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# Learning within medieval re-enactment in the United Kingdom

Alison Ryan

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in  
partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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## Abstract

This thesis looks at learning within medieval re-enactment in the United Kingdom, specifically looking at participants who portray various characters from the historical period 1300-1500. It seeks to make an original contribution to knowledge about how the acquisition of skills and knowledge needed for these portrayals in areas such as combat, costume, spinning and dancing is carried out by the participants.

The study uses aspects the theoretical framework of communities of practice and the legitimate peripheral participation to look at social relations within these communities. Apprenticeships were also considered, both as an aspect of learning in the medieval period and how far they could be identified within the skill development of modern re-enactors.

The study used an ethnographic approach which enabled the study of the way that communities of practice supported this learning. This focused on interviews with 22 participants with varying degrees of experience of re-enactment. Participant observation was also used, as I am a re-enactor. This took place at a number of events attended by myself and participants over a 2-year period between 2016 and 2017.

The analysis showed that within these communities of practice re-enactors were undertaking detailed and scholarly research in their chosen areas, with an emphasis on the use of primary sources to try and ensure authentic reproduction of both artefacts and role portrayal. There was a central role for both individuals, who acted as masters and mentors within the re-enactment community, and the support of re-enactment groups as repositories of expertise. This knowledge was rarely codified, with a reliance on the oral tradition in passing on skills and knowledge though this was supported in some instances by the use of social media. The study showed that contested areas, such as authenticity, along with factors affecting participation such as gender, were aspects that the re-enactors were very aware of and felt that their own research and participation helped to contribute to these debates in the wider fields of medieval history and heritage.

A wide variety of learning was evident, not only that which the participants had undertaken in order to fulfil their character portrayals, but also in their interactions with the public at events. It was this aspect of their skill development that many of the participants had found most significant, with confidence and the development of their new identities being central to their learning and participation.

The contribution of re-enactment to the personal satisfaction and life enhancement of the participants, was found to be of significant value and the learning gained through involvement in the hobby gave a sense of pride and achievement to all involved in the study.

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## **Chapter 1 Introduction and background to the study**

We learn constantly through a variety of different means and in a wealth of different relationships. This learning becomes more formalised at certain points in our lives, when we enter school, or chose to participate in higher education. This learning always involves relationships, whether it be with teachers and fellow students or within a workplace with colleagues and mentors. How this learning takes place has been the subject of extensive debate with a wide range of theorists (Bernstein,1999; Engeström & Kerosuo, 2007; Krathwohl, 2002; Wenger, 1998, 2000; Vygotsky,1978) exploring different ways of trying to understand our learning within schools, workplaces, and through participation in hobbies and interests. As an educator for the last 33 years I have been involved in many facets of education. Some of this learning has been in the form of accredited provision on GCSE, degree and PGCE programmes. However, much of it, particularly my work with trainee teachers and early years' students on placement, has been about understanding the value of learning in social situations.

I have also been a medieval re-enactor for 18 years and, like many other people, joining a re-enactment group was a natural next step from being a history enthusiast. This involved visiting many events where the life of a particular period was being re-created by dedicated volunteers. My academic background is in science and technology, with much of my professional life devoted to teaching literacy, numeracy and IT. Formal study of history ended for me at the age of 16 with an enjoyable, but at the time it seemed not particularly relevant, History O - level. However, over the last 17 years I, alongside my fellow re-enactors, have learnt about the reigns of kings such as Edward I, Edward II and Edward IV, ecclesiastical history relating to the expansion of monastic life, medieval textiles and embroidery. This learning has all been informal, self-directed and unaccredited and in undertaking this personal study I have become interested in what is learnt through engagement in this mainly unexplored area of leisure and how this learning is supported by the communities of practice that are formed with re-enactment groups.

Re-enactment is a hobby estimated to be undertaken by approximately 20,000 people in the UK (Giles, 2013). Re-enactors cover virtually all periods of history in the UK, from Roman to Gulf War and are generally organised into groups that cover defined time periods. These can be very specific such as the LEAD Re-enactment group, who portray the household of Edward IV (Chamberlain, 2017) or groups such as the Devon Medieval Combat Alliance who cover the 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries in their events (Devon Medieval Combat Alliance, 2019). Groups vary in size from ones like my own, Swords of Mercia, which currently has 25 members who participate in around 8 events per year to groups such as the largest in the UK, the Sealed Knot, which has over 200 events a year with up to 1,000 members attending each one (Sealed Knot, 2019).

Re-enactors are unpaid volunteers in the hobby and participate in all aspects of portraying military and civilian life of their chosen period. All periods have their own unique draw for the participants and may be chosen for a number of reasons. It may be because of family historical connections, a love of a particular type of location such as medieval castles, or an interest in a particular skill such as sword fighting or weaving. There are a wide variety of events that come under the heading of re-enactment, from one or two people story-telling or music making to large battle re-enactments. In the discussions that led to the exemption of re-enactment from the Violent Crime Reduction Act of 2006, with reference to clauses that prevented carrying and using weapons, the British Government officially defined re-enactment for the first time as “any presentation or other event held for the purpose of re-enacting an event from the past or illustrating conduct from a particular time or period in the past” (Giles, 2013: n.p.). Hall gives a more detailed definition when he says “re-enacting is more than a situation for play or an attempt to recreate historical situations. It is a process that involves establishing and maintaining relationships, sharing common understandings of re-enacting and authenticity, and the presentation of a battle” (Hall, 2015:416). This is a useful starting point for thinking about some of the key themes in this thesis such as process of acquiring skills and relationships between group members.

The overall aims for this study are outlined below;

To identify the skills learned and knowledge acquired by selected participants within medieval re-enactment through learning within communities of practice.

To explore the notion of 'expertise' in specific fields within the re-enactment community and how it is validated by participants given that there exist few formal systems to accredit the knowledge and skills gained.

These two aims reflect the nature of learning within re-enactment and have been used to explore both the way that knowledge and skills are acquired and the way that this knowledge and skills are recognised within both individual communities of practice and the wider re-enactment community. Re-enactment is a unique hobby in that it encourages its participants to develop a wide variety of traditional skills such as armour and costume making, safe use of a variety of weapons, cooking on open fires, herbalism and crafts such as leatherwork, woodwork, weaving, metalwork and brickmaking. It attracts people from all sectors of society, most with no previous experience or training in these areas. Therefore, as well as looking at the acquisition of skills and knowledge, I have also researched motivation for individuals to undertake this learning and any limiting factors. I am also interested in ways participants and groups that form these communities of practice may relate to the traditional roles of medieval guilds in knowledge transfer and how this links with concepts of master and apprentice and communities of practice.

The knowledge that is gained through participation in this hobby is not accredited, mainly as there is little in the existing curriculum and assessment structure to offer accreditation. Many of the skills and knowledge re-enactors are working on are those that have been lost as we have moved to a more mass-produced and mechanised society. Skills such as dyeing your own cloth, making a leather belt, cooking your evening meal over an open fire and keeping your maille shirt repaired are commonplace ones that re-enactors have acquired and which reflect everyday life in their chosen period. As there is little in the way of formal education available for these skills and no external validation I am interested in how people become 'experts' in their field through this learning and how other participants perceive that expertise. The aspect of re-enactment being different from everyday life is used by NARES (National Association of Re-enactment Societies) in their promotional material.

With this outlet from hum-drum life, the re-enactor has a unique freedom to roam the centuries—to explore the intricacies of our ancestors’ minds and habits. Thus, for the individual or the family, re-enactment allows a unique exploration of life, unconstrained by the present. (NARES, 2019: n.p.)

### **The scope of the study**

I have limited the study to medieval re-enactment groups in the UK that cover the historical period 1300 to 1500 AD. The reason for this was a practical one as that is the time period that I am most familiar with and where I knew that I could access participants for my research. There are some other events which are termed ‘multi-period events’ that I have attended with my group and groups from other periods such as the Romans and the Napoleonic Wars however due to the limitations of this research project I only used groups that represented my chosen time period. I did however use additional research sources in my literature review about groups in other periods where there are similar themes and issues for reasons which will be discussed in chapter 2 of this thesis.

The research used specific questions detailed below which derive from my aims;

1. How can the learning within re-enactment groups be contextualised using theories of communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation?
2. What are the skills learned and knowledge acquired by participants within medieval re-enactment through involvement in these communities of practice?
3. In which ways does the ‘master and apprentice’ relationship contribute to the learning of these skills and how is ‘expertise’ within this learning defined and validated by participants?
4. How do online forums, blogs and social networking communities aid skill and knowledge development within these communities of practice?

In using these questions, I sought to investigate specific aspects of re-enactors' learning and to look at how social learning relationships support that learning. Communities of practice has been used as a theoretical framework as it enables the components of any learning community to be analysed, looking at significant aspects such as identity and shared resources (Wenger, 1998). I was also interested in the aspects of becoming part of a re-enactment group through legitimate peripheral participation. Lave and Wenger (1991) describe this as a process by which new members become engaged in social practice that involves learning. For many re-enactors joining a group may initially solely be a social activity but participation has to involve learning to enable them to become a full member of the group. The ideas of communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation are closely linked to ideas of apprenticeship. Therefore, this was also used as a way of understanding the learning taking place. In the medieval period apprenticeships were the principal means by which most trades were learnt (Wallis, 2008), covering a wide range of skill areas that relate to those that re-enactors engage in. Apprenticeships and communities of practice are not the only forms of social learning but I have chosen to focus on these in this study. Due to the amount of face to face participation in re-enactment being limited for many participants I also wanted to analyse the role of social media in supporting the learning identified.

Re-enactments events are part of a wider programme of heritage tourism and heritage education. They are the main showcase for both the learning that the individual group members engage in. Here they can also be involved in passing on this learning to members of the public. The following section of this introduction discusses what these events entail, and some of the specific considerations within medieval re-enactment.

### **The nature of re-enactment events**

Although there are opportunities to re-enact many different historical periods in the UK this is not true in all cultures. In the USA and Australia, for example, opportunity to re-enact is, by the nature of the documented history of the country, more limited. "In identifying historical re-enactment as a cultural practice it is important, as historians have noted, to

consider precisely which histories are being performed” (Gapps,2002:9). This not only relates to considerations of power relationships but also timeframes and information available about historical periods. There are also considerations needed of the ethics of re-enactment and inclusion or exclusion of different time periods or groups for political or sensitivity reasons. For example, although World War 2 is extensively re-enacted in the UK, and there are groups who portray German soldiers, this is not an accurate representation of what happened as there were never German troops based in the UK. Also the portrayal of SS groups is sometimes not welcomed by event organisers due to concerns about attracting other modern political groups or persons who share similar ideologies who may use the events for their own aims (Tibbets 2007).

The medieval period is one of the most popular for various reasons. One is the availability of locations at which to stage events. English Heritage look after over 400 historic sites (English Heritage, 2019a) of which a large number are castles, historic houses or battlefield sites from within my 1300 – 1500 AD period. Added to this are properties from the same period amongst the 300 historic houses owned by the National Trust (National Trust, 2019) plus additional battlefield sites and historic homes either owned by councils, charitable trusts or private owners. This makes for an appropriate backdrop to the displays of medieval tents, knights on horses and men in armour, as shown in the picture overleaf and evident in the publicity material on the English Heritage website (English Heritage, 2019).



**Illustration 1: A medieval re-enactment event at Caldicot Castle, South Wales**

The scheduled re-enactment event may not be re-enacting the actual history that took place at that location but will usually be linked in terms of theme or historical record to events that could have taken place there. This could be a jousting tournament, a battle over land ownership or portrayal of life in a medieval battle campground. Some events are actually on the historic battlefield sites. These are usually the Wars of the Roses events where the sites have been preserved, such as the 1471 battle of Tewkesbury and 1485 battle of Bosworth.

Another reason for the popularity of medieval re-enactment is that it is colourful, exciting to watch and often spectacular in its execution. The Tewkesbury Medieval Festival that encompasses the battle is the biggest free re-enactment in Europe attracting over 3000 participants from Europe as well as the UK (Tewkesbury Medieval Festival, 2019). The sheer scale of the battle, with around 1500 participants on the field each year, marks it out as a significant attraction, as well as an extensive living history encampment representing both the Yorkist and Lancastrian armies. This type of re-enactment event explores themes well represented in popular culture, knights in shining armour, flags flying, shields and swords being brandished, the clash of steel. For further detail of two of the events studied within this research please see Appendix 2.

The host organisations for events usually have a specific educational remit, this being particularly relevant to English Heritage. The National Heritage Act of 1983 that led to the creation of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England specified that “educational facilities and services, instruction and information to the public” (National Heritage Act, 1983:np) should be provided at the properties managed by the new English Heritage organisation. The current English Heritage remit includes the statement to “provide outstanding learning opportunities for all, whether they're visiting our sites, browsing online or reading our publications” (English Heritage, 2019:np). This priority is the final one of the list of five. At the start of the list is capturing the imagination, then improving their offer, drawing on customer insight, and fourthly improving the digital offer. The fact that learning is at the end of this list may indicate that it is not as much of a priority as other aspects. However, the first priority mentions new visitor experiences and capturing the imagination. Here interpretation is specifically mentioned as a way of achieving this. It is

interesting to note that as part of research into the impact of re-enactment events by the Welsh equivalent of English Heritage, CADW, in the late 1980s, Light (1996) found that “education – to inform and educate visitors to monuments “(Light, 1996:185) was third out of the list of six priorities for the organisation. This may indicate that education had a higher priority at that time. This could be due in part to the 2015 changes in funding of the organisation as they are now a self-financing charitable trust and need to raise more from visitor engagement rather than relying on government funding.

There are also links to formal education in the organisations’ remits. The National Curriculum for History contains the following as one of its aims “know and understand significant aspects of the history of the wider world: the nature of ancient civilisations; the expansion and dissolution of empires; characteristic features of past non-European societies; achievements and follies of mankind” (DfE, 2013: n.p.). This time period is full of evidence of the significant aspects of the history of the wider world. For example, aspects such as the eight Crusades to the Holy Land to reclaim sites significant to the Christian faith between 1096 and 1291, which still resonate in discussion of Middle Eastern politics today. The achievements and follies of mankind are clearly evident in a study of the War of the Roses. This is an example of a civil war where the emblems of the white and red rose are still to be seen in Yorkshire and Lancashire today.

In particular, in the Primary Key Stage 2 curriculum, there is a local history element “a study of an aspect of history or a site dating from a period beyond 1066 that is significant in the locality “(DfE 2013: n.p.). This is used by local primary schools at the schools’ day event that takes place on the Friday before the battle of Tewkesbury event. Not all events will have this level of involvement with schools, due to the fact that most take place on the weekends. However, English Heritage, and other organisations, use links with the curriculum to promote their events to schools, local residents and other members of the public. They specifically target parents with school age children stressing the value of the events for helping to understand history in context.

## Participation in re-enactment

In seeking to understand what re-enactors' involvement consists of it is useful to look at it firstly as a pursuit that shares particular features with other very intensive and time consuming pastimes. In common with other hobbies that require significant commitment in terms of equipment, this is an expensive way of spending your weekend. However, it is not just about money. To re-enact means a commitment to learning, a willingness to spend time talking to a wide variety of members of the public, and the enthusiasm to carry on with an event whatever the weather. Although not professionals, these unpaid hobbyists take their commitment very seriously. The usual description given to potential members is that 'it is not a hobby; it is a lifestyle choice'. Leadbeater and Miller (2004) refer to participation in hobbies like this as the emergence of a new type of 'pro-am', who they argue have a very important set of skills and hold their work to high standards. They discuss the positive contributions of these pro-ams in many different sectors of business and leisure, from technology to sport. They also point out that the pro-ams spend a large amount of their income on this leisure in terms of supplies and travel expenses. This is very true of re-enactment. The average amount spent to attend an event will be around £150, and most re-enactors will attend at least six events a year. This is aside from the costs of clothing and equipment. For a re-enactor, camping in the living history section of an event, in a reproduction canvas tent complete with furnishings, and fighting in full armour, the costs would average around £6000.



**Illustration 2: Caldicot Castle Living history encampment, a tent with armour displayed on stand**

This does not mean that re-enactment is not socially inclusive. There are options to camp in an ordinary modern tent, to portray a non-combatant, or lower status character, with a basic set of costume which can be bought for around £200. However, costs can be considerably reduced by making as much equipment as possible. This is why the hobby features such a focus on this skill development. It is hobby open to all, and as such has participants from a wide range of occupations, not that you may know what these are.

In many cases, re-enactors will tell you they do not actually know what are the 'real life' occupations of their fellow participants. On a personal level, this is one of the great attractions of re-enactment; that an individual's worth is measured by their skills and abilities rather than their wealth, class or occupation. (NARES, 2019: n.p.)

All that is required is the interest in medieval history. This is why many re-enactors enquire about joining groups after seeing them perform at an event. This initial interest will be followed up by a process of involvement that is the focus of this study.

### **The nature of re-enactment groups**

There is a wide range of different types of groups available for the prospective re-enactor to join. There are groups that cover solely military functions, and those that represent only domestic life. Some groups portray actual historical households; others are created around fictional groupings. Groups attract members from the public at events. They also advertise on social media, sometimes using their own group pages for this purpose. For individual groups, reputation is considered to be very important. This is closely linked to notions of authenticity, which is examined further within the study as part of the skills and knowledge gained. There is no overall standard for authenticity within re-enactment groups, partly as they cover such a wide time frame. Event organising committees do issue warnings about authenticity with all booking information. This contains specific information about the event time period and kit expectations. Organisers will not renew invites for groups that do not adhere to the standards. In most groups there is one person who is responsible for advising

new members. All participants will advise on particular areas of their expertise. This approach to monitoring authenticity is common in most types of re-enactment as Brædder, Esmark, Kruse, Nielsen, and Warring's (2017) research found. They stated that "informal peer assessment is the main source of authority among the medieval and World War II reenactors, who continually evaluate their own practice and that of their fellows" (Braedder et al., 2017:186). This is one of the things that dominates discussion at events where members may be about to make new purchases. It is also common in off season Facebook messages, with 'is this acceptable for our period?' being one of the most common questions asked. With groups often taking part in multiple events with different time frames, what is acceptable for the 1323 timeframe event at one location, is not allowed at the 1471 battle of Tewkesbury.

This reputation is also supported by where the group participates in events. There are several different categories of organisations that stage re-enactments. They are responsible for inviting re-enactment groups to participate in their events. One category is English Heritage, the National Trust, and owners of historic properties. Charity and community organisers are another. The third are groups of re-enactors who run their own events. Who a group works for has a direct bearing on the level of authenticity they have to adhere to. Those groups who work for organisations such as English Heritage, have very high standards of costume and equipment. This also applies to groups that focus on the higher ranks of society, such as the LEAD Historical group portraying Edward IV's household. Because of their investment, in both the extensive equipment needed to set up a king's encampment and the knowledge needed to portray the king and his retinue, these groups are considered as knowledgeable and reliable sources of information. This means that joining this type of group will demand the highest standards of authenticity in costume and equipment from the outset. They therefore tend to only attract established re-enactors and are usually by invite only rather than casual enquiry from public at events.

Thus, for the medieval and World War II reenactors in particular, authenticity functions as a currency, a status-differentiating capital in Pierre Bourdieu's sense, that structures hierarchies both internally among the reenactment groups and

externally between the reenactment milieu and the surrounding world. (Braedder et al., 2017:186)

This does present an interesting parallel to medieval social structures. In the era being portrayed by these re-enactors, power was held by those who were born into higher status roles, or who achieved them through skill in combat. As such, they then had the right to expect the automatic respect of the other strata of society. They also had their own sets of rules for things such as conduct and dress. This was codified in many ways through legislation such as the sumptuary laws that existed at that time. The re-enactors who portray people such as Edward IV have an automatic respect and validation when they are in character. This is partly because of the amount of time they have invested into their costume and equipment. Their status is visible in how they are dressed. In a society that relied on visual symbolism, medieval nobility was expected to portray their power and authority through their clothing and equipment. These groups use this in their portrayals.



**Illustration 3: Re-enactors portraying Edward IV and his queen, Elizabeth Woodville.**

**Picture courtesy of LEAD re-enactment**

## **Ethical and social issues in re-enactment events**

What is 'real' history does tend to depend on the viewpoint that is being studied. As mentioned earlier in the discussion about dilemmas, this does depend on how the communities being re-enacted may have been marginalised in the past. This is particularly relevant in re-enactments of Aboriginal history discussed by Cook (2004). His work explores various re-enactments celebrating anniversaries of events that had very negative outcomes for the indigenous population. He looks at what has happened in the past and how they can be portrayed sensitively. McCalman and Pickering (2010) discuss how these debates have influenced re-enactment. They state that the acknowledgement of the affective domain being vital in understanding past events is relevant to both re-enactors and academic historians. They also point out how important this affective aspect is to the owners of historic sites.

Johnson (2015) questions the relationship between historians and re-enactors, and refers to it as "the charismatic, but troubled (and troubling) distant relative" (Johnson, 2015:193). She cites concerns about over-dramatisation of events for the public. She argues that by their affective nature these events can be seen as not so much as a portrayal of realistic history. Instead they are something that has been created to entertain rather than inform. She also explores the idea that by denying the validity of the performance of history, and seeking to use traditional forms of analysis, there may be marginalisation of the views of other communities. She states that "adherence to written history, to the exclusion of somatic, performative traditions, restricts the means to record (and create) history to an elite – a predominantly white, male elite" (Johnson, 2015:194). Whilst seeing the value of a more performative type of historical portrayal, she explains that there is concern from scholars whether people outside academia have the ability to do this.

As well as the learning that is undertaken by re-enactors in preparing for their participation there is also the consideration that re-enactment itself acts as a form of education for the general public, and thus re-enactors act as educators. Agnew (2007) explores this in her study of re-enactment history. She suggests that the re-enactor acts as both a pretend eyewitness and ethnographer staging events. They then describe them to the audience in a

way that enables them to understand the events at the level appropriate to their age and experience. De Groot (2011) also discusses the fact that participation involves a level of self-reflection. This also involves explanation to the public about why a person would choose to stand in a field dressed in costume that they have painstakingly made to represent life in the early 1300s. He argues that participation in the activity also forces re-enactors to explore their own relationships to the past. It also makes them think about things like the ethical issues surrounding combat, religious persecution, racism and sexism within the periods re-enacted. It is also about how these can be represented to a 21<sup>st</sup> century audience. Whilst this may be a valid point, re-enactors are at events to portray medieval life. They may wish to engage in debates around these issues. However, there is perhaps a limit to what can be done in the short timespan that they have to interact with individual members of the public. That is not to say that these issues will not be explored by re-enactors themselves, but may not be fully articulated during the public aspects of events.

Fu, Zhang, Leito and Miao (2018) discuss the value of these events as contributing towards a sense of community. They also note the fact that they can be both socially and economically beneficial to the location. They discuss the shared sense of pride in the community and cultural identity they found through their research. These aspects were seen to be of as much value as the economic aspect. This is supported by Halewood and Hannam (2001) in their analysis of the recreation of Viking heritage sites in both the UK and Scandinavia. They found concerns about authenticity where sites are re-created away from original archaeological ones. They did also discuss the way that everyday Viking life is portrayed at these sites by re-enactment groups, the focus being more on combat. They concluded that they were a valuable contribution to understanding the wider aspects of Viking life. This gave a different perspective to that portrayed in film, which concentrates on their role as invaders.

English Heritage, along with CADW, is a major host of re-enactment events. This commitment by the host organisation to education supports what re-enactors are trying to achieve through their interpretations. Even though it may be lower on the list of priorities now, this educational remit has long been a feature of museums and historic preservation organisations. Change in what visitors expect from visits to heritage sites has prompted a

focus on live interpretation rather than static or digital information sources. Audience research showing a growing trend for outdoor events and costumed interpreters rather than just static collections (Malcolm-Davies, 2002, 2004). Interpretation is an educational activity which helps the visitor to gain meaning and understanding. This is not just of actual artefacts or reproductions of these but also of rituals and routines (Poria et al., 2009). This bridges the gaps between the written information that may be available, and the experiences that the visitor has. The 'living history' that re-enactors engage in has particular strengths in the display of how artefacts are used which makes it a very valuable educational tool (Chhabra, Healy & Sills, 2003). However, it must be seen as only one way of interpreting that history. It is one that is fraught with dilemmas as to how to represent and what to represent (Peterson, 1988). Historic sites wish to entertain as well as educate their visitors. Therefore, there is a tendency to avoid controversial topics. Although authenticity is often cited as being of prime concern, interpretations cannot be truly authentic as "many visitors would flee a faithful reproduction of historical sights and smells" (Peterson, 1988:29). As with De Groot's (2011) views on engaging discussion about ethical issues, there is a compromise to be made between what the visitors want to see, and the actual facts that surround the historical events. Telling the story of a property will usually involve a summary of the most interesting aspects which may not involve a true reflection of all the different views that are available about those facts.

Dallen and Boyd (2006) note that heritage tourism, including pilgrimage, is not a new phenomenon. Historic sites were being visited in Roman and medieval times by those who could afford to do so. They discuss the growing interest in what they term "the present day use of the past" (Dallen & Boyd, 2006:2). Specifically, the increase in heritage tourism is of significant interest to those who undertake research in tourism studies. They return to the ideas of representation within the heritage industry. They note that often the history that is portrayed is re-written to avoid sensitive subjects such as slavery, or oppression of indigenous populations. They also discuss conservation concerns relating to events. Heritage organisations want to encourage larger numbers of visitors to come to special events. This causes concerns about how that affects the physical structures that they are trying to preserve. As they explain, with funding sources being increasingly limited for heritage preservation, managers often have to turn to events such as re-enactments as a source of

income. They conclude by exploring the concern that the majority of the history portrayed is that of the nobility. There has been little attention given to the history of the working class and the poor, though do acknowledge that this is changing. Whilst there are different views about the validity of re-enactments as contributing to historical research, there is an agreement amongst those who have researched within this area (Gapps, 2002; Hunt 2004; Kalshoven, 2015; Braedder et al, 2017) that learning for both visitors and re-enactors is a key part of the practice of re-enactment groups and individuals.

It can be argued that the members of the public visiting these events are not really concerned about what they are seeing, just that they are participating in something historical that may be educational or entertaining, or to use the newer term 'edutainment'. David Lowenthal, whose seminal work 'The Past is a Different Country' (1985,2014) is often quoted by historians looking at re-enactment, gave this viewpoint in an interview around the time of the republication of his text;

I think there is a move away from authenticity to experience. There's a tremendous vogue for re-enactment, most of all in battles and things like that, but also in the everyday life of bygone times. I have just been reading about Germans, Danes and Swedes who go to great lengths to spend a week in the past. It is very much a holiday thing. You pay for ancient experience. People are not much interested in whether it is the Iron Age, or the Stone Age, it is just a generalised remote past. This is family stuff, kids are involved, getting it archaeologically or historically right doesn't matter; it is the feeling of pastness that counts. (Lowenthal 2014 cited in Edwards & Wilson 2014:108)

Whether re-enactment is just part of this 'feeling of pastness' is an interesting question. In thinking about what re-enactment is and why people participate, Agnew (2004) argues that re-enactment bridges previously quite different categories of participation between professional and amateur. She also discusses the fact that re-enactment has become

popular even in places that have no actual link to the history they are portraying. She uses the example of medieval re-enactments of the Crusades in Australia (Gapps, 2009a). She surmises that this may be due to the fact that Australian history may be seen as too sensitive to re-enact. Particularly this is due to previously mentioned issues about the marginalisation and oppression of Aboriginal peoples. Agnew refers to “medial-temporal extravaganzas” (Agnew, 2004:329) such as English Heritage’s multi period event ‘History in Action’. This ran for a number of years and included over 3000 re-enactors from periods from the Romans to World War Two. She cites discussions about the perceived purpose of re-enactments from both academics and re-enactors themselves about their roles in contributing to making history more accessible, bring it alive and making it not seem as dull as the school history taught from textbooks.

Whether re-enactment is a valid and authentic way of representing history, it exists as a hobby, a contribution to the economy and as a source of learning. The latter is true for both those who participate and those who attend. What this thesis seeks to do is to look at that learning in greater detail.

Chapter 2 reviews literature relating to the theoretical framework of communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation. Other aspects of social learning such as apprenticeships are explored. It also looks at the types of knowledge that are involved and examines the learning within these communities of practice. Chapter 3 reviews factors that may affect participation such as authenticity, gender and ethnicity. The methodology in Chapter 4 examines the choice of an ethnographic approach and the considerations of researching within a community in which I am already known. There is discussion of particular aspects of the data collection given the need for authenticity of participation and a summary of the data analysis methods used. In Chapters 5 - 6 there is an analysis of the data collected from 22 participant interviews and associated participant observations. Through my interpretation of this data I seek to define the nature of the communities of practice within re-enactment and the learning that takes place. I conclude by outlining the contribution of this study to the body of research on learning within communities of practice and reflect on the research questions, methodology and analysis methods in reaching my conclusions.

## **Chapter 2 Theoretical Frameworks**

### **Introduction**

The selection of literature for this review has been informed by the research questions which have been discussed in the previous chapter. For the medieval re-enactors who are the participants in this study, learning is key to their involvement. The knowledge and skills needed, to both make the artefacts for their roles, and to acquire the physical skills and competence to use them, is generally outside the current remit of what is offered by formal education. It is thus primarily acquired through learning within, and supported by, the re-enactment group as a community of practice.

At the start of this chapter definitions of and the role of communities of practice are also explored as a means of supporting this learning. The notion of legitimate peripheral participation is central to becoming part of a community of practice, and this is discussed as part of becoming involved in the re-enactment community. The application of communities of practice as a framework for understanding learning in a variety of situations, such as apprenticeships, has also been explored, particularly with reference to how the theory has been developed by this application. Motives for participation in terms of skill and knowledge development are examined, as well as factors affecting participation such as gender. The notion of authenticity as one of the key influences on knowledge and skill development is also explored. Finally, the role of online technologies in supporting this informal learning is discussed.

### **Communities of practice - types, definitions and structures**

Lave and Wenger's (1991) notion of communities of practice is used within this thesis as a theoretical framework to help structure analysis of what is being learnt. A community of practice is defined as "a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation to other tangential and overlapping communities of practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991:98). In their earliest work they discuss the notion that learning within the community is always situated and that this learning is not about acquiring knowledge, but knowing how

to use that knowledge (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This is particularly relevant when thinking about aspects of skill development within re-enactment. As with the workplace practices that they studied the learning cannot be looked at in isolation.

Communities of practice take many different forms and that affects how they can structure themselves and look after the knowledge that is held within them. Lave and Wenger's earlier work (1991) identified some particular types of community and the later discussions used further examples of what it meant to be in a community of practice. The importance of the community shaping the individual was recognised here and the relationships being dynamic and fluid with individuals also shaping their communities (Wenger, 1998). Identifying that there are many different forms of communities of practice means that it may be challenging to recognise them (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). In discussion of these different forms, the authors use size, time span, geographical location and a division between homogenous or heterogeneous communities, as ways of looking at the different types of groups. One of the aspects when examining re-enactment groups in this way is that they vary so much in terms of their relation to the first three of these groupings. As outlined in the introduction, groups vary in size across re-enactment generally, though within medieval re-enactment they are within the range of 10 – 100 members. In terms of time span, groups themselves may last for as many as 40 years, however membership will be fluid within that time span. Most are spread geographically, though for some this spread is nationwide, generally it will be regional with most members living within the same county.

In terms of the homogeneous and heterogeneous communities that Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, (2002) discuss, re-enactment groups fall into both categories. As the authors state "it is often easier to start a community among people with similar backgrounds, but having a problem in common is also a strong motivation for building a shared practice, even among people who share little else" (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002:25). Unlike communities that are brought together to solve a particular issue, or who work in a shared business environment, re-enactment communities are both homogeneous and heterogeneous, and that is one of their unique features. The homogeneity comes from a shared purpose. The heterogeneity is due to the very wide variety of personal and professional backgrounds,

skill, knowledge and experience that members bring to the groups. This very wide range is something that is not always found in those communities of practice that have been previously examined, due to the focus being on work based communities in many of these studies (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2003, 2004a, 2004b; Wenger, 1998; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). These communities often at least share a physical location, common organisational structures, or professional backgrounds.

Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004b) discuss these differences, particularly in relation to external factors that affect the organisation that the learning takes place in. In thinking about workplace factors, one key aspect is the purpose of the organisation, and how that might affect the learning within it. An educational organisation, such as the schools studied by Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004b), might be expected to have a different way of dealing with the knowledge held within it than a commercial organisation. Malcolm, Hodkinson and Colley's (2003) also argue that process, location and setting, purpose and content can be looked at in more detail to determine differences between a wide variety of types of learning within organisations.

In their work on how concepts within communities of practice can be applied, Barton and Tusting (2005) use ideas around language and literacy to examine how various different communities can be seen to show these concepts. Their examples cover settings such as police stations, schools and speech and language therapy departments. All of these are neither solely educational, nor commercial, but have aspects of both in terms of their focus on learning within a community and having constraints on them in respect of organisational structures and regulations. The authors talk about how becoming a member of a community involves becoming knowledgeable and skilled (Barton and Tusting, 2005). In her work on accountability literacy in different educational settings Tusting (2011) explores this further, when looking at how paperwork was used to demonstrate internal accountability. These processes of commodification of knowledge into something that may not be accessible to outsiders are discussed by Lave and Wenger (1991) where they argue that this may make the knowledge and skills somewhat devalued.

A re-enactment group is neither a commercial or and educational enterprise, although there may be considered to be elements of both within their remit and practice. The Falchion group who are part of this study describe themselves on their website as “a group of Medieval enthusiasts who enjoy portraying the 14th century through crafts, education and combat re-enactment. We aim to encourage people to learn about medieval life through practising crafts or skills associated with the time” (Falchion,2020: n.p.). Thus their educational remit is clearly stated. Though not a commercial enterprise in terms of making a profit, there is a financial element to their organisation in terms of payment for some events, however it is not a prevalent feature of the organisation, as it was with some of the communities that Wenger (1998) studied, such as the insurance company.

If there are a number of different types of communities of practice, and they can vary so widely, then it is useful to consider how they are defined, and what makes something a community of practice rather than just an indeterminate grouping. In the later work there is more specific information as to what constitutes a community of practice. Discussion in later work about whether any community could be considered a community of practice led to a clearer explanation of what actually constitutes a community of practice, rather than any other type of grouping. Wenger refers to three aspects “mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire” (Wenger, 1998:73). In thinking about re-enactment groups as an example of communities of practice, it is useful to consider each of these three dimensions separately.

Mutual engagement is concerned with the developing of a group flow, a sharing of creativity that produces better results than would happen in a sole endeavor. It is also about negotiating relationships with others ““establishing who is who, who is good at what, who knows what, who is easy or hard to get along with”” (Bryan-Kinns & Hamilton, 2012:3). This is a very important aspect of joining a group, particularly identifying where the knowledge is held within the group, who is in charge of a particular aspect and who can give you access to what it is you want to do. This mutual engagement does not necessarily have to take place in the same physical space. As mentioned previously, some of the learning in re-enactment groups may be quite solitary, to do with own role of particular skill set. However, it is happening for a sense of common purpose, and that common purpose is shared,

understood, and to a certain extent managed within the group by mutually agreed boundaries. These are aspects such as, which historical period is being portrayed, and what types of activities will take place within group events. For example, a group may decide to focus primarily on 'living history' rather than combat and have their event as a series of demonstrations of daily life and crafts, such as spinning, weaving and cookery. Other groups may focus solely on combat to the extent that they have no authentic tents and no encampment within the 'living history' sections of the events they attend. It is understanding these boundaries, that are rarely codified in the way that job roles are, that is part of the legitimate peripheral participation process which is discussed later in this chapter. Wenger also specifies a number of indicators that apply to re-enactment groups such as "mutually defining identities, shared ways of engaging in doing things together and local lore, shared stories, inside jokes and knowing laughter" (Wenger, 1998:125).

A sense of joint enterprise is perhaps more evident in most re-enactment groups than other communities of practice, such as workplace groupings. The act of putting on an event demands co-operation, and a sense of shared purpose that is often cited as a motivation for people to join groups. As volunteers it is not about being there as you have to, or because you are being paid to do so. It is about a sense of shared work for a common goal. The shared repertoire of resources is the easiest aspect to determine. As well as the shared funds of knowledge within a group there will be shared physical resources as well in the ownership of group equipment which may involve stocks of equipment for new participants to borrow.

Wenger's definition of a shared repertoire includes aspects such as "routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions or concepts" (Wenger, 1998:83) and many of these are very evident within the groups studied. Routines will be developed for particular aspects, such as the activities during a show which rely heavily on an informal 'script' where roles are played out in accordance with loosely defined parameters. There is a significant reliance on the re-enactment groups' tools to do this. This includes both the tools for practical use, such as the costumes, weapons, tent and other equipment which set the scene, but also on the interpersonal tools that the members use. The ways of doing develop over time, and with this participation and reification into the

group's story. Whether that be the narrative played out at a particular event, or the story of the history of the group, these stories become part of the group's set of resources which are passed on through oral traditions, both during public events and the after-hours conversations or discussions during training sessions. This repertoire is dynamic and can be and is modified as people leave the group and new members join, bringing with them a desire to modify or extend the stories and tools that the group share. This notion of change within a community of practice means that these communities can be seen as both continuous and discontinuous. The re-enactment groups in this study have constantly changing membership and this means that members' roles within the groups change as well. As Wenger explains "relations shift in a cascading process. Relative newcomers become relative old timers" (Wenger, 1998:90).

Another strength of community of practice as a framework for understanding what happens in re-enactment groups, is its focus on learning within social systems and the way that "we justify our actions to ourselves and to each other" (Wenger, 1998:11). Wenger contrasts this type of action with the way that many decisions within institutions have to be justified according to the rules that govern that institution. Although there are rules within re-enactment groups, they come largely from within the groups themselves, and can be easily modified by the members. If someone wishes to change role, or learn new skills they can do so, as long as they can justify that to the group within the context of the group's historical parameters they can do so. This flexibility of learning is one of the attractions of being a member of a re-enactment group, you are not told that you cannot do something because you have not completed a previous level of formal learning, but rather are encouraged to pursue your ambitions within the context of the group.

Communities of practice may be seen as organic systems that grow without being specifically created but that does not mean they do not need to be cultivated. They do not necessarily need recognition by anyone to survive, as they may be composed of a fluid and voluntary membership. However, they can and will benefit from specific aspects of cultivation (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). The analogy of plants that self-seed is used within this specific text, but it is argued that these plants still need the right conditions in which to flourish. Re-enactment communities of practice do not just appear like weeds;

they are formed in response to a specific need that is perceived by the founder members. Although in some respects they cannot be organised in the same that a business would be, they can be supported in terms of their growth by having a clear direction and elements of leadership, albeit without the same hierarchical structure of a commercial organisation. Although not registered companies there is still a financial element to group organisation. Insurance has to be purchased to cover events, and payment processed from 'employers' such as English Heritage. Some groups do also have a system of membership fees, though that is mainly to just pay for insurance rather than any additional benefits. Group bank accounts mean that there have to be nominated people who are assigned roles such as treasurer and chair even though many do not run on a formal, committee led basis.

### **Components of a community of practice**

Wenger summarises these into four components, "meaning, practice, community and identity" (Wenger, 1998:5). In later work Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder (2002) add to this in order to make the definition of what is a community of practice more explicit. In this work they describe communities of practice as being "a unique combination of three fundamental elements; a *domain* of knowledge, which defines a set of issues; a *community* of people who care about this domain; and the shared *practice* that they are developing to be effective in their domain" (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002:27). These components, as applied to the learning undertaken within participation in re-enactment, take on particular connotations. Meaning is related to how re-enactors can talk about their own abilities and experiences, attribute meanings, and show understanding through their experiences. When practice is discussed, the focus is on the shared resources and perspectives that sustain the engagement. These resources may be physical, as in the artefacts that have been created to enable the events to take place. The domain of knowledge is linked both to these artefacts, and the knowledge needed to produce them. It is also about the knowledge that the group holds of the way that events need to be organised, the interaction with the public, the constraints and demands of the physical actions that are part of the event itself.

Highly significant aspects for the purposes of this thesis are those of community and identity. Although meaning and practice are carried out within the social situations of the

group, they are often solitary pursuits, due to the particular nature of that learning, or to the constraints of meeting with others. Unlike some of the communities of practice that Wenger studied, such as workplace communities, re-enactment groups are by their nature fragmented, as mentioned previously, many not meeting face to face on a regular basis. The social aspect of this learning is by sharing it within the community, either by online interaction or by the participation in training sessions or through live events. Wenger uses the phrase “social configurations in which our enterprises are defined as worth pursuing and our participation is recognizable as competence” (Wenger, 1998:5) which is key to the social learning taking place here. The social aspects of learning in any situation also relate to the culture of that situation. When thinking about Eraut’s (2010) work on how knowledge is being learned, it is important to consider “that much uncodified cultural knowledge is acquired informally through participation in social activities” (Eraut, 2010: 263). To have your leatherwork or costume making skills recognised as not just competent, but hopefully as developing in terms of moving towards expertise, is what re-enactors desire from the community. As will be discussed later in this thesis, the role of social approval and social recognition of skills and expertise is especially significant when there is no external validation of learning available.

In discussing competence further in their later work, Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner (2014) talk about the need for this competence to involve a certain amount of accountability. They give the example of a doctor who uses their network of professional contacts, as well as their own experiences, to update competency within their field of expertise. One may argue that in re-enactment, unlike medicine, there is less updating of knowledge as there are no advances in scientific research that develop new treatments. However, there is advancement in archaeological and academic research in the field that members of groups may be expected to be aware of if they are to maintain their competence in knowledge. There are direct parallels in terms of physical competence for skills such as weapons combat, and thus the notion of being accountable for your competence is still relevant.

Identity within a community of practice manifests itself on two levels within a re-enactment group. Identity relates to oneself as a re-enactor, and the process of becoming a full

member of the group but also in developing the separate historical identity that enables full participation. Whether that is a fictionalised character, or the portrayal of a historical personage such as a king, both have, as Wenger states “personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities” (Wenger, 1998:5). Identity within the group also involves thinking about which aspects of other identities can be brought into this new identity (Fenton-O’Creedy, Dimitiadis & Scobie, 2014). This, for any new role, will be linked with how closely what you are undertaking resembles previous identities, and thus is linked to motivation for joining this new community. This new identity may mean encountering feelings of incompetence as you negotiate learning new skills and a change in your self-perception due to this. There is often an emotional intensity about this change in identity, which can leave members of a new group feeling bewildered and lacking in the skills to cope with the change (Fenton-O’Creedy, Dimitiadis & Scobie, 2014). Support may be needed in terms of mentoring from more experienced members of the new community.

In relation to the formation of identity within a community of practice Wenger identifies several different types of trajectory that can take place. He identifies “peripheral, inbound, insider, boundary and outbound trajectories” (Wenger, 1998:154) depending on whether the members become a fully participating member of the community or not. It is not within the remit of this study to discuss in detail those members of re-enactment groups who do not stay and become full members. There are those who join groups and for many reasons decide it is not for them. Of interest to this study is the re-enactment careers of those who do stay, and in particular those who become members of several groups, either sequentially or concurrently, and this is discussed further within the findings.

When thinking about the notion of joint enterprise or practice, it is important to consider what the actual role of a re-enactment group is. In one sense they are a group of people with a shared love of history, and a shared ambition to educate themselves and enjoy the output of this endeavour. Given the nature of the groups studied, it is not enough just to do all this for personal gain or that of the collective group. None of the groups in this thesis exist purely for their own entertainment. This practice of re-enactment is a very public one in terms of the outcome of the individual’s research and artefact creation.

There are also those who come to events to view their endeavours, usually paying for the privilege of doing so. Therefore, they must also have a notion of enterprise in a more commercial sense. This is albeit a limited one that is not focused on profit, as some of Wenger's early examples of communities of practice were. Groups are 'employed' by organisers such as English Heritage, although often for very little, if any financial recompense. Therefore, this joint enterprise has to involve an understanding of the needs of these organisers, and the visitors to the events. The simplistic aim 'to put on a good show' may be an easy way of defining that joint enterprise, but the actual skills needed to do that are far more complex than may first be envisaged. This links with relationships between the learning that the re-enactors undertake to enable them to participate and the learning that the visitors who watch events are experiencing. This is discussed further later on within this literature review.

Wenger does refer to this notion of employment of a community of practice when he discusses "the pervasive influence of the institution that employs them" (Wenger, 1998:79) with reference to his studies of claims adjusters. However, a re-enactment group may have four or five different 'employers' per year and these can change year on year as events are replaced by new ones. It is this aspect of inventiveness in modifying practice that is common to both re-enactment groups and to claims adjusters. Negotiation within the community of practice the way that this is achieved. Mutual accountability, (Wenger, 1998:81), is the way that the groups take responsibility for the joint enterprise. Group members have to commit to aspects such as attending the shows they have said they would, creating kit to a satisfactory standard, and engaging in all activities of the group in a manner deemed appropriate by the group.

In later work Wenger-Trayner & Wenger- Trayner (2014) also explore the idea that community of practice does not necessarily relate to a single community where knowledge resides. Rather there may be a network of communities that an individual may be a member of, either at the same time or consecutively, they use the term "a complex landscape" (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2014:15). This idea of multiple communities is a very realistic one, not only in consideration of professional fields such as education and medicine but also within communities of practice such as re-enactment groups. The flexibility of this

landscape is described thus “the composition of such a landscape is dynamic as communities arise and disappear, evolve, merge, split, compete with or complement each other, ignore or engage the other” (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2014:15). This describes the nature of the re-enactment community very accurately. There are constant changes in the number of groups that are operating each year due to mergers and splits.

