jack Churchill DSO, MC & BAR during World War II.

Crossbow

A **crossbow** is a weapon consisting of a bow mounted on a stock that shoots projectiles, often called bolts or quarrels. The medieval crossbow was called by many names, most of which derived from the word ballista, a torsion engine resembling a crossbow in appearance.[1]

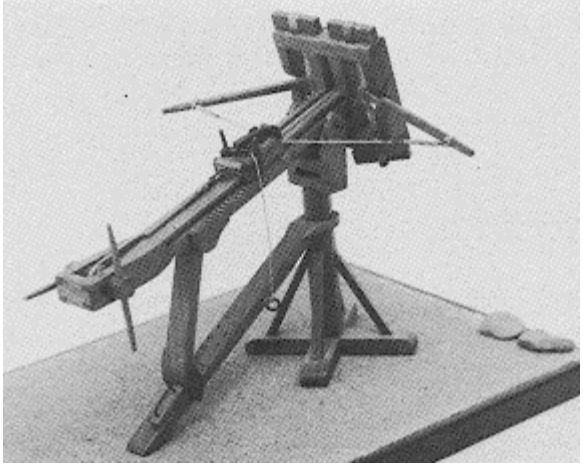
Historically, crossbows played a significant role in the warfare of East Asia, Europe and the Mediterranean. Today, they are used primarily for shooting sports, hunting,[2] and when shooting in silence is an important consideration.



Ballista

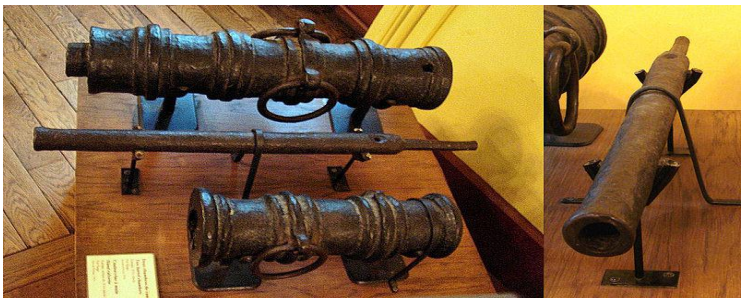
The **ballista** (Latin, from Greek βαλλίστρα – *ballistra*[1] and that from – βάλλω *ballō*, "throw"),[2] plural **ballistae**, was an ancient missile weapon that launched a large projectile at a distant target.

Developed from earlier Greek weapons, it relied upon different mechanics, using two levers with torsion springs instead of a prod, the springs consisting of several loops of twisted skeins. Early versions projected heavy darts or spherical stone projectiles of various sizes for siege warfare. It developed into a smaller sniper weapon, the scorpio,[3] and possibly the polybolos.



Culverin

A **culverin** was a relatively simple ancestor of the musket, and later a medieval cannon, adapted for use by the French in the 15th century, and later adapted for naval use by the English in the late 16th century. The culverin was used to bombard targets from a distance. The weapon had a relatively long barrel and a light construction. The culverin fired solid round shot projectiles with a high muzzle velocity, producing a relatively long range and flat trajectory. Round shot refers to the classic solid spherical cannonball.



Musket

A **musket** is a muzzle-loaded, smoothbore firearm, fired from the shoulder. Muskets were designed for use by infantry. A soldier armed with a musket had the designation *musketman* or *musketeer*.

The musket replaced the arquebus, and was in turn replaced by the rifle (in both cases, after a long period of coexistence). The term "musket" is applied to a variety of weapons, including the long, heavy guns with matchlock or wheel lock and loose powder fired with the gun barrel resting on a stand, and also lighter weapons with Snaphance, flintlock, or caplock and bullets using a stabilizing spin (Minié ball), affixed with a bayonet.

Siege engine

Battering ram

A **battering ram** is a siege engine originating in ancient times and designed to break open the masonry walls of fortifications or splinter their wooden gates.

In its simplest form, a battering ram is just a large, heavy log carried by several people and propelled with force against an obstacle; the ram would be sufficient to damage the target if the log was massive enough and/or it were moved quickly enough (that is, if it had enough momentum). Later rams encased the log in an arrow-proof, fire-resistant canopy mounted on wheels. Inside the canopy, the log was swung from suspensory chains or ropes.

