
Weapons and Armor during the Middle Ages

During the medieval times, weapons and armor played a crucial role in survival and living in all social classes and kinds of people. Amor and weapons were used by all armies from the medieval times. All men were expected to know how to fight. They were expected to be ready and available when called to fight for the king. Their lives were organized and structured to have military training incorporated in their daily lives. Weapon training was provided by the lords. The most valuable items to a knight were his armor, weapons, and his war horse. These three items were very expensive, meaning that only the wealthy could afford to be knights. Many knights hoped to regain some of the cost through plundering when they conquered enemy towns and cities. In order to survive weapons and armor became one of the most important aspects to live during the Medieval Times

In the Middle Ages there were a variety of weapons used to fight, hunt, and overall survive. There was a sword, which is a long, edged piece of forged metal. The word sword comes from the Old English language word "sweord" which is from a Proto-Indo-European root "Swer" which means to cut or to wound. Swords could be single or double bladed edges and straight or curved. There were four types of swords during the Middle Ages – Arming, Broad Swords, Falchions, and long swords. "The Broadsword had a two-edged blade measuring 2-3 inches wide at the base and tapering to a point. The length of the Broadsword ranged from 30 - 45 inches and weighed between 3 - 5 pounds. A Falchion sword was favored by some Medieval Knights who had been on Crusade. The Medieval Falchion swords had a short, heavy blade with a single edge. Longswords are also known as Hand and a Half swords. The length of the Longsword ranged from 44 to 50 inches in length. The arming swords were at first used by early Medieval Knights and were also particularly favored by the Vikings.

There were daggers and knives. A dagger is a double edged blade used for stabbing or thrusting primarily. Daggers would play the role of a second defense in a fight. Knives were used primarily for cutting, rather than to be used on food, nature, or a person. There were 4 types of daggers used over the whole time period. One type is known as Anelaces and was a long dagger and was almost like a short sword. Another type was called Stiletto, which is a short blade with a long slender primarily used for stabbing.

The last two types are the Poignards and Rondels. Poignards are light weight daggers with fancy designs and were created during the renaissance. A Rondel type of dagger was a casual blade and was most commonly carried by most people such as knights, merchants, and even peasants. Armor played a crucial role in survival and there was a variety of types that were used. There are two most commonly used types of armor-steel and leather. knights wore heavy armor made of metal. There are two main kinds of steel armor: chain mail and plate armor. Chain mail Chain mail was made from thousands of metal rings. The typical chain mail armor was a long cloak called a hauberk. Knights wore a padded cloak underneath the armor to help them carry the weight of the armor. A chain mail hauberk could weigh as much as 30 pounds. Although chain mail was flexible and offered good protection, it could be pierced by an arrow or thin sword. Some knights began to put plates of metal over vital parts of their bodies for added protection. Soon they were completely covered in plate armor and they stopped wearing chain mail. (Price Brian "Techniques Of Medieval Armour Reproduction")

During this time, leather armor, was one of the most popular types of armor to be used. In the later stages of the Middle Ages, leather became less popular but there was always a place for it in the soldier's battle gear. The reason leather armor was so popular was because it was cheap and super easy to find. Another reason why leather armor was popular was because it did not take as much skill to make as ring mail or plate mail. A soldier could make his own repairs if necessary. Leather armor was typically used by the lower classes although it was also used by some nobility who couldn't afford more expensive armor. Leather armor became less popular as ring mail and plate mail became cheaper but a typical soldier always wore some leather armor even if it was just around his legs or under his ring mail. It was also used as the base.

The evolution of armor from the start of the Middle Ages to the end had major improvements while keeping the same basic ideas. Mail, or chainmail, made of interlocking iron rings, is believed to have been invented in Eastern Europe about 500 BC. Gradually, small additional plates or discs of iron were added to the mail to protect vulnerable areas. Hardened leather and splinted construction were used for arm and leg pieces. A coat of plates was developed and was like an armor made of large plates sewn inside a leather coat. Early plates in Italy, and other places in the 13th–15th century were made of iron. Iron armor could be case hardened to give a surface of harder steel. (Medieval Review, "Evolution Of Armor through the Middle Ages"). Plate armor became cheaper than mail by the 15th century as it required less labour and labour became much more expensive after the Black Death.. Mail continued to be used to protect those joints which could not be protected correctly by plate. For example, the armpit, crook of the elbow and groin. Another advantage of plates was that a lance rest could be fitted to the breast plate. The small skull cap evolved into a bigger true helmet, the bascinet, as it was lengthened downward to protect the back of the neck and the sides of the head.

Additionally, several new forms of fully enclosed helmets were introduced in the late 1300s. Probably the most recognized style of armor in the world became the plate armor associated with the knights of the European Late Middle Ages. By about 1400 the full harness of plate armor had been developed. Heavy cavalry dominated the battlefield for centuries in part because of their armor. In the early 15th century, advances in weaponry allowed infantry to defeat armored knights on the battlefield. The quality of the metal used in armor became worse as armies became bigger and armor was made thicker. If during the 14–15th centuries armor seldom weighed more than 15kgs, than by the late 16th century it weighed 25 kg. (Medieval Review "Evolution Of Armor through the Middle Ages"). The increasing weight and thickness of late 16th century armor gave increased and much needed resistance.

The evolution of weapons during the Middle Ages was not as huge but still much improvements where made when needed. There was a great change to weapons not because they evolved but because they changed to maintain effectiveness under different conditions. By the fourteenth century, improvements in the range and power of the crossbow Crossbow had made it a favorite tool of war. In the Crusades, the crossbow, and not the knight in melee, proved the winning factor. However, although mounted crossbowmen were used a lot in Spain, crossbowmen could not move quickly while shooting, and this meant that they were vulnerable while reloading. Missile fire could be devastating from a protected position but the archer simply could not hold open ground against a well-performed cavalry charge. The long spear, which turned into the pike, was used successfully to hold ground, and on numerous occasion troops using these weapons beat back cavalry charges. (Ford, Roger "Weapon: A visual History Of Arms and Armor" Smithsonian Institution, 2016)

These forms of spears became renowned for their skill also known as the pike and halberd. However, footmen could indeed hold ground if they were well-trained, but they usually could not take ground because moving quickly made it difficult to keep the close order that these formations depended on for survival. A disordered formation was certain to be cracked open by a well timed charge. Additional weight of heavier armor was invented that would resist crossbow bolts. It was a constant race of inventions to adapt to each others latest and best upgrades.

In order to survive and conquer people had to keep improving their weapons and armor to live during the Middle Ages. People made advancements to be able to one up each other and have the upper hand when in conflict. Weapons and armor where used in all classes from knights to lords and even to merchants and peasants. It played a crucial role of living and thriving in the Medieval Time period. During the Middle Ages the innovations of weapons and Armor was a crucial part of living and turned into a huge stepping stone to other advancements of modern weapons and armor.

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