A key aspect of being a member of a community of practice is the idea of belonging. Wenger identifies three different modes of belonging, namely “engagement, imagination and alignment” (Wenger, 1998:174). Engagement is characterised by negotiation of the role that the person is taking within the community, their personal trajectory and the way that their practice develops over time. Imagination is a really important aspect of becoming involved in a re-enactment community. Sometimes what you want to become, to fulfil your sense of belonging, is not already evident within the group. Wenger explains this emotively when he says “my use of the concept of imagination refers to a process of expanding our self by transcending our time and space and creating new images of the world and ourselves” (Wenger, 1998:176). This encapsulates the feelings of the potential re-enactor who first visits an event, as described by many of the participants in this study. They see a group perform in impressive costumes and armour against a castle backdrop. There is an enthusiastic audience, and rather than just staying in that audience, they want to become part of the show. They want to be that medieval princess or knight, and have that new image for themselves.

Wenger further discusses the idea of imagination as being linked to personal fantasies, and states that he is not using the term in the specific sense of something not real. However, for some of the participants in this study, becoming part of this community of practice is indeed about fulfilling childhood fantasies. Wenger uses the example “One can imagine what it was like to be a knight, but one does not necessarily adopt the code of chivalry for oneself” (Wenger, 1998:179). The people who join these communities of practice may well adopt this code, at least to govern their performances in shows at medieval events. In this way they are aligning themselves with others who do the same, and take on the expectations of the re-enactment group in terms of conduct, dress and commitment. Alignment is important as it helps to shape communities of practice. It helps to form a sense of belonging to that

community. It does take work, sometimes in thinking about how to reconcile different perspectives on aspects of the community. There are those that may conflict with specific differences between medieval life and modern life, such as the role of gender in participation. This aspect is also discussed further later within the literature review.

Wenger states that “identity is a locus of social selfhood and by the same token a locus of social power” (Wenger, 1998:207). Thus, if there is going to be a change of identity, as there inevitably is with joining a re-enactment group, there is going to be a change in both of these aspects. The social power aspect is possibly the most significant one, due to the nature of the trajectories that new members of re-enactment groups follow. No-one joins a group and plays the role of the nobility immediately, whatever their modern social status. The process of becoming a full member of the group often involves lowering social status in a very visible way. This may involve playing the role of a servant or squire “a central drive for the negotiation of meaning is the process of becoming a certain person in a social context” (Farnsworth, Kleanthous, & Wenger-Trayner, 2016:145). This social context can be very different from that normally experienced through existing work or family relationships

### **Communities of practice – use and focus**

Wenger states that his social theory of learning is not designed to replace other theories of learning but rather that it has its own focus. This is more concerned with both the social aspects of that learning and of its meaning and engagement with that learning by the participants. “There are many different kinds of learning theory. Each emphasizes different aspects of learning, and each is therefore useful for different purposes.” (Wenger, 1998:4). These different theories help us to make sense of the very different ways of looking at what knowledge is and how we come to know. The key idea is what matters in the learning and, in the case of the communities of practice within this study, this is to a large extent determined by the participants rather than an externally imposed curriculum.

This idea of the centrality of the learning to the person and their experiences is explained here “so what if we adopted a different perspective, one that placed learning in the context of our lived experience of participation in the world?” (Wenger, 1998:3). This is of particular

significance to this study. Re-enactors learn because they want to, not because they have to. In many cases this in a very different way to any previous type of learning. In this study participation is in the world of re-enactment. The lived experience being studied here is that of trying to re-create others' lives. This is done through a mixture of research about them, and practical attempts to recreate their clothes, artefacts and relationships.

Fuller (2007) discusses the way that community of practice has focussed on the role of learning as participation, rather than learning as acquisition. This focus seeks to concentrate less on the cognitive theories of learning, but rather on the social aspects of learning. This is not to say that cognitive theories do not have a place in understanding learning, but rather that they are not the only ways of doing so. She also discusses the fact that expertise in an area may rest in individuals who do not hold formal teaching qualifications. This shift from seeing knowledge as solely resting in the hands of certain, accredited, individuals, who then pass it on to others who receive it, is one of the most powerful aspects of communities of practice as a theory of learning. This is particularly true in respect to this study, where participants are unlikely to hold formal qualifications in their areas of expertise. What communities of practice does is confer legitimacy on this participatory learning process.

Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2003) explore the use of community of practice in their study of teaching in a secondary school. This they link with other participatory learning theories such as activity theory (Engeström & Kerosuo, 2007). They caution "there is a risk of seeing only the social, because the individual is subsumed within it" (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2003:4). This view is supported by Billet (2007) who writes of the need to still see the individual and their cognitive processes as a very important part of the learning process. This risk is acknowledged within this study. The individual's learning within re-enactment is so closely linked with the social aspects of this learning that participatory theories of learning offer a very valuable way of analysing this. Billet talks about "ongoing negotiations between the individual and the social throughout individuals' life histories of ontogenies" (Billet,2007:59). This is very useful way of thinking about how the multiple life histories that re-enactors may be trying to portray may work in practice. There will always be negotiation needed between the reality of people's daily lives and job roles, and the somewhat 'fantasy' elements of portrayal that re-enactment demands from its participants.

There is a very different kind of social situation in a re-enactment group than in the workplace situations, where most community of practice theory has been used. The groups studied here come together because they want to, rather than because they are all employed by the same company. They spend both more time together, in the sense that this includes extended periods of time with the same group of people over re-enactment event weekends, and less time, as this is not done on a daily basis. Therefore, there are marked differences between the relationships in these communities of practice and work based ones.

Community of practice theory has not only been used to look at employment based practice. In his own work Wenger (1998) does mention other hobbies such as music and amateur radio. What communities of practice does as a theory of learning is look beyond the explicit knowledge that can be codified and taught in more formal settings. It helps us make sense of the knowing that comes from being part of an action, that cannot be so easily specified in advance, but rather can be reflected on during and after it is taking place. Eraut's (2010) research on learning in the workplace also provides an analysis of some of the key issues that define this learning. The research framework he uses gives a useful basis for thinking about learning in relation to this study, asking the questions "what is being learned, how is it being learned and what are the factors that influence the level and directions of the learning effort?" (Eraut, 2010:247). In exploring the first of these questions he states that "both knowledge and learning can be examined from two perspectives, namely the individual and the social" (ibid:263). He suggests as does Tough (1999) that there is an important social aspect to learning but that it is more significant for the participant to have "a greater scope for individual agency" (Tough, 199:247), than the social aspects.

### **The structure of knowledge within a community of practice**

As Wenger discusses, it is often difficult to distinguish between explicit or tacit knowledge (Wenger, 1998) because the two work together during our participation. The notions of procedural and declarative knowledge as discussed by ten Berge and van Hezewijk (1999) are also relevant to this consideration of learning, declarative knowledge being knowing

'that' and procedural knowledge, knowing 'how'. Participation enables us to gain knowledge, and it is our reification of it that helps us make sense of it. This can be through the way that we explain it to others. It can also be how we codify it in terms of written documents, or other artefacts that help us make sense of what we are learning. Wenger gives the example of a painting which he says "reifies a perception of the world, an understanding. It is an expression that makes a statement and focuses our attention in specific ways" (Wenger, 1998:70). This example is particularly pertinent when thinking about the learning within a re-enactment community, with its reliance on visual rather than literary sources for much of the source material. A costume maker may use a painting as information about a new dress design. They may then discuss that painting, and its interpretation into the three dimensional garment, with other re-enactors. This participation in creating new knowledge about how to construct the garment, is built on the artists' participation in their community of practice. It involves their reification of the structure of a medieval gown in the painting. However, not everything can be made available as codified knowledge. It is often the tacit aspects of knowledge that can be most complex to codify (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). They discuss that fact that communities of practice must have an idea of whether knowledge is codifiable or not. They give examples of the how different communities use both relationships and documentation to both enhance and store knowledge that is important to the community.

Re-enactors need to use specific types of language in their learning within their community of practice. They may be studying medieval texts and manuscripts which require specialist language to be able to understand, not only the text itself, but the way it is interpreted. In acquiring competence in the various skills that they will be learning through their social relationships they will be using a different form of language. This language and this knowledge will be presented in many different forms of reification. This may be original texts, or information given to new members in the form of a handbook or costume guide.

Barton and Hamilton (2005) discuss this reification as it pertains to literacy and language and discuss the key features of "succinctness, portability, durability and focussing" (Barton and Hamilton, 2005:27). They argue that this helps distinguish between reifications and helps to make sense of how they are used by participants in a community of practice.

Spoken language is a key feature in the knowledge transfer within a community of practice such as a re-enactment group but it has little in the way of durability if not codified in some form. Visual reifications such as paintings can be imprecise and open to individual interpretation, particularly if the specific details of the painting are unknown as in many manuscript illustrations.

In thinking about the skills and knowledge gained through learning in communities of practice it is useful to also draw on Bloom's taxonomy and its revisions (Krathwohl, 2002). In particular, the two areas of cognitive and psychomotor domains. The original taxonomy has been debated as a classification of learning. However, it is useful for analysing this learning more specifically. It builds on the ideas of declarative and procedural knowledge. It also gives a structure that can be used to think about the progress of skill development. For example, in developing the skill of safe handling of a weapon in combat. In the revised taxonomy the area covered within the cognitive domain envisages knowledge as being structured in four separate areas of factual, conceptual, procedural and metacognitive knowledge (Krathwohl, 2002). These are particularly relevant divisions in this study as one of the key areas for becoming a re-enactor is knowledge of terminology which is within the factual knowledge. The actual act of making artefacts, and the skill development that is needed for this, is an aspect of procedural knowledge. Metacognitive knowledge is also important in thinking about how the re-enactors have acquired and have subsequently applied this knowledge. This asks them to display "self-knowledge" (Krathwohl, 2012:214), about their own learning which links to the ideas of grades of knowledge. The cognitive domain is one that is very closely linked to educational assessment and classroom practice. As Bolin, Khramtsova and Saarnio (2005) explain "traditional instructional practice emphasizes cognitive outcomes such as recognizing, knowing, comprehending, remembering, applying, and synthesizing information" (Bolin et al., 2005:154). This is very closely linked to the factual knowledge that re-enactors will learn such as names and dates. They will also be applying factual knowledge to artefact creation.

The psychomotor domain is usually associated with practical training that involves tools such as engineering. This uses several different types of models to assess learning, moving from recognising tools, through to basic, and eventually expert handling (Salim, Puteh &

Daud 2012). This links closely to the physical skills evident in sword combat, gunnery and archery. It can also be used to look at skills in areas such as role play, where different skills such as representation through physical actions are used (Rao & Stupans, 2012). This role play is a significant aspect of a re-enactor's role as an informal educator, particularly if they are playing a historical character. There has been no literature specifically found that evaluates the hierarchy of skills and their development in medieval re-enactment. However, as Gapps (2009b) and Hall (2016) have shown in their research, this area is a key part of re-enactment practice. This thus identifies a gap in the literature relating to how these skills are acquired. Within the psychomotor domain the original classification (Wu, Yang & Chuang, 2007) moves from the perception of a skill through to a guided response and then an overt response. This relates to the process of learning by observing from a master then gradually learning to do that task with guidance and then being able to perform that skill unaided. The affective domain is important as it relates to how the learning changes aspects of behaviour. Emotions are a central part of any learning process affecting learner's motivation and success and are considered as crucial to promoting learning (Green & Batool, 2017). Although they were writing about formal learning the same kind of importance of emotion is significant in other types of learning.

Mi (2015) in his analysis of his definitions of knowledge based on the work on Confucius and Sosa, discusses the idea of there being grades of knowing. In this it is not enough just to know something, which he assigns as first order knowledge. You also have to be aware that you know it. Importantly, you also have to be aware of things that you do not know, which he describes as second order knowledge. Mi states that "reflecting on what we are learning or what we know can raise the grade of our knowledge to a meta-level cognitive state or, simply put, to second-order knowledge" (Mi, 2015:357).

Involvement in practice has traditionally been seen to focus on observation and assimilation. However, Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that it is participation more than observation that contributes to the learning. This crucial aspect of being involved in practice, rather than merely observing it, means access to conversations which allow apprentices to explore the language of the community. Carliner (2013) identifies the importance of the situation as learning takes place in both planned and unplanned

occurrences. This is reflected in many of the situations in which learning takes place within re-enactment. Hager's (1998) discussion of the recognition of workplace learning by educational establishments illustrates some important elements about the nature of this learning. It is often unintentional; having no formal curriculum or prescribed outcomes. The learning outcomes achieved are often unpredictable. The management of such knowledge is different to formal education. Here the curriculum development process specifies in advance what is to be learned through an activity. Many workplace learning situations can be ascribed to serendipity, of being in a place where something useful or interesting is discovered unexpectedly (Hager, 1998). This means that there will need to be more emphasis on reflection of what is learnt through the event, rather than assessment of meeting pre-planned objectives. Some forms of apprenticeship, such as tailoring, move backwards through the skill set needed (Lave and Wenger, 1991), with novices taking on jobs such as the finishing of garments. The apprenticeships for aspects such as weapons combat see the novices starting with the very basics of stance, protective equipment and terminology. This everyday practice and the learning that takes place needs to be considered within the context of that community, as Lave and Wenger argue "It is not something that can be considered in isolation ..... or analysed apart from the social relations that shape legitimate peripheral participation" (Lave and Wenger, 1991:97).

### **Legitimate peripheral participation**

Legitimate peripheral participation is defined by Lave and Wenger (1991) as a process that happens when viewing learning as a situated activity. It is the way that newcomers "move toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of a community" (Lave and Wenger, 1991:29). It is a way of both ensuring that the communities themselves continue, and that their practice is sustained and developed. For Lave and Wenger (1991), this work in defining how people become part of a learning community built on earlier notions of apprenticeship. Their work on craft apprenticeship in Liberia led to a reconsideration of situated learning. This became a focus on the engagement of the individual in the process through legitimate peripheral participation. "To open up practice, peripheral participation must provide access to all three dimensions of practice: to mutual engagement with other members, to their actions and the negotiation of the enterprise, and to the repertoire in use" (Wenger,

1998:100). What is important to note is that Lave and Wenger do not suggest that there is a notion of an “illegitimate peripheral participant” (Lave and Wenger, 1991:35). Neither do they suggest that there is a central point within a community that can be identified as being reached once one has travelled from the periphery. They do suggest that there could be a consideration of “complete participation” (Lave and Wenger, 1991:36) but prefer the term “full participation” (Lave and Wenger, 1991:36) which fits more easily into the kinds of relationships that are to be found in re-enactment groups. Full participation implies that the member of the group has gained access to the repertoire of the group. They will be mutually engaged in the joint enterprise through having, in this case, control over their own role and resources.

In contrast to other theories of learning that look at learning as a process of internalising knowledge (Vygotsky,1978), Lave and Wenger argue that “participation in communities of practice concerns the whole person acting in the world” (Lave and Wenger, 1991:49). Although they are referring to acting as the process of performing actions, the word can also be used in the performative sense. It is in this way that it most closely links to the participation in a re-enactment community of practice. Playing a role is a central part of the public aspects of being a re-enactor. Learning that new role, within the partial re-creations of the medieval world that are attempted at re-enactment events, is a central part of what is achieved by being involved in the community. Factual information can be obtained through different many ways of learning. The learning needed to fully participate is about relations between participants, it is “meaning to given actors, its furnishings, and the relations of humans with/in it, are produced, reproduced and changed in the course of activity” (Lave and Wenger, 1991:51). This again draws on images of the stage, with roles taken by actors on furnished sets, which allow scenes to be played out for the audience. This is essentially what re-enactors are learning to do through their legitimate peripheral participation. They are learning how to play their parts through this involvement. Although this learning can be broken down into its constituent parts and thought of as a set of skills, knowledge, and emotions it is far more than that. It involves the whole person functioning within the community, and forming new identities through their actions.

Fuller et al (2005) have also evaluated Lave and Wenger's (1991) work on social practice, and specifically situated learning, in relation to their own studies of workplace learning. In particular, the way that they explain legitimate peripheral participation "it is the fact of becoming a member that allows participation and therefore learning to take place" (Fuller et al., 2005:51), is very relevant when analysing informal learning within re-enactment. In all groups there is a period of membership which is peripheral, while skills and knowledge are being gained to allow full participation. This does to a large extent depend on what area the skills and knowledge are being developed in, and relies heavily on access to appropriate costume.

Costume is central to identity within re-enactment and is one of the things that all re-enactors will engage in research for. Even if they do not have the skills to make all of their own garments at the start of their participation, they will need to establish who to approach for help with this, and what is appropriate for their chosen role. Miller (1998) investigated how costume linked to identity in her study of dressing for fun and fantasy. She looked at the theme of how costume can support the uniformity of identity within certain groups. She had two hundred and sixteen respondents complete her study questionnaire, of whom one hundred and twenty-two were re-enactors from various groups. The rest were members of dance groups and science fiction fan convention attendees. She also included American Civil War re-enactors in her study and, as with other research (Hunt, 2004, 2008; Turner, 1990; Gapps 2009a), her conclusions re-enforced the role of a standard costume shared by the regiments, which helped with their sense of collective identity. For those re-enactors who did not belong to groups that had a specific uniform, there were responses linked to the creation of a new identity that could be chosen and made personal by the participant. For medieval re-enactment, although there is no standard uniform for most roles, there are general types of garments worn for particular roles. The costumes that people acquire will re-inforce this new identity. This may be as a member of a particular household, nationality or social status grouping. This costume enables the re-enactor to identify themselves as belonging to this group, as well as identify other re-enactors and ascertain their identities.

With respect to legitimate peripheral participation it is not just about learning to be part of the group, in terms of knowledge acquisition it is "gaining knowledge of who knows what"

(Amin & Roberts, 2008:358), in order that the learning can be directed to relationships with that person within the community. Dreschke (2019) observed this type of relationship in her studies of German Hunnic re-enactors. In these groups new members have to undergo a two-year probationary period of sharing tents and equipment. This also involves learning from more experienced members how to create their own costume and gather artefacts. Knowledge in these situations may not be codified, as much as it may exist within individuals, and in the social context of the learning. Amin and Roberts (2008) refer to the sharing of a common language specific to that community. There both tactile and emotional bonds formed through this learning. Language, and in particular learning specific historical terms for equipment, is a key part of legitimate peripheral participation. This will affect a new participant's self-confidence within the group.

Gabriel, Renaud, and Tippin (2007) suggest that self-confidence is very linked to the idea of self – concept. They suggest that this changes depending on the relationships that we have with other people. This links in to the process of becoming part of a community of practice. Participants move from legitimate peripheral participation on first joining a re-enactment group, through to becoming a fully integrated member of the group with their own medieval persona. This involves choosing, researching and developing this other self, be it a known historical character, or one that has been created to suit the situation. Baldwin (1992) refers to these ideas of different selves as being part of “relational schemas” (Baldwin, 1992:467), which people use to navigate their way through different relationships. Within this schema there will be different types of both declarative and procedural knowledge. This involves facts about the relationship, and knowledge about how the relationship works in terms of the processes that it involves. The idea of scripts is used to describe how people will behave in certain situations. In particular, the notion of an “interpersonal script” (Baldwin 1992:468), is used to determine behavior in certain role, for example doctor and patient, or waiter and customer. This script is based upon previous knowledge of those situations. This may be supported by portrayals in popular media about expectations of these roles.

This idea of identity being linked to aspects such as heraldry is explored by Turner (1990). His research was with American Civil War re-enactment, where there are uniforms rather

than individual heraldry relating to specific people. He found that there was a similar relationship between the artefacts and the identity they conferred. In his research he refers to the re-enactor identity of his participants as a being often more meaningful than the person's real identity. He states that "the play identity transforms the re-enactor into someone else – a Civil War period personage – and at the same time someone more fully himself: a creative individual freely engaging in a personal meaningful activity" (Turner,1990:126). Participation in this kind of re-enactment is very different from medieval. Many of these re-enactors can actually determine which side their ancestors would have fought for. However, there is the same idea of freedom to create a new identity that can be intensely meaningful. He also discusses how re-enactors have a different relationship with the artefacts they own for their roles. This is one not linked to consumerism, as with those in their everyday lives, but to the relationship between their possession and their use. These objects are central in allowing the re-enactor to take on this new identity with authenticity amongst their peers. The creation of an artefact, based on research, trial and error in its development and the honing of the sewing, metal work or leatherwork skills to complete it, gives it a very different meaning to something that can easily be purchased. These artefacts are unique, intensely personal and not only handmade, but made by the hands of the user. Fenwick (2014) makes similar links between identity and action, specifically work practices and acknowledging that this can be used to support other non-work practices as well, and argues that "within these dynamics of knowing-in-practice materials act together with other elements and forces (discourses, symbols, desires, etc.) to exclude, invite, and regulate particular forms of participation, including particular forms of expertise and strategy" (Fenwick, 2014:269). Thus through this creation the re-enactor participates in both the making of the artefact and the making of the new identity.

Halewood and Hannam's (2006) research within Viking re-enactment in Europe looked at how personal identity was constructed through participation. Their study, conducted over a period of six years, included thirty semi-structured interviews with heritage managers, re-enactors and event organisers, as well as participant observations at six events. They found that social identity was a very important part of why people participated in the events. They stated that "this expression of identity is iteratively reconstructed through communication, socialisation, authenticity, consumption and regulation" (Halewood & Hannam, 2006:24).

Although some socialisation took place through internet sites via forums, the main development of identity was through participation. As with Hunt's (2004) research, they found that the after-hours socialisation once the public had left was key to this. Consumption in terms of trading was seen to be very important by the participants, especially being able to buy goods directly from the makers in the festival markets. This was felt to contribute to both the authenticity and sense of collective identity. They conclude that by establishing a collective authentic identity there is also a strong sense of emotional bonds within the community. This emotional bond between re-enactors is linked to the relationships formed, not just in participation in events but in the community. This is linked to the sense of shared purpose in undertaking the learning needed to develop roles within the group.

McAdams and McLean (2013) explore the notion of narrative identity as being important in everyday life "through narrative identity, people convey to themselves and to others who they are now, how they came to be, and where they think their lives may be going in the future" (McAdams & McLean, 2013:233). They link this to notions of people's agency to affect change in their lives, and how this may be demonstrated through status and achievements. As with real life employment, re-enactors will have re-enactment careers, and their roles and status will change depending on their length of involvement. They may take on responsibility for learning, in roles such as combat trainer, or being responsible for organising costume making events. They may develop new roles that give them a different status when in that role, in relation to other members of the group. This will change the relationships with others in terms of verbal interactions during performances, and thus developing a different sense of belonging (McAdams & McLean, 2013). Burke (2006) notes how identity changes over time in response to different work or relationship situations such as becoming a partner or a parent. In this case, they argued, identity may change slowly as the situation evolves, and thus participants have time to assimilate these changes. For a re-enactor the change may be slow, in response to the research of a new role, or quite sudden in response to changes in group membership or new forms of performance needed within group events. This can lead to a change in the power dynamics within a group.

The differences in power between different members of a community of practice can inevitably be linked to knowledge acquired and it is most certainly a case within re-enactment groups that “the power to set and relocate boundaries is unevenly distributed throughout the membership” (Fuller et al., 2005:54). Generally, longer standing members are those who have the power to allow membership to progress and to extend or deny opportunities for learning. In this respect there are links with apprenticeships and mentoring. The quality of learning can be affected by the variables in a very personalised relationship that is different to that of a class teacher with many students.

The move from legitimate to full participation is a crucial part of any re-enactor’s journey. This is different to other communities of practice, such as workplace groupings. There background knowledge and professional qualifications will give both legitimacy and knowledge about practices. In contrast most new re-enactors will have very little in the way of prior knowledge to assist them. Identity as linked to costume is a very important aspect of this, as without it participation in actual events is impossible. Without costume aspects such as training can be participated in, but this still does need a minimum level of protective equipment. Due to the very specific nature of the dress needed to take any part in public events, new re-enactors need to be assisted as quickly as possible to obtain this. As Eberle, Stegmann, and Fischer (2014) explain “for a community of practice to function, the participation of its members is crucial and the development of newcomers from passive, unknowledgeable observers to active participants is a core process” (Eberle et al., 2014:217). New re-enactors may not be totally unknowledgeable about aspects of medieval history. The key thing here is the move from passive recipients of factual knowledge about historical events, to active participants in their roles through their learning.

This legitimate peripheral participation has several elements to it. In terms of the legitimacy for a re-enactor the very act of joining a group serves to legitimise them. Re-enactment groups do not have specific entry requirements as identified in other types of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The peripheral participation in groups is often about taking over simple tasks at first, such as setting up equipment, moving towards fuller involvement once confident. This will be supported by other members of the group as needed. Thinking about legitimate participation versus non – legitimate, and peripheral

versus full participation, implies an obvious binary divide (Consalvo, Schallert & Elias, 2015). This is difficult to assess in terms of how re-enactment groups work. Unlike employment where there may be a formal probationary period, re-enactment groups will support members as required. This is initially in the form of practical help such as costume and equipment loans. This support will be extended as needed depending on personal and financial circumstances. As there is no formal end of probation, most groups would consider the legitimate peripheral participation process as a flexible one without any finite timescale. In most cases new members either become committed to the group very quickly, or find that it requires different things than they first realised, and decide to leave within a short time period. Due to the high cost of equipment it may be a few years until a member actually owns all of the things that they need for full involvement in events. Therefore, from a practical aspect they may still be feeling peripheral for some time as compared to other members with more access to funds.

### **Accessing communities of practice**

Access to a community of practice is not without its issues. For example, there is a wealth of discourse that may be specific to the group. This can be difficult for a novice to understand without specific explanation from more experienced members or masters. Lave and Wenger (1991) focus specifically on this in their analysis of how relationships between the groups that they studied. They give examples from diverse situations such as recovering alcoholics and spirit mediums. They term this process “learning to speak” (Lave and Wenger, 1991:106. They give examples of how the specialist terminology gives validity to the new members of the group, even though it may not have a direct effect on their practice. Knowing the names of all of the different types of weapons may give a new re-enactor confidence. However, this declarative knowledge (ten Berge and van Hezewijk, 1999) is only a small aspect of what they need to know. It may however improve their confidence and sense of belonging.

Within re-enactment groups this can be additionally problematic due to the knowledge of context that may be needed, in addition to the knowledge of the particular skills that are being learned. As Lave and Wenger state “thus, understanding the technology of practice is

more than learning to use tools; it is a way to connect with the history of the practice and to participate more directly in its cultural life” (Lave and Wenger, 1991:101). This quote again is worthy of analysis of how the language used has two meanings when thinking about its application to re-enactment groups. When thinking about the history of the practice there is the history of the re-enactment group itself, and the history of that particular tool or practice in a medieval history sense. Thus the re-enactment group may have made a decision to focus on a particular period of history, and then a particular aspect of that, such as the portrayal of a specific household. That group history will affect how the group works together as a community, who they work for, which artefacts they create. They are also underpinning this practical work with research into how this practice, these aspects of cultural life were actually present in 1317 or 1469.

Lave and Wenger (1991) discuss these aspects in terms of the transparency of the knowledge that is available to the learners. Artefacts used within a group can be made more transparent by additional information about its history and its purpose. For more experienced members it can sometimes be hard to judge the amount of information the new member needs at that time. Does someone need a complete history of the development of armour before being taught which protective equipment they should obtain first? Is an extensive knowledge of medieval undergarments essential before borrowing costume to wear at a first event? The notions of control and selection (Lave and Wenger, 1991) are very important here, who controls the information or access to artefacts, and on what basis is that information or equipment selected to be shared with new members? It is important that new members of a community are given access to enable them to participate, but not to be overwhelmed by information so as they feel unable to participate.

The importance of stories as a way of conveying this additional information is emphasised by Lave and Wenger (1991). More experienced members of communities can use storytelling to illustrate past situations where they have solved problems. Newcomers at first listening to these stories can gradually add their own as they have their own experiences. As they explain “for newcomers then the purpose is not to learn *from* talk as a substitute for legitimate peripheral participation; it is to learn *to* talk as a key to legitimate

peripheral participation” (Lave and Wenger, 1991:109). Within re-enactment groups this is experienced as having your own costume making fails to talk about, and your own ‘war stories’ from battles experienced. Dabbagh and Kitsantas (2012) state that what is often important in the learning is “observation, trial and error, asking for help, conversing with others, listening to stories, reflecting on a day's events “(Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012:4). These stories have also been valued in other types of communities of practice, such as the business based ones explored by Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, (2002). Here the collective knowledge obtained over a long period of time about processes related to aspects such as car manufacture, can be modified through the telling and retelling of stories that relate to different aspects of the problems solved. It can be difficult to manage this knowledge though, as they explain “it is not an object that can be stored, owned and moved around like a piece of equipment or a document. It resides in the skills, understanding and relationships of its members” (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002:11).

### **The links between communities of practice and apprenticeships**

Lave and Wenger's (1991) research involved a variety of different types of apprenticeship such as the work of midwives and tailors. They discuss these relationships, and the variability of the formal and more informal partnerships that contribute to legitimate access to the community of practice. In some cases, such as tailors, apprentices must be formally sponsored by a master, in others the relationships are based more around family ties. As well as the relationship between master and apprentice, Lave and Wenger (1991) also identify the importance of relationships between other apprentices for learning. As they argue “the practice of the community creates the potential “curriculum” in the broadest sense – that which may be learned by newcomers with legitimate peripheral access” (Lave and Wenger, 1991:93). This is also true of re-enactment groups, there are usually one or more ‘apprentices’ undertaking their training at any time and there is a strong focus on the practice itself.

The guilds of the medieval period were one of the first formalisations of communities of practice (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002) and they maintained their influence until the Industrial Revolution. The skills that are gained by modern re-enactors through the

learning that they undertake are in many cases those that would have been taught in the medieval era through an apprenticeship. The medieval apprenticeship offered a very different learning situation to that of a traditional classroom. This section of the review seeks to give an overview of this type of social learning. It seeks to make links between the historical role of apprenticeships and how apprenticeship type relationships may support learning within the communities of practice present in re-enactment groups.

Master and apprentice relationships were an important factor in the learning of skills in the medieval period. Apprentices were employed in many different trades, some examples of which are weaving, armoury, pewter work and glove making. Many of them travelled to larger cities to take up apprenticeships. This partly influenced the need for an apprentice to live with the master and his family. People were often apprenticed outside kinship links and paternal trades (Ashley & Clark, 2001; Minns & Wallis, 2012). This had an influence on social and economic change. Wallis (2008) estimates that up to ten per cent of the non-agricultural workforce (both male and female) was apprenticed at any one time. Epstein refers to pre-industrial apprenticeships as being needed to “iron out initial differences in skills among children and socialize adolescents into adulthood” (Epstein, 1998:690). Many authors (Carus-Wilson, 1941,1959; Thrupp, 1962, 1966; Minns & Wallis, 2012; Oldland , 2014; Soly, 2008) have contextualised the growth of medieval apprenticeships in a time of great social and economic change. This was influenced not by globalisation and recession as our current policies are, but by the influence of war and diseases such as the Black Death which caused population decline and then shift. The average age of starting an apprenticeship was 14, though there have been records for apprentices as young as seven (Thrupp, 1962).

Thus there was also an element of social control in the relationship “the master was not only an employer, but also a substitute father” (De Munck, 2010:337). Masters were members of guilds. These also had a wider role in controlling the flow of labour by limiting numbers of apprentices per master. Richardson (2004, 2005), Stabel (2004), Ogilvie (2007) and Crombie (2011) all found that the guilds had both economic and social functions. They were also involved in the maintenance of product quality and technological transfer. Thus the apprenticeship system not only affected the commercial life of medieval England, but

also its social and structure. It also had a significant impact on geographical mobility. The re-enactment community does perform this function in terms of product quality and technological transfer. The production of artefacts within, and between, groups is to an extent controlled by the groups themselves. This is particularly in terms of quality assurance of what is produced by members. Although there is no direct impact on social and geographical structure the re-enactment community has had some impact on aspects of the economy. For example, the supply of high quality linen available for costumes. Since there is a high demand for this at events one of the traders has been working directly with mills in Ireland commissioning fabric to be woven specifically for re-enactors.

A standard medieval apprenticeship was seven years long, once this finished the person would become a journeyman. This allowed them to work for any master at daily rate of pay. It is unclear from the literature if this term applied to both males and females, however it is evident from the literature that there were female apprentices (Bednarski & Courtemanche, 2009). The journeyman would be expected to be geographically mobile, journeying to find work. This may have prevented as many women as men doing this, due to restrictions on female roles that would prevent mobility. Eventually, if successful, a journeyman could become a master himself and able to take on apprentices. The transition from apprentice to journeyman and then to master would involve the creation of a 'master piece' to demonstrate the skills acquired during that time (De Munck, 2010). The medieval master was a vocational teacher, passing on his or her skills directly to a small number of apprentices, often assisted by the journeymen in the larger workshops. In terms of how apprenticeship relationships may work within re-enactment groups, there is a structure to the learning of skills such as combat, costume and armour making which draws parallels with this idea of a close and personal level of direct teaching.

Marchand (2008) suggests that apprenticeship itself was not standardised in the earlier periods of its occurrence but designed to react to prevailing economic and social conditions. Knoop and Jones (1932) have evidenced regulations for certain trades such as masons being established from the early 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards. However, it was not until the 1563 Statute of Apprentices was passed that standardisation of apprenticeships and guild membership were enforced. This piece of legislation is therefore one of the earliest examples of

government reform of vocational education. The 1563 Statute of Apprentices was repealed in 1814. Fuller and Unwin (2009) have explored the way that apprenticeships were used in the 1970s and 1980s and concluded that there has never again been the same kind of regulation, leading to a very varied vocational sector in the UK.

De Munck (2010), in his studies of sixteenth to seventeenth century apprenticeships, suggests that they were socially inclusive, being available to many young people. He cites evidence of a small registration fee as one of the things that made it an accessible route. However, there is the question of differences in apprenticeship by gender. The literature shows that although female apprenticeships were not unknown in the 1400s, they were not as prevalent as those for males. Bednarski and Courtemanche's (2009) study of the town of Manosque in Provence found no records within the 1461 documentation of female apprentices. They conclude from their review of similar records from other European cities, that only around ten percent of apprentices were female. Those female apprentices were in female occupations including retail and clothing, the male occupations listed being those such as blacksmith, tanner and cobbler. Within this study consideration has been given to the choices that participants had about the skill and knowledge areas they have developed. This has been discussed in relation to their gender. Despite equality legislation being in existence for more than forty years, there are still gendered choices throughout education and apprenticeships (Fuller, Beck & Unwin, 2005). This may be reflected in the opportunities available for skills development in certain re-enactment areas for both genders. Parker's (2006) study of the apprenticeships at an English football club gives a useful parallel to the central role of combat within many re-enactment groups. There are similarities between the debates around participation by women in professional football, and women in re-enactment roles. As he states "viewed either in terms of occupational or social characteristics, professional football is a strictly gendered affair" (Parker, 2006:691).

Wolek and Klinger's (1998) work in analysing the components of apprenticeship distinguish between the "know-what and the know-how" (Wolek & Klinger, 1998:51). There are clear links to the ideas of declarative and procedural knowledge. They discuss the idea that much of the know-how that is an identifiable feature of learning within an apprenticeship is unspoken. They describe a classic model of apprenticeship. Through observation the

apprentice learns what they need to know to make a piece of work, initially with flaws. After feedback from the master, and repetition of the manufacture, the pieces would gradually improve. This is very pertinent to my study as re-enactors will often discuss how initially they created resources with flaws. More experienced members would then point this out to them, importantly not just identifying an error but giving advice on how to correct it.

This description from their paper, though talking about weaving, could be applied to many areas of learning within re-enactment, such as sword combat.

Initially most of the apprentice's time is spent observing the weaver. The usual method of teaching is to have the apprentice observe an action numerous times and then the apprentice tries the action under the supervision of the teacher. The teacher corrects errors by instructing the apprentice to change hand position or to observe the teacher's hand position. (Wolek & Klinger, 1998:52)

This tacit learning relies on visual performance by the master. This visual learning is further explored in other analyses of apprenticeships (Collins, Brown & Holum, 1991; Senapathi, 2011) with the role of the master displaying two key components. The first is modelling the task, with the master making the components of the task specifically visible. Then the master will be scaffolding the support that is given to allow the apprentice to achieve the task components. This scaffolding support will gradually be faded away as the apprentice gains confidence. Tacit knowledge is that which is derived from direct experience of a situation. A skilled master will be able to analyse their own practice. They will be able to pass on that knowledge through the modelling and scaffolding process. There may also be explicit knowledge that the master possesses, that which they have written down and codified in the form of training manuals. This modelling and scaffolding is a key component in the learning of practical skills within re-enactment, such as sword combat, archery and textile preparation skills.

Some of what re-enactors need to build confidence for may be linked to the roles that they undertake talking to members of the public. The physical combat side of the events has more in common with sporting participation. The training regimes and actual combat are similar to both one - on - one situations as in martial arts, and team sports such as rugby. Vealey (2018) discusses this aspect of confidence building as part of an athlete's training. He also notes the vulnerability of this confidence. He links it again to ideas of successful performance but emphasises its fragility. He suggests ways that training can be used to overcome these, in the same way that it is used to develop physical strength. He suggests that focus needs to be given to "developmental, preparatory, and performance confidence" (Vealey, 2018:3). Developmental confidence he links to personal philosophy about what is possible, which he links to Dweck's (2017) ideas of growth mindset. It is also about coping with failure. Preparatory confidence links to the start of the event season. This is more directly associated with strategies for team building and support for and from others. This learning will take place within the training regimes. It will consist of rehearsal of not just the physical aspects of the combat, but also of the interpersonal skills and communication needed for the role playing that is involved. Performance confidence is linked with the endurance and resilience needed for the actual event. This is very closely allied to physical strength, stamina, and the confidence in knowing that you can complete the performance of sustained combat without injury to self or others.

Guile and Young (2011) use Lave and Wenger's (1991) work on the collective nature of learning, alongside the idea of the structuring of learning within the apprenticeship, to share a social perspective on this theory. They also discuss the idea of communities of practice being supported by new technologies to enable extending the community beyond physical boundaries. The concept of apprenticeships is now well established, though less of a familiar route for young people than it once was. The idea of on the job training is experienced by many people, the role of a master one that is a well-established way of learning "go to most places in the world and people will understand the meaning of this model of learning" (Fuller & Unwin, 2009:261). Apprenticeships are now seen as a way of gaining skills for such diverse sectors of employment such as lawyers, journalists, plumbers and chefs.

Guile and Young's (2011) exploration of apprenticeships as a social theory of learning describes the process as "observation, assimilation and emulation" (Guile & Young, 2011:176). They argue that apprenticeships have often been seen as not being underpinned by any explicit theory of learning. They note that sometimes learning within apprenticeships does not involve any direct transmission of knowledge from master to apprentice. It is rather solely concerned with watching a master as role model and replicating that work. They found that the situation varied depending on the type of apprenticeship being undertaken. Many were very knowledge intensive rather than just skill based. They stress that rather than seeing apprenticeships as being very different to formal learning there are many similarities, such as the theory of a zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). Since much of the learning through re-enactment is by observation and then replication it is important to analyse the observation itself. It needs to be seen as more than just watching as the public might do. It needs to include the ability to translate what is seen by the re-enactor into something that can be assimilated and then emulated.

### **The application of communities of practice to research**

Communities of practice as a way of understanding learning has been used for a number of different areas of social research such as teacher education, nursing vocational education and gender studies (Farnsworth et al, 2016; Andrew, Tolson & Ferguson, 2008; Morley, 2016). The key themes of these pieces of research are the application of the idea that "learning takes place through our participation in multiple social practices, practices which are formed through pursuing any kind of enterprise over time" (Farnsworth et al, 2016:140). Tough's (1999) early work on informal learning and Knowles' (2012) work on adult learning, both first published in the late 1970s, identified the fact that most learning takes place outside formal educational environments. This work on communities of practice has enabled professionals to think in different ways about how learning takes place in their own contexts. The purpose of this kind of social theory is not to validate something as true, but rather to guide the researchers and enable them to construct a narrative about what is happening in that situation.

Through the application of terms such as “negotiation of meaning, practice, community, identity and competence” (Farnsworth et al, 2016:142) the theory helps researchers to understand what they are seeing happen. These are important areas to be able to consider in this study as participants negotiate their way through their new identities as re-enactors within the communities they have joined. They become familiar with group practices, and become competent with the various skills that are required of them in their new roles. It is not just about re-enactors’ own roles within the groups that this theory can be used to analyse, it is also about what Wenger-Trayner refers to as “knowledgeability” (Farnsworth et al, 2016:142). This is about knowing other things about the community of practice that you are not competent in. This is a very important aspect of the practical aspects of the work that is needed to put on an event. Re-enactors needing to know something about each other’s roles in order to be able to support the group as a whole.

In seeking to understand the links between education or training and the world of work, communities of practice theory has been used to explore work-based learning in the form of placements or work experience. The contribution of this for enhancing students’ readiness for employment was the subject of a small – scale case study of higher education in sport and recreation undertaken by Fleming & Haigh (2018). The study focused specifically on the interaction of the students, their academic supervisors, and workplace mentors in negotiating the learning needed for the roles. In particular, the professional interactions needed were a focus of the research. One of the key findings of the study was about communication. As they explained “for successful workplace learning, they needed to understand the professional behaviours and language that were appropriate for the environment they were in, and if necessary, adapt their own” (Fleming & Haigh, 2018:402). This supported the academic knowledge that they had gained through their university studies, and this live experience was essential in helping them understand the role.

Sternszus and Cruess (2016) suggest that what is needed in addition to the observation of practice is reflection on learning. This acknowledges the conscious processes that may be needed to make the unconscious learning more understandable. They argue that when linked with the use of experienced practitioners from an established community of practice, this may produce very powerful learning. Within the re-enactment community there are

particular individuals, and groups, who are used as both positive and negative role models in terms of both standards and conduct. The expectation is that more experienced members of the groups will act as role models for the facets of behaviour that are difficult to explain in abstract. This may be areas such as relations between members of the group during performances and interaction with the public. This is a very important aspect of the social learning within re-enactment groups. It is not enough to have knowledge; you need to be able to explain that knowledge to members of the public. Developing those skills can only be done with the support of the community of practice at live events.

In her case study of a bilingual co-worker in a speech and language therapy service in a UK hospital Martin (2005) examined the three dimensions of mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire in respect of the community within the hospital department. She identified the issues relating to the understanding of a shared repertoire for the bilingual worker who is not trained as a speech therapist themselves. They need to learn the technical language that is being used by their colleagues, and then translate it for service users. Within re-enactment groups there is also a need for extensive technical language to be acquired by new members. It then sometimes needs to be 'translated' for the general public in an interpretation that takes place in the public facing elements of the events.

Language was also a focus of a research project by Hall (2017). This used communities of practice as one of the theoretical frameworks in a study of teacher training sited in an HE in FE context. Here the elements of master and apprentice relationship that are contained within communities of practice work was felt to work well with the trainee / mentor relationships that characterise these courses of study. This study used a useful visualisation of the community of practice described here.

"If a community of practice is thought of as a circle, and any interactions as being contained within that circle, then the placement of the interaction can be anywhere from the edge (identified as legitimate peripheral participation) for a 'novice' to locations moving closer to the centre as their expertise grows" (Hall, 2017:123)

A key part of moving to the centre of this circle in a teaching context is not only understanding the language. It is also being aware of issues of power and hierarchy is the use of that language. The language observed in use throughout the study showed that, although the master and apprentice model may be one that is assumed within the relationship between teachers and trainees, there are other factors. There was also an understanding that “it was not merely about having an impact on an ‘individual’, but also on all parties involved in these conversations” (Hall, 2017:130). In this way the masters would learn from their apprentices in a more collaborative manner. The study concluded that whilst communities of practice theories provided a useful framework for analysis, there may be other frameworks such as ecological learning systems that also provided a way of analysing the relationships.

A further study of teacher training placements by Johnston (2016) used communities of practice as the theoretical framework to look at the issues surrounding placements that were not successful. This research focused particularly on the ideas of legitimate peripheral participation by the trainees. The original ideas around legitimate peripheral participation ultimately end in full participation, moving to the centre of that circle. This can be interpreted differently within a short term teaching practice placement. Here it is not expected that the trainee will ever achieve full participation. What he found in his research was that where problems occurred it was often as a result of this “guest status as temporary visitors who had a limited amount of time to get up to speed in making sense of important community practices” (Johnston,2016:539). The teachers in his study were often too busy to be able to spend extended time with their trainees and this hampered their movement within the circle of practice.

This idea of only being temporary, of not having full access to the practices is common in many situations. Within re-enactment groups is not only linked with not yet having the skills to fully participate, but also initially lacking the equipment to do so. Johnston’s (2016) study contributes to the field of research by extending the original ideas of a newcomer to the community of practice. In discussing the particular issues of the temporary newcomer whose inclusion was time limited from the start a new aspect is considered. He proposes that being able to develop that all important shared identity, which is one of the features of

a successful community of practice, is difficult when placement students are always going to be the time limited, peripheral, person within the organisation.

For Cuddapah & Clayton, (2011) the value of communities of practice as a theory lies in its ability to help understand the complexity of relationships. Their study looked at a support scheme for new teachers. One of the drawbacks of this application of communities of practice theory to their study was that their groups comprised solely of novice teachers. Thus the ideas of legitimate peripheral participation were not as useful. They were not looking at the established communities that these teachers were working in, as much as the new teachers themselves. For this thesis, although there are a number of new participants, there is a wider range of experience amongst the participants. Therefore, exploring legitimate peripheral participation is a very useful way of examining how these newer re-enactors are being supported by more experienced members. Interestingly their work did look at identity, and found that to be a significant part of the idea of becoming a teacher, particularly in terms of conflict between teacher and non-teacher identity.