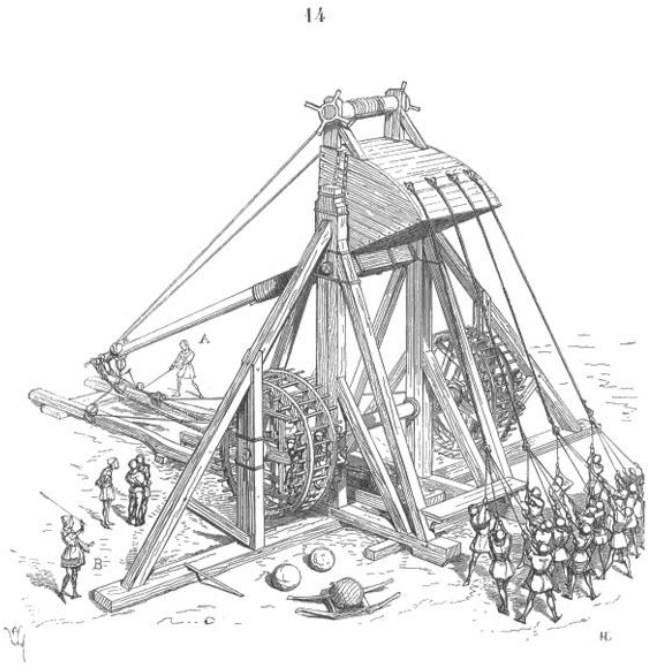
Catapult

A **catapult** is a device used to throw or hurl a projectile a great distance without the aid of explosive devices—particularly various types of ancient and medieval siege engines.[1] Although the catapult has been used since ancient times, it has proven to be one of the most effective mechanisms during warfare. The word 'catapult' comes from the Latin 'catapulta', which in turn comes from the Greek καταπέλτης (*katapeltēs*), itself from (*kata*), "downwards"[2] + πάλλω (*pallō*), "to toss, to hurl".[3][4] Catapults were invented by the ancient Greeks.[5][6]

Mangonel

A **mangonel** (derived from Greco-Latin word manganon, meaning "engine of war")[1][2] was a type of catapult or siege engine used in the medieval period to throw projectiles at a castle's walls. The exact meaning of the term is debatable, and several possibilities have been suggested. *Mangonel* may also be indirectly referring to the *mangon*, a French hard stone found in the south of France. It may have been a name for counterweight artillery (trebuchets), possibly either a men-assisted fixed-counterweight type, or one with a particular type of frame.[3][4] The Arabic term *manajaniq* comes from the same word, and applies to various kinds of trebuchet. It is also possible that it referred to more than one kind of engine, in different times or places, or was a general term.

In modern parlance, catapult is often used as the name of a medieval form of onager, though there is little evidence for this historically. In this sense, mangonel had poorer accuracy than a trebuchet (which was introduced later, shortly before the discovery and widespread usage of gunpowder). The mangonel threw projectiles on a lower trajectory and at a higher velocity than the trebuchet, with the intention of destroying walls, rather than hurling projectiles over them. It was more suited to field battles.



Trebuchet

A **trebuchet**[nb 1] (French *trébuchet*) is a siege engine that was employed in the Middle Ages. It is sometimes called a "counterweight trebuchet" or "counterpoise trebuchet" in order to distinguish it from an earlier weapon that has come to be called the "traction trebuchet", which employed pulling men working the mechanism. The counterweight trebuchet appeared in both Christian and Muslim lands around the Mediterranean in the twelfth century. It could fling projectiles of up to three hundred and fifty pounds (160 kg) at high speeds into enemy fortifications.

The trebuchet did not become obsolete until the 15th century, well after the introduction of gunpowder, which appeared in Europe in the second half of the 13th century. Trebuchet's technical constructions were lost at the beginning of the 16th century. First modern reconstruction of a Trebuchet based on epoch documents (1324) was made in France by the engineer Renaud Beffeyte (Armedieval)[3] in 1984.

Siege tower

A **siege tower** (also **breaching tower**; or in the Middle Ages a **belfry**[1]) is a specialized siege engine, constructed to protect assailants and ladders while approaching the defensive walls of a fortification. The tower was often rectangular with four wheels with its height roughly equal to that of the wall or sometimes higher to allow archers to stand on top of the tower and shoot into the fortification. Because the towers were wooden and thus flammable, they had to have some non-flammable covering of iron or fresh animal skins.[1] The siege tower was mainly made from wood but sometimes had metal parts.

Used since the 11th century BC in the ancient Near East, the 4th century BC in Europe and also in antiquity in the Far East, siege towers were of unwieldy dimensions and, like trebuchets, were therefore mostly constructed on site of the siege. Taking considerable time to construct, siege towers were mainly built if the defense of the opposing fortification could not be overcome by ladder assault ("escalade"), by mining or by breaking walls or gates.

The siege tower sometimes housed pikemen, swordsmen, or crossbowmen who shot quarrels at the defenders. Because of the size of the tower it would often be the first target of large stone catapults but it had its own projectiles with which to retaliate.[1]

Siege towers were used to get troops over an enemy curtain wall. When a siege tower was near a wall, it would drop a gangplank between it and the wall. Troops could then rush onto the walls and into the castle or city.

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