Communities of practice theory has also been used to look at power relations within organisations. In an ethnographic study of creative practice within a design firm, Contu (2014) used the theory to develop understanding of the way that this practice was developed and mentored. There was a particular focus within the study of how the organisation operates with the potentially conflicting demands of “art and commerce, management and craft and passion and business” (Contu, 2014:312). Although, as mentioned previously, re-enactment groups are not business and they do not have to make a profit. However, there are still potentially the same areas of conflict between what members might want to do as an individuals and what their ‘employers’ such as the heritage organisations might wish of them.

Communities of practice theory does not apply to all social groups though, there needs to be an idea of a “social process of negotiating competence in a domain over time” (Farnsworth et al, 2016:143). Therefore, groups that do not share a common purpose for learning will not fit the theory. Other critiques of the theory such as Hodkinson & Hodkinson (2004a) discuss the difficulties in defining communities of practice, particularly when they

are distributed. Although individual re-enactors will have their own domains of expertise, the overall domain of medieval history, and the attempted re-creation of aspects of medieval life, mean that community of practice theories can be applied to them as a way of understanding the learning within them.

In their study of four departments in a school using communities of practice as a theoretical tool Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004b) propose that the terminology used, both by Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) may need further defining depending on the type of community being studied. They argue that “situated learning, or learning as social participation, are better terms than communities of practice to capture the underlying essence of Lave and Wenger’s (1991) theoretical approach” (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2004b:30). They suggest that the term communities of practice should only be used for the “narrower, more cohesive types of social relations” (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2004b:30), such as those that were in Lave and Wenger’s original studies. In the case of re-enactment groups in this study, although they are often very geographically distributed, the fact that they identify themselves as a community, a defined group with an identity, means that the theory can be used.

Boud and Middleton’s (2003) work took a slightly different approach from other studies in looking at four distinct workgroups within an educational organisation. With a focus on both academic and administrative areas of the organisation the research was able to capture particular features of each group, particularly the reification used for each group. Of particular interest in this research was the social dynamics within these well-established communities. There was a strong focus from the participants of how an understanding of both the internal and the external relationships that affected the workgroups was very important to their efficient functioning. They found that “negotiating the political” (Boud and Middleton, 2003:198) was key to being able to function successfully. With acknowledgement of the complex landscape of re-enactment groups previously discussed this is also something that new participants to re-enactment have to be aware of. It is often assumed knowledge within groups and thus can be difficult for new re-enactors to be aware of.

Smith, Hayes, & Shea's (2017) work was a review of the use of communities of practice in online and blended learning research, showing that this framework can be applied to both physical and virtual communities. The sixty research articles that they reviewed, which were published between 2000 and 2014, showed widespread use of the framework, with forty - one of the articles using it extensively. Many of the studies were seeking evidence of a community of practice within the research, and of these a significant number were concerned with the temporal elements. This was for both the forming of the community of practice, and the time taken to become a legitimate participant. A particularly interesting aspect of this research relating to this thesis was in looking at how the online communities supported the interaction, and whether than enhanced or detracted from the community. Their conclusions were that additional research was needed in this area to take account of the effects of the technology, in particular that concerned with participation that was meaningful online, rather than cursory.

Amin and Robert's (2008) review of over three hundred papers published between 2001 and 2007 discussing communities of practice resulted in the development of a typology of different sorts of communities. These were namely "task/craft based, professional, epistemic/highly creative and virtual" (Amin & Roberts, 2008:356). These four groups within the typology have different focuses on the types of knowledge that they use. The task/craft based typologies are linked to the development of aesthetic and kinesthetic awareness and skills. Their groupings were concerned more with face to face interaction, and the passing on of skills which may otherwise be lost. Most of what re-enactors will do as informal learning away from the public fits into the first category of task / craft based. There are elements of the professional groupings in the focus on research and shared knowledge. As this is not linked to paid employment, re-enactment groups cannot really be considered as professional groups in this respect. Epistemic/highly creative communities are those which exist to develop new ideas and solve problems. Within the re-enactment community there are groupings which exist to organise particular events. These comprise of members of different individual groups. These share some of the features of epistemic groups, however these tend to be longstanding, rather than the shorter lived epistemic groups in their research. There are also virtual communities of re-enactors through social media which cover particular skillsets and interests such as medieval furniture making.

Early studies of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) also focused on practical skills. These were learnt by newcomers through apprentice relationships with more experienced members of the community. For Amin and Roberts (2008) task / craft based communities are seen as primarily concerned with making sure that existing knowledge is not lost. This is particularly relevant for traditional crafts that have declined in availability within formal education. This is very closely linked to some of the aspects that re-enactment groups portray, such as textile preparation and herbalism. Amin and Roberts (2008) see innovation within this group as incremental. It is more concerned with changing and refining the process rather than altering the end product. This again is very relevant as the goal of re-enactment groups is not to change the end products in any way. This may not be the most efficient or practical way of tackling that particular task or function. The goal is the reproduction of these artefacts to look as authentic as possible, rather than innovation in design.

Andrew, Tolson and Ferguson (2008) discuss two different ways of looking at situated learning. The first looking at this from a constructionist viewpoint, concerned with activities within a specific context in either school or work based learning. The second, and more relevant to this study “an anthropological one” (Andrew et al., 2008:246), looking at learning from participation in a social network. They argue that knowledge within a community of practice needs to be managed as an asset. The importance of the products of the knowledge of a community, such as tools or documents should be seen by the community. They suggest that “knowledge generated from informal learning is often not acknowledged, valued or exploited within organisations” (ibid:248), and thus can be lost when the membership of the community of practice changes. This is a significant aspect of the informal learning that takes place within a re-enactment group. As well as loss of the physical objects that they have access to through changes in group membership, there can be loss of knowledge. There is often no consistent management of this change.

The notion of change over time within a community of practice is very relevant to this study. As Eckert and Wenger explain “a community of practice can be defined as an ongoing collective negotiation of a regime of competence, which is neither static nor fully explicit”

(Eckert & Wenger, 2005:583). Membership of re-enactment groups, as with other communities of practice such as employment based groups, is fluid. Group membership is often not formalised by the payment of membership fees, or any formal acknowledgement such as membership documentation. As this is a hobby rather than employment, flexibility of commitment to the group is also encouraged to take account of varying personal circumstances. Andrew et al. (2008) suggest that the sustainability of this knowledge depends on dissemination of practice which will help new communities of practice.

However, if this is learning with no mechanism for the type of codification which exists within formal academic learning, such as the publication of books and journals, then how is this achieved? Much of the knowledge that relates to skills derived from the original medieval tradespeople which are used today in re-enactment was oral rather than written knowledge. This is not available to us today as it was not recorded at the time. Often re-enactors will use visual interpretations such as manuscripts to try and gain that knowledge. However, these can be very limited as they do not give any instructional detail. Parker (2006) returns to the central question of knowledge transfer during learning and again uses Lave and Wenger's (1991) social theory of learning to explore "situated learning – learning which takes place as a function of the context, culture and locale in which it occurs" (Parker,2006:690). Within his study of how young men learn to become professional footballers his interest is not only in the learning of the skills of becoming a footballer, but also in how the young men come to understand the "dominant norms and values" (ibid:690) that are relevant in any community of practice. It is these norms and values that are unlikely to be codified within re-enactment communities. This relies on shared understanding of appropriate behaviour. This can be specific to a particular group depending on what sort of roles they portray and who they work for.

In his examination of the contribution of community of practice theory to research, Denscombe (2008) suggests that it needs to be considered carefully in the way that knowledge is discussed within the theory. He argues that the importance of practice based knowledge, and situated learning, might be elevated "above more abstract, propositional forms of knowledge of the kind associated with academic theory and university research work" (Denscombe, 2008:277). In the case of this study the academic research into

medieval life is specifically excluded as a source of primary data. Although there are re-enactors who use this work as part of their research, the participants within this study are not themselves undertaking research through their re-enactment. It is specifically the practice based and situated learning that is important here. Communities of practice as a theory of learning allows exploration of this in ways that other learning theories may not. Storberg-Walker (2008) argues that what is needed is an applied theory that can be used and adapted. She argues that the multiple definitions of community of practice and how they have been used make it unclear as what learning processes are actually being explained.

The notion of communities of practice has been contested by some authors. Kupferberg (2004, cited in Andrew et al., 2008) argues that professional identity often starts to form before someone enters a community of practice. Thus notions of community of practice are too narrow to describe how someone learns to become. He argues that there is no evidence that communities of practice assist in motivating people to develop within their careers. He states that additional extrinsic motivation is often needed. This may relate to structural factors outside the scope of a community of practice. As this study is not looking at professional development, or standard career development, this can only be linked to the medieval 'careers' of the more experienced research participants. Unless someone joins a group as an experienced re-enactor they are unlikely to have an identity as a re-enactor beforehand. Therefore, their assimilation into the group will be very different to that of an experienced person joining a work community.

Probst and Borzillo (2008) rightly identify that sometimes communities of practice do not work successfully and offer one explanation as to why. "Practice intangibility occurs when members fail to engage with one another in a way that allows them to illustrate the practice to make it concrete enough for other members to understand and visualize its function" (Probst & Borzillo, 2008:343). This is particularly relevant in re-enactment groups where the practice has not been codified in the form of a members' handbook. In this case the rationale for the practice may be unknown or not fully rationalised. The notion of communities of practice has also been described as incomplete (Fuller & Unwin, 2003), due to its lack of acknowledgement of how communities work with new members who are not

novices. This is true in the case of experienced re-enactors. There are also issues around how formal learning within communities of practice is not recognised. However, many writers still value the perspective that communities of practice give in understanding learning. Within this study it is a framework that allows re-enactment groups to be considered as not just friendship groupings, but those with a particular purpose in supporting the learning of re-enactment practice.

### **Chapter 3 A Review of other relevant literature**

In this section important aspects outlined in the introduction are reviewed with respect to literature that supports discussion. These explore, firstly, the role of re-enactment within the heritage industry as educators. Participation within re-enactment is influenced by many different factors. One of the most important, both for the heritage industry and for individual re-enactors is that of authenticity. This is very closely linked to aspects such as gender and ethnicity, and how these relate to the 21<sup>st</sup> century portrayal of medieval life.

#### **Factors affecting participation within re-enactment**

This section of the review looks at some of the factors affecting motivation to join a re-enactment group, and how those have been explored within other research. This is an important area as it explores how motivation may affect the skills and knowledge gained through the learning. Factors affecting participation in this learning, such as gender and ethnicity, are also discussed.

One of the aspects of re-enactment that often attracts questions from the public is why participation is undertaken. Miller (1998) summarises this in her opening questions relating to the previously mentioned study. This looked at why various types of costume are worn by people in a range of hobbies, including re-enactment. She asks “what motivates a person to dress in wool clothing in the heat of the summer? What motivates a person to re-enact an event when the outcome is well-known and documented?” (Miller, 1998:35). Within re-enactment the same events are attended year on year by the same participants with known consequences. This indicates that it is not the outcome of the events that is important, but the process of getting to that outcome which is the motivation for attendance. Within her research motive is explained in many different ways. One of these is that participants may be looking for the chance to escape everyday reality. This she links to Roach-Higgin’s and Eicher’s (1992) ideas of self and identity. They discuss the way that identity is very closely linked to dress. It is the way that this outward appearance signifies status within a community. In her earlier work Eicher (1981) categorises identity into three different types of the self, which she refers to as the public, intimate, and secret selves. She refers to the

secret self as the one that might engage in fantasy dress, either in private or on occasions where fancy dress is the norm such as parties, masquerade balls and Halloween.

Re-enactment gives the opportunity for multiple 'fancy dress' opportunities with like-minded individuals. This is within a particular timeframe, and may well be linked to childhood dreams of playing out knights and princess roles. Miller (1998) uses these ideas and proposes that costume wearing such as that within reenactments may be linked to a number of reasons. As well as allowing the participants to play out fantasy roles not normally associated with adulthood, it may also be linked to gender stereotypes around dress. She poses the question "are boys and girls socialized differently where dress is concerned and if so how does this socialization affect later adult fantastic socialization (e.g. reenactment costuming)?" (Miller, 1998:39). It is certainly the case that male re-enactor costume for the medieval period allows a large amount of flamboyance. There is the opportunity to wear material and fashion that may appeal to those that are constrained by everyday adult dress. Miller concludes by stating:

Just to imagine how life was 200 years ago takes imagination and creative effort, and attempts to appreciate how it was in all aspects of life 200 years ago by actually living it takes a tremendous amount of time and energy. (Miller, 1998:51)

For re-enactors a central feature of their participation is this time and energy spent. This is particularly around gaining the skills and knowledge that they need to be able to take part fully in this actual living. Dreschke (2019) describes it thus "the term re-enactment has come to describe an approach to history that not only draws on imagination but also on practical experience gained first hand in real space, bringing into play real bodies and things" (Dreschke, 2019:34). He analyses this practical experience that takes place during weekends and evenings, both 'off season', and during the summer when re-enactors are actively participating in shows. He states that this may consist of hand stitching garments to wear, repairing medieval armour damaged in battle, cooking an evening meal over an open fire, and discussing the best ways of making new costume. Turner (1990) also talks about these items as being very important to the re-enactor's role "tactile, sensual, aesthetic, the

material culture of reenacting persuades the experiencing body of the reenactor that he can participate in the Civil War” (Turner, 1990:125).

Gapps (2009b) describes a number of skills he has developed as a re-enactor. These encompass skills such as making leather shoes based on archaeological finds and hand sewing tunics. This is partly as a response to the cost of buying all he needed for his different roles and periods. In acquiring the range of armour, weapons, tents and furniture he needed, buying ready - made was prohibitive. Therefore, the majority of items will be made by the participants themselves, with only very specialised things bought from traders. Hall (2016) also identifies a genuine sense of satisfaction in this, one that maybe people don't get from their paid employment. He proposes that this is another reason that may motivate people to join the hobby. As he states “reenactors make personal use of history to satisfy, inspire, or challenge themselves” (Hall, 2016:414). This concept of the personal use of history is a very interesting one. Re-enactors choose which aspects of history they want to concentrate on, which skills they wish to develop. Thus they can choose to focus primarily on social history, religious, military or domestic. They can follow historical interests and set themselves targets for personal development. This may be very specific such as understanding how to spin wool to make a garment as it would have been done in 1340.

There are also social aspects to re-enactment. Hunt (2004) discusses this aspect of motivation in his study of American Civil War re-enactors in the UK. Of the ninety-six re-enactors that completed questionnaires in his study, forty-six percent stated motivations that linked to these social aspects. A further thirty-one percent linked their motivation to education or historical scholarship. In particular, he talks about the importance of comradeship stating “it is difficult to over-estimate this feature, especially for male re-enactors. Masculine identity through militaristic activities is a strong dimension to male bonding in a temporary setting cut off from everyday life and the outside world” (Hunt, 2004:398). This is particularly linked in his study to mutual dependence, as evidenced in the military drills and battle combat, but also in practical aspects such as sharing tasks like putting up tents and cooking.

The social aspects his participants relate also link to the after-hours entertainment when the public have left. These feature traditional storytelling, reflection on the day's events, discussion of history and equipment relevant to participation. Hunt (2004) uses Goffman's (1961, cited in Hunt 2004) ideas of front stage and back stage to describe the two aspects of a re-enactors' life. He links the back stage, after – hours, parts of re-enactment as being vital in forming these close relationships. There is a sense from his respondents of a very significant bond with other participants, as exemplified by this quote from one re-enactor "it's my family. I am a single man but this all makes up for what I haven't got" (Hunt, 2004:399). Turner (1990) describes the camps in his similar study as giving a feeling of belonging, albeit in a very romanticised way, where there is freedom to express creativity and identity with people who share values like your own. Re-enactment gives you a chance to share your learning with others. Those who are equally as fascinated by aspects of the development of the hand gun, or the use of fabric colour to denote social status as you are.

### **Exploring notions of authenticity**

Concern about authenticity is one of the key aspects of learning within re-enactment. This links to the role of the communities of practice. They are vital in this learning of how to support the authenticity of reproduction of artefacts and purchases of equipment. This learning about what is, and what is not acceptable, for the time period is a central part of the learning that is undertaken by the re-enactor. Gapps (2009b) discusses the different levels of authenticity within American Civil War re-enactment. He found that groups used particular terms to describe the progression from being a novice to becoming fully authentic. The groups he researched accepted the fact that it would take time to perfect skills. There would be time needed to achieve a level of competence in sourcing and making costume which met the standards of authenticity demanded. This meant that participation by new members was often supported by loaning of clothing and equipment until they could obtain their own. Different groups did also have differing perceptions of what is acceptable. Gapps (2009b) and Hunt (2008) both discuss the differences in perceived authenticity between Union and Confederate regiments. The Confederate army uniform changed throughout the conflict, and the soldiers often scavenged from the dead of both armies. Therefore, there was a perception amongst some of the participants that those who

were not as concerned about authenticity, or who were not willing to spend the time to make or source standard costume, would often join that side as it was easier.

Dreschke (2019) also discusses the difference in standards of authenticity in her exploration of the creation of Hunnic camps in Germany. Many of the participants in her research were happy with equipment that looked authentic from a distance. They were not concerned about total accuracy, just the perception that it was accurate. Their learning was not as much concerned with reproducing artefacts, as in being able to know what was acceptable within the camps by being mentored by other more experienced re-enactors. Despite the concerns from re-enactors about being as authentic as possible, Cook (2004) highlights the impossible task of truly becoming authentic despite this careful attention to detail. Even if a person has reproduced the costume as well as can be done given the limitations of materials available, and their own time and skills, there is the question of mindset. He cites the example of participants on a re-enactment of Captain Cook's voyage to Australia undertaken by a group of scientists and historians. They were denied the usual eight pints of ale, or half a pint of rum per day, on health and safety ground. They also smuggled sweets on board to provide relief from a diet of hard tack biscuits and mouldy fruit. He concludes by stating that the voyage was as much a story about engaging with history, as it was about the actual history, and this may be true for all re-enactors. Certainly the focus on authenticity in most re-enactment camps does not extend to the prohibition of luxuries such as chocolate and mobile phones. These items are present, but kept well out of sight of the public.

Carnegie and McCabe (2008) explored themes relating to the making of artefacts in their study of authenticity. They concluded that the re-enactors recreated objects but also looked to interpret them. This was in thinking about the social purpose and cultural attitudes related to that object, and the individuals that would use it. They found that they invested a large amount of time, research, money and effort into developing authentic reproductions. Their study quoted people who had not only hand sewed every stitch, but also dyed the material and leather, and made the tools used to create the items. Kalshoven (2015) refers to this as a sensual relationship and also talks about the importance of experience based practices in both creating and using the object. His research was with people who recreate costume and artefacts for representing North American Indian culture in Europe. This is an

interesting addition to the debates around authenticity as there were never any of the tribes that these groups portray living in Europe. Therefore, the whole premise of the re-enactment is not based on authenticity.

The term authenticity has been discussed as a major concern for re-enactors in their learning in a number of pieces of work (Cook, 2004; Gapps, 2009b; Hunt, 2008). Lowenthal (1985) argues that true authenticity is impossible given the lack of knowledge about everyday practices that has been recorded. Instead he proposes that the term verisimilitude be used to denote reproductions that are as near as possible to the original given current information. Handler and Saxton (1988) refer to two different aspects of authenticity. The first pertains to a perfect simulation of an object or event, and second relates to having an authentic experience. This links to what the re-enactor is trying to do in his role during an event. As an informal educator they will engage the public with their interpretation of how it feels to wear heavy armour, or be hit by a sword. Handler and Saxton (1988) discuss the fact that what a re-enactor will experience making their own leg armour, based on manuscript drawings and effigy research, is one aspect of this. Experiencing the protection that the armour gives when a blow to the leg is given during a tournament is another aspect. They conclude that neither will be perfect as often interpretation has to be made based on lack of evidence or authentic materials. There is also the fact that the weapons used are not sharp as they would have been due to health and safety concerns. They suggest that the terminology used for such situations should be simulation rather than replica. Braedder et al (2017) also discuss this reflection on authenticity. Their research showed that the re-enactors they communicated with were well aware that they are only creating approximations. They describe their views here “studies of reenactment from the actors’ perspective show that the almost fetishistic preoccupation with authenticity is accompanied by self-reflection as well as self-irony” (Braedder et al, 2017:173). They also refer to Bruner’s (1994) distinction between things that have been made to look like the original item, and those that are exactly like it. In most cases they surmise that this is impossible to achieve due to the availability of materials. For example, hand woven linen from flax grown by the weaver does exist. It is not used by the majority of re-enactors who could not afford it, and would find it difficult to source.

Bruner (1994) also discusses the question of authority in who decides what is authentic, given that groups rarely have professional historians within their membership. In terms of authority there is rarely a single source on what is authentic in a group. Groups will have more experienced members who can advise new participants. Anyone can produce evidence for something they wish to create and have that accepted, as long as the group feels this is valid evidence. This leads to differences between what is considered acceptably authentic by different groups because they may have used different sources. Halewood and Hannam (2006) cite examples of rules from the organisers of the Viking festivals they studied. These mainly related to the restrictions on use of non-authentic items such as “all food must be served on typical Viking plates. No modern packages of any kind and no beer-cans” (Halewood & Hannam, 2006:28). They did also see evidence of sale goods at festivals being checked for authenticity by designated members of the re-enactment societies.

Braedder et al (2017) also stress that the credibility of an artefact constructed by a re-enactor must cover two aspects. The source used must be a credible one, and the finished object must work when worn or used. They argue that this linking of source material with functionality is crucial. This involves making, wearing and testing out garments and armour. This is often to try and decide on things that were probably used in the period, but of which no evidence survives. These include things such as the additional straps and fastenings that have rotted away on archeological finds. These cannot often be seen on paintings and manuscript drawings of the period. They recognise that often there is no evidence as things were not recorded. This is particularly true of those concerned with the garments of the poorer sectors of medieval society. It also includes minor domestic details such as handling hot pans when cooking over an open fire. They also state that re-enactors also need to keep an open mind when new sources come to light.

Magelssen (2004), in his discussion of the Plimouth Plantation Living History Museum in the USA, also suggests that visitors to historical re-enactments must show collusion in believing that these environments are authentically recreated. He draws parallels with theatre performance suggesting that the audience for a re-enactment needs to react in the same way a theatre audience would. They need to show belief in the staged authenticity, knowing that it is actually recreated rather than truly authentic. Pirker (2011) also discusses

authenticity with respect to language. French was used as the language of court for most of the medieval period. There was a very different version of English spoken by those outside the royal circles. Since re-enactors need to communicate with the public they generally use standard English. This means that they often use very different terms to that which their characters would have used. Therefore, there are compromises that are made during events to enable participation from the visitors to be accessible. This accessibility is also important for re-enactors and this next section discusses two important aspects that link to authenticity.

### **Gender, ethnicity and participation**

Hunt (2004) found in his previously mentioned study that only eight percent of his American Civil War re-enactors were women. These participants were in the main portraying traditionally female roles such as nurses and camp followers. In his later paper using the same research (Hunt 2008) he cites the example of the Tennessee Sewers. These are a group of women who knit and crochet items for the troops and he uses them as an example of this traditional and peripheral role. He suggests that in the case of this particular type of re-enactment it may be about “playing out aggressive masculine roles through military activity” (Hunt, 2008:466), and that this mainly male re-enactment environment is a response to changing male roles in society. He suggests that the re-enactment groups might seek to marginalise the role of women deliberately, as well as being justified by being historically accurate. Tivers (2002), in her study of four different types of heritage interpretation, argues that stereotypical female roles should be discussed with the public at events. She suggests that it is part of the re-enactors’ role to raise this debate. This issue of gender and participation was also supported by Turner (1990) who described women in marginal roles in his study of American Civil War re-enactment in the USA. There were some women taking part in combat in both studies. However, this was seen as problematic by many members as there was little documented evidence of women being actually involved in battles. It was therefore stated as evidence of inauthenticity by that particular regiment.

Modern re-enactment of conflicts where there were clearly racial issues, such as the American Civil War, raise questions about participation from the diverse populations that

exist in the UK and USA today. This issue is explored by Hunt (2004) in his study of the American Civil War re-enactors in the UK. He noted that they have very few black participants. The explanations that he was given were that it is not that there were no black soldiers fighting in the war but that the regiments were segregated along racial lines. This actually happened historically after the period the group was re-enacting and therefore was used as a rationale for lack of participation. As Hunt states “black membership creates problems of authenticity” (Hunt, 2004:396). Turner (1990) supports this in his study of American Civil War re-enactment in the USA. He highlights the fact that he only encountered one black person in his study on the Confederate side. This re-enactor was playing the historically documented role of a general’s slave. He questioned the motivation for someone to play a role that appeared to support the subjugation of the black population. Turner also noted the lack of spectators from diverse backgrounds and concluded “the hobby is largely a white affair” (Turner 1990:129).

Clearly these observations have to be seen with the context of the timeframe of the research, as well as diversity concerns. A more recent source from Magelssen and Justice-Malloy (2011) also discuss this lack of diversity in terms of whose voices are being left out of the history. They cite the examples of re-interpretation of events in the USA that would have had slave involvement that do not include that perspective. They suggest that by omission of certain groups or demonisation of others re-enactment can contribute to misunderstandings. These may be about the role of different groups in history, and affect understanding the contribution of diverse populations to that history. Ethnicity and participation in medieval re-enactment was not discussed in any of the literature that was reviewed, however similar participation rates have been noted during this research. There are also issues of lack of diversity in the members of the public attending events in the UK and this is something that English Heritage and National Trust amongst other organisations are working to change (de Bruin, 2014; Waterton and Watson, 2015). This may be to do with a sense that the history on offer does not relate to personal heritage.

The notion that migrants to a country would not necessarily want to engage with history which was not part of their personal family heritage has been explored by Roppola, Packer, Uzzell, and Ballantyne (2019). Their research was into the views of immigrant visitors to an

Australian museum commemorating the role of the nation in WW2. Their study found that reasons given for coming to the exhibits was to gain a sense of their new national identity, and that this type of activity helped with this. This was exemplified by a quote from one of the participants in their study about visiting with his children “because neither my wife nor I are Australian, it’s important that they grow up as Australians, they understand their heritage and so on” (Roppola, Packer, Uzzell, and Ballantyne, 2019:8). For their participants it was not as important that they were not reflected in the actual material in the museum, as the sense of belonging that it gave to them in their new country. One of the reasons often given for lack of diversity in re-enactment participation is the key issue of authenticity as discussed in the previous section. This is something that is very pertinent to other current debates in society about social exclusion and the way that history and heritage is presented. It is not within the scope of this study to discuss this, but these remain issues that need further exploration.

### **Specific aspects of social learning – confidence, self - confidence and identity**

Identity is something that is very pertinent when discussing the way that social learning takes place within these communities of practice. As mentioned in the previous section, this may relate to ideas of national identity or belonging. They also relate to personal identity, confidence, and self-confidence in the roles that re-enactors learn to develop through their participation in their communities.

Perry (2011) in her discussion of the development of confidence and self confidence in nursing defines it thus “self-confidence is simply a self-perceived measure of one's belief in one's own abilities, dependent upon contextual background and setting” (Perry, 2011:219). She proposes that there is a confidence cycle that is affected by aspects such as external factors affecting successful performance and internal ones such as the physical and emotional state of the learner. Abraham (2004) links the concept of self-confidence with emotional awareness and says that these two areas, along with self-assessment help to develop the ability to feel as if you can succeed. She stresses the importance of belief that you can succeed in a task and suggests that those with greater level of belief are more likely to accept challenges in the workplace. Eun (2018) also supports this suggesting that this is a

very strong influence on performance, it does not guarantee success as there can be other social factors that impede this but is seen to be very significant.

Pfitzner-Eden (2016), studying a similar professional area in work with pre-service teachers, emphasised the idea that this confidence develops through having successful mastery episodes which can lead either to success or failure. She emphasises the role of feedback through mentoring, and how it forms a central part of public facing roles such as teaching. Teachers need the ability to apply their knowledge in flexible ways appropriate to a situation rather than in the same fixed manner each time. The same is true for the re-enactors in this study as they often act as educators for the public.

Mikula (2015) talks about the notion of identity in her research undertaken about a re-enactment of the evacuation of people during the Second World War in Finland, in particular the idea of identifying with the evacuees. In this re-enactment give more contextual information some of the original evacuees do take part in the event so there is the opportunity for the others taking part to discuss experiences and emotions directly with people who have participated. Clearly this cannot be the case with medieval re-enactment, although in some cases participants do choose to portray characters who they have connections with, either through family history or geographical location. In these cases, identity can be developed through research into genealogy, using local archival sources and for some re-enactors this forms a central part of their learning. Heraldic information is available for most family names as well as contextual information about the meaning of heraldic symbols. This visual identity is only one part of developing a role, albeit a very important one, given heraldry's prominence in the medieval era.

There is a considerable amount of specific terminology within medieval re-enactment that is part of the knowledge that is explained to the public. The knowledge of this terminology serves to further contribute to a re-enactor's identity. A re-enactment group can be defined as a discourse community using Swales' (1990) characteristics. He talks about members having discourse expertise. He mentions mechanisms of intercommunication between members of the community, and specific lexis that is used. De Groot (2006) describes the re-enactor as both familiar in that they talk to you, but because of their different dress in some

way very much not as expected. As well as practical skills, he maintains that it is very important that they have this knowledge of how to interact. This will involve being able to reflect on and codify their knowledge and their process of skill acquisition. They will then need to be able to share it with the public. He suggests that this needs to form part of becoming a re-enactor, and thus is very much linked to the move from peripheral to full participation. Gapps (2009a), when writing about his own research with re-enactors, states that this description of clothing and equipment is done in great detail because of this intimate knowledge of the process. He talks of re-enactors being concerned with the very minute details of their costume. This is often to the extent that they will include items not normally visible, such as the contents of pockets, so that visitors can have a complete sense of the artefacts. These skills of communication and public interaction form a key part of the learning at events and it is only by experiencing different types of events and interaction that this skill development can be undertaken.

One of the most valuable aspects of this live interpretation is that it can be tailored to an audience in ways that static information cannot “interpretation’s main failing is that it rarely differentiates between different visitor types” (Malcolm-Davies, 2002:37). The re-enactor’s role as an interpreter is to tailor their communication to these different types of audience. Their identity, although only assumed for the duration of the event, helps in that communication. Although their artefacts will be reproductions, some of them personally made, their location is often genuine. This is usually in a ruined form, necessitating the recreation of spaces in which to conduct the interpretation. This is an area that demands skill and knowledge development from the re-enactor, particularly in light of the wide variety of audiences at an event. Re-enactors will need to be aware of the fact that “visitors have different educational backgrounds, different levels of information need, different preferences for ways of accessing information; there is no single ‘right’ communication technique.” (MacDonald & Alford, 1995:139). Visitors will engage in both cognitive and affective learning at these locations. It is the affective domain that can be most enhanced by the re-enactor’s interaction with them.

There are other factors which influence this learning at heritage sites (Light 1995). The visitor’s motivation for the trip, level of interest in, and background knowledge of, the

history associated with the site will affect how they want to interact with the re-enactor (Beeho & Prentice, 1997). This will also impact on how the knowledge that the re-enactor has is communicated to them. Light's (1995:140) model of how these factors affect communication emphasise the importance of understanding the visitors, in order to promote effective learning. The re-enactor has to use their identity as their chosen character effectively to promote understanding. This is challenging for the re-enactor when there may only be a very short time in which to present the display or talk to what can be a large audience. The value of these events as educational experiences may be seen as limited due to these constraints. However, Light's (1996) research showed that rather than being seen as more focused on entertainment, the re-enactments were not seen as less educational by visitors than other forms of interpretation. He found that the majority of visitors had learnt something. He concludes "clearly people can learn something from an event which has an emphasis on visual spectacle and entertainment, although what is actually learnt will probably be different in nature from that resulting from use of the site's permanent interpretive media" (Light, 1996:189). The re-enactors can work in conjunction with other sources of information to provide this learning in a variety of ways.

### **The role of technology in supporting learning**

Discussions amongst re-enactors about authenticity form a large part of both the off – season learning. This is a central part of developing new artefacts and equipment and the face to face interaction during events. Although much of this does not involve technology, there has been a shift towards using this to share knowledge and support learning. This will be discussed in this final section of the review.

The earlier work on learning by Tough (1999) took place in an age where gaining knowledge relied mainly on physical access to books, artefacts or individuals with the required knowledge. It is therefore very relevant for this study to discuss the literature relating to the use of technologies. Learning within re-enactment can be extensively supported by access to digitised resources and social media. In discussion of the nature of learning, research has shown how access to specialist knowledge through internet sources has aided particular

groups. This has been linked with giving them the confidence to be able to talk to professionals in the field. Dabbagh and Kitsantas (2012) talk about “learning on demand” (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012:3), in their discussion of how higher education students create personal learning environments. These learners bring together learning management systems provided by their institutions, and social media such as blogs, wikis and twitter feeds. They use online knowledge management systems to co-ordinate the various knowledge feeds. They argue that, despite attempts by institutions to provide online learning through centrally provided systems, learning is richer when the student has responsibility for the control and organisation of the knowledge themselves. They can bring together multiple sources and blend their learning, again linking back to Tough’s (1999) ideas of learner control. This control of learning, be it through digital or non-digital sources is a central feature of the re-enactor’s learning. Access to higher education resources through publicly accessible digitised databases, for resources such as manuscripts, is an important part of the learning that they undertake.

Dabbagh and Kitsantas (2012) also discuss the central feature of online identity as being important in these personalised learning environments. Unlike the institutional systems where identity is fixed, this online identity when using social media can be shaped by the participant. This helps them to build relationships, which can also affect who they share information with. Song and Lee (2014) specifically evaluated the impact of Web 2.0 technologies on informal learning websites. They analysed a sample of two hundred and eighty-seven sites within their study. This research had an emphasis on how the significant features of Web 2.0 allowed users to collaborate to create content. This was in contrast to just accessing the mainly static content of Web 1.0. The topics of these sites were not specified, so it is not known if the content would directly relate to the skills and knowledge that re-enactors would share. However, the websites had access to the same features as those analysed within this study. The central change with Web 2.0 is the idea that expertise can be shared easily and quickly by tools built into these platforms. It is this idea of community within online learning, which they characterise as an “online participatory culture” (Song & Lee, 2014:512). This is an important concept and links to previously discussed notions of communities of practice. They also discuss the importance of

knowledge management in online sources. This is achieved through tagging and categorising by the contributors themselves, rather than by administrators of the source.

Heo and Lee (2013) used Engstrom's (Engeström & Kerosuo, 2007) notion of activity systems to explore how adults used web sources such as blogs for learning. They refer to learning within practice communities, linking with Wenger's (1998) work. They argue that web based informal learning has both an information sharing, and a social perspective. The majority of the users in their study formed relationships through their use of blogs. They identify three dimensions of learning through engagement with Web 2.0 activities. These are, acquiring information, which is mainly a passive activity; reflecting and making meaning from that knowledge; and engaging in a community with social benefits. Heo and Lee's (2013) research supports Song and Lee's (2014) view of web based informal learning as being about participation, rather than mere assimilation of knowledge. This participation is what Valencia-Garcia et al. (2012) refer to as collective intelligence held by a group. This is as opposed to the knowledge of a single person or text source. They also discuss the validity of information from web sources such as blogs. They acknowledge the difficulties of finding accurate and relevant information within the large amount of published work on the internet. This is particularly relevant when seeking information which relates to historical accuracy. They suggest that the use of knowledge management systems, such as web specific ontologies and semantic annotation software, would assist users in sorting and cataloguing relevant information, and in suggesting valid sources.

Park, Yeo and Lee (2011) studied the effectiveness of using blogs for informal learning and also emphasise the reflective nature of this learning. Respondents specifically mentioned improvements in their ability to reflect on learning and to manage knowledge acquisition. They argue that blogs may have a particular value as each author can contribute their own perspective on a topic, thus the reader is thus exposed to multiple views. Whilst this may pose questions of validity, which were also expressed by many respondents, it means that a much wider range of information can be obtained than through formal taught study with access to a limited number of reference sources.

In their semantic analysis of the value of this type of learning to the participants the self-directed nature of learning was seen as a key advantage, again echoing the themes from Tough's (1999) work forty years earlier. Participants also highlighted the active nature of their learning, rather than what they saw as the passive nature of formal schooling. Park et al. (2011) see the use of blogs as making learning more motivating for users. This can be more enriching and fulfilling for a variety of reasons. It may also be linked to the use of multimedia within blogs, such as video and audio through podcasts, which may be more accessible ways for some people to learn. Thus web sources of learning can offer benefits in terms of the availability of information and the ability to use others' and own reflections to analyse knowledge gained. Participants in this type of learning do recognise issues of validity. The credibility of the blog authors may be a concern with some types of knowledge. For re-enactors, authenticity of knowledge is such a key issue that this aspect of social media will potentially not be used as fully, as it might be in other types of learning.

## **Conclusion**

The review of literature has shown an extensive body of work looking at communities of practice as a model of learning. There is also wealth of material looking at social aspects of learning within apprenticeships. Motivation for participation in re-enactment also involves looking at some of the challenges in terms of who participates, in which roles and how that links to the key aspect of authenticity.

What this study has sought to do is to use these ideas and apply them to the under-researched area of learning within re-enactment. In reviewing the literature for this thesis it has become apparent that there is a limited amount of writing and research into what is learnt through participation in re-enactment. Within the sources used for this review there have been few that mention medieval re-enactment specifically. Sometimes this is only as an example of a type of re-enactment and not about events within the UK where this research is based. There is also often a lack of distinction, particularly in the sources on living history, between costumed volunteers who only work at one property such as a National Trust house, paid historical interpreters at properties and re-enactors who are participating as a hobby. Therefore, literature has been used relating to other eras of re-

enactment such as American Civil War (Hall, 2016) which has been extensively written about. There is also use of literature about Australian exploration celebrations from the 1950s (Gapps 2002,2009a,2009b) and Viking re-enactment (Halewood & Hannam, 2001, 2006). Though this may compromise the information that can be used as a starting point similar themes have been looked for within all of the literature. These are skills and knowledge gained by participation, motivation for participation, learning within re-enactment, and its links with historical research and authenticity.

Although the literature on communities of practice is extensive, it looks at very different communities than the ones within this study. Most of the research has been done within work-based learning. Many have a focus on the places where the participants are located in physical spaces that represent their occupation. These offer stabilities in some respects in terms of the facilities and spaces for interaction. This is not the case with re-enactment communities. By their nature they move from location to location between events, and in most cases do not have a physical base at all, unlike other clubs and societies. The membership of the different re-enactment groups does however have a parallel with the composition and dynamics of a workplace environment. Membership does tend to be stable due to the amount of time and money invested in the acquisition of equipment. People tend to leave within the first year or stay for a very long time. Therefore, the work on relationships within these settings is particularly relevant for this study. This literature review has helped to inform both the methods used and the content of the specific research strategies as discussed in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 4 Methodology**

A review of the theoretical frameworks that were required for the study led to consideration of different types of epistemologies and ontologies and in this section there is discussion of the choice of these for this research. When deciding on the data collection methods to be used in this study there was an evaluation of the methods that were used in the re-enactment research previously discussed, as well as thought about the most appropriate ones for this particular research situation.

### **The choice of research epistemology and ontology**

The epistemological basis for the research was that of an ethnographic approach. In thinking about how to determine how the communities of practice worked, I was conscious that all research can only attempt to interpret this, that there can be “understanding of that world only through a process of describing constituent properties of an entity” (Slevitch, 2011:77). The world of re-enactment contains many constituent properties, of which re-enactors themselves are only one part. Arguably, they may be considered as the most important part, but they interact with a large number of other aspects. Some of these relate to the heritage industry, its properties and employees, as well as the public that attend the events. The particular aspects that I wish to research are more personal to the participants themselves. They relate to the artefacts that they have produced, the displays they take part in and the social relations within the learning community that enable these. Thus an ethnographic approach, with its focus on qualitative methods, was felt to be the most appropriate choice.

In choosing this approach I seek to make meaning about re-enactment in a way that “results typically in a written representation of cultural understandings held by others – meanings about work, about careers, about life – that are closely tied to a specific context and always provisional and partial” (Van Maanen, 2015:40). Social learning takes place within a specific culture (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and my research seeks to codify particular aspects of this. Specifically, the learning and the relationships that support that, which needs to become a written representation of the nature of this learning. The meanings that my participants

make of their learning is explored, not as it pertains to work or to careers but about the “serious leisure” (Hunt, 2004:289) that they devote large amounts of their lives to.

At this point it is also useful to focus on what culture is and how it can be identified in order to be studied. Van Maanen defines culture in very specific terms here and links the nature of culture to ethnography.

Culture simply refers to the meanings and practices produced, sustained, and altered through interaction, and ethnography is the study and representation of culture as used by particular people, in particular places, at particular times. More important perhaps is not what culture is ..... but what culture does. (Van Maanen, 2011:221)

In this study there is a focus, not specifically on the culture of re-enactment itself, but on the community of practice aspects within it. It is therefore, a focus in what the culture is doing in aiding this learning. In thinking about the specific context that re-enactment takes place in, there are aspects which relate to the physical and geographical in terms of locations of events. There are also aspects that relate to the affective domain in thinking about participation. Ethnographical methods have been used to study many different cultures. As re-enactment has its own culture, this means that there are links between previous studies and this one. As with many intensive, socially based hobbies, relationships develop that can be likened to those within close family, work - based or cultural groups and ethnography seeks to document the “culture, perspectives and practices of the people in these worlds” (Reeves, Kuper & Hodges, 2008:1). The experience of putting on armour on a hot July afternoon, to take part in a battle re-enactment with 1500 other participants, is a unique one that is very different to everyday work or leisure practices. Ethnographic approaches offer the tools to capture this, “ethnography’s lens is that of lived experience” (Gubium & Holstein, 2002:85). This living is a central part of the participation, with re-enactors often describing themselves as ‘living historians’. As Van Maanen says “it is an interpretive craft, focused more on ‘how’ and ‘why’ than on ‘how much’ or ‘how many’” (Van Maanen, 2011:219). This is important as though I have collected some limited quantitative data such

as date of starting participation and sizes of groups I am focusing on how people learn the skills and acquire the knowledge needed. This is rather than how many years they have been participating. Therefore, the interpretive nature of ethnography fits well with my data.

One of the advantages of this kind of approach that was significant for the study, was the idea that this would leave opportunities for the research to evolve as it was being undertaken. Although I had been a re-enactor for some time before the start of the research, I was conscious that I had not experienced all aspects of the community. Thus I needed an approach which would give me flexibility. As Van Maanen explains here;

Ethnography is improvisational, not procedural. It is path-dependent because we learn more about the subjectivity and intentionality of those we encounter in the field after our work is begun and, the longer we are at it, the more we learn about what we need to learn next. (Van Maanen, 2015:401)

This flexibility was important, although some decisions were made that set certain aspects of the research as fixed. The interview questions remained the same over the whole research period. However, there was the opportunity afforded by the ethnographic approach to vary things such as the sample.

Ethnography allows a focus on social interactions. The prime mode of learning how to become a re-enactor is through these interactions. There is a substantial amount of reading, for example from historical texts, that can be done by re-enactors about the knowledge areas in this study. This is important learning, so that declarative knowledge can support other types of knowledge needed for interaction with the public. Ultimately though, re-enactment is something that has to be lived rather than read about. It is dynamic and evolving and changes through interactions. This means that ethnography is a useful methodology for this study as it has a focus on people rather than things. Although ethnography usually “focuses on people’s ordinary activities in naturally occurring settings” (Brewer, 2000:20), within for example a workplace or family environment, it can be used for other aspects of interaction such the ones in re-enactment. The setting is undoubtedly

artificially created. However, the participants are acting as if it is their natural environment. They are participating in this 'living history' and attempting to portray the ordinary activities of spinning wool, or mending armour, in their encampments with a pretence of reality.

Ethnography can thus be considered as a descriptive science (Shaffir, 1999; Sleigh, 2005). It is suggested that the emphasis should be on the practical side of the research with sustained contact with the target group being seen of value during the research. This time for ethnography has to be allocated, and this can be problematic in research. Van Maanen (2011) talks of ethnographers going "beyond their ivory towers of employment, libraries, classrooms, and offices to 'live with and live like' someone else" (Van Maanen, 2011:219) In my case, time was already devoted to this hobby and fieldwork was thus fitted into the already planned attendance at the events. Not all events I attended during the research period were used. Rather some were selected as I knew they would give access to different aspects of the participants' roles. I was fortunate to be able to arrange this sustained contact over the two years of my data collection period. Although there was interviewing and observing for only part of each event, I was fully immersed in the events each year of my research, both in data collection, analysis and writing up phases.

Experiences within ethnography are variable. The approach used needs to be adjusted to a particular setting. One of the considerations with this type of research is that there is full participation in the events with authenticity. My participation was already known, and my role as a fellow re-enactor clear to my participants. This meant that I could be present with not only authenticity as a researcher, but authenticity in my role. This aided my interviews and participant observations. There were still considerations about how these were carried out which, is discussed further within this chapter. It is often assumed that ethnography and interviewing are always carried out together (Jerlmack, 2014), but that does not have to be the case. When seeking to understand human behaviour, the primary approach is often to observe that behaviour over a number of situations. One can then use deductive approaches to make sense of it. These observations can be either as an outside observer, or as a participatory observer. It is also important to try and think about what you need to find out, to the extent of often imagining that you know nothing about causes of this behaviour as Rook suggests.

The ethnographer must in this sense be sometimes a little naive by design, so becoming the outsider who does not quite understand what is going on, asking for information which everyone either knows already or does not wish to probe. (Rook, 2001:27)

To do this it was necessary to think about the situations I was observing, in some cases as a total outsider would. This was particularly relevant when looking at legitimate peripheral participation, and how new re-enactors would view certain things that experienced ones would take for granted. This reflexivity meant that I needed to consider how my experiences might be affecting what I was seeing.

Ethnography is only one of the possible methodologies that I could have chosen for my study. Other qualitative methodologies such as phenomenology, narrative or case studies could also have been used. They each have their own advantages and disadvantages for the researcher, and as such have to be evaluated before and after use. In making decisions about my own methodologies I have considered the research that I have reviewed. I have looked at the methodologies and data collection methods that they have used. This has been done to determine if there are any aspects of their evaluation which is useful for this work. Braedder et al. (2017), in their study of different types of re-enactment, used empirical field study. They looked specifically at the viewpoints of the practitioners about authenticity, rather than any of the institutions that host events. Hall (2016) in his study of American Civil War re-enactors, used an ethnographic approach with in depth interviews with a small number of participants. Hunt's (2004) study used a combination of qualitative participant questionnaires, and ethnographic participant observation at 10 events. In looking at this previous research I was able to consider various different types of approach. Ultimately the flexibility and the focus on the participant was the most important aspect to me. As Hannabus explains;

Ethnographic research allows us to regard and represent the actors as creators as well as executants of their own meanings. The very way in which they tell us about

what they do tells the researcher a great deal about what is meaningful for and in the research. It adds richness and texture to the experience of conducting research. (Hannabuss, 2000:99)

The use of the word actors in this quote particularly resonates with what my participants do. They act out their roles, creating their own meanings from their research and this richness and texture was central to what I wanted from my study.

In thinking about the ontological framework used for this study it is useful to first offer some definitions of ontology. We can then to examine what those mean as applied to this study. Ontology “covers what we believe can exist, what we consider to be fundamental or basic” (Berryman,2019:272). This will affect the types of things that we think can be researched, the types of questions that can be asked. Jacquette (2002) talks about the nature of being, and discusses the ideas of multiple senses of being. This is a useful way of thinking about the multiple identities that one may have throughout life. This is very relevant to participation in re-enactment. Here the attempted portrayal someone else’s life, norms, values and physical artefacts, such as clothing, is an expected part of the engagement. Discussion of ontology seeks to understand the reality of what exists, as Jacquette explains “it is true that the actual world exists, and that underlying the fact of its existence there is a wealth of concepts to be uncovered in order to understand the meaning of being” (Jacquette, 2002:35). However, what re-enactors are attempting to do is to recreate a world that is lost to us, that only exists now within the somewhat limited evidence that we have about it. The concepts that relate to this medieval world may still exist within our own. Many have changed in terms of what we now believe can exist, and what is nowadays considered as fundamental or basic.

Ontological assumptions can be made about the exact nature of society. There has been extensive research into many different aspects of society such as family, relationships, class, gender. These have aided us in our understanding of these factors that affect our lives. However, what first has to be established for any study is, which society is being studied? For re-enactors living in a technological 21<sup>st</sup> century world, there is a certain understanding that comes with experience of relationships within the spheres of family, education, and

employment. However, the re-enactors in this study spend their time trying to recreate society in the 1300 – 1500s. This a society which was very different in terms of sociological aspects of gender, class, wealth. One of the key questions then is thinking about whether both societies need to be studied. That which the re-enactor lives in for the majority of their lives? Or that which they spend their time learning to try and replicate, for a limited time, and a specific purpose? As outlined in the literature review, this desire for an authentic experience is cited as an important facet of a re-enactor's life. No weekend living history encampment can ever come close to replicating the actual structure of a medieval village. It is however useful to consider the notion of a dual social framework when thinking about the experiences that are part of this study. Particularly how those link to key aspects of theoretical frameworks about society and identity.

Because of the fabricated nature of the re-enactors' lives during events, naturalism cannot be used as a framework for observation without acknowledging that the situations are not real settings in every respect. The re-enactors are playing multiple roles at events. Some of these may be related to the same historical character. Others may be very different from each other. The physical objects are tangible, however there are other aspects that are not. Moving in and out of role, and the pretence that takes place as part of this, as well as the shared knowledge that the person standing in front of a family is not really the current king of England, means that a naturalist perspective is not without issues. There are aspects of the positivist standpoint that I found interesting, however I felt that this study was too limited, and the potential relationships too variable to allow a positivist stance to be useful to me. The interview sample of twenty-two participants comes from approximately three thousand medieval re-enactors, so any findings would not be statistically significant. I was particularly interested in the "what and the how" (Hegde, 2015:22) of their learning, which can be overlooked in positivist research. The positivist paradigm was also problematic due to the fact that it presupposes that the researcher is neutral. Neutrality can be a difficult thing to achieve, even if one is not closely connected to a research topic, due to own norms and values colouring interpretation. My previous experiences as a re-enactor mean that I cannot be value free in terms of studying this area. I can seek to ensure that my experiences do not affect my results through examining my positionality. I can also use reflexivity in

ensuring that I am not letting my personal knowledge influence what is in my data. I am already too involved to use a positivist perspective.

An interpretivist stance is one where the researcher works in collaboration with the participants to make meaning, where the “the complex social world can be understood only from the point of view of those who operate within it” (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004:36). Re-enactment can be complex if viewed from an outsider’s point of view. Members of the public often don’t realise things such as that there are many different individual groups at an event. They are often unsure if this is a voluntary activity, rather than paid employment. Even the researchers I have previously outlined, who participated in a limited manner at events, did not get to engage with the full spectrum of activities. This stance seeks to provide “rich and contextually situated understandings” (McChesney & Aldridge, 2019:227), rather than any specific theories or rules that govern behaviour in these situations. These understandings may only be limited to that particular participant, time frame or event, and therefore cannot be generalised. It may be argued that interpretivist stances are always associated with qualitative methodologies. Indeed, there may be such a feeling of divide between quantitative and qualitative that the two methods must never be mixed, but this is not the case (Onwuegbuzie & Leech 2005). Both types of research can be utilised to develop a more holistic approach. This is in looking at the similarities rather than the differences between the two types of methodology. There is data reduction in both types of research, with interpretivists looking for themes rather than statistical cluster analysis. Both stances are aiming to make sense of large amounts of data.

Interpretivist stances are often used in educational research. Although my research is not within an educational institution it has many similarities with other research. Thus it has been useful to examine the ways that interpretivist methods are used in other studies. Rapley’s (2018) account of her PhD research into HE in FE pedagogy discusses her conversion from positivist to interpretivist. In it she cites previous professional experience as a scientist for an early leaning towards positivist interpretations. My professional background is similar, previous study and professional work being grounded in science, technology and mathematics. My initial studies of sociology at undergraduate level, while interesting, struck me as being disturbingly lacking in concrete answers. However, as with

Rapley's (2018) doctoral journey, my own has led me away from the statistical certainty that I love, into a richer and more chaotic world. That is not to say that interpretivism means that results are not reliable, but rather that "trustworthiness, credibility, transferability and confirmability" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2004, cited in Rapley, 2018:24), are used rather than other more 'scientific' criteria.

The nature of my potential data was concerned with narrative accounts of personal learning, relationships, descriptions of processes and observations of skills in action. Therefore, qualitative rather than quantitative approaches were used for data collection. There was some quantitative data associated with the study in terms of length of participation in re-enactment. This was a factor in how I selected my participants as I wished to use newer re-enactors as well as more experienced. This was specifically to get recent perspectives on the role of legitimate peripheral participation, and notions of belonging and identity. However, this type of data is secondary to the amount of qualitative data that the study produced. The study relied on interviews, participant observations, and analysis of online sources as the primary methods of data collection. Documentary analysis was not used, though a small proportion of the online data did refer to documents. The reason for the exclusion of documentary analysis was that most of the re-enactors did not use documents such as membership handbooks. Thus it was felt that this would be a limited source of data, and not be applicable to the majority of the participants.

### **The links between the research questions and methods used**

At this point it is useful to return to the research questions and consider how the data collection methods relate to these. The individual methods are chosen are discussed in more detail in sections relating to each method later in this chapter.

Q1. How can the learning within re-enactment groups be contextualised using theories of communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation?

The first question was central to my research. This involved both consideration of the aspects of communities of practice that were present within re-enactment groups, and the

way that new members moved from legitimate peripheral participation to full participation. This question relates to all three aspects of the data collection. In the interviews questions were asked about relationships within the group, and experiences of joining the group. Participant observation was used as a way of observing some of these relationships, particularly those that linked to relationships that led to the sharing of practice and evidence of joint enterprise. I chose to focus on two new participants to one group over the two-year research period. This was specifically looking at how their roles changed as became part of the group. Online data sources were also used, thinking about to what extent they both supported, and were communities of practice in their own right.

Q2. What are the skills learned and knowledge acquired by participants within medieval re-enactment through involvement in these communities of practice?

The shared practice and the idea of a shared repertoire of resources are very important aspects of a community of practice (Wenger,1998,2000). The interview questions were in part designed to elicit this information about how this was evidenced in the acquisition of specific knowledge and skills. Part of this looked at resources that the groups used, and in particular were shared with new participants. This was supported by participant observation and by the online data collection.

Q3. In which ways does the 'master and apprentice' relationship contribute to the learning of these skills and how is 'expertise' within this learning defined and validated by participants?

As outlined in my previous discussion of the role of the master in social learning I was interested in finding out in what ways what is done by participants resembles the traditional roles of these relationships in the medieval period. As discussed in the literature review medieval apprenticeships were a very personal one to one type of relationship. These involved knowledge being passed on verbally, and this forms a key part of the learning within re-enactment. This question was not specifically designed to be wholly answered through the interviews themselves. I was also looking for evidence from other sources, such as my observations and online data collection as well. I wanted to hear from the participants

how they defined and validated expertise, either from a face to face interaction or online source.

Q.4 How do online forums, blogs and social networking communities aid skill and knowledge development within these communities of practice?

The use of data collection from online sources is an aspect that I chose for two reasons. Firstly, to support the face to face methods of data collection as a way of obtaining an insight what people do in the periods of time between events. There is not the opportunity for the modern re-enactor to have the sustained face to face relationship within an apprenticeship or community of practice that would occur in physical examples such as a workplace. Therefore, I was interested in the way that these relationships were supported by online communities. Since starting this study the way that participants use social media has changed. Participants often post examples of work in progress or research for others to comment on. They also post questions about resources and equipment which adds another dimension to the sharing of knowledge. This aspect of learning was the second reason for using this data.

### **Positionality**

Although I have strived to be objective in what I do I am not independent of my research field, as already discussed in my choice of stance. I have specifically excluded myself from this study therefore I did not undertake auto ethnography. Although my own experiences of becoming a re-enactor did inform my research I did not wish to look at any of my own experiences. This was partly due to the fact that I am an academic with a particular perspective on learning already. I wanted to look at the experiences of others who do not share this academic background. However, my experiences as a re-enactor have naturally informed my research. For example, in areas such as questions' development I have used my experience as a basis for knowing what to ask. As I have been part of this community and this culture for so long I was unable to justifiably observe with an outsider mind-set. I already had too much knowledge which would possibly lead me to make assumptions about what I am seeing.

Traditional ideas of insider/outsider research force researchers into a dichotomous dilemma of whether they belong in the community they are researching or not. Rather there can be a consideration of positionality (Lu & Hodge, 2019), in thinking about how the relationships between researcher and researched can be articulated. It is sometimes assumed that by sharing gender or ethnicity, there will be shared understanding implicit in the research relations, when in fact this is not always true. There may be situations where being an insider gives advantages to the situation in terms of the understanding of relationships that would not need to be explained by the participants (Jones, 2014). Pole (2010) examines the work of early feminist researchers in his analysis of his own research with people of different ethnicities. In his discussion there is identification of the value of sharing characteristics with your participants. This is if you “share a structural position which is based on the experience of oppression within a patriarchal society” (Pole, 2010:162), which he suggests feminist researchers may do. However, there can be disadvantages with this notion of being an insider. In her work on eating disorders amongst women of colour Pitman (2002), found that her own gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, raised problems of power and relationships amongst groups that she had felt she may have connection with. Pole (2010) also identifies the value of difference between the researcher and those who are being researched. He cites examples of early anthropological studies and those where there are significant cultural or ethnic differences between the two.

In this study, although I do have a shared identity as a re-enactor, my experiences are significantly different from some of my participants. This is due to my lack of experience of certain situations, such as combat. Though I have held armour and swords I have never worn them or been hit with them. Therefore, there is a gap between my experience and that of my participants in many cases. This will affect my positionality as I am both an insider in some respects, and an outsider in others. It is important to recognise, as Taylor (2011) says that “insider research is not faultless, nor should one presume that as an insider, one necessarily offers an absolute or correct way of seeing and/or reading the culture under investigation” (Taylor, 2011:4). There are many reasons why my interpretation may not be correct. Also this shared and non-shared experience can cause dilemmas in the way that the researcher feels towards participants (Keikelame, 2018). It can also affect dealing with

personal feelings within research. Although I was not dealing with sensitive subjects in my research, it is still important that reflexivity is used. This helps the researcher think about their own position in relation to the information given. It is also important not to assume that being like your participants will make the study any easier or the results more worthwhile. Outsiders may have an advantage in that their position enables them to have more clarity in what they are observing, without pre-conceptions. They may also be able to make more effective use of questioning (Mason-Bish,2019). It is important that my positionality is taken into account, both at the start of my research, and in evaluating the results.

All researchers begin data collection with certain assumptions about the phenomenon being investigated, situations to be observed, and people to be interviewed. The more one is like the participants in terms of culture, gender, race, socio-economic class and so on, the more it is assumed that access will be granted, meanings shared, and validity of findings assured. (Merriam et al., 2001:406)

I am both like and unlike my participants, I share the culture of re-enactment with all of them, gender with a third of them and race with all. In terms of socio-economic class and other factors I did not collect any information relating to these areas. Therefore, I am not able to draw any conclusions. The things that I do share may, for my participants, be expected to aid my positionality in understanding their views. In their work researching in Ghana and Malawi, Adu-Ampong & Adams (2020) found that their nationality as Ghanaians meant that their positionality as insider or outsider researchers was constantly in flux. At points it was beneficial for them to stress their similarity to their participants. At others there was more benefit in being seen as an outsider. In terms of my research I am an academic and their interviewer which means that although I am like them, at times I am not. I am, temporarily, an outsider 'doing research'. This means that I had to be aware of the effect this would have on others, both during interviews and participant observations. In my discussion of ethical considerations later in this chapter, I return to the dilemmas of research with people who are known to the researcher.

As I was in my role as a costumed re-enactor during the majority of the participant observations there was no discernible 'observer effect' for the public who were interacting with the re-enactor being observed. My presence had little impact on the re-enactor either as I am commonly to be found observing these situations as part of my involvement. It is interesting that Shaffir (1999), mentions the fact that ethnographers need to undertake role-playing and acting as part of their research. That is very much part of my involvement within re-enactment anyway. I play a role along with those that I am observing. In discussing his research with Hassidic Jews at their synagogue he states that "deception was nonetheless inherent in the ethnographic encounter" (Shaffir, 1999:682). I did not have to deceive to be participating. I was doing it as a valid member of the re-enactment community, who already role plays alongside others. This hopefully gave additional validity to the research, being known and trusted by my participants. I was also fortunate in not having any reaction from "others who are often initially recalcitrant and suspicious of those who come uninvited into their lives" (Van Maanen, 2011:219). My ethnography took place in a setting where, although not having a close relationship with all of my participants, I had at least the starting point of being one of the community. Hodkinson, in his study of research into Goth subculture, describes his relationship with his fieldwork subjects as having "intense personal connections" (Hodkinson, 2002:132). This was true with some of my participants. Others I only knew by sight when I approached them to be part of the study.

There was also a consideration of possible bias in collecting my data due to the fact that I am known within the re-enactment community. A positivist stance (Douglas & Carless, 2012, cited in Owton & Allen-Collinson, 2013), would suggest that there would need to be a separation between myself and the participants to avoid bias. This was one of the reasons that a more interpretivist stance was chosen. I cannot separate my researcher self from my re-enactor self. Emotional involvement can provide an advantage for the researcher, along with the idea that using friendship as a method of research can be valuable (Owton & Allen-Collinson, 2013). Friendship can reduce the power imbalance between the two parties, and make it easier to have a more successful interview relationship. However, having a friendship alone will not mitigate against other issues within the researcher/respondent

relationship to do with status, gender etc. The fact that I was an academic undertaking a doctorate was not generally known within the re-enactment community before starting the research. This was of necessity revealed to my participants in asking for their permission to be involved, therefore changing the relationships that we previously had.

Mason-Bish (2019) discusses the imbalance of power in her qualitative research with those who are seen to be part of the elite. In thinking about her perception of herself as being less powerful than those she was interviewing she questions how this might affect her positionality. She suggests that “positionality can have a number of impacts including the ability to gain access and the information that a respondent is able, or willing, to share” (Mason-Bish, 2019:265). Although I did not feel that I was in any position of power at any point during the research, there is a perception that my role as an academic, and the undertaking of a PhD, might have an effect on some of the participants. It is important to recognise that personal motivations for doing the research initially might generate conflicts during the process. The need to represent your participant’s views fairly, whilst satisfying the demands of supervisors and external examiners, means that as a researcher you may experience “contradictory positionalities” (Huisman,2008:379). In her feminist ethnographic research with Bosnian Muslim refugees, she encountered a series of ethical dilemmas. These mainly related to the wish to use participatory research, and the need to spend time building relationships. This was in conflict with her need to complete her PhD in a timely manner. Although there have not been similar dilemmas in this research, having to reject offers of participants due to having too much data was challenging, given my position as an insider researcher.

In similar research with Muslim teenagers McGarry (2016) argues that positionality will affect the knowledge generated by the study. This, she proposes, is particularly important where this knowledge is used to inform policy or practice. In her work, like many other pieces of sociological research, she was particularly conscious of her role as the adult, and the outsider within the community. This she felt worked to her advantage as she found that participants were more willing to share things with her than with other adults, such as their teachers. For this study, the knowledge generated, though hopefully of interest to others in education, is not going to be affecting decisions about social or educational policy. The

outcomes of this work, being mainly publications within the academic community, mean that my positionality will not affect what happens with the data that I collect.

### **The participants**

One of the things that was important in considering the use of participants was deciding how many participants is enough (Mann, 2016). There are a considerable number of variables (Baker & Edwards, 2012) to be taken into account when selecting the number of participants. These are aspects such as timescale of research, availability of participants, and the value of data that might be obtained from each. Initially I wished to interview 25 participants. This number enabled wider range of the skill areas, and group membership to be covered. It was also felt to be manageable over the two-year period. The easier access to the participants in this study was a key feature in the decision about how many to include. I was fortunate to have a wide pool of potential participants to select from. Where feasible I selected a male and a female participant from each skill area as I wished to explore participation in relation to gender. The specific skill areas that I selected were costume and headdress making, embroidery, wool spinning, archery, gunnery, dancing, armour making and combat skills. Initially I was concentrating only on skill areas that related to artefact creation or acquisition of particular physical skills. However, in interview phase two in the second year I did add an interview with a participant who portrayed a major character role in order to look at this combination of skills. This was after reflection on the data I had obtained from a previous participant. It was part of the flexibility that I had with my chosen methodology (Van Maanen, 2015), that I could vary the path depending on what I was finding out.

22 one-to-one semi-structured interviews were undertaken over 2 years. The semi-structured interviews enabled data to be obtained relating to the majority of the research questions. Participant observations and online data provided additional information. The participants were informed that they had been selected to talk about the particular skill area identified. This was rather than a general interview about everything relating to their involvement in re-enactment, this was due to constraints on time. The word interview was deliberately chosen when asking participants to take part rather than the informal chat or

talk. My sample were generally older and very confident participants. Thus it was felt that they would not be put off by the term interview. Ethnographers often use other terms of chat or talk with younger or less confident participants (Walford, 2007). I chose a range of types of skill areas to ask questions about during my interviews, as outlined in the participant chart below. Skills under the heading of costume covered armour making, textile work including, embroidery, gold work, leather work and garment making. These skills were not normally specifically demonstrated to the public. They would be used as part of a talk about the end product, such as head dress talks. Other skill areas were those that the participants had developed as demonstrable skills such as spinning, dancing and combat skills.

Two of the interviewees, Sean and Sarah were chosen specifically as they were new re-enactors at the start of the research period. They had both identified areas that they were interested in. However, I chose them to focus on the role of the community of practice as supporting legitimate peripheral participation. They were both from my re-enactment group and this meant that I would have more contact with them over the research period than if they had been members of another group. This enabled a focus, not only on how they were supported by the community, but what happened to them in terms of their skill development. In both cases their 're-enactment careers' led them in different directions from that which had initially been envisaged. This provided the opportunity to look at particular influences from the community of practice, especially with respect to gender and participation.

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Skill area</b>	<b>Date started Re-enactment</b>	<b>Group membership</b>
Kathleen	Costume	1988	Age of Chivalry
Karen	Costume	2002	Swords of Mercia
Sarah	Costume	2015	Swords of Mercia
Emma	Costume	2002	Swords of Mercia
Matthew	Costume	2006	Swords of Mercia
Colin	Costume/King's role	2002	Swords of Mercia
Phil	Costume/Armour	2006	Swords of Mercia

Ben	Costume	1985	Thomas Stanley Household
Sean	Combat/leatherwork	2015	Swords of Mercia
Heather	Combat	1991	Plymouth Medieval
Neil	Combat training	2002	Falchion Group
Duncan	Combat/ training	2005	Falchion Group
Stan	Combat	2013	Falchion Group
Chris	Dance	1991	Plymouth Medieval
Martin	Gunnery	2004	Douglas Retinue
Laura	Gunnery	1998	Poor Knights of St Dysmas
Fred	Gunnery	1998	Poor Knights of St Dysmas
Darren	Combat/King's role	2012	LEAD Historical
Alan	Archery	2006	Company of the White Hart
Christine	Spinning/cookery	2006	Company of the White Hart
Robert	Jousting/combat	1992	Destrier/Paladins
Adam	Barber surgeon	2014	Swords of Mercia

**Table 1: Participant information table**

I was only able to interview 22 participants rather than 25 due to 3 being unavailable during the data collection period. One of the Swords of Mercia group members, Liam, left the group temporarily at the start of the research period due to a change in job role. Another member of that group, Stephen, was not available to be interviewed during the research period. A third person from another group, Kitty, was on maternity leave from her re-enactment role of a combatant during the research period. This does mean that some of the analysis makes reference to these people without the additional information from interviews. This is due to their roles within groups as they were significant in their relationships with other participants who were interviewed and observed. People from a number of different re-enactment groups were chosen to provide additional validity to the data and to be able to cover a wider time period with the broad spectrum of medieval re-enactment which covers the period 1300 to 1500 AD. I did wish to interview a substantial number from two re-enactment groups specifically to answer research questions 1 and 3 looking communities of practice and master and apprentice relationships. Therefore 7 participants from one group and 3 from another were interviewed. It was felt important to

reflect the wider community as well, which was why this study was not restricted to just two groups. I was interested in the way that re-enactment groups may work together in “a complex landscape” (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2014:15), of communities of practice. A small pilot study involving 2 participants, one male and one female, had previously been conducted the year before the research phase commenced. The male participant was involved in furniture and bow making and the female participant in costume making. This enabled further refining of the interview questions but the data from the pilot study was not used in the final analysis as the change in interview questions for the later research period meant that the data sets obtained in the pilot were very different.

## **Interviews**

This section discusses the choice of interview techniques and some of the considerations about how, when and where I chose to carry out the interviews. How the interviews were undertaken is outlined here, with consideration of practical issues that arose. The design of the interviews in terms of questions included, and how those relate to my research questions, is also discussed. Only one of the possible types of interviews were used in the data collection, namely semi-structured interviews (Roulston, 2006).

The use of semi-structured interviews was a choice made, along with observations, to enable me to obtain information about the aspects of communities of practice that I discussed earlier. Open ended or oral history types of approaches were discounted as a method of data collection. This was because there were too many specific things that I wished to discuss with the participants. I had identified four overall research questions that I wished to answer partly through interview. Therefore, I had a large amount of data that I wished to gather in the time available. Semi-structured interviews were chosen in preference to structured interviews. This was to allow for flexibility in what was asked. It was important to me that these were carried out face to face, giving the opportunity for flexibility discussed earlier. The semi-structured interview is also considered as a way of obtaining much richer data than a structured interview or questionnaire (Gray, 2004). Interviews have their own advantages and disadvantages and I discuss some of these later in this chapter. However, they are a way of obtaining insight into the things that I cannot

observe directly. I discuss the rationale for the place and timing of interviews later in this chapter.

There needed to be awareness of possible interviewer bias due to previous relationships with myself and the participants (Taylor, 2011). There may be a number of possible influences on interviews (Garton & Copland, 2012). Therefore, there needed to be consideration of a number of factors to be taken into account. These were, degree of intimacy of friendship, the form of the interview, and the longevity of the interviewer/interviewee relationship. I did not have a close relationship with the majority of the participants, apart from those that are within my re-enactment group. The interviews took about half an hour. They were on a one-off basis with participant observation carried out at points after this. The scheduling of the interviews was designed not to intrude on their normal re-enactment roles. This meant that the individual's schedule at the chosen event needed to be established, and a suitable time for interview arranged. All participants were people who are used to talking to others about their involvement within re-enactment, particularly in response to questions from members of the public, and in encouraging membership of their groups.

It is important for interviewers to design interviews so that the respondent's voice comes through (Mishler, 1986, cited in Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). It is suggested that open ended questions, and acknowledging participants own linguistic formulations assist with this. Interviews are unusual situations in which the usual rules of conversation regarding turn taking and reciprocity of non-verbal cues are suspended (Walford, 2007). It is also invested with more significance due to its permanence. The role of narrative is also important and this should be linked to the normal process of listening to a story. Prompts made be needed for the respondent to elicit further information. The researcher has to be able to do this, using 'can you tell me more about that aspect' rather than a more every day 'go on then' to gain greater depth of information. The concept of respondents being empowered while the interview is taking place is a key one, leading to an interview that is more symmetrical in terms of its power relationships. This was evident within some of my interviews, with participants commenting at the end how much they had enjoyed the process of reflecting on their learning and participation.

It is important that as an 'insider' researcher there is not too much assumed about other's experiences (Owton & Allen-Collinson, 2013). Everyone will have different experiences. Therefore, answers must be listened to carefully so that further questions can be targeted well. The interview is intended to be developed as an "interactional event in which the interviewer and interviewee both construct meaning" (Garton & Copland, 2010:533). Linguistic analysis is a useful tool in thinking about how this meaning is co-constructed. With access to recordings of the interview there was the opportunity to assess of whether there was any confusion about meanings of questions or answers.

### **The interview questions**

The full list of questions asked is detailed in Appendix 2, however I will discuss the relationship of the interview questions to my research questions here. The initial interview question about length of involvement was designed partly as an administrative question. This was so that I could look at any correlation between length of involvement and other factors. These were aspects such as legitimate peripheral participation and relationships within multiple communities of practice. This question also included asking about why the participant joined re-enactment. Although this is not a specific focus of my research, there were answers that related to subsequent choice of skill area development. There were three questions specifically focusing on the development of skills and knowledge starting with a very general one about what has been learnt. This was followed up by asking about how these things were learnt. There was then a prompt question about anyone who has helped in this learning. This was to try and establish relationships within the community of practice. I specifically did not use the phrase master and apprentice in this question as I felt that this may be confusing for the participants. They may not have seen themselves in these kinds of relationships. I consider that it was through my analysis that I was able to determine the types of learning relationships operating within the groups. A further question about relationships with others was used to link to research question 2. I included a question about the process of becoming involved in a group, which links to research question 3. This was a very general question to elicit experiences of becoming a re-enactor. Again I was not using the terminology of legitimate peripheral participation, but was looking

for evidence of this in responses. The final questions were related to research question 4. These were concerned with legitimacy of information from online sources, and also contribution to the online sources themselves.

### **Conducting the interviews**

As a member of the re-enactment community who was interviewing other members of the same community I was displaying “cocategorical incumbency” (Roulston, Baker & Liljestrom, 2001:748). This means that there was specific understanding of the topic. More significantly, the language to be able to produce a type of discussion was not as likely to be hampered by having to clarify meaning, as someone with no knowledge of the field would. These types of interviews can also be referred to as acquaintance interviews (Garton & Copland, 2010). This can have an effect on the symmetry of the discussion in an interview. I was mainly posing the questions and the participants were answering them. This type of conversation was different from that which would take place at events generally. This would be more symmetrical in terms of the flow of the conversation. In some cases, we had to start with an explicit exploration of these new roles in order to establish the nature of the interview. This involved me explaining the purpose of my doctoral study. In seeking to establish this I was using what Roulston (2010) calls a romantic conception of interviewing. This is where “the interviewer- interviewee relationship in the romantic interview is one in which genuine rapport and trust is established by the interviewer in order to generate the kind of conversation that is intimate and self-revealing “(Roulston, 2010:217). This genuine trust was built on the relationship already established by being part of that community.

The idea of “footing” (Goffman, 1981, cited in Garton & Copland, 2010:359), is useful to think about how roles may change within the interviewer / interviewee relationship. This is especially true where the participant questions what is happening. Or they may try to control the process more than they would in a setting where there was no previous relationship. To my knowledge none of my participants had any previous experience of qualitative methodology. I was able to establish the ground rules of the discussion by explaining the structure of the interview, and how long it would take at the start. The rationale for the questions was also outlined. I also had specified the skill area that I wished

to concentrate on with them at the point of asking them to be involved in the research. The opportunity for the participant to have questions repeated was also outlined. The right to terminate the interview at any point was also discussed. It is suggested that there are two main forms of interview interaction (Have, 1998). The first is where interviewer and interviewee both have relatively short speaking turns. The second where there is a primary speaker and the other only has minimal input and responses. Both forms can be used in the same interview. In my interviews the primary speakers were my participants. My role was to ask the questions and prompt for clarification if needed.

All of the interviews were intended to be digitally recorded, as well as the making of interview notes. This was done with the participants' agreement to be recorded. Recording allowed review of the data and the ability to detect nuances within the interview. It also provided an opportunity to review answers for any possible follow up later. It is possible that this process of recording may be off-putting for participants in research situations. However, the participants chosen were people with very public facing roles within their groups, so there was little impact of the recorder being present. Within the interviews the aim was to use "co-constructed, collaborative and meaning-making process between interviewer and interviewee" (Cunliffe, 2011, cited in McLachan & Garcia ,2015:198). The interest is in both the "whats and the hows" (McLachan & Garcia, 2015:200), of the interview process. The analysis of the interview looked at both the information obtained, and the way that that the conversation went. There was also a focus on the actual words that participants used to express themselves during the interview. This was part of the reflexivity over the two years of the data collection period.

There were three interviews that were not able to be recorded due to technical issues. In using the recorder for the first time I was not aware of the amount of information that could be stored on the recorder memory card at one time. I recorded two interviews and then tried to record a third but there was no space left on the card. For future interviews I ensured that I only scheduled two per event weekend so that I could avoid this problem. There was also a situation when the recorder ran out of batteries. I did not have any spare ones with me and did not have time to go back to the camp and get replacements before my participants had to leave. This meant that I had to take very detailed notes from those

three interviews, more so than from others. There were other interviews where the sound quality was very poor. As an inexperienced user of the technology some of the early interviews were disrupted by environmental noise such as wind, which I had not taken account of. It was only when playing those interviews back after the events that this was realised. Later use of the recorder took all of these factors into account.

In analysing the quality of my interviews, the intention was to use criteria adapted from Kvale (1996). This looked at to what extent there were rich and specific answers from the participants. In the analysis it was also important to look at the extent to which answers have had to be clarified or followed up. The interview process was documented through a fieldwork journal. This was used to record impressions of the interviews, the ease of obtaining information from each participant, and any issues with questions needing to be repeating or clarified. It was not the intention to change the questions from interview to interview, as it was felt that would detract from the overall validity. However, as the interviews were conducted over the two-year period more was learnt about additional prompts to give, or additional information asked for based on other participants' answers.

It is important as well to consider problems that may have occurred during the interview. These may be in terms of respondents not understanding the questions or not being willing to respond to questions. There may also be issues with the interviewer not being able to build the rapport needed to enable questions to be answered freely (Roulston, 2014). It is suggested that sometimes these issues are to do with the interviewer not being able to understand and relate to participants. This may have been an issue with interviewing participants in a situation where the researcher had little knowledge. It is also factor where there were considerations of power within the relationship. However, in this situation the interviewees were all known to me and involved in the same hobby. Therefore, there were already shared experiences and some kind of relationship. Normally the first stage in good research design is to conduct preliminary field work. This enables the researcher to understand the particular cultural and linguistic norms used within a group. As a re-enactor for 13 years prior to starting these interviews, a large part of my 'becoming' has been to be able to understand the significance of particular aspects of a re-enactor's life. As with all

groups we have our own shared jargon that may be unfamiliar in their context to those outside the hobby. This this shared language helped me in understanding responses.

It is also vital for the researcher to consider the importance of voice (Gubrium, 2002). In the interviews it was hoped to hear the voice of the re-enactor, not whatever else they may be in their everyday lives. For that reason, questions were not asked about any links between skill development and professional development, or other areas of the participant's lives. There were specific reasons for choosing to conduct interviews at re-enactment events. There was ease of access to the participants, which was important as they are from all over the UK and face to face access would have been time-consuming otherwise. There was also the chance to photograph or video what they referred to in their interviews. One of the primary reasons was that they were in their roles; they had their artefacts with them. They had undertaken the act of 'becoming', metaphorically shedding their 21<sup>st</sup> century skins, and taking on the persona and costume of their re-enactment character. It was hoped that the interview setting itself led to richer data. This would hopefully include a more authentic voice. As they were in role at the time, they would possibly be thinking more about that role, than if they were interviewed out of role. This also gave the opportunity to link questions to the actual costume worn at the time. For example, asking about the construction of a particular garment. This also helped with the environmental validity of the interview.

The intention was that interviews were all conducted within the group camps of the participants. It was hoped that being within the group environment at the time of the interview may have prompted remembrance of incidents. They would also have more chance to reference others that were present within the camp. This would possibly not have happened if the interview had taken place, 'off season', in an unrelated location or by telephone. This did have particular benefits for one of the interviews. This took place in the king's encampment with Darren, who played the role of Edward IV. During his interview he referenced one of the other members who was sitting nearby as helping him develop his confidence for the role. This member, Len, then came over and talked about his role to us. Although group interviews had not been planned, in this case it was useful to have another perspective. Being able to interview in the group camp was possible for the majority of the

participants. This did entail, in some cases, having to conduct the interviews inside the tents of participants, partly due to environmental noise factors as mentioned previously. This was also due to the need to conceal the modern recording equipment needed. This was because some of the interviews took place during hours when the public were on the site. Five were interviewed in other areas of the event where they were demonstrating for logistical reasons. At some events, such as the larger multigroup ones of Caldicot and Tatton, participants were heavily involved in public facing roles so interviews had to be scheduled around those inputs. Therefore, some took place in short timeslots just before displays started.

There had been consideration, given the number of interviews within the study, whether to conduct telephone interviews. These were considered for follow up on particular aspects if needed. This was due to the logistics of trying to arrange further face to face meetings. There were particular considerations with telephone interviews though, not least the logistics of recording information at the time. There may be distortion of actual voice, loss of visual cues, loss of rapport and loss of empathy (Irvine, Drew & Sainsbury, 2012). All of these factors would be of consideration for the first interview, but not significant in obtaining follow up information. In the end telephone interviews were not used despite me being unable to interview 3 participants. I felt that to do that would mean that this data was less rich, for the reasons outlined in the previous discussion of location of interviews.

It was the case that at times the respondent identified a voice within the process of the interview in a phrase such as 'as a combatant'. It was important that the analysis phase took account of this. This was particularly relevant if respondents were discussing changes in role over the course of their involvement in re-enactment. Many re-enactors do have more than one role in their groups, such as group commander or combat trainer. Although they have been chosen for specific aspects of their re-enactment skill development they may have wanted to refer to others. They may have wished to share these different perspectives (Luff, 1999, cited in Gubium & Holstein, 2002), which shaped the course of the interview, and this needed awareness of at the time. It is important to hear the meaning of what is being said.

Within any interview situation the interviewer will possibly need to engage in strategies such as backchannelling or acknowledgement tokens (Mann, 2016). This is to keep the participants engaged in the interview process. These are strategies used to help the interview maintain a flow and provide support. This involves the use of sounds or words such as 'really' 'uh huh' 'wow' which indicate engagement with the speaker and provide feedback that the interviewer is listening. The people that have been included in this research can be viewed as ideal interview subjects. They love talking about their hobby, they are very used to talking about the way that they acquire and develop artefacts to the public. They have often had experience of being filmed and more formally interviewed for television, newspapers and radio. Interviewing has been changed by postmodern epistemologies (Fontana, 2002). The very act of interviewing, where once reserved for sociologists, law professionals and reporters, is now commonplace within people's experience. This is either directly or second hand through watching televised material. One of the key facets of the postmodernist- informed interview is the issue of representation. This is important when thinking about the story we as researchers are telling, and for what purpose. The purpose of my interviews was to gather the data behind the sort of information that a re-enactor might give to a journalist at an event. To seek out the specific details that would not be considered newsworthy, and to explore the relationships within the groups themselves.

There was also a need to consider identity politics while conducting the interviews. Questions were asked to all participants about whether skill acquisition was affected by gender. From the literature review I have undertaken it is clear that there have also been gendered issues within the take up of apprenticeships in certain trades (Fuller et al., 2005). Combat does form a central part of re-enactment, and there have been gender participation issues within this as identified in the literature review (Hunt, 2008). There has also been a long-standing belief that women should not take part in combat. This was only fully removed in 2018 (Army, 2018). This question about participation was asked to both male and female respondents. This was as there may have also been things that male respondents feel that they have been prevented from learning due to their gender.

## **Participant observation**

For an insider researcher one of the key issues is to be able to understand the context of the setting. In this case, as well as norms and values of the re-enactment community, there was the advantage of understanding the terminology of re-enactment. There was consideration of the field specific lexis to be able to interview without having to ask for explanation. Choosing participant observation as a method was partly about acknowledging that I was a member of this community already.

It is often considered that ethnography is participant observation (Forsey, 2010), plus some other techniques but this is not always the case. Though they are often associated, participant observation is not synonymous with ethnography. Participant observation has come to be seen as a very powerful way of getting close to the community that you are studying. However, it does need further consideration. One way of doing this is to consider the two parts of the phrase separately, and this is particularly relevant to my research for a number of reasons. Forsey (2010) invites us to consider what ethnographers actually do when thinking about how they are both participating and observing. While participating in something you may be doing this at a number of levels. These can vary in terms of their involvement in the activity. As a fully involved participant you can have a role which means that your ability to observe may be limited. If your focus is more observation than participation then you can miss parts of the interaction, depending on the level of passivity. Takyi (2015) also emphasises the challenges that participant observation poses, discussing four different levels of participant observation “complete observer, the complete participant, the observer-as-participant, and the participant as-observer.” (Takyi, 2015:865). In this study I was acting as participant as observer, my observation periods did not comprise the whole of my involvement in the event, and when observation was over I was still a participant.

The concept of a border between ethnography and narrative analysis within sociological studies, and the shift to a post-modern view of ethnography has meant that the views of the participants are just as important as the views of the researcher (Gubrium & Holstein, 1999). Although semi structured interviews, rather than narrative, were the primary source

material from re-enactors, there are still similar themes to be used about the role of ethnographic observation. There is also a role for participant observation in gathering information about little known or stereotyped populations (Gans, 1999). The literature review showed that little is known about actual the role of re-enactors. There has been limited research in this area aside from looking at re-enactment as an authentic form of representation (Gapps, 2009; De Groot, 2011).

Participant observation was used to enrich the data obtained from interviews. It also was a practical choice of research method. The data that I wished to gather was too complex to be obtained via interviews alone. I wanted to be able to see the skills and knowledge that people were talking about demonstrated through their actions as re-enactors. It was not enough for me to hear them talk about learning something, I wanted to also see them do it. This meant that the observations were linked specifically to the interviews, and in practice were scheduled at the same event. For some of the participants these took place at multiple events where they were demonstrating different aspects of their skill development and knowledge. For example, a gunnery display at one event and participating as a hand gunner on the battlefield at another.

As mentioned the observations were chosen specifically so that the interviewees could be observed doing displays, demonstrations, or being in battles which related to the interviews. For example, some of the participants who were interviewed about costume were observed doing costume and head dress talks. Those who were chosen for combat were observed in tournament, battle combat or both. All participants also attended other events during the data collection period, which were referred to in some of the interviews. Due to the nature of the events, observations also included other participants from the individual re-enactment groups who were not interviewed. These have been included in the data analysis where appropriate to give context.

The majority of the participants have two levels of engagement within re-enactment; not only do they create and use their artefacts. They also provide a narrative to members of the public about that process and its end product. This added to the holistic nature of the data as there was the interviewee's version of their skill development and knowledge acquisition,

but also evidence of this through the observations (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003). This was particularly relevant for those skills that were demonstrated at events, such as weapons handling, archery and spinning. This also applies to areas such as costume making. This was not demonstrated in public, although participants spend time talking about that process to members of the public as part of the re-enactment events. Observations gave evidence of the range of skills that have been developed that help to create artefacts. They also showed how those artefacts were explained to members of the public, and the language that is used, thus demonstrating the knowledge about that area.

The interviews and observations were carried out at re-enactment events at eight separate venues each year. This is detailed in Table 2 below.

Temple-combe	Bolsover	Peveril	Ashby	Lincoln	Caldicot	Tatton	Tewkesbury
<b>Karen</b>	Karen	Karen	Karen	Karen	<b>Heather</b>	<b>Christine</b>	Heather
<b>Emma</b>	Emma	Emma	Emma	Emma	<b>Chris</b>	<b>Fred</b>	Chris
	Adam	Adam	<b>Adam</b>	Adam	Duncan	<b>Duncan</b>	Duncan
	Sean	Sean	<b>Sean</b>	Sean		<b>Laura</b>	Sean
	Sarah	Sarah	<b>Sarah</b>		<b>Robert</b>	<b>Alan</b>	Robert
	Liam	Liam	Liam	Liam		<b>Martin</b>	Martin
	Matthew	Matthew	<b>Matthew</b>	Matthew		<b>Darren</b>	Darren
	Stephen	Stephen	Stephen	Stephen		<b>Ben</b>	Stephen
		Colin	<b>Colin</b>	Colin	<b>Stan</b>		Stan
			<b>Phil</b>	Phil		Bess	<b>Neil</b>
							<b>Kathleen</b>

**Table 2: Participants that were interviewed and/or observed at each location. Interview locations are shown in bold for each participant.**

Events within the re-enactment calendar for all groups involved vary in size and complexity. This affected the ability to arrange interviews and observations. Four of these events were single group ones with the Sword of Mercia re-enactment group. These all took place at English Heritage properties, namely Bolsover and Peveril Castles in Derbyshire, Ashby de la Zouch Castle in Leicestershire, and the Bishops' Palace in Lincoln. The Ashby event was used

as location for the majority of interviews for participants from this group as it was generally a quieter event with more opportunity to arrange these. Two interviews, with Karen and Emma, were done at the Templecombe event at the start of the research period. There were no other members of the group attending that multi- group event.

The other four were multi group events at Templecombe in Somerset, Caldicot Castle in Monmouthshire, Tatton Hall in Cheshire and Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire. The majority of interviews undertaken at the multi-group events were done at the Tatton event. This was again for reasons of practicality; this is one of the smaller events with opportunity to schedule interviews between individual's own schedules of participation. These were chosen to represent the range of events that participants engaged in, and to enable observations to be done throughout each of the event weekends. Where interviews were not done at the Tatton event it was either because that participant did not attend that event, as in the case of Neil and Kathleen, or that the interview was scheduled around a particular observation. In the case of Heather and Chris the interviews took place at Caldicot directly after their dance display. Robert's interview also took place at Caldicot. This was due to that being one of the places that his joust group were performing at, and again that was linked with a participant observation of the display. Stan's interview was scheduled at Caldicot as well because he was taking place in the tournament there.

Observations were recorded using field notes (Appendix 4). Schindler and Schafer (2020) refer to the use of notes as being vital in facilitating memories. As I was in costume at the time of the actual observations, field notes had to be made shortly after the actual observation. This was done using a paper field work notebook. These notes were then typed up on return from the event. In total 130 hours of participant observation was undertaken over the 8 events. These field notes were used to provide additional evidence about the learning. They were also used and to corroborate what was said in interview. The decision was taken not to reference specific participant observation events in the analysis. It was felt that coding to enable this would compromise the flow of the narrative. This was due to the fact that multiple examples were observed over the course of the observation period. Rather, the field notes were used in conjunction with the interview transcripts, visual data, and online data, to build a holistic picture of the participant's learning and

relationships. When doing this, researchers have to be careful that the field notes do actually represent what has happened. The very act of writing transforms the events observed, they are interpreted in specific ways by the acting of writing things down (Kalthoff, 2013). There is a responsibility by the researcher to make sure that what is being written in the field notes is accurate (Hammersley, 2005). This means that there needed to be very careful consideration of what the field notes contained as compared to the video and photographic evidence which was available.

### **Obtaining visual data**

Participant observation allowed me to gain additional data by direct observation of the skills demonstrated at public events. This also involved some video recording and photographic evidence (Appendix 5). This evidence was very useful, not just in terms of my analysis of what the data contains, but also in being able to explain what this activity looks like to future end recipients of the research (Penn-Edwards, 2012). Where activities are undertaken that may be unfamiliar to others, such as Schindler's (2018) ethnographic studies of martial arts and flamenco dance teaching, it is helpful to have not just written explanations but also video evidence. When obtaining film and photographic evidence I sometimes needed to be temporarily out of costume. This was because as using modern equipment in costume would contravene event authenticity regulations so for those short periods participation was conducted not in costume. This proved to be logistically difficult at times during the research phase. Therefore, I sometimes asked other friends of the re-enactment groups who were not in costume to take specific photos or video for me. Within the two of the groups, Swords of Mercia and Falchion, there were partners of members who were not in costume who I could use as a 'visual amanuensis' if needed. Although not possibly giving totally the same focus that I would to a situation, these are people who regularly attend re-enactments for the purpose of recording the events through photo and video. I was also able to use images from another amateur photographer who visits all events and shares his work, specifically so that re-enactors can have photos of themselves in action. He is present in the battlefield situations so enabling access to detailed images of combat.

The ability to record qualitative data visually may be seen as “aiming to capture and identify images of the truth that may be hidden” (Penn- Edwards, 2012:159). It was not my intention to look for hidden aspects. It was more to use the visual data to confirm aspects of what was said in the interviews. It was also to provide additional evidence for me of practical skills which may not be able to be fully described to a non-specialist. In other research situations when using video there would need to be a consideration of the impact of the event being videoed on the participant, and whether that might distort what happens within the captured sequence. In the case of public displays at re-enactment events there are always members of the public undertaking the same thing, albeit for different purposes. Therefore, the considerations of doing this were more of a practical nature. This was in terms of being able to gain footage that captures both visuals and sound where narrative explanations would enrich what is being demonstrated.

It would have undoubtedly been useful to review this video evidence with participants to enable them to comment on it, and explain particular features of narrative or of the interaction with the public. It was not possible in this situation due to lack of time and equipment to be able to effectively playback evidence in a useable format while at an event. This form of video-reflexive ethnography has been used to improve problem solving in clinical practice (Carroll, Iedema & Kerridge, 2008). It can also be used as a form of reflective practice within teacher training (Fankhauser, 2008). Since I only had my interpretation of the event, it was important that I looked closely at the accompanying interview evidence so that the two did not become disconnected.

### **Online sources**

Some of my data came from the analysis of online sources. There were four main types of online sources that were used to supplement my interview data, linking to research question 4. There were, a specific forum for the UK re-enactment community, websites and Facebook groups set up by re-enactors for sharing information, and personal Facebook pages. In this section of the chapter issues with acquiring this type of data are outlined and different methods evaluated. Online sources are often used in supporting the acquisition and sharing of knowledge, both within formal and informal education (Chen & Bryer, 2012;

Greenhow & Lewin, 2016). In recent years there has been a shift in what people are using, and how they are communicating through these resources. Newer forms of social media (Giglietto, Rossi & Bennato, 2012; Zamith, 2016) have become more popular. Karpf (2012) discusses what he refers to as “internet time” (Karpf, 2012:639), relating to the speed of change of the internet and in particular social media. This can cause issues for social scientists researching in this field. This was particularly relevant in this study as the use of the forum as a mean of communication declined during the period of the research.

At the point of the initial proposal for this research the main source of interaction amongst the participants was a specific web-based forum set up for re-enactors in 2005 called Living History ([www.livinghistory.co.uk](http://www.livinghistory.co.uk)). It covers all periods of re-enactment in the UK so not all of the information was specifically relevant to the study. The forum is split into sections for each historical period, starting from 2000 BC and ending with the 1900 onwards area. There are also themed sections where people can discuss particular topics such as event information, costume queries, music, food and drink, as well as a general section. The site is a public one, anyone can read posts without being a member. Only members can post but membership is open to all and there are no private areas. The forum is a standard format question and answer via ‘threads’. While pictures can be attached to posts it is not common for people to do so, the conversations being mainly text based.

Since writing the proposal the majority of groups have now moved mostly towards use of Facebook and blogs/websites for sharing of information. The main reason for this seems to be practical. Facebook allows visual input which is important for sharing pictorial information. Also the various tools within Facebook allow groups to promote themselves and their events more widely. There is also the option to have closed groups for specific information pertinent only to members of that re-enactment group. The Living History forum is still a useful resource for re-enactors, particularly those that wish to engage with a wider audience than their Facebook contacts, or for specific information about events. However, it has become very large in terms of the volume of information held in the forums. Despite its sections, can be unwieldy to navigate.

During the two-year period that the face to face interviews and participant observations were being conducted, these online sources were used for evidence of information to support the interview questions. This was unique data in some respects as it allows the capture of online conversations that previously there would have been no evidence of (Wilson, Gosling & Graham, 2012). There were also specific sources followed up that were mentioned in the face to face interviews, such as the use of specific Facebook pages and blogs. This was in particular looking for triangulation where the same source was mentioned by different people.

There are a number of specific data collection tools that have been developed for gathering data from sites such as Facebook pages such as NodeXL, Netvizz and SocialMediaMineR (Sormanen et al., 2016). The decision was made not to use any of these software solutions as there were only a small number of known users and groups targeted. Interest has been growing in what has been termed 'Big Data' (Olmedilla, Martínez-Torres & Toral, 2016) such as Twitter and its potential for social science research. In this context my data is 'small data' rather than 'big data' as specific content from known individuals was being looked at. Therefore, the data collection consisted of monitoring feeds and making notes from those feeds to obtain my data including the use of screen shots of relevant content. This manual data gathering may be considered time consuming (Sormanen et al., 2016), however this content analysis took place over a period of two years covering the face to face interview period. It was feasible to undertake with the participants, and the limited number of pages and groups. The data gathered was that which was felt to be most relevant to the research questions. Therefore, posts of a purely social nature were not included for analysis.

There has been a mixture of methods used for studying social media data. These include ethnographical approaches such as the one that I used, statistical approaches to detect trends, and computational approaches using tools that enable data mining such as API (Application Programme Interface) (Giglietto et al., 2012). This new type of data set means that there needs to be careful thought about methods for studying a rapidly altering data set (Karpf, 2012). The advantages of having potentially large amounts of data available to me were tempered with the possible temporary nature of that data in that users can delete posts if wanted. The intention was to collect information from the personal feeds of the

participants that related to my key questions. Also to use their group pages for similar information. These consisted of pages constructed for specific re-enactment groups so members of that group and interested parties could share knowledge and progress with their makes.

These online resources provide a very rich source of data (Bollier, 2010). This has been used to some extent for social research purposes in the last five years. There have been a number of studies that have looked at the use of Facebook (Noor Al-Deen & Hendricks, 2012; Wilson et al., 2012). To date the majority of these have been to do with the amount of usage and the relationships that have been formed or affected through Facebook use rather, than the content of posts. Back's (2013), study of the use of Facebook by second language learners studying overseas did use a content analysis approach to determine gains in proficiency in the target language. This used an ethnographic case study approach of three students. Other studies (Honeycutt & Cunliffe, 2010), have noted the move to Facebook being used to support existing networks rather than to create new friendships. This very much relates to the way that participants in this study were using their social media. In terms of the use of Facebook by re-enactors, the platform was used much more to support exchange of knowledge, than for purely social reasons as might be evident in other situations. The online data gathered was in the form of the posting of information, pictures, links to research, and discussion of skill development or completed artefacts.

### **Ethical issues**

Ethical issues are always of primary importance in the design of a research study. There are particular ethical issues with researching with participants who are already known to the researcher, and in using online sources, which are also considered here. Throughout this study there was adherence to the BERA ethical guidelines (BERA, 2018). The interview participants were all given information about the rationale for the research, and were asked for their informed consent by signing a participant consent form. The anonymity of participants has been aided by changing names. Anonymity has been given by this process. However, there needs to be consideration of the fact that my participants are known in their roles throughout the re-enactment community, and to the members of the public that

visit the events. Participants also gave permission to have photo and video evidence used within the study so they could be identified by those in addition to their role. This brings up the question of why am I anonymising people who can then be identified? Ellis discusses this notion of relational ethics when reviewing her own studies, saying that “relational ethics requires researchers to act from our hearts and minds, to acknowledge our interpersonal bonds to others, and initiate and maintain conversations “(Ellis, 2007:4). In her research with marginalised fishing communities she sought permission from participants and anonymised them. However, her choice of easily related pseudonyms to real names meant that her participants were identifiable with little work.

In my own research the same applies, I have identified re-enactment groups by name so it would take little work to determine who a participant was if wanted. In addition, although I have re-named them it would not take much in the way of research by a dedicated reader to determine who ‘Colin who portrays Edward II’ in the re-enactment community actually is. This is as there are so few people playing that role. The fact that these people have public facing roles means that, although I did give consideration to potential ethical issues in portraying the truth of what they said, I was working with people who do not need to hide their participation in any way. I have anonymised them as it is good practice to do so, but this does not really guarantee their anonymity in such a public sphere as re-enactment.

Freeman (2019) talks about the importance of these considerations of the particular ethics that will arise through a given research situation. This means exploring the nature of specific ethical considerations for circumstances that are in some way different to the standard situations. In this study there was also consideration of the relationships that I have with some of the participants. Although not people I spend time with on a day – to – day basis I would consider some to be close friends, particularly some of those from my own re-enactment group. Convenience sampling amongst friends is not unknown in research (Barton, 2011; Taylor, 2011; Brewis 2014) and can be done for a number of reasons. This may be when researching topics such as queer identity, health concerns, and other areas where a sample may be difficult to obtain through other channels. I did not choose the participants from my own group for convenience, rather I chose them as I knew they had the particular skills I needed. I chose them as I thought they would enhance the sample.

However, it certainly aided my research that we already had existing relationships. It also meant that I had access to them for interviews and observations. It is important as well to make a distinction between friendships that exist before research takes place, and those that form through research. These are what are termed “friend - informants and informant – friends “(Taylor, 2011:10). There are people who I approached to be involved in my research who I only knew by sight before I interviewed them. Being involved in the research has enhanced our relationship somewhat as I got to know them through the interview and observation process. Many have asked about the progress of the research on subsequent occasions since their involvement.

There are other ethical issues to be considered with close relationships within research. I have also included my daughter in the research. She was a key person in my re-enactment group in terms of her character portrayal, and her role in relation to others such as the newer re-enactors I interviewed. She was referenced in the pilot study and then in one of the first interviews I undertook. I took the decision to interview her as well as she had such a pivotal role in supporting learning for these participants. I took the decision that not to include her would be to skew the data collection for various reasons. One of which was that it would have meant trying to avoid her role in the participant observations, which would have been impossible to achieve. I felt that the ethical issues affecting that close relationship would be outweighed by the value of including her. Ellis also gives consideration to this in her analysis of her research with what she terms “intimate others” (2007:14). She discusses the opportunities that this affords, and also the responsibilities for accuracy of portrayal. I considered that as what we were discussing was not a subject that related to our family, but to a mutual hobby, that there would be little in the way of conflict of interest between my roles as her mother and her interviewer. She is 29, has lived independently for 11 years, and has developed her re-enactment character and associated artefacts independently of me. Thus in interviewing her I felt that I was able to consider her in the same way as other participants. All participants have been offered the opportunity to read the thesis if they wish before publication. Some, including my daughter, have expressed a wish to do so. This means that they will have a chance to read what I have said about them. They can thus respond to it as required. This does open up the possibility that the close relationship I have with some of the participants could lead to them wanting

to alter what I have written. However, what I am writing about is not a sensitive subject. I have not added interpretations of people's behaviour. I have also used reflexivity to try to ensure that what I am writing about is true to the information that they have given me.

Steps have been taken to ensure that there was no harm or risk to anyone by participating in my research. There were no subjects that were controversial, and no-one in the study could be considered as a vulnerable participant. As mentioned previously, participation in re-enactment implies sustained contact with members of the public. Although some re-enactors may not have as much experience of that as others, all are themselves aware of issues of working with vulnerable children and adults through their involvement. The fact that I was known to the participants, and am one of them in terms of my adherence to the norms and values of a re-enactment community, meant that I did not have to pretend to be anything that I am not to gain access to my research participants. There has continued to be relationships maintained with these people long after the research period has finished. As mentioned some of these have been enhanced by their participation.

The online sources such as the Living History Forum and Facebook pages are all considered to be in the public domain (Giglietto et al., 2012). Therefore, there were no specific ethical issues with using information from these sources. It was explained to participants that Facebook sources will be used as part of the research. Permission was asked to use extracts from their feeds and groups pages in the research. Access to private groups set up by individual re-enactors solely for their group use was not asked for. Facebook policy on principles governing use of data (Facebook, 2016), was also adhered to.

### **Analysis of data**

The research generated data from different sources, namely interviews, participant observations, and online data. Therefore, there needed to be different approaches used to analyse these different data sets. This was partly to do with operational concerns, such as the type of data produced. It was also to do with how the data was examined for categories and themes. This section discusses the analysis of the paper based, photo and video evidence and then goes on to discuss how the online data was analysed.

## **Interviews and visual data**

For the analysis of interview data, a combination of approaches was used. As I was using an interpretivist point of view, there was awareness of discussion which makes sense of what the participants have experienced as re-enactors. This involved how they bring together the various sources that have helped them develop their skills and knowledge. It also looked at what they can say about how these people, places, and events, have brought them to the position they are at present (Roulston, 2010). The analysis sought to make meaning by presenting the findings as categories. These were supported by extracts from the interview data as explained here “we begin by asking, ‘what stands out in the data?’” (Roulston, 2010:200). This was a more deductive approach rather than an inductive one, as there were particular categories that were being looked for in the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). These related to the research questions and were as follows, the role of the community of practice, skills and learning involvement, master and apprentice relationships, expertise, and the role of online learning. There were also additional aspects that came from the literature review, namely, gender, ethnicity and authenticity. Therefore, an open mind was needed in allowing these to come through from the data. There are arguments for and against using particular instruments for data collection and analysis. One of the reasons for choosing particular types of analytical instruments is that specific things are being looked for within the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Unlike other studies that may be more open ended in their research questions, mine were specific. I knew that people have acquired skills and knowledge. The purpose of the research was to try and ascertain how they had done this, looking at the role of communities of practice in supporting this.

When looking at the interview data it was important to pay attention to aspects such as turn taking and describing talk as social action (Mann, 2016). This area is just as important as the actual data that comes out of interviews. It contributes to the reliability and validity of the data by thinking about the interview process. When analysing data, it is important to be aware that “words are fatter than numbers and usually have multiple meanings” (Miles & Huberman, 1994:56). In this respect, having an analysis structure can be helpful, though this may mean that any part of the responses could fit into multiple areas of the structure.

Categories and themes naturally change and develop as further interviews are conducted. One of the dilemmas as a researcher is whether to start the analysis process after each interview set, or whether to wait until all of the data has been obtained before starting the analysis. The aim was to complete the interviews over a two-year period. Due to the nature of the re-enactment season there was a gap of six months between the first set of interviews and the second set. Therefore, in order to deal with the large amount of data generated, the first set of interviews were initially analysed after they were completed during that non-interview period. They were then looked at again during the final analysis phase, after the second set of interviews.

A combination of content analysis and two other types of thematic analysis was used to enable specific themes to be captured relating to the learning. Content analysis is often used for specific documents in fields such as health (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008), but can also be used for verbal data such as that gained from interviews. It can be considered as quite a simplistic analysis technique if all that is being done is counting occurrences of a particular category or theme. In this case it was used to structure the data and relate it to the research questions. I was not concerned with how many of each category was being displayed, but rather what was being said within the content category.

Within the content analysis the specific categories that did not fit into any of the pre-existing ones already outlined were identified and added as further categories. For example, I had not initially considered the affective domain in learning as I was focused on the cognitive and psychomotor domains. After the first interview participant mentioned confidence, I then added this to my content analysis. This confidence category then expanded to include identity as a sub category. It is important to distinguish between categories and themes when undertaking content analysis. Graneheim, Lindgren, and Lundman (2017) define a category as a 'what', in my case for example a particular skill, resource or person. A theme they describe as "a unifying 'red thread' running through several categories that brings meaning to a recurrent topic or experiences and its various manifestations" (Graneheim et al., 2017:32). In the case of this research themes included aspects such as belonging, public interaction and authenticity.

The first type of thematic analysis was perspectives on adult learning from the work of Fenwick and Tennant (2004). This set of perspectives fit well with the initial research questions, particularly looking at the notion of a community of practice. They discuss four aspects of adult learning; learning as acquisition, learning as a reflective process, learning as a practice based activity of a community of practice and learning as a co-emergent process (Fenwick & Tennant, 2004). For the analysis this was used as a framework to look for the following areas in the interview data. Learning as a practice based activity was linked directly to the first research questions of exploring the individual as a member of a community of practice within their medieval re-enactment group. This looked at support from the group with all aspects of the learning. This included knowledge such as specific language needed or relevant skills for the role (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Learning as acquisition is linked to the second research question and looks at the substantive knowledge that a learner gains through the process of learning. These may be specific skills such as how to attach a rivet, or which head dresses would have been worn in the early 1300s. Learning as reflection was linked to the analysis of what the person has learnt about becoming a re-enactor. During the interview they were being asked to summarise the learning about the skill area that they were being interviewed about, such as how to make armour. Learning as a co-emergent process seeks to define those relationships further (Lave and Wenger, 1991: Cuddapah & Clayton, 2011). In this theme the idea is that evidence of specific relationships should be forthcoming. This links back to the role of the community of practice and the relationships that are formed within that community. It also links with an exploration of how the master and apprentice roles are evident in modern re-enactment. This thematic analysis enables exploration of what has been termed the “architecture of participation” (O’Reilly, 2005, cited in Heo, 2013:134), of people’s skill and knowledge development.

In thinking about the ways re-enactors learn, a useful way of exploring this is the notion of tacit and explicit knowledge and the idea of pedagogic relations being “explicit, implicit and tacit” (Bernstein & Solomon, 1999:267). In the analysis of both the interview and visual data, examples of all three situations occurring were looked for as the second thematic analysis. An explicit relationship would be where both parties are aware that teaching is taking place, such as a re-enactor participating in a specific weapons training event led by another re-enactor taking the role of trainer (Wolek and Klinger, 1998). This would be where

the master was modelling and scaffolding the knowledge, as discussed in my initial overview of the types of knowledge. An implicit situation would be where someone learns from observing. However, they are not really aware of what they have learnt at the time, or the significance of that learning does not become clear until applied later on. This may happen during the early period of someone joining a group. A tacit relationship is where neither party are aware at the time that learning has taken place. An example would be informal conversations between re-enactors where the intention was not to specifically impart information.

There was a five phase analysis structure (Gray, 2004) used for each set of interviews which involved firstly becoming familiar with the data, and then using the content and thematic analyses that have been previously discussed. Immersion in the data was considered as very important, although I chose not to fully transcribe all of the interviews. Two were fully transcribed (Appendix 6). For the others there were very detailed notes made from listening to the recordings and their accompanying interview notes (Appendix 7). Thus I felt that this would be sufficient for the thematic analysis to take place. This did mean that initially the amount of data to be analysed appeared to be challenging. As Elo and Kyngäs warn “regardless of the ‘quality’ of qualitative data, its sheer quantity can be daunting, if not overwhelming” (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008:113). Each set of interview data was analysed a number of times using these different types of analysis, and also to generate new categories to cover other aspects of the data. I used manual analysis rather than software such as Nvivo, as this type of categorical and thematic analysis was not as suitable to be carried out via electronic means. Memos were also used with the data. Memos are a useful way of keeping track of recurring themes for a researcher, even when working alone they can serve to remind you of things to keep track of during your analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The field work journal was supported by memos that enabled the pulling together of themes.

The photo and video that was collected during the participant observations was primarily to support the interview data. This was to enable evidence of things that have been discussed, in particular evidence of procedural knowledge, and skills in areas such as spinning, combat skills and archery. It was also used to support aspects of declarative knowledge analysis. This involved looking for evidence of specific factual knowledge in things like a headdress and

costume talk, or dance display. The video evidence was analysed using previously outlined categorical and thematic analysis, looking for evidence of these knowledge and skill areas. Each video was analysed in relation to the specific interview that it supported once the full analysis of that interview had been undertaken. The video evidence therefore provided support and further triangulation of the data, from both the interviews and online data analysis. The data from this video analysis was in the form of notes on each video and an example can be seen in Appendix 5.

### **Online data**

The study used online data from various sources to support face to face interaction such as the interviews. The use of online data within research is by its nature a relatively new area compared to my previous discussion of interviews and participant observation analysis. Therefore, different types of analysis were used as outlined in this section. The differences in the two platforms mentioned previously, forums and social media, led to different ways in which people use them. The “sociotechnical infrastructure” (Hansen, Schneiderman, Smith, & Books, 2011:np), allows researchers to look at not only what people are doing with the information when they use social media, but also the social relations that the relational data allows us to see. Who is responding, what are they saying, and how is that contributing to the overall knowledge for re-enactment gives a wealth of additional and easily obtained data. This does not have the same issues in its collection as other qualitative data, such as face to face or telephone interviews. Traditionally definitions have been made about the timeframe that interactions take place within when using social media (Hansen et al., 2011). This is whether the interaction is synchronous or asynchronous, taking place at the same time as in a web chat or instant messaging situation, or at separate times such as posts on forums and blog and Facebook posts. It was the intention to use only asynchronous data for the research.

For the analysis of online sources Activity Theory (Engstrom, 2007; Barab, Schatz & Scheckler, 2004), was used. The value of this has been debated in the literature (Avis, 2009). However, it has been used successfully for analysis of the use of online collaboration

through blogs and social networks. This is to determine specifically what their respondents are doing with each type of online activity (Heo & Lee, 2013). As mentioned in the above section on online sources, the forum, websites and Facebook sources were analysed. Part of this was to look at whether the participants act as readers, writers or as both, (Heo & Lee, 2013), when it comes to their use of online sources. Activity theory is a triangular structure of activity with 6 components “subject, object, tools, community, division of labour and rules” (Heo & Lee, 2013:136). In the use of this theory the subjects were the re-enactors themselves using online sources, and the objects were the blogs, forums, websites and Facebook pages they use. For the community aspect the analysis covered who was a member of particular communities, such as specific Facebook groups. The division of labour aspect relates specifically to who took the lead within groups such as administration and moderation. This links to the rules such as explicit moderator guidelines, and the norms that constrain the social media interaction. In using this framework, it enabled exploration of what has been termed “sociotechnical interaction networks” (Barab et al., 2004:26). Modern re-enactors, unlike the medieval masters and apprentices mentioned earlier, do not always have face to face interaction all year round. Therefore, the analysis of online sources explored how participants used these sources for support. The type of information, and more importantly the validity of information, was explored in the relevant interview questions and by analysis of posts and responses.

### **Reliability and validity**

Quality research was very important in all of the facets of this doctoral study. It is often difficult to define what quality actually is. There are certain aspects that are acknowledged to be an essential part of this, such as reliability and validity. However, we can also think about the design of the research, the way that it is carried out, and the way that the analysis and representation of the data is carried out (Roulston, 2010). We have to accept that there is no ultimate truth that “each person has her/his own personal perspective, seen through the lens of cultural, experiential, environmental, and other contextual influences” (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011:152). However, we do not want our research to be seen as invalid, or not to be able to apply to other situations. Reliability and validity can be affected by many factors. These can be the amount of data generated to be coded, the coding methods used, the

number and rationale for the sampling, and bias of the researcher (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It is important to avoid self-delusion when looking at the data. Many forms of research have suffered from methods of analysis that are not well formulated, leading to erroneous conclusions by researchers (Miles, 1979). Observation can be subject to bias due to difference in what observers see, and what is really happening (Seale & Silverman, 1997). Authenticity is also a key issue in qualitative research. Open ended questions are usually the way that research is gathered but care needs to be taken in the transcription of answers (Seale & Silverman, 1997). It is suggested that generalisations are supported by counts of events and by looking for multiple occurrences of these events in the data set.

### **Reliability**

My sample was purposive and stratified (Miles & Huberman, 1994), in that specific aspects of skills and areas of knowledge were chosen that are represented within re-enactment. It cannot be considered to be a representative sample due to its limited size. For my sample, individuals were selected who represent the skills range, but also the cross section of re-enactors in terms of length of experience of re-enactment. I did not attempt to select representatives from a specified set of real life occupations as the sample were chosen for their skills and knowledge within re-enactment. This would have made for an opportunity to look for correlations between these. The sample also included people who have been chosen for their specific gender to see if there was any effect of gender on participation. As discussed in the literature review (Hunt, 2004), there is a dichotomy between the realistic representation of medieval life, and the demands placed on groups by 21<sup>st</sup> century ideologies and legal requirements for equality and diversity. There was also use of typical case sampling in that the participants represent what is normal within the re-enactment population. Other than the choice by gender others were chosen from the general re-enactment community. When looking at how reliable my data from the interviews is four key areas were considered" representativeness, reactivity, reliability, replicability" (Mishler, 1986:108). There is also the consideration that participants' memory of events may not be accurate. They may be subjective "at best, interviewees will only give what they are prepared to reveal about their subjective perceptions of events and opinions" (Walford, 2007: 147).

## Validity

Internal and external validity was considered once conclusions were drawn (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Evidence of internal validity came from looking at areas such as internal coherence of findings. For example, where interviews with members of the same re-enactment group or same skill area gave the same results. The participant observations were also used as part of the process to validate things that had been shared in interviews. For external validity there needs to be an assessment of whether the findings are transferable to other contexts. Although there has not been any similar research carried out specifically within medieval re-enactment, there has been some undertaken in other aspects of re-enactment (Hunt, 2004; Hannam & Halewood, 2006; Gapps, 2009; Hall, 2016; Chamberlain, 2017). There is also a large body of research on learning (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012; Schürmann & Beusaert, 2016), so it was possible to compare my results with other similar studies. Another useful way of looking at validity is to consider both transactional and transformative validity (Cho & Trent, 2006). Transactional validity refers to ensuring that the data collected is trustworthy. This often involves checking the data with the participant after the event. Although the transcripts and interview notes were not given to participants to check, the fact that there were detailed notes or transcripts made from the recordings in all but 3 of the interviews means that there was less possibility of distortion.

There was also a need to ensure that the process of assigning categories does not disenfranchise participants (Richardson, 2002, cited in Gubium & Holstein, 2002). There are differences in language used by researchers within the academic community. That may differ from the background of a respondent. It was important that authentic language from the interviews was used. Therefore, there was reflexivity in terms of revisiting the original data many times. This was to check how far the language may have moved from that from the interviewees. Only two of the interviews were fully transcribed (Appendix 4). However, all of the available recordings were listened to several times, and detailed notes made of all non-transcribed interviews. All interviews were also accompanied by notes made at the time. These were also read several times in conjunction with listening to the recordings. Transformational validity is related to the social change that may come from the research

process. As this is a study that looks at learning within a leisure area, it is not expected to produce significant social change. However, there is a possibility that the outcomes of this study will lead to a greater understanding of the role of the learning, and of the scholarship that re-enactors undertake.

A continued reflexivity in my philosophical standpoint (McLachan & Garcia, 2015) was displayed during all of my research. Who I am in relation to my interviewees was of importance as I was seeking to conduct interactive interviews (Ellis & Berger, 2003). I needed to be aware of my role in that process. Reflexivity was important both within actions when I was carrying out research, and upon those actions (May & Perry, 2011). This was done by being conscious of what was happening throughout the interview process, and in keeping a field work journal. As a novice interviewer I was very conscious of the need to keep revisiting what I was doing, and how the interviews were being conducted (Elliott, 2011). The data from the interviews, observations and online sources was revisited many times within the three-year period of my analysis and writing up. The process of analysis was iterative. Analysis and writing up of parts of the analysis being concurrent, rather than all of a writing up period being left until the end of the doctorate as is often assumed as the norm (Humphrey & Simpson, 2012). It has been suggested (Mann, 2016), that reflexivity has been ignored by researchers, and that it is of vital importance to how choices made influence the data collected. Therefore, it was important for me to be reflexive throughout the study to contribute to the reliability and validity of the analysis.

## **Conclusion**

In choosing ethnography rather than other types of research methodologies I have been able to use a combination of data collection methods. It has been important for me to think about possible bias from my role as an insider researcher. This has involved considerations of my positionality, and also the ethical issues in working with people who I have close relationships with. I have considered ontological assumptions, in particular which society I am studying. I have also considered how the dual nature of social relationships within re-enactment may be considered as providing challenges for the researcher. In any research decisions have to be made about what to include, and what to leave out. This is due to

constraints on time for data collection and analysis, availability of participants, and potential ethical, reliability, and validity issues. A study can always be considered as incomplete due to these constraints. After analysis of the findings I have considered in the conclusion what I have learnt from making these choices. In reviewing what I have done within this methodology there have been considerations of what has, and what has not worked well. There were some issues with the scheduling, and with the recording of the earlier interviews. This meant that some of the data was in a different format to other interviews. There was the need to use additional evidence from other sources, rather than just my own photos and video. Throughout the research period I needed to be flexible and adaptable in my approaches. I needed to keep a focus on the research questions, but be reflexive enough to respond to the need to change aspects as needed.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Analysis of theoretical frameworks and their relation to the findings**

This and the following analysis chapter have been structured based on the categories and themes that were identified in the previous chapter, which has been linked to the research questions. The interview responses and participant observations were analysed by firstly looking at the role of communities of practice theory in supporting the learning. The key aspects of a community “meaning, practice, community and identity” (Wenger, 1998:5) were identified within the responses from the interviews and observations. This links to learning as a practice based activity of a community of practice and learning as a co-emergent process (Fenwick & Tennant, 2004). This has then been explored in relation to the specific learning gained through these communities, relating to the ideas of pedagogic relations being “explicit, implicit and tacit” (Bernstein & Solomon, 1999:267). The idea of legitimate peripheral participation as a way of supporting new members to the groups has also been evaluated. Social learning as linked to apprenticeship is also examined, as are notions of expertise and how it is identified. Key issues of gender, ethnicity and authenticity, affecting both legitimate peripheral participation, and the role of communities of practice themselves, have also been discussed. Finally, the role of technology in supporting this learning has been examined. This has focused specifically on how participants have used social networking tools to support learning within their communities of practice.

### **Re-enactment groups as communities of practice**

This section initially discusses the role and function of communities of practice and how re-enactment groups can be seen as examples of these. It is useful at this point to return to the definition of what a community of practice is, being “a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation to other tangential and overlapping communities of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991:98). There was discussion of individual learning by participants. They also exhibited traits that evidenced that they were operating as part of not only their own community of practice, but also as part of the wider re-enactment community. It was clear to the participants that they were connected by a specific set of relations from the moment that they joined the group. These related not only

to the live events, but also to the sharing of information between members between these times and over the winter period.

One of the particular features that characterised these relations was knowledge of the norms and values of re-enactment. These were things that participants had learnt through their involvement in events and relationships with other re-enactors, rather than personal research. This social learning was very much a part of “learning which takes place as a function of the context, culture and locale in which it occurs” (Lave & Wenger, 1991:690). Re-enactment has its own culture, as do other hobbies that involve specialist knowledge, specific terminology, and intense dedication to leisure pursuits. The social aspects of this learning relate to the culture of the situation where the learning is taking place. Re-enactment group cultures differ depending on period being re-enacted and the type of shows that they participate in. Authenticity of costume and equipment was central to the participants interviewed and learning. What was, and what was not, authentic for their role was a central part of what their communication with each other. This is discussed further later in the analysis. Knowing about these self-imposed standards was a crucial part of the learning and this was particularly reflected in participants’ discussion of their membership of the communities of practice.

In further defining what communities of practice are Wenger refers to three aspects “mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire” (Wenger, 1998:73). Unlike other communities such as teaching and nursing, the re-enactment communities of practice are leisure groupings. They do not have the same norms and values as a workplace grouping and participation is purely voluntary. However, they can still be considered as groups where mutual engagement in the end product is vital, even though it is not connected to livelihood as employment is. “Mutual engagement involves not only our competence but the competence of others” (Wenger, 1998:76). This is particularly important when talking about combat skills where competence with weapons is vital.

One of the things that you learnt pretty much straight away via the training is the trust that you have between members, you need to be trusting and honest because

you are actually putting your life in their hands and vice versa. (Phil – interview May 29<sup>th</sup> 2016)

There are many examples of joint enterprise within the re-enactment communities of practice. The actual act of putting on an event demands co-ordination, commitment, and a willingness to deal with a number of variables, not least of which is the weather. Each of the events outlined in the previous methodology chapters has its own particular features, but all share the same basic structure. For a single group event this involves co-ordinating member's attendance, setting up of the encampment and arenas the night before, and running a programme of events on both days of the show. For multi- group events, although the first step will be undertaken by the organising committee, the other steps are the same albeit much larger in scale. An event at Bolsover Castle will involve 15 re-enactment group members and up to 1,000 visiting members of the public each day. The Templecombe event involves 400 re-enactment group members, some of whom are part of the organising committee, and up to 800 visitors. The largest event of the re-enactment calendar is Tewkesbury. This involves around 3,000 re-enactors, organised by a separate committee which does include representation from re-enactment groups, and approximately 10,000 visitors per day. Unlike other communities, such as workplace examples, the enterprise is very evident. It is in the successful completion of the event each time it is held.

The shared repertoire evident the many examples of co-operative working that takes place during an event. This may take the form of a weapons talk, an archery competition or a dance display. In these activities there is a sharing of both language and action in the forms of the particular skill or activity being portrayed. It is also evident through participation in activities not directly related to the public side of re-enactment (Eraut, 2010). These include weekly combat training, meeting for costume workshops and the social activities in the evenings at events. This is learning as a practice based activity and learning as a co-emergent process (Fenwick & Tennant, 2004) through relationships involving pedagogic relations which varied in their nature. These aspects are further explored in the next section of the analysis, which looks at the learning taking place within groups.

Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, (2002) identify both homogenous and heterogeneous groups within communities of practice. The interview participants in this study were members of 10 distinct groups all with their own identity as medieval re-enactment groups. All groups shared “a strong motivation for building a shared practice, even among people who share little else” (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002:25). As previously mentioned, re-enactors come from a range of social, educational and employment backgrounds but the groups serve as a focus for shared practice and shared interests.

Participants had often been members of two or three groups in their re-enactment careers, which ranged from 2 to 31 years. Some also held current membership of a number of groups to reflect different roles and skill sets. In thinking about the nature of interaction between communities of practice the notion of “a complex landscape” (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2014:15) has been used. Many of the participants had already had long re-enactment careers where they had taken on a number of roles within the group or groups that they were members of and therefore showed clear evidence of what Wenger refers to as “the evolution of the practice” (Wenger, 1998:154). This idea can be related to the re-enactment careers of the participants in the study in many different ways. It may be that the nature of the group that the re-enactor first joins does not have the right focus, or location, and so their engagement does not go beyond the peripheral. Alan started as a member of one group, the joined another which was more convenient geographically. He subsequently set up his own group with wife Christine, which they then recruited some of the members of the second group to as well. Ben is a member of two medieval groups, one as a combatant and one as a gunner, as well as a number of groups from other time periods. This means that there is a constant shift in the idea of new and older members for most groups. Not only do “relations shift in a cascading process. Relative newcomers become relative old timers” (Wenger, 1998:90), within a group but between different groups. It was evident from the interviews that there had been many changes in groups’ membership over time and this is something that is a feature of a community of practice as being “neither static nor fully explicit” (Eckert & Wenger, 2005:583).

The study involved 35 re-enactment groups in total through participant observations. This was where the interview participants were interacting with members of other groups at

larger events, evidencing the “other tangential and overlapping communities” (Lave & Wenger, 1991:98). This idea of a wider network of expertise is one that is shared by many of the participants, the sense that you have, not just your own group, but the skills and knowledge of the wider re-enactment community to draw on.

The biggest thing that you get from re-enactment is the fact that you are socialising with so many different people from all walks of life and the camaraderie and the way everybody supports each other within the community. It’s a sense of community that I sometimes don’t see in the outside world. (Laura – interview June 17<sup>th</sup> 2017)

This was also evident by particular people and groups being mentioned by participants as being acknowledged experts in their skill areas. For example, Kathleen and her group were cited extensively by others for their knowledge of costume and dance. Chris was very aware of the role of this wider community. His dance specialism wasn’t undertaken by many people so he had little in the way of overlap with other communities for this area. He had sought information from others about weapons and armour, and was keen to share his knowledge of medieval dance as well.

We learnt by asking other re-enactors. We have used British Plate and Plantagenet for advice. There is also a dance group leader in Exeter who we have talked to. Age of Chivalry and Plantagenets also do dance but only half a dozen groups are doing it in the UK. We will share with anyone as we are keen to spread dance within re-enactment. (Chris – interview Sept 16<sup>th</sup> 2017)

The interviews first sought to establish the motivation for joining a re-enactment group. This was partly to try and look at the ideas of motivation for sharing of practice (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). Of interest was whether people were joining an established group to try and learn a specific skill. Of the 22 participants there were only 6 who had joined groups for this reason. Three of these, Sean, Stan and Adam, had wanted to learn

sword combat and then looked for groups to join to do this. Two others, Matthew and Alan, had visited re-enactment events and then joined specifically to develop a skill. In Matthew's case it was sword combat and in Alan's it was archery. Robert had visited joust events prior to starting a joust group with friends. A further 5 people had visited an event and become interested while attending and had joined the group that was performing there. The particularly interesting aspect of motivation was that 11 of the participants had joined as a result of friendship or family ties with an existing member of a group without really knowing what it involved. Thus out of the 22 participants 16 initially had no clear idea of what their role or skill development would entail. For 50% of the participants joining was unplanned and in response to persuasion from others, in some cases quite sudden persuasion.

My friends were going off for a training weekend and one dropped a shilling in my pint and next thing I knew I was in a car going off to Devon. I had been recruited, but they did let me go and pick up clean underwear and a sleeping bag! (Laura – interview June 17<sup>th</sup> 2017)

This unplanned entry into the community of practice means that, for these re-enactors, membership had less to do with understanding the relations that take place within a group beforehand. Other studies of communities of practice (Farnsworth et al, 2016; Andrew, Tolson & Ferguson, 2008; Morley, 2016) on areas such as teaching and nursing, have looked at those who join a community where the context is already known. There is a general awareness of the learning in these fields, and the 'context, culture and locale in which it occurs' (Lave & Wenger, 1991:690). For these new members this was unknown but often had immediate appeal as described here of the first visit to the multigroup Tewkesbury Festival.

Steve, our friend, recommended we go and visit as he was playing Warwick at the event. We went to do that and immediately I was smitten and I thought this is it, this is the business, I want to do this. (Fred – interview June 18<sup>th</sup> 2016)

In analysing different types of communities of practice Amin and Roberts defined four different types “task/craft based, professional, epistemic/highly creative and virtual” (Amin & Roberts, 2008:356). Re-enactment groups mainly fit into their definition of the task/craft type of community being mainly concerned with the development of skills and in particular passing on skills which may be lost. This is certainly evident in areas such as Christine’s spinning and Sean’s leatherwork as these are all skills which are not routinely carried out or taught. There are some elements of the other types of communities within re-enactment groups as well. In common with professional communities of practice, re-enactment groups are often geographically dispersed rather than in one physical location. They do also make extensive use of virtual communication. Although individual re-enactment groups could not be defined as virtual communities themselves, there were virtual communities through forums and Facebook groups. These existed to support particular aspects of skill and knowledge development. These are discussed further in the analysis of online data.

All participants had different types of motivation for joining, whether it was an interest in a particular area, an enthusiasm to be part of something they had enjoyed watching, or encouragement by friends or family to be part of the hobby. They had developed their own roles within the community. All had taken on different roles within their groups as well as developing specific skills, and were able to identify different aspects of this skill and knowledge development.

### **Learning within the community of practice**

In thinking about the three aspects of a community already discussed “mutual engagement, sense of joint enterprise and shared repertoire of resources” (Wenger, 1998:73), it was evident that there were all three elements present within both the interviews and the participant observations.

For Phil the mutual engagement is evident through his fellow members’ enthusiasm for their skills and sharing their knowledge.

Basically if there's something that you want to do, be it metalwork or embroidery there's someone that will be happy to help and there's no-one that will try and stop you. And that's an extra reward, you're learning different skills as you do this, it's a brilliant creative commune. (Phil – interview May 29<sup>th</sup> 2016)

Matthew refers to this joint enterprise in his discussion of his newest piece of costume when talking about how Des had helped him with the process “for instance he'd just finished making a hood himself when I started making my hood so that coincided nicely, you know comparing notes and that, how to do things” (Matthew – interview May 27<sup>th</sup> 2017). As a new re-enactor Sean had used this shared repertoire extensively, citing specific people as being able to help him with his skill and knowledge development.

Theatrical skills are part of the training so Liam has done work on show fighting with me, given me points on how to improve the fighting from the shows as well as discussion with the others in the group. Public speaking has also been from Liam at live shows as part of weapons and armour talks. History I just learnt from talking to the group at shows. I have talked a lot to Tom about local history and he sends me articles to read. (Sean – interview May 29<sup>th</sup> 2016)

It was clear from both the interview responses and the participant observations that the re-enactors were using the three fundamental of communities of practice. This is summarised as “a *domain* of knowledge, which defines a set of issues; a *community* of people who care about this domain; and the shared *practice* that they are developing to be effective in their domain” (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002:27).

There was much that the re-enactors were gaining through involvement in the communities of practice that was helping them to be effective in their own domains of knowledge. The shared practice through specific social learning in areas such as combat and costume making

was evident in the products of that learning. In addition to learning through their own research, there were also examples of learning from watching other participants perform their demonstrations at the events. Thus the research done by individuals will be shared not only with the public, but with other re-enactors. This was true at both single group and multi – group events. Members would often attend fight demonstrations, craft talks and other displays by other groups to enhance their own knowledge. Many participants mentioned this unintentional learning that comes from being part of events. Phil had mainly discussed learning skills related to his own costume and armour in his interview. However, he had also listened to the head dress talks being given by the women in the group, and had learned about specific fashions and construction techniques. While this knowledge was not essential to his role, he felt that it gave him an appreciation of the level of knowledge that others had. He appreciated the skills they had developed to create these artefacts, which he saw as just as complex as his own armour making. This is what Wenger-Trayner refers to as “knowledgeability” (Farnsworth et al, 2016:142) which is about knowing other things about the community of practice that you are not competent in.

Analysis of the interview data showed that there was both procedural and declarative knowledge (ten Berge & van Hezewijk 1999) being used by the participants in their own research and creation of artefacts. The declarative knowledge of knowing ‘that’ certain things existed in the past, had to be supported by the procedural knowledge of knowing, ‘how’ they could be constructed and worn. This is particularly evident in Kathleen’s recreation of head dresses. This involved a complex journey of within her domain of knowledge, starting with her first text which she found in a local library. This journey then became a series of visits to churches, and to more detailed research into actual finds. “From that it led me to effigies, it led me to books which had real finds in, the London finds book. From that I was able to look into how it was constructed and then started looking at manuscripts” (Kathleen – interview July 8<sup>th</sup> 2017).

As she discussed, part of this learning journey is how to construct an authentic looking head dress from either a three dimensional image in stone, where there is no record of what was actually used in the construction, or a two dimensional image from a manuscript where you cannot obtain side or back views. This is similar to the example that Wenger uses of a

painting which “reifies a perception of the world, an understanding. It is an expression that makes a statement and focuses our attention in specific ways” (Wenger, 1998:70).

Kathleen has to take this reification and try to produce a wearable artefact. However, the focus of attention from this reified form is not usually that which is helpful to her. Again trial and error has been used extensively (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012) for obtaining this procedural knowledge of how to actually recreate the head dresses. This has not only involved knowledge of fabric manipulation but also of metalwork, gold and silver embroidery and beadwork. All of this has also been extensively researched and developed over the last 21 years of her involvement in re-enactment.

It just evolved really, from one thing led to another, it wasn't a set, set of steps, it's a gradual evolution, one thing leads to another, it kind of fans out, it's like a spider's web really, a knock on effect. It's quite convoluted. (Kathleen – interview July 8<sup>th</sup> 2017).



**Illustration 4: A Butterfly Hennin head dress made by Kathleen showing metalwork, beading and embroidery, image from Kat's Hats website**

For Kathleen, it was the outcome of these processes that led to her becoming a leading authority within the wider re-enactment community. Her contribution to the community is extensive, in terms of the sharing of her resources with other members.

For Sarah her domain of knowledge about costume making was specifically focused on how to make buttons for her first dress. For her the issue was in trying to determine how the fabric buttons she could see on illustrations in manuscripts could be made. The process she went through in turning this declarative into procedural knowledge was sometimes frustrating but once completed she described a real sense of satisfaction in being able to discuss how she had done this with fellow re-enactors and the public. This learning was supported, not just by members of her own group, but also by access to shared practice from other re-enactors. Sarah had spent time discussing her potential solutions with Emma and Karen, as well as using research within the wider community. In doing this she found a community that cared about the specifics of how to make fabric buttons and once she had worked out how to make them was able to share this practice with others.

This exploration of the domains of knowledge, and finding ways to solve issues was seen by many participants as a very enjoyable part of their learning. It also formed a significant part of their discussions, as supported by Braedder et al. (2017) “the medieval reenactors appreciate the process of filling gaps in existing knowledge and see themselves as explorative researchers and practical experts whose activities produce new insights about life in the Middle Ages. “(Braedder et al 2017:187). Rather than seeing their lack of knowledge as a detriment, it was seen that finding out how to do something gave a unique insight into the reality of the original craftspeople. This was more valuable than just the declarative knowledge of something’s existence.

Talking to other re-enactors about their research really broadens your horizons.

Reading an academic source can perpetuate misconceptions. Being able to re-create things practically gives you a great edge, not understanding the whole spectrum of mediaeval life but an aspect. (Colin – interview – May 27<sup>th</sup> 2017)

Sometimes re-enactors will need to go outside their own community to gain the knowledge they need. For Fred, after identifying the gaps in his domains of knowledge about gun manufacture, he had been assisted by staff at the Royal Armouries in Leeds. He had used their specialist knowledge, and access to equipment, in assisting him in having a replica made of a medieval hand gun. This had involved arranging for x-rays of the gun to be taken so that the interior structure of the gun could be determined. He then compared this to manuscript evidence of guns from the period. He was then relaying this information to the people who were casting the actual gun pieces. At the time of interview in 2016 this process had already taken four years of research and was not yet completed. Although Fred was going outside his re-enactment community for this specialist knowledge, he was bringing it back into the gunnery group he belonged to and sharing it with the others.

For Laura one of the issues with her domains of knowledge was that though declarative knowledge is sometimes referred to in sources, procedural knowledge is assumed. When looking at original sources this has to be taken into account. Many of the medieval sources were mainly visual, such as fight manuals with illustrations and little explanatory text.

A lot of this wasn't written down. Doug was looking at fighting manuals and it talks about 'usual stance' as if you know what that is. Cookery books are the same as it talks about mix the herbs 'in the usual way'. For them it was just an aide memoire for what they did and they mixed them probably several times a week so they didn't need to write it down, it's just frustrating for us looking back on it now. (Laura – interview June 17<sup>th</sup> 2017)

For the more experienced re-enactors interviewed, there was reflection on how this knowledge development had changed since first participation. This was partly in response to building relationships within the re-enactment community, both within own groups and with other re-enactors. This enabled them to gain access to the store of knowledge, and help with skill development, within the wider community. This access to the shared practice of a community is a significant feature of task/craft based communities of practice, as

discussed by Amin and Roberts (2008). It was also linked to the desire to improve skills to reflect changes in status. Length of participation was closely linked to status of character portrayed in most groups. As they changed characters, so the need for other knowledge and skills developed.

There was also a desire expressed by some participants, such as Christine and Karen, to become more involved in other steps in the process. They were interested in not just buying own fabric but spinning, weaving and dyeing it, creating jewellery themselves and being able to learn skills for every step of the process where possible. This desire to be as involved as much as possible in artefact creation rather than to see artefacts as evidence of consumption has been noted in other re-enactment research (Carnegie & McCabe, 2008; Turner, 1990) and is linked with the idea of having as authentic an experience as possible for the re-enactor. There was a desire amongst many of the participants for an intimate knowledge of the process (Gapps, 2009a) as well as being able to have a workable end product. This led them to go outside their own communities of practice to find other re-enactment groups that had this knowledge. This asking for help is a key feature of this learning (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012) and was something that was featured in many of the participants' accounts of their learning. Christine supports this by describing how she developed her spinning skills through seeing people doing this at multi-group events. As she became more confident and started spinning in public there were others that supported her with this learning by demonstrating alternative ways to use her drop spindle. She made contact at multi-group events with other re-enactors, "I just became friends with people, seeing them doing it and putting myself forward and saying 'can you teach me?'" (Christine – interview June 17<sup>th</sup> 2017).

For Phil, once he had chosen his character of a high status knight, he needed help with making the decoration for his helmet. He realised that although he did not have the skills himself there were others in the group that could help him. He was assisted in this by another member, Kevin, who had specialist metal work skills that had been developed through his own armour making experiences and they met up outside group event time to do this. This example of mutual engagement and shared practice, although only of two of

the group, is another example of how members of the community help each other with learning.

In some cases, participants such as Fred, first had to find people who could help and present themselves as legitimate in their intentions as potential gunners. He and friend Doug had original trained with swords, but his friend had decided he wanted to build a cannon.

We had to get other re-enactors who did all that, convince them that we weren't nutters and we were going to do it all properly, they taught us the ins and outs of the law, how to do it safely, how to use gunpowder. (Fred – interview June 18<sup>th</sup> 2016)

This involved spending time with others to learn about these aspects through conversation and being involved in other group's gun demonstrations. A lot of this learning was tangential, Fred had started by building a medieval cannon then expanded into other areas of gunnery. He ended ending up learning a lot about guns from other periods, which were still relevant to his time frame. After meeting fellow re-enactors who were involved in other aspects of gun use he subsequently attended a training event run by a professional historian where he gained access to further sources.

I met a pirate in the beer tent so got involved in pirate re-enactment. I went to Ed Fox's School for the Sailor twice where I was shown the 17<sup>th</sup> century seaman's manual. The process is still the same, a lot of things haven't changed. He was a curator for the Golden Hind and did training on the ship. (Fred – interview June 18<sup>th</sup> 2016)

In some cases, as discussed by Kathleen when talking about how she had learnt how to make head dresses, there was initially no-one she knew that she could learn from. As such she had to identify the domain of knowledge for what she had wanted to learn and the determining of outcomes for that learning (Carliner, 2013). Other participants had often

seen something they wanted being used by another re-enactor, and could approach them for guidance, as Sarah had with her buttons. When Kathleen started making head dresses twenty years ago she was the first person to her knowledge to engage in these reconstructions. Her contribution to the domain of knowledge to other re-enactors was acknowledged by several of the participants. They mentioned her as their most important source of information from her very extensively researched website and Facebook page. This learning has been supported by years of research, involving visits to a range of sources.

I've looked at collections in museums, I've been to an exhibition at the V and A on Opus Anglicanum, the medieval English gold work embroidery. I've also looked at vestments in a cathedral, to see how they are sewn and constructed. (Kathleen – interview July 8<sup>th</sup> 2017)

It has also involved direct contact with staff at museums, by phone and e-mail to ask for help in validating images and other sources. This has included a private visit to Arundel Castle to see a particular effigy not on public display, as research for the making of a particularly rare type of head dress.

Ben had also not found others within the community to engage with for his interest in embroidery. At the time of interviewing his membership was of two groups that were mainly focused on combat and gunnery, and these were male was dominated in their composition. He had followed his interests in embroidery through self-directed research in the medieval period and had also expanded into embroidery in other periods. This culminated in the reproduction of a 19<sup>th</sup> century embroidered waistcoat. He had, like Kathleen, used sources outside his community such as handling sessions at museums and exhibitions of costume. He was very keen to share his skills and knowledge with others, but found that his specialism was a little too specific within the re-enactment community as few people were interested in silk embroidery as he was.

Some of the re-enactors had very close relationships for their learning with others within their communities of practice, such as Christine described. Others didn't have this before developing their skills, but evidenced this as members of their communities in sharing practice with others. Alan was a good example of this. He had been a member of an archery club prior to joining his first re-enactment group. This had given him the basic skills that he needed. His practical experience in medieval archery had come from involvement as an archer in various multigroup events. He also spent time talking to other re-enactors during these events. He cited being left handed as something that made it difficult for him to be taught by others so he used observation of practice along with adaptation of the technique. Archery, like sword combat, does have a competitive element at events. After involvement in a number of battles and competitions, he became the archery captain for an event run by a friend within his re-enactment group. This led to him being asked to be captain at other events as his experience grew. His practical knowledge and his contextual knowledge, gained by research into the role of archery in medieval warfare, meant that he was able to play a major role in archery displays. In this he acted as a commentator, explaining aspects of archery to the public while fellow archers demonstrated their skills. For Alan his learning was very much a product of the membership of very loosely structured community of practice of archers. He did not have other within his group who did archery, so relied very much on contact with people within the wider community. His learning was a co-emergent process alongside others in battle situations or displays (Fenwick & Tennant, 2004). Much of this learning was implicit with Alan observing situations then later reflecting on them and realising what he had learnt from them (Bernstein & Solomon, 1999).

When thinking specifically about a shared repertoire it is useful to look again at its definition of including aspects such as "routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions or concepts" (Wenger, 1998:83) These aspects were particularly linked to combat skills and was used as a form of learning for new participants as well as the more experienced ones. This is particularly true of the way that activities such as tournaments and battles function shows. One common activity before a tournament at all events is the 'dressing of a knight'. This is used as both an educational experience for the visitors, but also to allow time for other combatants to get into armour ready for the subsequent tournament. One member of the group will be dressed in full armour, while

acting as narrator, assisted by a couple of the newer group members acting as squires. The squire's role during the tournament is to assist the other combatants with their armour and weapons. The dressing activity forms a very practical function for them of being involved in the show. It also assists the learning by reinforcing the name of the item, how it is attached and its function. There is a clear focus on the language and process of getting into armour, accompanied by stories relating to each piece of equipment.

This routine is clearly linked to the actual combat in tournament as each type of weapon and piece of armour's function is explained, this will be demonstrated in the live action, again usually based around a story that the tournament relates to. Repetition of these two events over a period of time assists the newer members in becoming familiar with the repertoire of the group. It also helps the group develop their relationships, both with each other, and the newer members. This links "observation, assimilation and emulation" (Guile & Young, 2011:176) in helping the new members learn the practical skills of live combat. Once this assimilation of ways of doing things has taken place and the new member feels confident they will take part in the tournament itself. This first show as a combatant rather than a squire can be a very powerful experience and is supported by the combat trainers in giving guidance which supports what has been learnt in the weekly combat training.

Yes, you're at ground level, you're not spectating any more, you're in the middle of things, it was just basic the way they structured it, following direction. You were loosely directed in the show and you did what you were asked to. (Matthew – interview May 27<sup>th</sup> 2017)

After these initial show experiences, once the combatant is deemed ready for full combat within the tournament, they will initially be paired with a partner of the same skill level. They will then gradually be paired with more skilled opponents. From a practical point of view this progress takes place over a number of years due to the limited amount of live shows that take place during the season. For most groups this will only be around six events

a year. This emulation gives a chance to develop the skills learnt in the fight training in a live audience situation and then feedback is given by the combat trainer.



**Illustration 5: The Swords of Mercia tournament combat with the lead combat trainers taking a central role**

This use of shared repertoire comes into the acting components of group shows. A lot of this comes through watching others in their shows although some of it can be incorporated into weekly training.

Dean is probably our best show fighter so we are looking to get him to do more on how to make it more showy and how they can make stuff more dramatic and that. Training is technical but a lot of the showman, show stuff you learn from the shows rather than in training. (Duncan – interview June 18<sup>th</sup> 2017)

Duncan concluded that watching the more experienced members of the group in live shows was really the only way to learn what is expected, especially thinking about audience interaction.

I think when it comes to your performance stuff that is something you learn over the course of the events, in terms of realising what things that crowds react to in the past and like things that you have done that you've not specifically practised in the Scout hut but you can do when you've got space in the arena on grass. Especially when it comes to performance its things like that, things to ham up, its jokes and things that have worked before which that same crowd haven't heard before yeh, yeh you may have used have a million times before. (Duncan – interview June 18<sup>th</sup> 2017)

The situated learning for combat situations thus has two aspects. The weekly combat training provides knowledge of terminology, skills and health and safety aspects. However, it is not until the live shows that the learning becomes truly situated, as Lave and Wenger explain “thus participation in the cultural practice in which any knowledge exists is an epistemological principle of learning” (Lave and Wenger, 1991:98).

Specific training will also take place at events. Liam had built up a collection of sharp swords, which are not used within re-enactment for health and safety reasons. Training with these was part of one of the participant observations at the Lincoln event. The purpose of this after hours training was to give the group experience of how these swords were used. In real life medieval combat, the aim would be to produce slashing and killing shots, which used a different technique to the attack and response technique taught in fight training. The training used water filled plastic containers. Liam first modelled the technique, observed by all of the combatants, then each person tried out the shots, with feedback and further demonstration as needed, again demonstrating “observation, assimilation and emulation” (Guile & Young, 2011: 176).

When looking at the types of resources used, reification is an important aspect as this is how knowledge is codified. In thinking about the “succinctness, portability, durability and focussing” (Barton and Hamilton, 2005:27) of different types of resources participants were very aware of the need to use a variety of resources. This was partly linked to the difficulty of specifying what was actually needed in terms of knowledge. Many of the participants had extended their learning from their original area, so that they could include additional information for the public about the context of that skill within medieval society. This often involved reading contemporary sources for detail of everyday life in the early 15th century, such as ‘The Book of Margery Kempe’. This was written by an English Christian mystic and is considered to be one of the first known autobiographies.

From that I think that you can get a strong sense of her mind-set and other people she would have been interacting with and I think that is quite helpful to get into that world. In order to make that text accessible I still had to know a lot of general stuff because again she doesn’t go into a lot of detail of description. She’s assuming you’re contemporary when she is writing it and therefore you’ll know what a bishop would be like and what an anchorite would be. (Duncan – interview June 18<sup>th</sup> 2017)

He had also been reading sources on medieval crime and punishment to link with an event based on the story of Robin Hood as he wanted to be able to give information to the public about what outlaws actually were. Thus he was not just focusing on one area of resource, but expanding due to his own desire to be able to support his initial role choice. Specifically, when reading contemporary sources there are aspects that cannot be understood without further research by the participant. It is this gradual awareness of own gaps in knowledge, and the ability to identify new areas of learning, that is such a powerful aspect of the learning within communities of practice (Carliner, 2013).

For Karen this process of identifying new areas of learning was a cycle of buying fabric, experimenting with it for different designs, constructing and then re-constructing garments. This she did to gain more knowledge of particular fabrics and designs worked with the commercial patterns that she had bought. Most of this process involved unexpected learning (Hager, 1998) which contributed to the overall knowledge of the properties of particular types of fabric and construction methods. There were occasions when the chosen fabric did not make it to become a finished garment due to its unsuitability once it was being actually worked with. This trial and error was often expensive but seen as an essential part of the learning process. The reification of the garment provided by the commercial patterns often did not match what in the manuscript sources that she was using. The other method of trial and error was to make garments without an existing pattern, using body measurements, draping of fabric and existing costume for guidance. This was a new way of learning how to sew for Sarah, when working with Emma and Karen, as she had previously only ever seen garments made from commercial patterns.

This type of experimentation was also evident in determining materials and resources that could be used for other participants. There is little in the way of reified knowledge for this aspect of learning. Costume sources for this period tend to be limited to museum catalogues which are concentrating on the form of the garment, not the usability. Armour sources focus on the form and construction of the armour. What is needed for the re-enactor is something that brings the two areas together to discuss practical issues when constructing garments to be worn with armour. In terms of the construction of costume to be worn in combat, some materials were found not to be successful. They were not able to withstand the wear and tear needed for use under metal armour. Again this was sometimes a time-consuming and expensive process where costume would have to be re-made.

Just trial and error, a lot of it just trial and error. I've learnt about different types of fabric, obviously to keep roughly in period and uhh the durability of it, as obviously sometimes, something that might look particularly nice might not be particularly

durable, especially in combat you know. I've learnt things like that the hard way.

(Matthew – interview May 27<sup>th</sup> 2017)

Joining a re-enactment group means that you have to rely initially on what is available through your immediate contacts, and then widen your knowledge as you gain more experience. Most of the participants did not have a skill area in mind when they joined. Therefore, they had to establish what was available to them in the group, and then look elsewhere for additional help if needed. This is where many participants mentioned the value of attending the larger multi-groups events as well to extend this circle of potential help into the wider re-enactment community.

Once you get into re-enactment you get into all sorts of side issues... the more people you meet; the conversations you have in the beer tent, which kind of usually end getting skewed to some sort of re-enactment talk or historical talk, so yes, you learn an awful lot. (Martin – interview June 18<sup>th</sup> 2017)

Although participants' own groups were identified as the prime source of learning, there was a strong sense of a larger community for those who did attend the multi-group events. This was particularly true when these were outside the group's own single show time focus, events known as multi-period. Much of the learning discussed in the interviews was about social relations between members of the group (Tough, 1999). There were a number of different factors affecting this learning, dependant on the relationships that were made. This could often influence the level and direction of the learning (Eraut, 2010). This was exemplified by small incidents recounted by participants which involved sharing of resources, knowledge of materials and problem solving strategies.

Someone had given Des a side of maille and we'd had a head to head working out what was wrong, basically it needed a slight alteration. We found that the metal that

he had used is a bit pliable so it is shedding links. (Matthew – interview May 27<sup>th</sup> 2017)

This unexpected interaction, which was as a result of asking for help, resulted in additional learning for both of the parties involved. This exemplifies the commitment to making use of resources rather than disposing of them as unsuitable. As well as the expense of purchase, many of the participants felt that this intrinsic motivation of making as much as possible, or making do with what was given to them, was really important to them. Matthew had made most of his own costume, which surprised some members of the public. He commented that it seemed as if being a male they often expected him not to be able to sew. Not all of the participants had made all of their own costume, preferring to concentrate on other aspects. He considered that having this control over his own production, and the learning that he had gained from this, had given him an additional aspect to his participation in re-enactment.

Some people are quite happy to just buy everything or get someone else to do it, do you know what I mean and I'd rather, I'd rather try if I can just because I'm a creative person, I like to create things. A balance of reading about things and then trying them out, it's like experimental archaeology really isn't it? (Matthew – interview May 27<sup>th</sup> 2017)

The shared repertoire of resources mentioned earlier can be problematic for groups as membership is often fluid and there is little in the way of codification of the learning. Only one of the groups, Falchion, had any form of member documentation. This mainly concentrated on health and safety rules, and guidance on costume. There was little in the way of evidence or documentation of the groups' activities that could be used for passing on skills and knowledge. The only thing that had started to be used by participants was the ad hoc videoing of certain aspects of combat by members of the public. This was then posted

by to the groups' public Facebook pages. There was also the occasional posted video from a fight training session but this was not done on a systematic basis.

This can cause problems when individuals leave the group as knowledge is not treated as an asset or "acknowledged, valued or exploited within organisations" (Andrew, Tolson & Ferguson, 2008: 248). The knowledge referred to earlier from Liam's extensive research about Fiore dagger techniques, built up over 12 years' participation in the Swords of Mercia group, has never been codified and it is now lost to the group as he no longer participates in shows due to a change in employment. The group has not replaced that knowledge although there are others such as Sean who are doing research in the same area and taking over roles in the shows. Generally, there is very little written information for new participants to these communities. Most of the groups interviewed structured their initial participation in the same way of allowing people to join the group, with a loan of equipment and possibly a probationary period which was linked to skill area. For example, attendance at combat training was very important in most groups but that was for health and safety reasons as well as becoming part of the group. Therefore, this set of relations within the community was fluid and relied on oral communication rather than written knowledge with the attendant risks of losing these shared resources unless they were in the form of physical equipment collectively owned by the group.

In summarising how this learning sits with the themes used for analysis it is useful to refer back to the work of Fenwick and Tennant (2004), and the first two of their four aspects of adult learning. Learning as acquisition was evident in the amount of factual knowledge that the participants had gained through participation. Part of this was linked to aspects of the shared practice within the group and the domains of knowledge that were explored. This was particularly true for the more popular areas such as weapons and costume. There was an emphasis on the collection of physical sources of information. Reification of this knowledge took many forms, however there was a reliance on paper-based, rather than web-based sources. Many of the participants mentioned the number of sources that they had bought for their research area. They clearly saw evidence of their own learning was that they owned, and had read large numbers of texts. Learning as reflective process was evident in both individual reflection and group reflection. In thinking about what was being reflected

on it is useful to relate this to Krathwohl's (2002) different areas of knowledge. He identifies factual, conceptual, procedural and metacognitive knowledge as all contributing to understanding of a specific area. By being able to identify the specific aspects of their performance they were able to display "self-knowledge" (Krathwohl, 2012:214), about their own learning.

During the interviews there was mention of using others within the community as sources of knowledge to validate what they had produced. As individuals they were reflecting on the success of manufacture, and trial and error of different materials and process. In group situations there was use of reflection to analyse the performance aspects of the event and to discuss the psychomotor skills evident in this. Learning as a practice based activity of a community and learning as a co-emergent process was also evident and this has been examined in the previous section. It will also be further discussed when looking at the role of the master and apprenticeship relationships.

Very little of what the participants described as skills and knowledge gained through re-enactment were things that they used in their everyday lives. There were some aspects that were mentioned, such as developing the confidence to machine sew and cookery, that can be considered as topics that relate to everyday activities. However, behind both of these activities there lies much more that was specifically related to their knowledge needed for re-enactment. This was where the participants had used research from a number of sources, including contemporary sources and texts published by acknowledged experts in the field. The knowledge gained in this context is very often high status knowledge itself, that which would be found within graduate or post-graduate study. However, the knowledge has not been acquired in order to gain high status in formal education terms. As none of the participants has any formal accreditation in their skill areas, there were various ways in which they sought to address issues of expertise and validity in their own research. Validity of information was addressed in many different ways by the participants, and in some cases substantiating own research was challenging. They were very conscious of the importance of presenting accurate information to the public. They considered there was a significant responsibility not to be giving information that was not valid during events.

There was evidence of a distinction between the grades of knowledge that the participants had obtained through their research and skill development. Examples of first order and second order knowledge (Mi, 2015) were discussed and observed. The first order knowledge of particular facts about weapons was noted at Bolsover Castle, during a public display of dagger work. Liam's display involved his narrating while demonstrating the use of the dagger with Sean. He also was evidencing his second order knowledge of being aware of how he had obtained that knowledge and what had he had not been able to establish. He outlined for the public where his sources had come from, and what aspects he had not been able to obtain any evidence for. Examples were explanations about how the Fiore manuscript images that he had used did not detail all of the steps for each defensive move. He had to interpret some things from these images for missing moves. Also, as the text had been translated from 15<sup>th</sup> century Italian, there were some phrases that he did not understand.

In addition, some participants showed awareness of how the different types of combat skills that they had learnt were linked, and the function of each different type of skill. This second order knowledge enabled them to categorise what they had learned, and assign a purpose to each set of knowledge and skills.

I fight on three different levels, there's the show fighting that I do. I would describe show fighting as almost like you're deliberately fighting badly. Like in terms of it's allowing people opportunities to make big strikes that you wouldn't normally give them that chance to. Quite honestly it looks more realistic to an audience than competitive fighting does. (Duncan – interview June 18<sup>th</sup> 2017)

His discussion of these different aspects show that he is aware of the different types of knowledge as it relates to his both his personal skills. It also shows how he can improve by knowledge of other combatants. This is particularly in the way he could improve his skills by becoming more confident with weapons he would not normally use in his show fighting. This second order knowledge also relates to what is needed by the audience in terms of

both verbal explanations in demonstrations. It also relates to showmanship in terms of turning combat skills and knowledge into an effective display for the audience. There is also much to be gained through the event itself that is often not directly related to own skill areas. There is also thinking about how the knowledge that has been obtained can be shared with the visiting public.

The domains of knowledge acquired by the participants, through their involvement in the community of practice, can be classified using the taxonomy of cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains (Krathwohl, 2002). Cognitive learning is that which is defined as factual, conceptual, procedural and metacognitive knowledge (Krathwohl, 2002). It is thus linked to both the cognitive and psychomotor domains in terms of knowing aspects of procedure for particular skills. Much of the knowledge gained was that of factual knowledge of medieval history, though this was very different depending on role and group membership. The 22 participants were members of 10 separate groups, all with different remits in terms of who they portrayed, and the types of events that they did. Some of the groups, such as Falchion and Swords of Mercia, cover a wider period as their timespan of events runs from 1200 to 1500. Others, such as the Thomas Stanley Household, only cover the Wars of the Roses battles between 1455 and 1487. This factual knowledge covered dates and locations of key events. There was also knowledge of persons involved for whom historical records exist, for example the battalion commanders within the 1471 Battle of Tewkesbury. This knowledge was used both explicitly, and as background for other aspects of learning. For example, when explaining to members of the public when a particular piece of legislation was passed, or how many people were estimated to have taken part in a battle, there would be factual knowledge used. There was also evidence of factual knowledge being used to support decisions on the making of artefacts, which may not be explicitly shared, for example the rules concerning heraldic design painting a new shield.

There was also factual knowledge which was specific. This knowledge was divided into two areas. The first related to the chosen skill area developed by participants, such as combatants, archers and gunners. Factual knowledge of history relating to the development of weapons and armour was mentioned by all participants. This also covered terminology for equipment and knowledge of social aspects relating to that equipment. This was

information such as who would have used it, and medieval legislation relating to its ownership. Those involved in sword combat also had a knowledge of metalwork processes from a theoretical point of view. Understanding the different techniques used to make swords, and the basic physics of sword fighting, enabled them to make choices about weapon purchases. It also helped them understand aspects of combat training. For gunners there was also practical physics and chemistry that had been acquired. This was to enable them to understand the different conditions that would affect gun firing, such as recoil and the impact of air temperature and humidity. Their learning also involved knowledge of how to obtain licences as, unlike swords, guns cannot be bought and used without holding a valid licence. This knowledge is quite specific to different categories of gun. This was explained by one of the gunners when talking about moving into a new area, where the local police had not dealt with re-enactment gun licensing before.

Doug actually taught the police a lot about the law, and the difference between a shotgun and a firearm. The cannonberg is a firearm as it has a short barrel and narrow bore and the cannon is a shotgun. We have shotgun, firearms and black powder licences which means we can carry and store powder and carry it to events.

(Laura – interview June 17<sup>th</sup> 2017)

For participants in other skill areas, their specific knowledge also contained factual information about how that area linked into wider medieval society. Christine had undertaken extensive research into the wool trade. She had read books and articles written by historians to support her practical learning of spinning. She had learnt about both the economic and social significance of this, including how it contributed to both family income and international trade. Kathleen's portrayal of a medieval noble woman had involved learning about sumptuary legislation, through looking at sources written about early dress, that dictated which fabrics could be used depending on status. She had also acquired knowledge of textile trading and the household economics of noble families. This had been achieved by using archives from museums detailing expenditure. Adam, who had researched the character of a barber surgeon, had learnt aspects of surgical history. This

included the types of injuries sustained in combat, and details of medical training available. This was along with the uses of the various pieces of replica equipment he had purchased. Chris's background knowledge for his dance display included the history and origin of the dances. He had also researched the social customs related to dance, and the context of dance within medieval society, including its restriction by the Church.

The second aspect of specific knowledge was personal history where real life characters were portrayed. Much of this was again factual knowledge, relating to birth and death dates, marriages and children, as well as detail of land holdings and participation in significant events. Participants who covered multiple periods also commented about learning extended family history. They would often portray members of different generations of the same family depending on the timeframe of that event. For all participants across the groups there was a commitment to memorising this factual information. This was partly so that they were able to be accurate when talking to the public. It was also to use this factual information to develop the context of their own roles. The aim of this knowledge acquisition was to enable an effective as possible portrayal of the character during the event, rather than just to be able to give a biographical account.

In addition to cognitive knowledge, participants had gained practical skills in various tasks and areas relating to their chosen re-enactment skill area. Psychomotor skills were particularly important in combat, involving extensive skill development from observation, guided response through to overt response (Wu et al., 2007) in handling the chosen weapons in single bout and battle combat. Combatants who engaged in sword fighting had learnt the widest range of psychomotor skills. This was due to the complexity of handling the different types of weapons and fighting in a wider range of situations. Gunners and archers had a more limited range of engagement options open to them at events. At single group events the learning was of how to demonstrate the equipment and skill rather than engage in combat with it.

There were also associated psychomotor skills learnt by sword combatants which were not evident for archers and gunners. This was due to the need for additional protective armour and clothing. This is very closely linked to group membership and character portrayal. In

groups such as LEAD and Swords of Mercia all experienced combatants portray medieval nobility. The type of armour and costume needed for these roles can only be obtained commercially through expensive custom commissions. Therefore, most of the participants had learnt the skills to make as much as possible to cut down on cost. Phil's background as a commercial graphic artist had enabled him to transfer his painting skills into decorating his equipment with his character's heraldry but he had to learn other skills of pattern cutting, leather and metalwork to make certain items.

The cuisses are for upper leg protection. I do a template in a large sheet of paper wrapped around my leg and you adjust accordingly depending on how you want it to look. Once you've done the paper templates I've got two layers of leather, thick and thin, so cut that out. Underneath the cuisses I've got leather plates, some of the knights would have used metal, steel plates but in my case cos I've got padded hose I've got leather. And then through the cuisses from the outside to the inside I've got some flowered studs which are fixed in position. (Phil – Interview May 29th 2016)

The specific skills learnt for costume making were varied. All those who specialised in this area had learnt pattern cutting, machine and hand sewing. For some there was also fabric painting, silk embroidery, gold work embroidery, applique, quilting, beadwork, leatherwork and metalwork. Group membership was a factor here. Those groups who primarily worked for English Heritage focused on using as much hand stitching as possible. This meant the participants who belonged to those groups had much more of a focus on this, with some citing learning a range of different types of hand stitching. Those who portrayed higher status roles also developed skills to reflect their status, such as the silk embroidery and gold work.

Other skill areas such as fur preparation, cookery, pewter casting and dancing had specific psychomotor aspects attached to them. The rabbit skinning and fur preparation, which Bess did in conjunction with Christine's cookery demonstration, involved careful removal of the

skins in one piece as far as possible. This was a process that demonstrated fine motor skills in knife work to enable this to be achieved. Dancing skills demanded personal physical skills but also co-ordination, balance and team work. This was particularly relevant in negotiating the format of the dancing within different physical demonstration spaces. For some participants, the skill development was not only for the making of costume and accessories, but was also used within events as a demonstration itself. This was particularly evident amongst women portraying noble characters. Using needlework skills was part of the role of that character, as well as having a functional end point. It was also evident with leatherwork where participants would spend free time at events working on projects, as well as talking to the public about what they were doing.

The amount of skill development was something that some participants had not envisaged initially “when I first joined I never actually thought that I’d be learning something like that, I am reasonably hands on person I like to do as much stuff as I can. It’s nice to figure out the process” (Matthew – interview May 27<sup>th</sup> 2017). He had joined the group to develop the particular skill area of sword combat. However, he had found an interest and enjoyment in making costume and armour which had very much extended both his cognitive and psychomotor skill development. The competence with these skills had been developed over his 13 years in re-enactment. They had been part of his negotiations with other members of the group and formed an important part of his current skillset.

The psychomotor and cognitive skills learnt are closely linked. This is not only in the fact that knowledge of the process and materials are needed, as well as the practical skills. It is also in recognising differences between how those skills would have been developed authentically, and how the re-enactors have learnt them. This acknowledgement of experience based practices (Kalshoven, 2015) relates both to how the skills were actually learnt. It also links to the knowledge of availability of materials and equipment and what compromises have to be made in developing these skills within 21<sup>st</sup> century society. It was also evident that participants knew where their own skills gaps were and had identified future learning, as in this evaluation of a current garment.

If I was doing this as it would have been done properly, I would embroider it, this is a future plan, what I think I would like to do is finally embroider my lions, currently they are painted on. There's a bit of a process for doing that, I guess it's kind of you can do it as you develop the skills that you learn, I don't do embroidery but that's the next step up. (Phil – interview May 29th 2016)



**Illustration 6: The heraldic surcoat with painted lions made by Phil for his character**

**William de Bohun with accompanying shield and helmet mantle**

The affective domain is central to learning. Attitudes, confidence and motivation are all key factors in successful learning in all situations (Green, & Batool, 2017). Within the affective domain, the confidence to communicate with the public was a key factor mentioned by many of the participants, particularly thinking about their own roles as educators. Although communication skills can be considered in part as psychomotor skills, most of the participants had spent time learning the very specific skills needed to work with a range of audiences. This involved the ability to have interpersonal interactions with a wide range of

ages and interests. There was also the aspect of confidence in own skills, and the learning of different behaviours. This linked to the actual participation, of learning to portray a peasant, knight or king. This affective domain learning was very closely linked with aspects of identity and belonging to the group. This is further discussed as part of legitimate peripheral participation in the next section of this analysis.

### **Legitimate peripheral participation**

This section outlines how legitimate peripheral participation in re-enactment groups was experienced by the participants. It firstly looks at the ideas around legitimacy and then how participation moves from being peripheral to full involvement. Lave and Wenger (1991) state that participation is vital in allowing learning to take place through more than just observation. As previously discussed Wenger identifies a number of different ways that participation in a community can take place. These are “peripheral, inbound, insider, boundary and outbound trajectories” (Wenger, 1998:154) and relate to people’s length of participation and commitment to it. Those who are on the inbound trajectory such as the newer members of groups who were included are of particular interest to the study in terms of how they are supported by other members to become full participants.

Legitimacy is about having the right to be part of that group and to participate. For some of the participants in this study that was difficult at first. Some of the participants joined specifically to develop an interest such as Sean and Stan in wanting to learn sword combat. Most participants however did not have a clear idea of what they wanted to do as part of the group when they first joined. As Christine explains she and her husband Alan visited an event at Chirk Castle and he spent a lot of time on the ‘Have a Go’ archery that the group there was running as he was really interested in this area. She was initially reluctant to join this re-enactment group, not really knowing what she would do. She explains that her husband felt differently” well he was hooked, I wasn’t convinced, it took me a while to kind of get used to the idea and now it’s more me than him” (Christine – interview June 17<sup>th</sup> 2017). Alan had been a member of an archery club prior to joining a re-enactment group so had undertaken his basic training with them. Therefore, he already had a number of skills in

this area. His peripheral learning was more about the historical aspects of longbows and their significance during the 100 Years' War (1337 – 1453).

What you have access to participate in will differ depending on which group you are a member of. This is to a certain extent defined by who the group is hired by, what events they attend, and the way that the group members share expertise and determine competence. Since the first group she joined had a focus on combat, Christine was not sure what she would do, how she would legitimise her membership as she explains "I wasn't sure what to do, I got a braiding wheel, as I thought it might be authentic and easy to do, didn't know it wasn't authentic." (Christine – interview June 17<sup>th</sup> 2017). Her early experiences as a re-enactor did not make her reluctant to be involved, but she found herself uncertain about what she was doing. It was not until they joined another group a few years later and she met a fellow re-enactor with a vast experience of textile work that she became more confident about what area she wanted to develop. Much of the early participation in a re-enactment group is establishing where the expertise is (Amin & Roberts, 2008) and Christine felt more comfortable after meeting Jane from her new group and being taught how to use the lucet, an authentic tool for making braid. Thus she could legitimise her role within the group as she had something to do.

In thinking about what this being on the periphery involves it is useful to think about how this works in practice. "Peripherality provides an approximation of full participation that gives exposure to actual practice. It can be achieved in various ways, including lessened intensity, lessened risk, special assistance, lessened cost of error, close supervision or lessened production pressures" (Wenger, 1998:100). All of these are used when looking at the ways that new re-enactors are supported. In terms of general participation there is a staged process that re-enactors go through in becoming fully involved in the life of the group. This links very closely to Hall's (2017) idea of "the placement of the interaction can be anywhere from the edge (identified as legitimate peripheral participation) for a 'novice' to locations moving closer to the centre as their expertise grows" (Hall, 2017:123)

This lessened risk is exemplified by legitimate peripheral participation within weapons combat. The novice combatant will start from within the circle, as defined by the arena

ropes, but only the edge. This experience is designed both to help the new combatant feel included in the event as well as give them practical experience of the way that the show is managed. There they will be confined to assisting the more experienced re-enactors with aspects such as weapons handling talks or acting as a squire. As they become more experienced they will move to the middle of the circle when they become part of the actual combat. The first show experience will involve very limited interaction with either members of the public, or the other combatants.

I think it was just walking on as like a squire with a tabard, a Despenser tabard **(denoting the heraldry of his knight)**, and walking in with a spear and a few bits of armour that people had cobbled together my way. You know like a gambeson **(padded jacket worn under armour)** and leggings and things like that and umm yeh, very overwhelming. Yeh, but good though, good fun. (Matthew – interview May 27<sup>th</sup> 2017)

Heather, an experienced fighter who is also one of her group's fight trainers, describes a system of support for novice combatants. Her group, Plymouth Medieval, does have a specific staged combat tests.

We then put them out into a show with someone safe and gentle to make them look good. Once they have been coming to training for a year they can then pass a knight's test and they get to wear their own colours. (Heather – interview Sept 16<sup>th</sup> 2017)

For Martin, he had spent a few weeks getting to know the group at combat training sessions before formally joining. This was to allow him full access to aspects such as the group insurance and equipment "it is the fact of becoming a member that allows participation and

therefore learning to take place” (Fuller et al., 2005:51), His first experience of a show came after a couple of months of combat training where he was given a specific role.

It was Hemlock Happening, a small event held locally. My role in that first show was show and tell to the public about swords, armour and soft kit and also participate in a short tournament and melee, surprisingly enough I lost. (Martin – interview June 18<sup>th</sup> 2017)

In terms of battle combat a similar process is followed, with the squire element from shows often being replaced by a role as a water carrier or flag bearer. This role allows the novice on the battle field without full engagement. As a water carrier, they are also responsible for observing the action and reporting concerns to the marshals on the battlefield. This also involves alerting first aid as appropriate. This gives a novice a chance to experience the flow of the battle, to observe combat and to see at close quarters the action without risk of injury. Thus they are shadowing the more experienced combatants, again with lessened risk. Their involvement is limited but it does give some insight into the reality of the process which weekly combat training cannot do. Once this process has taken place and the combatant feels that they are ready, they will go onto the battlefield. The decision to take part in battlefield combat is left to the participant once they have reached a level where they are deemed as competent to do so by the group fight trainer. Some participants had spent longer observing before taking part and others felt confident to do so earlier on. In this respect, for combatants, there are different amounts of time taken for their “peripheral, inbound, insider, ..... trajectories” (Wenger, 1998:154), according to their individual needs.

Most re-enactors had like Martin done a few shows with just their own group before participating in one of the larger multi-group events but for others, such as Duncan, there was a different experience. As he had joined the group near the end of the summer season, his first event was a larger one in which he took part in the battle. He describes this first experience of combat and how he was supported.

My first show I went to was Caldicot in South Wales. So for that show I'm wearing an armband to illustrate it's my first show but equally I was in amongst my group who are picking out people for me to fight who they knew and who they can trust who will not bury me so that was 2006. (Duncan – interview June 18<sup>th</sup> 2017)

As well as costume new re-enactors will also be lent armour and weapons and be supported by the rest of the group in all new experiences. Duncan reflects on this first event from his current experience "I find it weird looking back at pictures as you can clearly see I'm wearing entirely borrowed kit umm yeh, I didn't even realise what I was doing." (Duncan – interview June 18<sup>th</sup> 2017)

He did not realise until later how well supported he had been in that first battle. As an experienced re-enactor and group fight trainer he now uses that same strategy with new members of the group.

I wasn't even aware at the time of just how heavily monitored I was being. By just people having behind me and it comes back years later on where I'm discussing events with people and they are saying umm about the event and how I was moving. And I didn't realise I was being so closely assessed for the whole thing. It's a bit like what we do now with new people, we will release them a bit like a goldfish into a tank, into a controlled area. We wouldn't put them against anybody they don't necessarily know, just keep an eye on them the whole time. (Duncan – interview June 18<sup>th</sup> 2017)

Legitimate peripheral participation was very closely linked to establishing a role and an identity within the group. Membership of a community of practice always implies participation in some aspect of the life of the group and a willingness to learn and to develop those skills to a certain level of competence (Fuller et al., 2005). One of the key

concepts of a community of practice is that of mutual engagement, as discussed previously “what it takes for a community of practice to cohere enough to function can be very subtle and delicate” (Wenger, 1998:74). To enable them to feel part of a coherent group it was important that members had a function within that group.

Karen knew what she wanted from the group she joined but it took some time to establish this her involvement. She had joined the group after seeing them at an event at a local castle, and states her motivation as being quite straightforward.

The reason I started re-enacting was a fairly vain one, it was because I saw a very pretty dress when I saw a re-enactment at Bolsover. Bea was wearing a white dress with a fur trim with a lovely hat and she just looked like a princess and I wanted to be a princess. (Karen – interview June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2016)

For Karen this participation took time to develop as she did not have the skills needed to make her own costume at the start. As establishing a role within the group is a crucial part of legitimate peripheral participation, once Karen had identified hers, as Lady Alice de Lacy, she the felt more comfortable about her involvement. She made her first costume, with support from other members of the group. However, she still found herself on the periphery for a long time. She was lacking in confidence about her role within the shows and in interacting with the public, describing her first show experience as one of mild confusion “I followed people around. I lacked confidence in talking to the public, and I still do” (Karen – interview June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2016).

Sean had been attending combat training for some time and felt established in his role there. However, the first group event was very different in terms of how he felt about his legitimacy and involvement. He again reflected on some initial concerns about what was happening “the first show was mildly confusing so I just watched but the after show campfire chat made you feel included” (Sean – interview May 29<sup>th</sup> 2016). In this respect Sean was experiencing the same types of issues as those that other so when they first join

the community. He had “guest status as temporary visitors who had a limited amount of time to get up to speed in making sense of important community practices” (Johnston,2016:539) and had to quickly get used to the routine of the event without feeling as if he was in the way. He did this mainly by observing others during the event.

The learning that takes place within this legitimate peripheral participation is often based on “observation, trial and error, asking for help, conversing with others, listening to stories, reflecting on a day's events “(Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012:4). This aspect of listening to stories about the group's previous events helped to foster a sense of belonging for Sean. Although he had gained confidence in the combat side the situating of this learning “as a function of the context, culture and locale in which it occurs “(Lave & Wenger, 1991:690), took some time to establish. For him it was the norms and values (Parker, 2006) of this live event that needed to be consolidated and linked with his learning at weekly training. The fact that he was a new member with no specific role at that point meant that his first day was limited to helping out where possible. On the second day of the first event he was more aware of what was expected Having spent social time with the group the previous evening he felt more included in the group's activities.

Sarah describes her initial participation as being slightly different in terms of its involvement. She became interested in joining a re-enactment group when she started working with Emma, who had been re-enacting since she was a child. Sarah felt that being invited to join by an existing member had helped with her involvement in being at the shows and her subsequent peripheral participation “I don't know if it was the way I came into the group was usual or not because again I, I had Emma holding my hand quite a lot” (Sarah – interview May 29<sup>th</sup> 2016). One of the key aspects of legitimate peripheral participation in a re-enactment event is having something suitable to wear, otherwise you will remain outside of Hall's (2017) circle. Being in costume allows you start this legitimate role. It is normal practice for groups to lend equipment to new re-enactors, so that they can try out the hobby without the expensive commitment. Sometimes this will be communally owned equipment for new members to borrow but often, as in Sarah's case, it was loaned from several different members. Her first event was an example of this.

I came along to a show, met everyone, I think a couple of weeks beforehand I'd gone to one of the fight training sessions held by the group so I knew a couple of the guys there and so basically everyone showed me what happened during the group and lent me some clothes and said 'there you go, get on with it, have fun, if you have any questions ask' and yes, and it was a good baptism of fire. (Sarah – interview May 29<sup>th</sup> 2016)

She describes her confusion over what was happening at that first event with the language that people were using when helping her dress. Re-enactment groups function as discourse communities (Guldberg & Pilkington, 2006) with their own discourse expertise and specific lexis and this was experienced by her as she was getting into costume for the first time.

Yes, I think that was one of the most confusing things, it's the terminology of items of clothing, of weapons. It's learning all of the little words and the customs and the different ways that people act when you're in front of the public. Things like aiglets and lucet cord and bassinet, all these words that sound so lovely on the tongue but yes, trying to work out how to put the clothes on ..... it, it was a complete culture shock. (Sarah – interview May 29<sup>th</sup> 2016)

Having to learn the terminology as well as wear unfamiliar dress is a key part of the legitimate peripheral participation experience and one that all new members of re-enactment groups experience. Although she was supported by people explaining the meanings of the specific lexis there are a lot of different terms to learn. This practice intangibility that Sarah experienced (Probst & Borzillo, 2008), was not a deliberate attempt to confuse but rather one that illustrates the difficulty of experienced members of a group trying to explain what they do, while doing it at a live event. As with other areas of learning such as teaching, there can be no substitute for the actual experience. It is often difficult to fully explain practice to a novice without using jargon or unfamiliar language. Although she

had attended the combat training, at this first event there were still many gaps in her knowledge that the community needed to fill. This is often one of the difficulties that established groups have in identifying what these are (Fuller & Unwin, 2003). Although Sarah had encountered re-enactors before through visiting events, the act of becoming one meant that she was then moving from the familiar to the unfamiliar due to her costume (De Groot, 2006).

As mentioned previously the move from peripheral to full participation takes different amounts of time depending on role, time and money to obtain equipment. In terms of combat, this is very much linked to training progress. In both the Falchion and Swords of Mercia groups this takes place over a period of months with each type of weapon. The training is controlled by the fight trainers. Only when a person has reached a level of competence with one weapon will they be allowed to move on to the next one. The lead combat trainers for each group have identified categories of competence that they use for the group members as described here “what we do is I do have four grades that they have for each weapon, never used, novice, competent within group and the final stage as instructor” (Neil – interview July 9<sup>th</sup> 2017). Although these levels are identified within the Falchion group, and used by other combat trainers such as Duncan, they are not formalised in any competency test within this group. Neil felt that he knew his combatants well enough to be able to use constant observation and feedback to enable him to determine their progress. The structure of his programme uses explicit knowledge about the different weapons and their handling (Bernstein & Solomon, 1999). There is a staged process controlled by the combat trainer, which involves developing competence with a wooden training sword before progressing on to using a metal one. Once the trainer is satisfied that competence has been achieved, then other types of sword and combinations of sword and protective equipment are introduced. By the time a combatant reaches instructor level within the group they would be expected to be able to fight with a range of different types of weapons to a safe standard.

Within the Swords of Mercia group there are the same progression routes through the weapons. However, there are more formal assessments of skills which take place initially to determine stamina, and then again at different levels. These are known as squire, man at

arms, sergeant and knight's level and involve combat tests with different types of weapons. The tests are carried out as timed bouts with the combatant and their trainer. They are assessed by the trainer with verbal feedback given as to safe handling of weapons used, and any developmental areas needed. Although these tests are a long established method of progress within the group's training they do not exist in any codified format. Combatants are informed of the staged nature of the tests when they first join the group and are encouraged to progress as fast as they are able given personal fitness level and availability to attend training. Passing the tests give the right to take on other roles within the live shows. For example, passing the man at arms test gives the right to participate in the show tournament fully as a combatant rather than a squire. This type of assessment is common in re-enactment groups but is not standardised between groups as explained in Braedder et al's research "informal peer assessment is the main source of authority among the medieval and World War II reenactors, who continually evaluate their own practice and that of their fellows "(Braedder et al., 2017:185). Thus as Wenger (1998) identified, peripherality is concerned with assistance and lessened risk. Movement to being an insider is about being able to fight without assistance and being able to assess own risk.

For combatants, the wearing of own colours is a significant part of the full participation and comes after a series of combat tests have been passed. It means that the participant can use their own heraldry and be a knight themselves, rather than being a squire for another knight. This means that the re-enactor will have researched a character that they wish to portray, and be making the artefacts needed for that such as surcoat, shield and banner. Thus this period of time is one where they are likely to be developing further skills and knowledge to enable them to do this. Heraldic garments are unique and cannot be purchased ready-made. Therefore, they have to be either made by the participant or commissioned from a specialist trader. This further serves to both legitimise the re-enactor is a very recognisable format within re-enactment, but also to recognise their move to insider status.

For non-combatants there is no such process of skills testing. Their moving from peripheral to full participation is linked to aspects such as wearing all of their own costume for the first

time at an event, rather than borrowed equipment. This is again supported by the group members as Phil describes.

Great advice was given not to buy so much kit straight away as it's a hobby that can get expensive, is expensive. You are gently led by the hand as to what to buy, what not to buy and the other members are always there to help with questions that you have but you start to formulate an image in your head of what you want. (Phil – interview May 29<sup>th</sup> 2016)

Matthew has been instrumental in advising new members as one of the most experienced re-enactors in his group. He has seen many new members make mistakes, as he cautions “the natural rush for someone when they join a group is just go on the internet and buy something and that's not always the practical way.” (Matthew – interview May 27<sup>th</sup> 2017) For Sarah, she only felt that she was fully participating, at the Ashby show in the May of her second year of re-enacting. At this she wore the outfit she had worked on for months, with the help of Karen and Emma. She was very pleased with her progress, and proud of her work but did also compare herself to the more experienced members of the group.

It frustrates me that I'm not progressing as fast as I would like because I see people who have re-enacted for years and you are all so comfortable being who you are and doing what you do. I do think sometimes I don't have that confidence and comfort in doing what I am doing as I don't have the time to do the research and make more of what I know and what I am and you know put my mark on everything. So yeh, yeh I, just not enough hours in the day. (Sarah – interview May 29<sup>th</sup> 2016)

For Sarah it was not just about making a costume, although she had researched what she wanted to make and then been successfully in learning to construct it. She still felt that she lacked experience in how to become her character. This was partly to do with finding one

that fitted the garments she had made, but also about developing her own identity within the group. “Participants forge new identities from their new perspectives. These changes can be encouraging or unsettling. They can reveal progress that had remained unnoticed: you suddenly see all that you have learned because you are in position to help someone.” (Wenger, 1998:90). For Sarah and Sean this was evident towards the end of the research period. Sean was giving advice to newer members on leatherwork techniques and Sarah was encouraging newer fighters during training. Even though they still felt relatively new to the group, others had taken over their new member status.

As well as full insider participation, other participants in the study showed evidence of “boundary trajectories” (Wenger, 1998:154). Martin had an early membership of the Falchion group, with whom he learnt sword combat. He became a fully competent member in this respect. There was then a further inbound trajectory with three other groups. One was specifically so he could learn about gunnery, and this trajectory never led to full participation. The other memberships moved from being inbound trajectories through to outbound for that particular group. However, due to Martin maintaining good relationships with all of his former groups, he showed evidence of “spanning boundaries and linking communities of practice” (Wenger, 1998:154). This was also true for other participants such as Christine, who at the time of the study was a member of her third re-enactment group, and maintained good links with her previous group.

These trajectories are different to those experienced with job roles. Groups often meet at events in a way that former colleagues do not often get the opportunity to. They are also very different as in some cases there is no wish to advance within the group. Unlike a job role, where they may wish to gain promotion, some members of re-enactment groups are happy to stay in their current roles. Most of the participants in this study did however show clear evidence of their evolution, and had changed roles since first gaining full participation. This is mostly through seeing what is possible by the example of others’ roles. A good example of this is Sarah’s change in identity. From her early attendance at weekly combat training as a way of getting to know the group she identified “a field of possible pasts and of possible futures, which are all there for participants, not only to witness, hear about, and contemplate, but to engage with” (Wenger, 1998:156). For Sarah this contemplation led to

discussion of how she could do this. She had identified early on in her re-enactment career that she would like to become a full combatant in the shows and thus she started another trajectory that related to this new role. This is discussed further in the section on gender.

### **Identity and self-concept within legitimate peripheral participation**

One of the features of a community of practice is the way that individual members work together to share expertise through their mutual engagement and shared resources (Amin & Roberts, 2008). In many communities this also involves notions of becoming someone else, of fully internalising the role that you are taking on, be it teacher, nurse or accountant. In other communities of practice this idea of collective identity may be well established by the group. In re-enactment communities it is different as not only do you become a re-enactor, you also become someone else, you develop a different medieval identity. This choice of role and character is also an important part of the move from legitimate peripheral participation to full participation and is linked to ideas of different self – concepts (Gabriel et al., 2007). Wenger identifies three different modes of belonging, namely “engagement, imagination and alignment” (Wenger, 1998:174), engagement being linked very much with the role that the person has within the community. For the re-enactors that are part of this study, all have had to develop their own roles that may be very different to those in their everyday lives. They also may involve very different relationships. Particularly for the new re-enactor, without the required skills or equipment to engage fully in the event, they may have to play a much more subordinate role. This may be very different to that they are used to in their real lives, which may affect their confidence. If you are used to being in a senior position at work acting as someone else’s squire or servant in borrowed clothes means that you have a very different set of relationships to portray, albeit only during show hours. Added to this the unfamiliar routine, clothing and restrictions on actions due to demands of authenticity can very much affect self – concept.

For some participants their medieval self – concept is very different to their everyday one as Alan the archery captain explains “If I am not in kit I am an introvert, outside of re-enactment I have a lot of social anxiety but as Matthew of Marberry in kit I am an extrovert” (Alan – interview June 17<sup>th</sup> 2017). He describes a natural affinity for the role, to the extent of

having talked to people about research into past lives. He stated that he now feels that he was an archer in a past life. He described seeing a facial reconstruction of one of the archers from the Tudor ship the Mary Rose based on skull evidence found. He felt that it looked like him to the extent that it could have been an ancestor or a past life.

For other participants, there was little in the way of previous knowledge about the role they have chosen to play. Therefore, this needed to be learnt explicitly, as part of the process of legitimate peripheral participation. This was through a mixture of direct instruction, observation, mentoring and own research. Most interaction between group members is not formally scripted, as in an actor's role in a play. However, there is an element of a script (Baldwin, 1992) having to be learnt, rather than assimilated through normal interactions. For other re-enactment eras, such as WW2, re-enactors will have been able to potentially talk to people involved in both of those conflicts. They will be able to read or watch many original sources, as well as countless interpretations through film and gaming. Understanding the identity of the medieval character you are portraying is more complex. There are restrictions on the availability of sources that present authentic first hand experiences of non- nobility roles, such as an archer at the battle of Bosworth that Alan has portrayed.

Costume is a central part of identity for the participants in this study. It is the idea of a shared identity as a re-enactor through this costume (Miller, 1998) that comes through strongly from the participants. Although there is no uniformity of identity, as with groups such as American Civil War re-enactors (Hunt, 2004, 2008; Turner, 1990; Gapps 2009a), there is very much a sense of collective identity. There is also the notion that if you are representing a known individual you have a responsibility to them. The idea of personal and social medieval identity being constructed within groups, was reinforced through participant observations at the multi-group events. This was both in the creation of resources, and consumption through buying things from artisans at specialist event markets (Halewood & Hannam, 2006). Being able to buy items that you could not make, from traders who had actually created them, was seen to reinforce the collective identity of the participants as re-enactors. This was seen to show a respect for the craftsmanship of items that the participants were not yet skilled enough to make.

Identity as a re-enactor is very closely linked to approval from other re-enactors and purchases were extensively shared, examined and discussed by the participants. This also contributed to the ideas of narrative identity (McAdams & McLean, 2013). This was particularly significant when the participants bought things that reflected their changing status. For Stan once he had passed his combat tests he was able buy a silk tunic from one of the established traders at Tewkesbury for his portrayal of the character of Sir John Chandos. This meant that he could “convey to themselves and to others who they are now, how they came to be, and where they think their lives may be going in the future” (McAdams & McLean, 2013:233). This change in his identity through costume had been enabled by both his ability to afford the garment, and the development of his fighting skills. This was very important to him as part of his identity as a fully participating member of the group.

### **Legitimate Peripheral Participation and Confidence**

Moving from peripheral to insider participation is a result of many factors. A central one that was identified by participants in all roles within the group events is that of confidence. This is undoubtedly aided by knowing the correct terms for equipment and having factual knowledge. It is something that is a perhaps unseen part of the re-enactors’ role from the outsider’s point of view. In thinking about how this links to engagement in the community, many participants will be challenging themselves to do things that they do not normally do at work, such as speaking to large groups of the public. In these situations, the verbal feedback will come not just from the members of the re-enactment group, but from the public who have hopefully enjoyed the presentation, found it interesting and learned from it. This verbal feedback is a key aspect development of confidence and self-confidence. This is especially true when dealing with a different context from normal daily or professional life. The confidence cycle depends on both the external factors of a successful performance of a weapons talk or a show tournament, and the internal factors of the physical and emotional state of the re-enactor. This was evident in Sean’s first combat in the tournament, where he fought his trainer in full armour in a public arena for the first time. Although obviously at a much slower pace than the other bouts in the tournament the

public applause and the positive feedback from the group meant that he was able to put his combat training into practice successfully. Sean's confidence was specifically linked to his role; he had mentioned his re-enactor identity as being very different to his everyday life.

For many of the participants a key aspect of moving from peripheral to full participation was about developing confidence in talking to audiences. Four of the participants interviewed are teachers in their everyday lives, Robert, Laura, Ben and Chris. Five others, Adam, Neil, Emma, Christine and Fred, work in fields where they have experience of training others. In this study all of the participants take on teaching roles when interacting with the public. This means that they have to develop the skills and the confidence to communicate with their audiences in a variety of different ways. This was a key part of their legitimate peripheral participation in moving from the novice identities that they had when first joining their groups, to becoming a fully included member of the shows, in the same way that trainee teachers develop their teacher identity (Pfitzner-Eden, 2016). This clearly acted as a motivator to them, giving them the chance to explain their passion for the subject. This involved demonstrating the knowledge and skills that had been acquired and talking about how the research had been done. The demonstrations, which included events such as Adam with his barber surgeon's talk, Christine's cookery and Emma giving head dress talks, involved them acting as pretend ethnographers staging events for the public's benefit (Agnew, 2007). It was particularly important to be appropriate level for the visitors' age and perceived interest. This involved thinking about the processes that the re-enactors had gone through in their own learning. This self – reflection about what had been made or learnt (De Groot, 2011) was evident in how the participants spoke about their interaction, and how they had modified it when needed.

Participants realised that their knowledge sometimes had to be translated for when they were talking to the public about combat. They had to be aware of what the audience might not know, and what they might want to know. Education may be only one of the reasons that visitors come to an event (Kempiak et al., 2017), and the interaction has to take account of the motivations and disposition for learning that the public display towards the re-enactors.

So it's a broader skill set you've got, so as I said you're going to be able to adapt to the scenario and especially back to the shows if you know a range of different things you can demonstrate to the public more weapons than perhaps they're familiar with. If they have established on telly what sword and shield looks like fine but I've found very few of the general public even know what a buckler actually is never mind how it will get used. (Duncan – interview June 18<sup>th</sup> 2017)

Duncan had reflected extensively on his own skills in public interaction, and this was evident in his interview responses. He also saw that interacting with the audience gave him a chance to identify gaps in his own knowledge and his confidence in explaining things.

Sometimes people ask questions as well and sometimes it's about going back and reading up on things and working out ways of how could I explain that better and filling in gaps in your knowledge ready for next time you are going to discuss that topic. The only problem I've found is that the more you know about something the harder it is to explain it simply, a conundrum there. (Duncan – interview June 18<sup>th</sup> 2017)

He was also conscious of not letting the weapons and armour knowledge be the only thing that the public gained from the event. He was keen to stress the social history as well, so that the visitors got a sense of medieval life from other aspects aside from combat. This aspect of living history is very important to supplement other forms of interpretation such as static displays (Chhabra et al., 2003). It is one of the most valuable aspects of having live interpretation where misconceptions can be dealt with immediately.

Because you are doing a talk specifically on weapons largely for warfare and for civil use people can get the impression it was like *The Purge* (**a horror movie where any and all crime is legal for 12 hours**). You know, that it was a state of continuous

violence and obviously it wasn't. It's getting the information over to the public.

(Duncan – interview June 18<sup>th</sup> 2017)

Awareness of own knowledge and what the public might want from a display was also mentioned by Adam. This was one of the things that he had learnt through doing his talks. During these he was keen to strike a balance between the factual aspects of barber surgery, and knowing how to share that knowledge in an engaging way. His professional identity as someone who was involved in presentations for work, and his re-enactment identity as a barber surgeon needed to be blended into a new form of identity. He needed to become someone who could communicate in a very engaging but informative way. This blend of entertainment and education has sometimes been seen as challenging within re-enactment (Malcolm-Davies, 2004) and Adam was aware of this issue.

I like the approach here at these events, it's as much about entertaining people whilst at the same time being somewhat educational rather than being incredibly boring and nobody wanting to talk to you because train numbers are more interesting. (Adam – interview May 28<sup>th</sup> 2017)

Duncan was also very aware of how he was interacting with the public, although he was very enthusiastic, he had learnt to take account of reactions to his talks. He talked about being reflective as to how his audience was engaging with him. In this way he was using the same types of strategies used in teaching to develop this identity, though he had no experience in this field, and this was not feasible to cover in the group's weekly training.

Also I think knowing how to gauge at what point a crowd is getting bored or fed up with what they are seeing and knowing what sort of body language and that's something you only pick up in the show by doing it. You can't simulate having an audience in training. (Duncan – interview June 18<sup>th</sup> 2017)

There are also different approaches thinking about the type of audience displays might attract which were mentioned by several of the participants. For Chris, the dance displays that his group did were modified to suit events as needed.

We change what we do depending on an audience, more historical facts for a specific audience at that type of venue. For things like local fayres we just do 'fun facts'. As a society we aim to do education through entertainment. (Chris – interview Sept 16<sup>th</sup> 2017)

This was something that other participants had developed as well, aiming to provide information in different ways depending on audience motivation. Robert's joust displays are attended by people who are often looking forward to the drama and spectacle of this part of the show.

For members of the public who wouldn't necessarily be interested in dry historical learning, then you just try to stealth the information in their heads so that they walk away knowing stuff that they wouldn't have actively gone and looked for. (Robert – interview Sept 17<sup>th</sup> 2017)

In thinking about how they had learnt the skills needed to interact with the public there was mention of mentoring and the use of role models. For Phil, taking over the weapons and armour talk from Kevin had meant a process of observing his talk and then assisting him as well as observing. When Phil first joined the group he lacked a lot of confidence, describing himself as shy and reserved. After a year of helping Kevin by assisting with the talk, he then moved on to taking over the talk, with Kevin mentoring him throughout this process. The confidence he had developed through this process was as a result of this careful staging to give him the opportunity for success while maintaining the opportunity for feedback throughout. Within a couple of shows Phil was taking a lead role in this talk and Kevin was taking the role of assistant. The transfer of this responsibility was a good example of one of the "social configurations in which our enterprises are defined as worth pursuing and our participation is recognizable as competence" (Wenger, 1998:5). Although Phil had been a

member of the group for some time, he had not felt confident enough before this to lead this activity. Taking over this meant that his engagement with the group was heightened (Wenger, 1998) and he was able to develop his practice through the relationship.

In terms of developing acting skills, a combination of strategies was discussed by participants. This included mentoring by more experienced members of the group, the observation of role models and reflection on their performances (Sternszus & Cruess, 2016). For Darren this had been central to developing particular aspects of his kingship role. He had taken over the role from the previously very experienced king. There were two very significant parts of performance to be developed that he had been supported by members of his group. He had been mentored by one of his group, Len, in both the acting needed for the start and end of battle scenarios, and for the public interaction needed for the trail and beheading scenario later in the event. Len's supporting role allowed him to work with Darren at this point, assisting him in developing the confidence to act out his lines in this scenario. This was in the form of Len taking the role of Chancellor, which enabled him to be beside Darren during the beheading event and prompt and guide him. This shared repertoire, defined as "routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions or concepts" (Wenger, 1998:83), that the group held, was able to be shared with Darren through these relationships within the group.

Confidence in talking to the public was mentioned by many of the participants as being a significant factor in their participation in the group. Stan talks about his early experiences of group shows and how he developed his confidence.

I was quite nervous, well, with talking to the public about stuff. So you sort of have to do your own research and find your own sort of thing to talk about but I would generally talk about the weapons and the armour. (Stan – interview Sept 17<sup>th</sup> 2017)

For Sean this aspect was one of his greatest gains from his involvement "re-enacting is fantastic for confidence, particularly Swords of Mercia who are very welcoming, feeling good about yourself, generally the group are very supportive" (Sean – interview May 29<sup>th</sup>

2016). For him most of this was about his confidence in combat. Unlike athletes, re-enactors don't always have to win the competition, the outcome of the historical battle usually being decided by which side you are allocated. However, there is still the determination to win individual fights in the show tournaments as the outcome is not pre-determined even for new re-enactors. Sean displayed aspects of both preparatory and performance confidence (Vealey, 2018) in his approach to developing his fighting skills.

As a new re-enactor Sean had progressed rapidly with his combat training. Preparatory confidence had in part come from his previous season. This was very much about seeing himself as part of the team. This was both through his inclusion in the previous year's events, and support from the others in the group in developing his fighting skills. He had also bought enough armour and weapons to participate fully. Performance confidence is linked with the endurance and resilience needed for the actual event and this was covered by variations in the weekly training that took place in the group just before the start of the season. This concentrated on stamina and the ability to maintain that in full armour rather than just training kit.

He had been observing the tournament as a squire for his first year as a member of the group. This observational learning was very important, however the behaviour needed to be successful in the combat bouts was too complex to learn by just watching successive iterations of the combat. Sean had to use the knowledge that he had learnt about sword combat as taught in training, and apply it in a tournament situation. He needed to be able to respond to each attack with the appropriate response. That application of knowledge is particularly relevant in the public shows where there is not the ability to stop and start again if errors are made. For subsequent tournaments each of his previous experiences supported his confidence. His developmental confidence (Vealey, 2018) was supported by his own personal ideas about what he could achieve within the group and this was not just about his combat skills but in discussions of which historical character he could portray in future shows once he had passed his knight's test.

Having your own area of expertise is seen as another important element in moving from legitimate peripheral participation to full participation. This is also linked to the

development of confidence within the community. For Sean this came in his second year of re-enactment when he started wearing a breastplate that he had made from metal plates and etched leatherwork. By the following year he had improved his leatherworking skills. He was demonstrating to other group members his progress on a new scabbard with a design that he had researched using manuscripts. His self- confidence was very closely linked to his ideas of self – concept (Gabriel et al., 2007) as a fully integrated member of the group. At that time, although some of the others in the group were competent in leatherwork as well, Sean was the first person in the group to undertake demonstrations of his work in progress at the event. In this respect he was showing all aspects of involvement in the community of practice “mutual engagement, sense of joint enterprise and shared repertoire of resources” (Wenger, 1998:73). Members of the group were learning skills alongside him and he was able to share his knowledge and skills with them and with members of the public. This added to the group’s shared resources in a very practical way as it could then become one of the scheduled displays.



**Illustration 7: Sean wearing a handmade leather coat of plates with etched leather design**

This full participation is linked with a real sense of achievement when you can confidently talk to the public about what you have made as Matthew reflects on what he has gained through his time as a re-enactor.

It's broadened my experience of things and you have that certain amount of satisfaction that you've done something and you've created something and something that somebody else can look at and get a bit of pleasure and enthusiasm about as well. (Matthew – interview May 27<sup>th</sup> 2017)

Legitimate peripheral participation is about learning to be part of a re-enactment group but it is also very much about feelings of belonging, confidence and identity within the group. It is about “gaining knowledge of who knows what” (Amin & Roberts, 2008:358) so that questions can be asked of the right person, either in your own group or outside it. By the time the participant observations concluded in 2018, Sarah had navigated her way through several different selves. These were her modern professional self, her medieval noblewoman self and her new medieval male combatant self. She had developed her different “relational schemas” (Baldwin, 1992:467) to enable her to play these roles.

Although re-enactors do use written sources much of what they need to know is not codified, it exists as individual knowledge and the lived experience of re-enactment that individuals such as Sarah referred to. It is part of the social context of the learning that the shared language of the community (Amin & Roberts, 2008) that Sarah described earlier assists participants in understanding what they have to wear, what they are expected to do and thus there are not only specific tactile bonds formed through participation but emotional ones as well (Amin & Roberts, 2008).

### **Learning through social relationships and apprenticeships**

There are links between communities of practice and apprenticeships, with Lave and Wenger's (1991) earlier work looking at different types of these as a form of workplace learning. Learning through apprenticeships was one of the key forms of learning within the medieval period. Therefore, research question three was specifically looking at this aspect and the notions of expertise that were involved in determining mastery. The data, from both interviews and participant observations, showed there were distinct relationships

evident in skill areas such as combat, gunnery, archery and costume making, though not in other areas. Some strong friendships had formed for aspects such as spinning, archery and dance knowledge. These did not display key features of a long lasting relationship where skills had been passed on through a master and apprentice relationship. Due to the fluidity of group membership, and the longevity of some participants' involvement, there was very much a sense of temporal and spatial networks in many cases. This was rather than direct relationships between one master and several apprentices as there would have been in the medieval period (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002).

Where master and apprentice type relationships did exist there was a variety in the length of these. There were some of only a few years, to relationships that had existed for as much as twenty years. These were different to those that were reviewed in the literature on apprenticeships, notably in terms of the lack of a fixed time-period. There were similarities in terms of the types of pedagogic relationships, and of how expertise was identified by the participants. For some of the participants there was a longstanding and close relationship with their 'master'. This often involved weekly training sessions, and regular exchanges of information through social media. For others this relationship involved more irregular contact, though still showed features of the social learning evident in master and apprentice relationships (Wolek & Klinger, 1998).

In terms of when the apprenticeship is finished Lave and Wenger refer to "reproduction cycles" (Lave and Wenger, 1991:98) within the communities they studied, this being the length of time needed to complete the apprenticeship. Within re-enactment groups it is difficult to define how long this cycle is, as it depends on both the training sessions and involvement in shows. For someone like Sean, who was able to attend all weekly training sessions and all shows in both of his first years of group membership, it was a period of two years until his full participation in a show as combatant. This was linked to his progress through a series of combat tests, which are discussed later in this section.

There was also evidence of mentoring rather than a direct master and apprentice relationship for some areas. From the responses it was clear that there was a distinction between these two types of relationship. Firstly, practical combat skills, gunnery, archery

and costume making, which all showed distinct features of a master and apprentice relationship with clear levels of progress. There were also mentoring and role model relationships for public performances like Phil's weapons and armour talks, Darren's kingship role and Falchion's show fighting. There is a distinct nature of the different skills and knowledge acquired through these learning relationships, and the level of direct instruction given for specific skills. Therefore, combat, gunnery and archery, and costume making will be discussed separately in this section of the analysis.

Combat holds a particularly prominent place within re-enactment, with many groups only focusing on this area rather than the more domestic aspects of living history. There are very few groups who do not have combatants and it is one of the more visible aspects of what a re-enactment group does. Because of the health and safety aspects of this area of skill development, it was also the most formalised. It still retained critical aspects of apprenticeships, such as the emphasis on social learning and lack of formalised curriculum. Guile and Young's (2011) exploration of apprenticeships as a social theory of learning describes the process as "observation, assimilation and emulation" (Guile and Young, 2011:176). In their work the importance of watching the master perform a task and then replicating that task under the guidance of the master was stressed. This was a central feature of combat training for the participants.

As different participants were interviewed and observed for different skills the data from combat comes from two groups, Swords of Mercia and Falchion groups. Weekly fight training sessions are held for both the groups. Training also takes place at the live shows during the summer. Observation is key for both training and live combat. In training sessions, the new combatants spend the first few months of training observing and being instructed by specific members, who act as master combat trainers. Most of the skill of learning to fight comes from observing and then breaking down the action into small steps. This linked to the key components of apprenticeship, distinguishing between the "know-what and the know-how" (Wolek & Klinger, 1998:51). The declarative and procedural knowledge is made explicit by the combat trainers through narrative of their actions. All of the lead combat trainers for the two groups were initially trained by one person, Rod, who was a professional armourer. Rod had been instrumental in developing a safe and effective

training method for many groups over his long career in re-enactment. Sadly, Rod had died during the first period of research after a long battle with cancer, so he had not been available to interview. Neil describes how they started training directly with Rod after working with another combatant, who had previously also been trained by him.

We kind of picked it up by osmosis from him and that sparked an interest in learning about it ourselves instead of just being a bunch of guys who hit each other with swords. It wasn't just about swords, also stance, balance, breathing, and attitude to fighting. (Neil – interview July 9<sup>th</sup> 2017)

The fight training method used by these groups is one called 'attack and response'. This consists of certain taught responses to sword blows on different parts of the body. These are firstly observed by the trainee, then taught in slow motion so that they can be assimilated by the combatant, and then emulated in a range of combat situations. These are firstly with the dedicated combat trainers, then subsequently with other members of the group, building up to bouts with the most experienced fighters. This combat training involves the development of physical skills that require both stamina and the development of specific techniques.

It was quite hard to get into at first because you don't really know how to be fluid in the motions so you don't really know how to go from block to attack. When you start fighting, sparring with the other people you learn to be more fluid, you know learn your weaknesses. (Stan – interview Sept 17<sup>th</sup> 2017)

This learning reflects closely the psychomotor domain classification (Wu et al., 2007) where there is a move from the perception of a skill, through to a guided response, and then an overt response. It is not only the psychomotor skill development that is important here (Wu et al., 2007), but also the confidence to be successful within this new learning situation (Green & Batool, 2017). It also does depend on the size of the battle. In the same way that a

trainee teacher may be happy to start teaching certain groups, and need more observation time before taking on other more challenging ones, so combatants will choose which battles they wish to participate in during their early involvement. On the battlefield they are identified as a new combatant by a white sash or armband. They are accompanied by an experienced fighter, usually the group's battle commander or combat trainer. The more experienced fighters will often direct the novice to fight particular people who are also novices. They will be using explicit knowledge (Bernstein & Solomon, 1999) of other groups' fighting styles. This involves the potential opponent's capacity to modify their fighting styles to accommodate novice combatants. This ensures that the experience is a safe and successful one for all involved. Stan had been with the group for a few months before having his first experience in a small battle with 40 combatants.

My first multi – group event was at Sherwood. So I still wasn't fully competent in combat but I was still learning so I was sort of shepherded on the battlefield. I was wearing an armband and was fighting against a new combatant as well. (Stan – interview Sept 17<sup>th</sup> 2017)

Thus, the re-enactor that has observed a battle as a non-combatant, can then apply the knowledge gained through that situation to other battles that they then participate in. This enables them to gain confidence in their ability to deal with each new aspect of a similar situation. As with teacher training there is no substitute for the actual experience. All the fight training can do is enable someone to be confident in their own weapon control in single or small group combat. The situation is very different when on a battlefield with 1500 other combatants. Stan talked about his first experience of this larger battle, which he participated in after he had been re-enacting for 3 years, as being a very different kind of experience. He was again identified as a novice by a sash. Although he had participated in other battles by this point, none were on this scale.

Last year I did Tewkesbury for the first time, nerve wracking. I was trusted to handle myself but I had a sash. There's so much more to keep your eye on, I had my sword

over my shoulder and I nearly poked someone's eye out as I wasn't used to that sort of, that many people. (Stan – interview Sept 17<sup>th</sup> 2017)

As Stan explained, the training cannot really prepare you to deal with numerous different fighting styles of other groups. There are also others who use different types of weapons, such as pole arms. Thus reflection on each experience is important so that gradually, over multiple experiences, combatants can learn to engage in combat with other groups. This learning as a reflective process is based within the social relationships of the group who are on the battlefield with the new combatants and features learning as a co-emergent process (Fenwick & Tennant, 2004).

For Sean his first multi-group battle experience took place at the same large battle of Tewkesbury. Sean was accompanied on the battlefield by Stephen, one of the group's combat trainers, who was a very experienced re-enactor. As well as being Sean's first large battle, it was the first in which he wore an open faced helmet, which he had borrowed from another group member. This meant his field of vision was much wider than he was used to. Therefore, adjustments had to be made for this, as well as the fact that he was fighting in a large block of 50 combatants rather than in one –to-one combat. Stephen had talked through what was going to happen in the battle with Sean. On the battlefield he guided and supported him in engaging other combatants, often standing back out of the fighting so that he could observe him. Stephen used both his tacit and explicit knowledge (Bernstein & Solomon, 1999) here and between bouts gave Sean feedback and offered guidance.

After the battle on Saturday Sean and Stephen discussed the experience with Emma, who had been supporting them as a water carrier. Sean had been able to transfer his learning from the combat training and experience in group shows to the new situation. Sean demonstrated more confidence in his ability to engage in sword combat through his now instinctive use of particular attack and response moves. As there was another battle on Sunday they were both able to discuss elements of the combat that needed to be modified for that. Stephen had intended to again stay with Sean for the battle however due to injury he left the field for most of the time so Sean was on his own for the rest of that battle and

fought successfully without injury. Using the shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998) of the battle scenario, which had been explained to him beforehand by Stephen, and narrated during the battle, he was able to engage fully in this new experience.

The training regimes that re-enactors undertake as part of their apprenticeship in developing combat skills are good examples of the role of the pro – am (Leadbeater & Miller, 2004). There is evidence that these sessions are very much “working at leisure” (Leadbeater & Miller, 2004:21). There is a serious commitment in terms of time and money for equipment, which increases as the skill development does. They also involve very specific goals and activities, that have targets and schedules for the re-enactors in terms of measuring their progress, though these do vary from group to group. The combat trainers in Swords of Mercia and Falchions discuss these with the trainees so progress is clearly outlined at each stage.

Moving on from an apprentice to journeyman’s or master’s role is not defined in the same way that it would have been in medieval apprenticeships, where there would have been the creation of a ‘master piece’ to demonstrate skills (De Munck, 2010). Within the groups in this study there is no formal structure for becoming a trainer. The trainers have to have passed all of their own tests, and thus hold the status of knights within the group. There is no specific training for these trainers though. Matthew, Stephen, Heather and Duncan have become combat trainers both on the strength of their combat, but also their skills at explaining things to new members, and their availability to attend training regularly. They show evidence of what Wenger refers to as “the evolution of the practice” (Wenger, 1998:154) in their ability to reflect on their own practice and codify their knowledge for others. In this way their experiences become part of the ‘shared practice’ of their groups (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002:27). For combat the only real ‘master pieces’ are combat success in the competitive tournaments held at some events. Duncan, Neil and Stephen have previously achieved. There is the progress in training tests as previously described, however the move from novice through to trainer is more about willingness to commit to the training regime and also about interpersonal skills.

Archery and gunnery training were the most informal of the learning relationships in most respects. Unlike sword combat, these were very often informal in their starting points. A common way of starting in both areas was people meeting at events and expressing an interest. They were then often invited to participate in taster sessions at the event before making any commitment. Due to health and safety concerns there was a different type of partnership in gunnery. This is because of the licensing requirements for owning guns and black powder. Partly this was also due to the lack of specialised training needed to fire a gun. However, it was not as simple a process to gain mastery, either as an authentic medieval gunner or a modern re-enactor.

It is often said it takes a lifetime to train an archer but you can train a gunner in a day. The thing you have to remember that in our period it wasn't just firing a gun, to be a master gunner you were manufacturing your gunpowder yourself so it was quite scientific for the age. (Martin – interview June 18th 2017)

Martin's apprenticeship had started in 2004, when he joined the de Warenne group under the tutelage of one of their master gunners. It had taken four years to gain enough expertise to own his own guns. During that period, he had gone through a process of "observation, assimilation and emulation" (Guile & Young, 2011: 176) with a number of different types of weapons provided by the master gunner, until he was able to apply for his own licence and start buying guns.

Due to the fact that there are less groups that have guns and archers, those interested are likely to have a number of relationships with masters from other groups, rather than the closer relationship within a combat training situation. Laura's husband, Doug, had initially got involved in building a replica cannon with his fellow group member, Fred, so it was he who initially trained her. Others were others involved at the larger multi – group events, where the majority of the actual training took place. She again described a mixture of explicit and tacit learning (Bernstein & Solomon, 1999) with fellow re-enactors giving information where they felt that it was needed.

It was Doug initially, though Jim is always helpful, always willing to give advice, will tell you off if you are not being safe, we all look out for each other. It was more casual really as there are limitations of where you can fire the guns. (Laura – interview June 17<sup>th</sup> 2017)

These casual relationships were evident at gun displays at events such as Tatton. Interested re-enactors would have the opportunity to try out firing guns, under the direct supervision of the master gunners from different groups. Unlike sword combat, this was very much an informal process with explicit instruction being given for how to safely handle guns and fire them as part of the public display with no previous experience needed.

Costume making showed additional evidence of longstanding learning relationships. As with combat training, there was evidence of temporal and spatial networks where experienced re-enactors, such as Kathleen, acted as masters to less experienced ones. In some cases, this was in the form of ‘master classes’ in particular aspects, such as a weekend workshop on how to make a particular head dress. There was also evidence of longer term social learning relationships between many of the participants. As with sword combat the focus was on learning as a practice based activity learning and as a co-emergent process (Fenwick & Tennant, 2004). This did not take place at weekly training but rather at regular sewing weekends. These would focus on particular skills as needed by the participants, such as pattern cutting, and be led by the more experienced members of the group.

Karen and Emma led these sessions for both Swords of Mercia and new members from other groups, their expertise being based on their successful completion of a number of garments on their own. This competence was negotiated and developed (Eckert & Wenger, 2005) over a fourteen-year period prior to the study. This meant that at the time of interview they were two of the most experienced members of Swords of Mercia. There was particular recognition within the group of them having expertise in the making of noblewomen’s clothing. They had developed skills in pattern cutting, hand sewing,

beadwork and gold work embroidery. Their psychomotor domain development had shown progress from the basic sewing skills, having previously had little formal training in sewing before joining re-enactment. They had moved through to the basic and then expert handling (Salim et al., 2012) of a wide range of difficult to handle materials such as velvet, silk and metal for head dresses. In this way they acted as masters to newer members such as Sarah.

Karen was still very keen to perfect her own skills. Although she was acting a master to newer members, she had identified continuing areas of own development. These included wanting to further develop her embroidery skills. She also wanted to improve her confidence with making male clothing, which was something she had more limited experience in. It was clear through Karen's description of all the items that she had made for re-enactment, her ongoing research for this, and time helping others such as Emma and Sarah, that this formed a big part of her life. She gained a great sense of satisfaction in this creativity which was not an aspect of her professional life, and was displaying many aspects of "personal use of history to satisfy, inspire, or challenge themselves" (Hall, 2016:414).

Much of the knowledge that had been gained for Karen, Emma and Sarah was everyday knowledge with respect to basic sewing skills. However, there were some differences between the requirements for re-enactment. Part of the skills that Karen and Emma were passing on were to do with the construction of the garments. There was also the importance of hand sewing to maintain the authenticity of the garment. It is these specialised areas of knowledge that the newer members don't have, that need to be learnt through the master and apprentice relationships. Unlike combat training where there is a clear structure for the progress, costume is more personalised. It depends heavily on participants being able to identify the gaps in their own knowledge. Many people will have had basic sewing lessons so, unlike sword combat, there is some notion of prior learning. The actual construction of a full garment was something that Sarah felt she was not able to do without help.

Yes, I couldn't have done it without the help of the other members of the group, because I wouldn't have known where to start. So having other members of the

group explain the process to me and so basically hold my hand through every step of the way has been invaluable. I really couldn't have done it without them yes, as I say I've never sewn anything before so not even knowing where to start. So yes I would be sitting here in underclothes. (Sarah – interview May 29<sup>th</sup> 2016)

Emma's communication skills and her ability to make her tacit knowledge explicit (Bernstein & Solomon, 1999) were really valued by Sarah. She was able to model each step of the process, scaffold Sarah's learning, and repeat steps if necessary. Although she was keen to make a garment, the process of learning was as important for Sarah as the product (Knowles, 2012). The social relationships that characterise adult learning being seen as important as the learning itself (Tough, 1999). As with combat training there was evidence of the "observation, assimilation and emulation" (Guile & Young, 2011:176), that characterises the master and apprentice relationship.

She's has been an absolute star in helping me cos she has got quite a calm relaxed way of helping me with patterns, and doesn't get too upset if I just say 'Emma I can't do this, can you show me again what to do here,' she's really good. (Sarah – interview May 29<sup>th</sup> 2016)

Emma was able to identify her declarative knowledge, gained through her own experience of both making dresses and research into costume. She was able to turn this into the procedural knowledge that Sarah needed. This is a key component of apprenticeship relationships with the master being able to identify the "know-what and the know-how" (Wolek & Klinger 1998:51). Sarah had needed Emma's help with every step of the process. Therefore, the dress had taken a long time to complete due to other commitments for both of them.

So we held regular sewing days where I would basically come and go, 'Emma what do I do now', and she'd explain what process we had to do next and why and what

we would be doing. And then she'd show me and leave me to do it myself and so I could learn for next time. So essentially I wanted to have experience of every aspect to making this dress. I wanted to make it myself but I knew that she needed to help me for the skilled me. (Sarah – interview May 29<sup>th</sup> 2016)

Sarah felt that having completed one garment she would need a little less help next time so was still conscious of the need to have support.

Yeh, I feel more confident in making my next garment. I kind of understand the process but I don't really have as much confidence to just go ahead and do it myself. So sewing days where I can sew while she gets on with something else next time and I can ask questions if I need to. Maybe by my twelfth dress I'll be more a little bit more confident. (Sarah – interview May 29<sup>th</sup> 2016)

Karen, Emma and Sarah's social learning shows the importance of the personal relationship that they had developed through this functional relationship. Not only was there social learning, the sewing weekends had become in themselves a social event. This served the dual function of keeping them in touch during the winter months, and on target with the completion of intended goals. All of them used this to set personal goals for costume and fulfil them through this relationship.

As with combat there was no specific point at which apprentices became masters. However, the completion of complex projects, that looked as if they were professionally made, was one aspect that group members used to measure their own progress and assess others' expertise. Outfits such as Karen's dress and head dress, as pictured below, show a very high level of skills and the same dedication to the pursuit and aspects of role as a pro – am (Leadbeater & Miller, 2004) as the combat training.



**Illustration 8: Karen (left) in early 14<sup>th</sup> century gown and crispinette head dress**

In the costume and head dress talks at Swords of Mercia shows there was always surprise from the public that the costumes were made by the re-enactors rather than being professionally produced for them, which is evidence of the high quality of the finished artefacts.

Although many of the skills, such as combat and costume making, would have been obtained through an apprenticeship in the medieval period these relationships were not as evident in the skill areas within this study. Factors such as a combination of lack of time to spend in a formal relationship, and more distributed relationships between participants meant that there was a combination of learning relationships. Master and apprentice, mentoring and the use of role models, had enabled the skills and knowledge to be acquired. Apart from sword combat where a regular and sustained relationship was evident, most of the other social learning relationships were more fluid in nature.

Expertise in some areas of learning was determined on a more formal basis. For combat there were specific staged tests that were devised by groups for skill in handling various

different types of weapons. There was also the public recognition of competitive tournaments at some events. These were judged by re-enactors from other groups, and having originally been established by respected trainer Rod, winning these was seen to denote particular expertise. For archery there were also competitive elements at individual shows, with a formal archery competition being open to anyone who wished to join. Unlike in medieval apprenticeships (De Munck, 2010) there was no creation of a 'master piece' as a determinant of skill. In determining expertise when selecting who to ask for advice, participants cited reputation within the re-enactment community as being the main factor in choosing a fellow re-enactor. This was linked to group status, in terms of who groups were employed by. Those such as Age of Chivalry, LEAD, Swords of Mercia and Destrier, who were used by English Heritage, were seen to have higher expertise than those who weren't. This expertise was also linked to role portrayal. These groups were those who portrayed real-life historical characters of note, such as Edward II and his wife Isabella, Edward IV and his brother-in-law Anthony Rivers, and Joan of Kent, wife of the Black Prince). Having this role playing status, also conferred status as experts for other groups who wished to learn more. The "complex landscape" (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2014:15) that makes up relations between the different communities of practice was assisted by being able to see status and expertise through the groups' standard of costume, weapons, armour and fighting techniques.

## **Chapter 6 Analysis of other aspects of the findings**

In this section of the thesis there is an analysis of the aspects that relate to two important aspects of participation, authenticity and gender. As discussed within the literature review (Gapps, 2009b); Hunt, 2008) authenticity is a much contested area within re-enactment, with participants striving to be as authentic as they can, within the constraints of time and access to information and specific materials. Gender significantly affects authenticity and participation in different aspects of the re-enactment community, and this can vary between re-enactment groups.

### **Factors affecting participation and learning - Authenticity**

The information from the participants showed an extensive range of different sources used and a dedication to not only finding authentic sources, but also to using as much primary source material as possible. This involved the development of skills in searching for and evaluating this information which was a key part of their learning. Professional historians have sometimes derided the attempts of re-enactors in terms of their acquisition of knowledge through unconventional means. Gapps (2002) discuss this disdain and cites phrases such as “button counters and authenticity nuts” (Gapps,2002:16), in relation to views of American re-enactors. For the participants it was not enough just to read other people’s interpretations of medieval life. They felt it was very important to get as close as possible to the actual artefacts from the period. A shared commitment to authenticity was evident in all aspects of the “mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire” (Wenger, 1998:73) that characterised the interviewee’s responses. They felt it important to advise each other on authenticity and to share resources that supported that understanding. They also wanted to try to understand the realities of life for the characters they portrayed without the distortion of time elapsed or 21<sup>st</sup> century perceptions of behaviour. There was a certain irony mentioned by participants in using the internet to look at authentic sources but they really valued the fact that they could get access in this way to rare and often fragile items such as manuscripts and costumes.

The majority of the practical skills learnt such as combat skills, costume making and gunnery, though supported by participants’ own research, had been through the

relationships which are a key aspect of communities of practice. The discussion centred on accessing sources that were authentic, as well as readily available for these amateur historians. Many participants had found inaccurate information that they at first believed and had made mistakes. This is illustrated by this comment about his early research on guns in the late 1990s “we were more gullible about the internet at first, we believed it as none of us are academic historians, we believed a lot of what was said on online forums. We learnt to be critical.” (Fred – interview June 18<sup>th</sup> 2016)

Previous research within re-enactment groups (Gapps, 2009b; Hunt, 2008; Dreschke, 2019) has emphasised not only the importance of authenticity, but also the acknowledgement that it may take time for new re-enactors to become fully authentic as they gain more experience with their research. Often re-enactors had purchased inaccurate equipment in their rush to obtain costume before they could make it themselves. This was to feel as if they fitted in, as Christine explains about their early purchases. Her lack of knowledge of both what was authentic and how to make costume had led to some inaccurate purchases.

When we initially started doing it we went to TORM (The Original Re-enactors' Market) and bought loads of stuff from Anne Laverick, and looking back now I'd die if I wore it now, if I was seen in it now, a Victorian kirtle and stuff. Now, now I'd much rather go and buy the wool and make it you know up myself, but at the time I didn't have the skills to do that. It's not till somebody turns round and says well actually .... That's not quite right and you think ok, I'm going to go and read a bit and you know.

(Christine – interview June 17<sup>th</sup> 2017)

She was very pleased that her latest dress was made without using a sewing machine as she had managed to devote a longer period of time to its construction. My working kirtle is completely hand sewn. It took about a month, wasn't too bad, in my spare time, when I

wasn't working and everything. If you were doing it constantly, probably only would have taken me a couple of days if I'd been doing it solid. (Christine – Interview – June 17<sup>th</sup> 2017)

Although it is not evident that the kirtle has been hand sewn to the casual observer it was important to Christine that she had achieved this level of authenticity and that she could describe the process of making it if asked.



**Illustration 9: The hand sewn kirtle dress being worn during a spinning demonstration**

Participants acknowledged the difficulties of being truly authentic in all of their portrayals as Cook (2004) has previously outlined. They felt that it was important to use sources that were authentic as a starting point even if they had to make compromises later on. Discussions about authenticity were often focussed on the fact that “we justify our actions to ourselves and to each other” (Wenger, 1998:11). If they could not produce an authentic artefact, for example due to the cost of authentic material, it was felt important to justify that. The compromises that participants had made between authenticity, available materials and current level of skill development was discussed in several interviews. The creation of an authentically reproduced artefact was seen as very important by all

participants. However, there was an acknowledgement that due to cost, or lack of knowledge of how the artefact would have been made, interpretations had to be made. In the case of head dresses, participants were using reference sources such as manuscripts and effigies. They often had no information about construction methods that would have been used. They were sometimes experimenting with inauthentic material for creations as long as this could not be discerned within the finished piece. Participants had to be creative with ways of constructing items as well as sometimes lack of access to the appropriate tools meant that different ways of manufacture had to be tried.

This was evident in many of the participants' descriptions of how they had made their costume and equipment. Karen had borrowed an existing head dress which had been made by another re-enactor to determine its construction methods and then tried to replicate this using her own materials and processes. In this she was limited by her knowledge of metalwork but had decided to try and use commercially available materials, which would eventually be hidden by the fabric covering, to overcome lack of specialist tools and skills.

I realised that the grille pattern looked very much like a bbq. So I bought some tin snips and a bbq set and then decided to replicate the circlet and band at the top of each cone. I decided by trial and error that that was best achieved by a cake tin and also some poached egg rings from Wilkinsons. (Karen – interview June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2016)

She reflected on her own creativity in this process and on the trialling of different materials that she had used in the initial creation during the interview. This development was followed by evaluation of the head dresses' practicality of use which revealed some minor flaws in the design that she modified for the following year. Again she was compromising using non-authentic materials which were not visible in the finished product.

I took apart the ones I already made and then resprayed them and just changed the hair and revamped them slightly. It was a big improvement learning process so I'm glad I did that. When I made the new Templars last year I actually found that the

washing up sponge was much better and so I sewed the silk around it rather than using glue and because when I attach the veil using a pin I can know attach the pin anywhere rather than having to avoid the spots of glue that I had before. (Karen – interview June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2016)

This relates to what Gapps (2009b) found in his research within American Civil War re-enactment. The progress from novice to experienced re-enactor often involved periods where participants would be knowingly wearing inauthentic costume. For Karen, at her current skill level the compromise is acceptable, as it is to her group. When discussing the construction with members of the public she will happily admit that the headdress is made from these materials. Even if in the future she can make another set without the use of plastic, since there is no record of how the originals were made, there is no guarantee that these would be truly authentic either (Cook, 2004).



**Illustration 10: The completed Templar head dress being worn with costume**

This trial and error approach to enhancing authenticity was also evident in her costume making. Karen used a mixture of buying commercial patterns and adapted them along with techniques similar to the draping approach used by some commercial fashion designers. This adaptation of patterns was used to try and improve the authentic look of a garment. Sometimes certain elements, for example sleeves, were not accurate on the pattern according to manuscript and other sources. As with the head dress construction much of this trial and error process involved wearing the garments and evaluating them in terms of how the fabric worked with the design in wear, ease of use of aspects such as fastenings and how the garment looked on. Again one of the issues affecting the authenticity of construction was that there were no accessible written records of construction of garments. Re-enactors used sources that had been written by other textile researchers. These were based on the few archaeological finds from this period. Carnegie and McCabe (2008) refer to these as authentic reproductions rather than authentic items.

Most of the participants used what they felt were valid academic ways to try to authenticate their sources.

I will often begin with a secondary source, then look at the quotes and go and find where the information came from, because that is the academic way of doing it, you have to find where the information came from. I try and find a copy of the original source. (Colin – interview – May 27<sup>th</sup> 2017)

Many participants mentioned the work of specific historians and their move towards primary sources and more specific academic texts rather than general guides they had previously used. Alan has no experience of academic research but his reading has developed within his quest for more authentic information about archery practices.

I have moved to more specific books from this period, Ann Curry who is a professor, Juliet Barker, a historian, Antony Sumpton, medieval history at Southampton University. Ann Curry has a muster roll which has been a major influence. I have also

accessed copies of documents for the county of Cheshire, mentioned William Jodrell an archer being given land for his services which is now Jodrell Bank. I've also found a letter from the Black Prince giving leave, one of the first paper letters. (Alan – interview June 18<sup>th</sup> 2016)

As with sources on costume and head dresses, one of the issues mentioned by participants was lack of access to original material. This was sometimes because it did not exist for certain periods. They then had to use later period material, and make assumptions about how that might have been used in earlier periods as Ben describes with his research on embroidery.

My sources are books mainly for the 15<sup>th</sup> century, it's difficult with some of the 14<sup>th</sup> century stuff as due to the Black Plague there were few sources from then. For 18<sup>th</sup> century it hits a pinnacle, I have a metre and a half of embroidery books at home. (Ben – interview June 18<sup>th</sup> 2016)

Visits to museums and collections featured in every response. One of the issues identified with textiles was the lack of actual artefacts, as compared with armour.

I try to use a lot manuscript evidence and physical objects from museums. You've more chance of finding armour and weapons in that sort of condition rather than textiles unless they've been preserved in a house because they just decay, or get repurposed. (Matthew – interview May 27<sup>th</sup> 2017)

This also applied to other artefacts that had degraded such as spinning wheels and textile production artefacts. For Christine, her research in spinning and cookery was about everyday activities as opposed to aspects such as combat skills. She was very aware of the significance of the artefacts she was using, and talked about research into their social

purpose and cultural attitudes (Carnegie & McCabe, 2008). This was not only the act of spinning wool but how central that would have been to daily life. She had found sources on wool production as part of medieval economics. Although the actual equipment is not available to study there is a large body of work about its impact on daily life which she had been able to access. This she felt helped her in validating the authenticity of what she was explaining to the public.

Participants were using digitised resources from collections where they could not go and visit directly. They commented on the value of seeing the actual garments in terms of construction, which could not easily be deduced from a photograph. This was felt to be of significance in helping with authenticity in reproducing garments. Ben's research on embroidery had focused on a lot of use of digitised sources although her was wary of validating information.

The internet is phenomenally helpful in this respect as long as you can check authenticity. I do checking of sources by going and finding the original source and its date. I use museums' online databases. Cutbacks have affected smaller museums such as the Herefordshire and Cheltenham Museums though they are digitising their collections. (Ben – interview June 18<sup>th</sup> 2016)

Adam also accessed original material through digitised sources. His subject matter meant that they had also been translated from the original languages. He was also always looking for sources that he could authenticate, especially if they had been translated.

I've read a few translations of medieval treatises on surgery. I am working my way through William of Solicetto's surgery at the moment trying to get a better handle on what he was talking about. So he was writing around 1275 so that is close to the period. The translation I am currently looking at is written by a surgeon so he has some sort of background in it. (Adam – interview May 28<sup>th</sup> 2017)

He sometimes struggled to understand the sources due to not having a medical background. He said that he felt part of his role in this research was to try and understand the translations, and then translate this into useful information for his talk. He acknowledged the fact that some of what he was going to be saying was possibly going to be lost as he was not using either the original language or some of the original terms (Pirker, 2011). He felt it was important that he had as much contact with this as possible for his learning.

For participants who were portraying historical characters, such as Edward II, finding original source material was very important. Some participants felt that books written about them might be giving an inaccurate or biased portrayal so they were looking for evidence of that person's actual communication to enhance their authenticity.

I always try and go back to original sources, one of the sources are letters, that gives you remarkable insight into his character, people perceive him as a weak man, he wasn't, he was a man of very firm opinions, he was really frightfully tyrannical. I look for rare books; some sources are published online. Evita Edwardius which was written at the time and ended around 1325, gives insight into how people saw him.  
(Colin – interview – May 27<sup>th</sup> 2017)

Re-enactors emphasise the value of this access to original sources with many participants citing the informal rule of being able to use something that they had found if they can document it from two reputable historical sources. However, it is their access to these that differ in both having permission to access and time to do so. For some participants this meant a dedication to the search for original material over a number of years.

I trawl the second hand bookshops, pull a few strings in libraries, sometimes I get a limited lend book that I can have for about a week. There is a very good bookshop I have found, one book I got from there is a collection of letters from the king and

taxmen and all in the original Latin so you are actually hearing their voices, the medieval equivalent of a telegram. These letters were written by Despencer, the King, the Pope and his generals all in the original languages. It's the fun of tracking things down. (Colin – interview – May 27<sup>th</sup> 2017)

Participants who were portraying actual characters were trying to bring to life “real bodies and things” (Dreschke, 2019:34) through their reproduction of costume and equipment and the responsibility to do that in a way that gave respect to the real-life person was stressed by participants.

Costumes are individual to that character, the heraldry is individual to that character, there is a history behind the things you are re-enacting which is important because you're holding up a status from someone who was alive 700 years ago. (Phil – interview May 29<sup>th</sup> 2016)

Darren displayed the same concern about his portrayal of Edward IV, discussing the fact that he had read many different books written by academics and there were often varying perceptions of what Edward was really like. Although, unlike Edward II, his king had a very much more successful image within medieval kingship he was still aware of possible bias.

Obviously we do one – to - one characters we need to try and understand to portray them actually as they would have been, and it's just, when I read this information it's to understand the guy's mood, attitude, his lifestyle so we can, hopefully portray an accurate interpretation of say Edward or whoever we're doing. (Darren – interview June 17<sup>th</sup> 2017)

This understanding the character also meant that there were visits to historic sites associated with them. This Darren thought might improve the authenticity of his portrayal.

I haven't managed to go and see it yet but I want to go and see where he is buried. We did it with Clarence as he is buried in Tewkesbury and it makes it a bit more personal for you, you know I mean I've gone to Windsor castle, you know I've seen where he, supposedly Henry 6<sup>th</sup> died, so we just try and get to see the atmosphere and that. (Darren – interview June 17<sup>th</sup> 2017)

For these participants their research is not just about costume and armour but also about the ability to feel an emotional connection with their role (Johnson, 2015) through both the physical actions and an empathy with that person at the significant moments that they portray. They were very aware that in their portrayals they are using dramatisation of historical events for entertainment and that this can be a problematic aspect of re-enactment (Johnson, 2015) due to the fact that public perception can be altered. The drive for authenticity of costume and equipment that was displayed has to be seen alongside the need to interpret for a 21<sup>st</sup> century audience. For these participants it was felt that if the focus was on that person's original voice through research as much as was possible then they could achieve something akin to an accurate portrayal.

Confidence is also linked to authenticity and being able to judge whether the advice you are being given is correct. Sarah was concerned about how she could validate expertise.

Yes, this, this is my really big concern as someone who is new at re-enacting. How do you know that you are being told something that's true? Because everyone has their own take on the medieval life and sort of how to portray it and some people have done more research than others. So yes it's always a concern and I think that's what holding me back slightly with a lot of things is that I don't have the confidence to say,

yes I know you are talking sense or I know you are talking nonsense? (Sarah – interview May 29<sup>th</sup> 2016)

She saw her group as having the collective knowledge to advise due to the fact that she knew who to ask, knew who the authenticity officer within the group was and knew that the group had extensive years of experience behind them.

But it's the people who talk with confidence and authority that you have to be careful with. But that's when I know I can go to the group and say is this what you would sort of say is authentic, is it a valid statement, is it something that I could use as a character, as a medieval character to progress my understanding. (Sarah – interview May 29<sup>th</sup> 2016)

There were particular people referenced in each skill area who were respected as having the knowledge needed to advise on authenticity. This was in most cases due to other people observing them at events and judging their costume and equipment as being of a high standard. This acknowledgement that the learners themselves are responsible for “determining when they have achieved those objectives” (Carliner, 2013:6) is a key feature of the learning shown by these relationships. This was evident in both the face to face interaction and in online relationships. For some skill areas, such as costume making, learning was very much a reflective and co-emergent process (Fenwick & Tennant, 2004) as was their understanding of authenticity.

Participants often had to be creative in how they used sources, looking in other places for the information they would need. In updating information about male clothing for one of the groups useful material had been found in an unusual source in manuscript illustrations about the Black Death.

This is probably some of the best contemporary sources for kit of our period because it's a lot of people who are busy loading bodies and stuff and so you get to see what they are wearing in more detail actually as they have taken layers off to do that.

(Duncan – interview June 18<sup>th</sup> 2017)

Much of his group's other research had been at armour museums such as the Royal Armouries in Leeds but this did not give information about what was worn under the armour so this source was very helpful. This use of manuscript and painting examples was also mentioned by other participants, particularly for costume and head dress information. Although manuscripts were not originally produced for this reason there were many richly illustrated sources such as prayer books and bibles which contained contemporary fashion. Since these manuscripts were often commissioned by the recipient and also portrayed them this was a very rich source of potential information which was used extensively by those wishing to re-create costume.

However, some of these sources that were not directly commissioned did need to be treated with caution as it was sometimes difficult to substantiate particular items through the available paintings.

The best simile for that is we are effectively reconstructing medieval high class clothing from reading the equivalent of Hello magazine, or Cosmopolitan so it's very much at a given period you will see what is a la mode, but there are huge gaps.

(Robert – interview Sept 17<sup>th</sup> 2017)

As well as the origin of the manuscript or painting, care has to be taken about its context. Digital databases of paintings and manuscripts often contain those from very different time periods and countries together and fashions were not the same across all of Europe. This was evaluated by the participants in the context of knowledge of political alliances and contemporary conflicts to determine what would be appropriate costume for a particular

character given their background and allegiance. To be able to provide accurate information participants had used other sources to substantiate what they had seen in other sources.

The only way to find evidence of that is going through funeral brasses because all of the manuscript illustrations and the paintings have either been destroyed in the Wars of the Roses or the Reformation. The brasses however tell a totally different story, something that was considered an anomaly in one or two funeral brasses when you actually start looking through the records. I've got 50 examples of the same dress ranging from unwed girls to matrons and widows. (Robert – interview Sept 17<sup>th</sup> 2017)

There was a general caution about using online sources from all participants due to concerns about authenticity, whatever age or length of re-enactment experience. The exception was sources where the participants knew the author. It was important that participants could validate the credentials of these people and in some cases that they had met them in real life and that they had standing within the re-enactment community. Validation took different forms, one of which was use by other organisations.

The Sempster is used by the BBC and other historians and she advises on her sources. There is a good reputation in re-enactment for both Kathleen and the Sempster, I have met them both face to face and know that Kathleen would say if pieces were not authentic. (Emma - interview June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2016)

Although digitised museum sources, work by historians and those whom people had actually met was felt to be useful, most of the participants were wary of what was available online. This reluctance to trust internet sources was emphasised by how strongly all participants felt about the value of printed material written by academics, historians and

specialists in areas such as combat. Although there was still an awareness of how printed sources still may not be accurate for a variety of reasons.

I've quite a collection of books at home from various authors based on the old 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century fight books. I've a couple of videos from some of those same authors which demonstrate the techniques that you can only see in the photos in the books. Of course it's all interpretation because this has not been a continuing martial art so those guys interpret it, everybody interprets it in their own way, see what works. (Neil – interview July 9<sup>th</sup> 2017)

As a combat trainer he is concerned that his research allows him to give his group members an authentic as experience as possible but realises that this may not be possible due to the limitations of what can be actually reproduced in training and equipment (Handler & Saxton, 1988).

One of the most important aspects of using sources mentioned by participants is what may not have been recorded or studied, both with original and current academic texts, as Johnson suggests “adherence to written history, to the exclusion of somatic, performative traditions, restricts the means to record (and create) history to an elite – a predominantly white, male elite” (Johnson, 2015:194). Participants were very aware that sources were often limited to those accounts from higher status individuals and that there was an emphasis on the recording of military rather than domestic details with the exception of a few sources which had been accessed by most participants such as the Paston Letters, a record of a wealthy 15<sup>th</sup> century merchant's household. This awareness of potential gaps in the literature meant that participants were using many visual resources such as manuscripts and paintings to supplement their knowledge.

Handler and Saxton's (1988) discussion of two different aspects of authenticity is very relevant here. There cannot be a perfect recreation of an object or event, given that often we do not know how it was originally created. Re-enactors may talk of having an authentic experience but since the worst injuries on a battlefield are usually a few small cuts it is not a

realistic experience. Even if they wanted to, current health and safety regulations prevent truly authentic events. Arenas are roped off, swords are blunt and 'authenticity' is limited to the curfew hours when the event is open. After that it is back to the joys of cool boxes, plastic crockery, waterproof clothing and mobile phones. As Braedder et al (2017) acknowledges, re-enactors realise the irony of their quest for authenticity in equipment and costume being accompanied for their desire for a comfortable modern existence.

In thinking about how authentic the experiences are that re-enactors are having there was evidence of reflection on this through the participant observations. This was particularly relevant in the post battle discussions at the Tewkesbury event. As well as reflection on the actual battle, there was also an acknowledgement of the re-enactors' role in the event. This was significant for Sean who had not taken part in the event before. The participants know that they are not going to die in the Saturday battle of Tewkesbury, and are going to have a very pleasant evening in the beer tent, prior to doing the same thing again at 3pm on Sunday. However, there is an undeniable effect on their perception of what they do by the experience of putting on armour, and marching onto the battlefield with 1500 other combatants. Sean's reflection on his own feelings about taking part for the first time were about how those original soldiers must have felt. It was his first large scale battle, having only fought in the group's small tournaments before. The sheer scale of the battle, the difficulty of moving within the ranks of soldiers, and the noise of the fighting, made him reflect on his previous research about the battle. They re-enactors know the outcome of the event; they watch Lord Somerset as he leaves the field as a traitor. They know he is later captured and beheaded. However, that does not prevent a rush of emotion from the Lancastrian side when they realise that they have lost the battle (again) and need to escape the field.

The re-enactment of the beheading takes place at the site of the actual capture in the grounds of the Abbey. There is humour evident in the king and his retinue throwing chocolate coins to the public to atone for the damage done to the city. There are papier - mache heads that appear on spikes after the traitors are beheaded. It is a staged, and light-hearted end to the day, but there is still an emotional impact for the re-enactors. They know that they are standing on the actual ground where these events took place, that the abbey

is the same place where the traitors tried to seek sanctuary and that this battle irrevocably changed British history. It is a very powerful and emotive experience, as evidenced by the atmosphere at the Compline Service after the beheading. Once the congregation is assembled, the king and his retinue enter the abbey to take part in a service which commemorates the dead of the battle. This also includes a reading of the names of all re-enactors involved in the event over the last 35 years who have since died.

It may all be staged but Darren does take his responsibilities for the portrayal of his role as king very seriously. It is not just about having the heraldic surcoat and the fine gowns, it is about having the skills and knowledge to become king and that does not just involve two weekends in July. Throughout the interview and the participant observation over the event weekend it became clear just how large a role it actually is. The king and his retinue arrive on the Wednesday before the event to set up the camp, then spend all day Friday with the school groups. On Saturday the king's day starts at 9am with the commanders' meeting, then being on duty in the encampment until getting ready for battle muster at 3pm. After the battle he has to change for the beheading at 6.30. This is followed by attendance at the Compline Service in the Abbey with his wife and retinue. It is only after 10pm that he is truly off duty. Even then he can be seen talking to combatants and dealing with any issues that arise in the performance of his duties as a member of the organising committee. The exhaustion that was observed on his face on Sunday night was genuine. He may not be a king but there is authenticity in his leadership of the re-enactors that attend the event.

There is also the question of who judges what is authentic or what is not, and on what basis that judgement is made (Bruner, 1994). As mentioned previously older, more experienced re-enactors within groups may be given the authority to advise newer members. This does not, however relate to any particular qualification for the role and is often taken on by someone like Karen who has expertise in costume making. In this respect she advised Sarah and other new members on patterns, techniques and sources of fabric. Organisers also have guidelines which state their perspectives (Hannam, 2006). This guidance does change though, as events become more established, and can be more selective in who attends, these tend to become stricter, as in the case of the Tewkesbury event. Non-compliance can lead to groups not being invited back.

In discussing authenticity and its pursuit, it is worthwhile concluding with the ideas of Lowenthal (1985). He suggests that verisimilitude is a more accurate term to use, meaning a reproduction that is as near as possible to the original. Whether this will come into use within groups is difficult to know. It is a far more unwieldy term than authenticity, both linguistically and in its use within general parlance. The public understand the word authentic. While re-enactors may use the term extensively, and organisers talk about it in their guidelines, it is collectively acknowledged that what happens at events is not really authentic. As Magelssen (2004) suggests, visitors and re-enactors collude in their belief in this authenticity. They are well aware that in paying to see a re-creation of medieval life, they are paying for a sanitised version without the death, disease and mud that characterised most battles in this period.

### **Factors affecting participation - Gender and Ethnicity**

A specific question was asked about gender and participation in the interviews to see if this had any effect on which skill area the participants had developed. It was also used to see how it may have affected their legitimate peripheral participation within the group. Much of what was discussed by the re-enactors linked to costume, as there are very different expectations for costume between genders. This meant that women who wanted to portray different gender roles would usually have to disguise themselves. This was mentioned by many of the re-enactors. Laura, a gunner, had wanted to participate in a particular event but the organisers' rules stated that she would have to wear male clothing. She had used her male partner's clothing before having children. However, this did not fit any more so she was only allowed to participate as part of the gun crew who were often composed of families. At other events she explained that she just wore a dress and a loose coat which tended to disguise her costume. As she was a long way from the crowd she felt that it would be difficult to determine her gender.

One of the other aspects mentioned was adaptation to medieval gender roles. Part of Sarah's legitimate peripheral participation was learning how to behave as a medieval noblewoman rather than a 21<sup>st</sup> century female. The long dress with flowing sleeves and

neck covering that she was lent at one of her first events was unfamiliar for her to wear, as well as getting used to being treated as a noblewoman. She explains her thoughts about that first show “so for example, because I am a woman I couldn’t necessarily do all of the things I could do as a modern day woman so I would have to rein back my behaviour slightly” (Sarah – interview May 29<sup>th</sup> 2016). She was also concerned on a practical level as the medieval noblewoman’s dress she was wearing had to hide her 21<sup>st</sup> century body decoration “the little things that you have to take into account like the height of the neckline to cover any modern tattoos and to cover your modesty and things like that, it was all very interesting” (Sarah – interview May 29<sup>th</sup> 2016).

This development of knowledge of medieval gender roles is an essential part of the process of legitimate peripheral participation, and both gender and social roles take adaptation by re-enactors. Tivers (2002) suggested that it was part of a re-enactor’s role to promote discussion about stereotypical female roles with the public when portraying living history. This is clear in much of the discussion about motivation for females to fight, as illustrated by Sarah’s comment.

I would like to fight as a woman in the group because I’m quite a feminist and I’d like to show girls that girls can hit things with swords too. But it may be I that have to modify my costume and dress as a male if I want to fight. (Sarah – interview May 29<sup>th</sup> 2016)

Over the two years of the research period Sarah transitioned from her role as a medieval noblewoman to a male fighter. She had begun this with combat training at the start of joining the group. She had expressed an interest in fighting in the group shows in the future at the point in 2016 when interviewed. At that stage she was not sure how she would do that, feeling that her fighting skills were not at a level where she could start suggesting this to the group.

I would like to fight whatever happened in whatever costume and I would modify any costume I would have to wear. I may have to wear guy's clothes and pretend to be a guy while I am in those clothes and then change into my women's clothing.

(Sarah – interview May 29<sup>th</sup> 2016)

She felt that the group fully supported her in this, although they had not previously had any women who wished to be fully involved in the tournament as a combatant.

I think members of the group are seeing it as a bit of an interesting challenge as to how could I do it, how could I fight in front of the public as a woman but there's never been a no I can't do this. There's always been an option of if you want to fight in the shows, this is what you'll need to know, this is what you'll need to learn. It's a question of costume I think more than anything else. (Sarah – interview May 29<sup>th</sup> 2016)

This new role entailed a very different physical portrayal that demonstrated different skills and knowledge. In her noblewoman's role she sat with Queen Isabella and talked to the public about head dresses. She had to remember to ask others if she wanted a drink rather than fetch one for herself. This was as others in the group had roles as servants and that request was appropriate to her role. Two years later she sat with the men in the group in male kit and repaired her leather gauntlet, discussing with them the merits of particular types of gauntlets. She wore a false beard during the tournament where she fought as a male. She used the name Bob as a reference to the Blackadder character Bob, who is clearly a female playing a man's role. Sarah's "relational schemas" (Baldwin, 1992:467) had changed as she needed different types of both declarative and procedural knowledge for her different relationships. Her "interpersonal scripts" (Baldwin, 1992:468) were very different for each role. In her new role she felt more comfortable with both her costume and her behaviour. It fitted more closely with her modern professional self than the

restrictions imposed as a lady in waiting to the queen. The initial role of being a lady in waiting had come about due to her friendship with Emma, who played Queen Isabella. It was also that none of the other women in the group had ever wanted to play male combat roles within the group. Although some of the women in the group did attend the fight training sessions, it was more for fitness and the social aspect. There had been a previous member of the group who had fought in the tournament. She had fought her husband in her lady's costume, as a set piece at the end of the tournament. This was more about a comedy effect for the audience, rather than as a woman demonstrating skills at fighting. It was not seen as something that anyone else could have taken on, as it relied on their unique relationship and the storyline that the group used in the show at the time.



**Illustration 11: Sarah (on right) with Emma at her first event, dressed as a noble woman**



**Illustration 12: Sarah (on right) in role as a male combatant**

When discussing gender, authenticity was mentioned as a rationale for decisions about roles by many of the participants.

I think that comes with being medieval, very much, because of how it was at the time, the men take on the male roles, the women take on the female roles, I think that's just how it falls because you're not authentic otherwise are you, it's not prejudice, it's just being authentic. (Christine – interview June 17<sup>th</sup> 2017)

As discussed in the section on authenticity this meant that certain areas of skill development were linked to gender roles quite specifically. Many groups did see flexibility in engaging in areas that were not traditionally undertaken by women as something that was very relevant to their practice.

I think the experience is certainly going to be different. Without being sexist historically there are male roles and female roles that have been done. There is the opportunity if you are a female to take part in combat, certainly in Falchion and in other groups I have been a part of, but usually have to portray yourself as a man. The exception of that being cannon crew as they were frequently manned or womanned by the family. (Martin – interview June 18<sup>th</sup> 2017)

Concern for an accurate portrayal of medieval society was an important consideration for some of the participants. They acknowledged that this would effectively lead to discrimination against female members of the group.

If you are doing medieval re-enactment and you are going to do it accurately you are talking about a very highly gendered society and it's difficult to get away from that.

In terms of what you would do as a professional there was not a lot that men couldn't do. (Adam – interview May 27<sup>th</sup> 2017)

This was also seen as an attitude that was directly prejudicial to women, asking them to portray roles in a society where women were not seen as capable as men.

Yes, absolutely, women are powerful but being a woman knocks you back, power is given to men as all the important roles are available to men and are restricted to women. There are different roles so you need to research social history, they're not like modern women. (Fred – interview June 18<sup>th</sup> 2016)

However, there is acknowledgement from all groups that compromises have to be made between authenticity and 21<sup>st</sup> century equality and diversity legislation, sometimes actively promoted by event organisers.

We had no historical records for female jousters. Women were included as the referees as arbiters of chivalry, this is evidenced in the Book of the Tournament. We do have women who joust as women in certain circumstances. English Heritage, until last year, would not let women joust at all, they are now actively pushing it again because culture has changed and we've got to the point where we can say historically this didn't happen but we are 21<sup>st</sup> century people, women have an equal role, we will not discriminate. (Robert – interview Sept 10<sup>th</sup> 2017)

This meant that the women involved in the group had additional opportunities open to them for learning to joust. They could now be fully involved without having to be concerned that they would be prevented from participating at certain events. He and his colleagues

had thus started planning a fuller involvement with one of the women who wanted to move roles from referee to fully armoured jousting.

Hunt (2008), when looking at American Civil War re-enactment, puts forward the idea that re-enactment groups may allow male participants the opportunity to portray typically aggressive masculine roles. He suggests that these are not the norm in a society where gender equality has meant changes in what has expected of behaviour. There are very aggressive behaviors evident within the military activity, such as in battles, but this was not confined to males although female combatants are still rare. Heather, who has been re-enacting since 1991, was one of the early female combatants and explains “at the start it was a man’s world, women were not expected to fight, I was the first woman to wear full plate. It has become more equal but there are still some old timers.” (Heather – interview Sept 16<sup>th</sup> 2017). When thinking about her early participation in combat she says that her gender had made a difference to the way that people have treated her. As people have got to know her things have changed. Initially she would get people who would refuse to fight her, but as she says “they have learnt over the years that they can hit you, often they don’t realise you are a girl.” (Heather – interview Sept 16<sup>th</sup> 2017). This is due to the fact that she fights in a close fitting helm which shows little of her face so for those that don’t recognise her heraldry you would not know that she is female, apart from perhaps a difference in stature.



**Illustration 13: Heather in character as Henry Percy, a 14<sup>th</sup> century knight**

Darren, who portrays Edward IV, did explain that sometimes he felt reluctance about engaging in combat with women. He had overcome this however he stated “there’s always this thing like maybe I’m not going to hit a girl but they go on the battlefield knowing they wanna do it” (Darren – interview June 17<sup>th</sup> 2017). He also acknowledges the draw of the military aspects of re-enactment for both re-enactors and the public.

There’s a lot of tension around the male sort of perception of we’ve got armour we’ve got swords, we hit each other. I try and at some point let the ladies, you know, that’s why we have fashion shows, let the ladies show off as well. So we don’t really like genderise it, we don’t restrict it so we try and make sure everyone’s involved into some sort of aspect of what they wanna do. (Darren – interview June 17<sup>th</sup> 2017).

At this point another member of the group pointed out that many of the women in the group had chosen to join this group portraying very high status members of the king’s household. They had therefore chosen these roles with their attendant constraints, rather than join another group where they would have the freedom to cross dress and play male roles.

Emma felt that at times her gender did mean that she was excluded from conversations. This was not by her own group, Swords of Mercia, who she felt were very supportive but in her role at the larger events where she was on the battlefield as a water carrier. She felt that at times her gender meant that there were perceptions about her understanding which were inaccurate.

Sometimes there are comments about my lack of knowledge of fighting from other re-enactors outside the group. I also have knowledge of armour and weapons through going fight training and the discussions in the group so I don’t see any divide because of gender. (Emma – interview June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2016)

Heather recognises that there are physical differences between genders in terms of combat training, referring to physical differences in musculature. She and her husband Chris are members of the Plymouth Medieval group that also perform medieval dance displays. Dance is not a gendered re-enactment activity. Both males and females from their group participate in displays, though there are male and female roles within the dances.

Chris explains the approach to portraying gender within his group “within the group there are no female knights so they have to have a male persona. So we have females dancing as males when they are doing the display.” (Chris – interview Sept 16<sup>th</sup> 2017). This means that the costume choice is carried on throughout the day. Females such as Heather always portraying males during the dance display and the camp life as well as in combat. This is an unusual situation as in most other groups females may be dressed as males while in combat but as females in camp. Chris and his group are unusual in their portrayal of dance as there are few groups that do this type of activity.



**Illustration 14: Chris and the dance group showing Heather (in orange) dressed as a male**

There are far more males who solely portray the combat side of medieval life. During the interviews the choice of skill area was discussed by several participants. In many re-enactment groups men tend to opt for the combat and archery, rather than craft. This was seen as a negative at times. “I think it’s the one thing that we all let ourselves down on is actually I think we still have in some respects our modern prejudice against you know, or we have the Victorian view” (Christine – interview June 17<sup>th</sup> 2017). She explains this further when talking about her research in areas such as textile crafts like weaving and her role as a cook.

The only thing I think that we all forget is that men cooked, you know we all assume that it was women who cooked when in reality it was men that cooked, we may have cooked in the home but cooking for the lord would have been the man.”  
(Christine – interview June 17<sup>th</sup> 2017)

Breaking out of these Victorian inspired gender roles is therefore not common in re-enactment, apart from the females who engage in combat. Ben is a gunner and an embroiderer who was enthusiastic about encouraging others to engage in this activity. During events he proudly displays the pouch he embroidered with flowers for his costume. He talks enthusiastically about his attempt to make accurate buttons for another set of costume. He also talked jokingly about setting up an embroidery club in the beer tent, but said he had so far had few takers. As Christine suggests “I don’t think we show that enough as re-enactors, we don’t show that men did what are now perceived as women’s roles” (Christine – interview June 17<sup>th</sup> 2017). This supports Tivers’ (2002) ideas of challenging stereotypes with the public.

For Martin he felt that there were more constraints on what men could do within their participation.

I think there is certainly it’s going to be a different experience for men and women but I don’t think certainly women are blocked from doing any part of re-enactment

these day. But possibly the other way round because I don't think I've seen many men taking on a female role so from that point of view you could almost say you get a better choice being a female. (Martin – interview June 18<sup>th</sup> 2017)

There was no sense in which participants felt that certain skills such as combat were valued above others such as costume making. All of the participants made articles of costume and armour themselves whatever their gender. The perception of the public about skills and what was expected did sometimes differ between genders. As mentioned previously some of the audience were surprised that male participants made as much of their own costume as they did. Participation within medieval re-enactment is very different to other periods such as the American Civil War (Hunt, 2004) in terms of numbers of re-enactors represented from each gender, in part due to the nature of re-enactment itself. As the focus for most groups is on everyday medieval life as well as battles, there is more of an opportunity to portray male, female and children's roles than in other types of re-enactment which focus solely on combat. Most groups are formed around the idea of a household, which will include family members and servants, and events at castles will portray 'everyday life' there. This research found that groups do allow women to participate in any chosen role but normally they would be expected to be dressed as men if portraying male roles. This sometimes was only when participating in combat with women then adopting a female persona and costume though there were re-enactors who stayed in male role at all times. The very different role of women in medieval life was mentioned by all participants. There was an acknowledgement that authenticity could be ignored when needed to take account of 21<sup>st</sup> century ideas about equal participation.

In seeking to change aspects of gender in participation it is useful to look at parallels with sport. Since much of the focus of re-enactment is on the physical aspects of battle, and the preparation for this, it resonates with debates around women's participation in sports such as football and rugby. Parker's (2006) study of the apprenticeships in English football found that "viewed either in terms of occupational or social characteristics, professional football is a strictly gendered affair" (Parker, 2006:691). The same can be said for women's participation in battle combat. Over the course of this study there were only 15 women

combatants observed at the 8 events. This was out of a total estimated number of combatants at all events of 1900. No figures are available for the overall number of women who participate in re-enactment in the UK. It is evident from the participant observations within the living history areas and encampments in this study that most groups have representation from both genders. It is acknowledged that the events attended only represent a sample of all re-enactment events in the UK. However, unlike participation in sport, where separate female teams and leagues have been a response to encouraging participation, this is not possible at re-enactment events. Holding a women's version of the battles would not be feasible, for many other reasons than historical accuracy.

It is this need to have the participation as mixed gender that is maybe the reason why women do not seek to participate in the combat side of the hobby. There is also the issue of role models. As Sarah said in her interview, she wishes to show the younger female members of the audience that it is possible to have full participation in any aspect that you wish to. She is however, a rare role model, particularly as in larger events the audience may not even realise that some of the battle combatants are female. The fact that they have to disguise themselves in order to participate, as mentioned by Laura, means that this facet of the hobby is potentially unseen by visitors. The study showed that many of the participants had joined re-enactment after visiting an event. Therefore, if more emphasis is placed by groups on showcasing their gender equality, possibly the situation may change in the future.

Another aspect of legitimate participation which also relates to authenticity is the question of the ethnicity of re-enactors. This links to the way that what they portray encourages participation from people from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Modern re-enactors do not often travel to the actual locations of the more contested battles and conflicts due to financial constraints. Therefore, directly coming into contact with people whose ancestors were affected, as in re-enactments of Aboriginal events in Australia, is not an issue (Cook 2004, Hunt 2004). However, some of what they portray is about conflict with countries that are predominantly Muslim. This includes the deliberate persecution of people due to their religion throughout the Crusades. This not only causes there to be sensitivity needed when talking to members of the public in explaining why these events happened, but also may contribute to the lack of ethnic diversity within re-enactment. Ethnicity was not a factor

when choosing the interview sample but it was part of the participant observations. Over the period of the research, with attendance at multiple events at different locations, there were only 5 non-white re-enactors encountered. This was out of a total overall attendance at events during this period of around 4,000 re-enactors (these figures are from estimated attendance of re-enactors by event organisers). This gives a figure of 0.125% of the re-enactment population who are non-white. The most current data from 2011 census gives the number of the population of England and Wales who identify as non-white as 14% (Gov. UK, 2020). It is acknowledged that these figures do not represent the re-enactment community as a whole, and are based on only two years' worth of observations at events. However, it appears, as Turner concluded from his earlier study "the hobby is largely a white affair" (Turner 1990:129).

As with Turner's research, authenticity is often cited as a reason why non-white people do not get involved, or may not perceive themselves as welcome in groups. Although the time periods involved cover the Crusades, the focus of the re-enactment is those events which happened in the UK. The general public are perceptive about these issues and can ask awkward questions about someone's right to participate based on ethnicity, not in a racist way but as questions posed about whether there were Asians or African Caribbean people involved in War of the Roses battles. The question may be asked as to why someone would want to spend their leisure time trying to find a convincing explanation for their presence at events. As previously discussed, women can disguise themselves on the battlefield in armour and can later dress in a female role if wanted. This is what women have to do to abide by rules of authenticity set down by groups. There is no mention of disguising your ethnicity in warning orders, not is there any suggestion that there should be among groups.

Although the question about ethnicity was not asked, Chris had mentioned that they had previously had a black member of his group during the discussion about gender. He stated that had just ignored his ethnicity as a group and not made any comment about it to the public by way of explanation. It may be that the lack of diversity within the audiences at re-enactment events is a factor (de Bruin, 2014; Waterton and Watson, 2015). Some people do join groups as a result of attending events so this may have an impact. It may be that even second generation immigrants do not see this as their history (Roppola, Packer, Uzzell, and

Ballantyne, 2019). This remains an unexplored area and one that would be very fruitful for further research.

## Chapter 7 Analysis of the role of online sources

As previously identified many of the participants did mention digital sources for their research, such as museum collections of costume and manuscripts. There was a general caution shown about using internet sources for this learning. This was unless the author could either be verified through institutional credentials, or was known personally to the participants. Most participants of all ages mentioned reliance on extensive collections of books as sources, rather than digital sources, unless they were the databases from museums. There was however evidence of quite extensive participant created digital content through the use of social media. This section of the analysis relates to the final question in my research. It evaluates how the use of online forums, blogs and social networking communities were used to share knowledge by the participants and aid skill and knowledge development within their communities of practice.

The “sociotechnical infrastructure” (Hansen et al., 2011:np) of the interaction was examined for different types of digital content. These were specific Facebook pages for re-enactment groups, participant’s personal Facebook pages and an associated personal website and the Living History forum previously detailed in the methodology. These are all asynchronous forms of communication. The information gained related to information shared over the three years of the research period, with reference to some earlier information for illustrative purposes. Amin and Robert’s (2008) previously discussed analysis of different types of communities of practice identified a specific type of virtual community of practice that existed solely online. None of these sources would be considered as solely virtual communities, as some of their participants do meet up in real life. They do exist in parallel to the real life communities, and in some cases such as the forum, do not have a distinct physical form as the re-enactment groups do.

Internet sources were being used by participants to share knowledge with both their own re-enactment groups and, in the case of group pages, with the wider public. This knowledge is not structured in any particular way. It does not have the same type of regulation as the “learning on demand” (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012:3) featured in higher education personal

learning environments. Rather the individual participants are creating their own virtual learning environments through engaging with a number of different digital sources.

### **Online identity**

The online identity was the same as the real life identity in most of these sources. This was with the exception of the Living History forum. Here user names are often pseudonyms relating to re-enactment role, or nicknames. For all other sources, such as websites and Facebook pages, the participants were using their own names. There was extensive evidence of identity through photos posted of selves in role. This means that the readers had some assurance that they were communicating with authentic re-enactors, in the case of receiving a request to join a group's Facebook page. Being able to determine the identity and provenance of a source was considered very important by the participants. This was one of the reasons cited for the decline in use of the Living History forum. This forum is open to everyone including, members of the public. As such there is little way of validating the knowledge and expertise of a poster in a thread. Although the more experienced participants had used the forum in previous years, they were wary of taking the information given at face value. This was unless the response was from someone they knew as a re-enactor in real life. This online identity was not only about personal identity, but also about the building of networks (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012) for learning. This was again to some extent reliant on visual confirmation of the individual as bona fide re-enactor. This involved either searching the individual's Facebook posts for pictures of them in role, or looking at their friend's list and determining if they had mutual friends who were known to re-enact.

### **Group Facebook pages**

Engstrom's (Engeström & Kerosuo, 2007) notion of activity systems was used to analyse the that information that was being shared through this digital interaction. The division of activity into "subject, object, tools, community, division of labour and rules" (Heo & Lee, 2013:136) has been previously used in other research on blog use. This was to analyse who is posting information and where. The examples detailed later in this analysis show evidence of sharing in different ways by the participants, and for different reasons. In some of the re-

enactment group Facebook pages, such as the St Dysmas one, it was mainly the administrators of the group who posted. Other members were reading, and engaging in limited interaction such as liking posts or short comments. In other re-enactment group pages, such as the Swords of Mercia, one there was evidence of interaction by all members of the group, with regular postings about work in progress and research.

The important aspects of how this information was being accessed, monitored and moderated by group administrators was also considered under the areas of community, division of labour and rules. In terms of the re-enactment group Facebook pages, although membership was primarily the group themselves, others could request to join. These were common for re-enactor friends from other groups, as well as members of the public who wished to know more about the group and future events. The Swords of Mercia Facebook group is a public group on Facebook. It has 264 members, whereas the actual membership of the group is 25 people. There are 8 administrators, who all have the responsibility to moderate posts, and the permission to accept or deny requests to join. The administrators are the longest serving members of the group. They are those that also have leadership roles within the group, such as combat trainers, treasurer, and battle commander. The St Dysmas group is a smaller closed group, having only 34 members, 16 of whom are members of the groups. The others are mainly re-enactors from other groups. There are 4 administrators, again those with leadership roles within the group. The role of administrators is particularly important in open groups, as members of the public have permission to post. The Swords of Mercia group uses its page for public relations functions of advertising its events as well as member discussions. Therefore, the group needs to ensure that what is posted is not in any way negative, derogatory or of a sensitive nature.

The re-enactment group Facebook pages that were analysed showed that a number of the posts were either factual / procedural in nature. These were often relating to specific things, such as the sharing of event information, known as 'warning' orders. Although mainly practical information, these do have a contribution to the learning. They serve as essential information in terms of equipment and costume preparation in that they contain information about the specific timeframe, history of the event, and the organiser's expectations. This extract from the event warning orders posted on the St Dysmas page is

typical of the information that will be included. This is sent a few weeks in advance of the event to all participating groups. This is so that re-enactors can undertake additional research about the historical facts that may be needed for communicating with the public at the event.

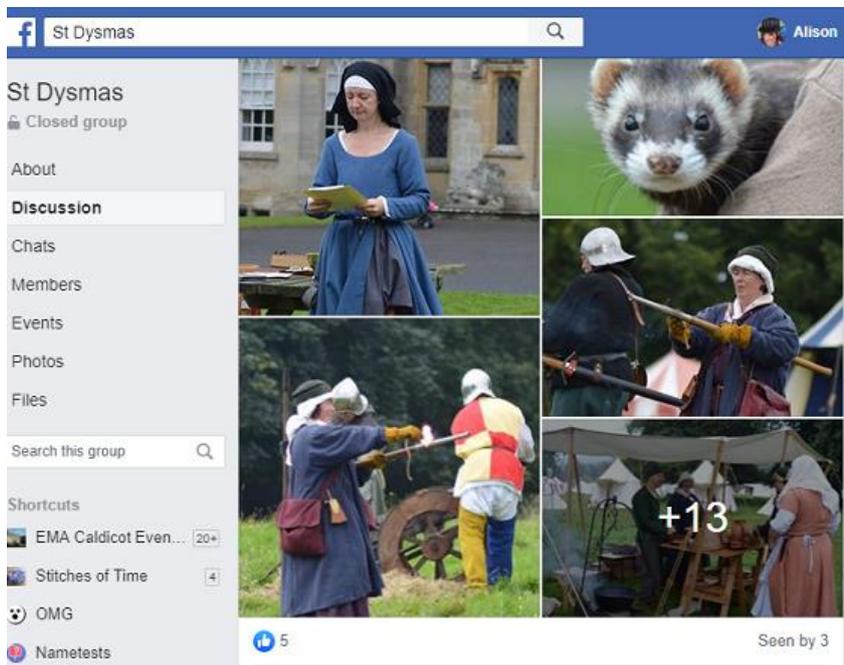
After spending Christmas in Gloucester, Edward, Earl of March heard of his father's death and started preparations to fall back on London. But then, news of the Earl of Pembroke's hostile army caused him to change his plans. In order to block Pembroke's advance and stop him from joining up with Queen Margaret's main army, Edward marched north with his three to five thousand men to Mortimer's Cross where he crossed the River Lugg and drew up in battle order. (Mortimer's Cross Warning Orders, St Dysmas Facebook page 2016).

The groups also used the pages to post photos of events, either taken by members of the group or members of the public. This may not initially seem to be a learning resource. However, these pictures were often used by the groups for evaluation of costume, and particular aspects of performance. Since much of what is experienced by the visitor to an event is visual, groups would use the pictures as resources to look at how the show was being experienced by the visitor. An example of this was video on the following page. This had been uploaded to the Swords of Mercia group page, and contained footage of Sarah after one of her first combat sessions. She used this as a reflective tool that evening to examine her performance. This was discussed it with her combat trainer who had been participating in the fight with her.



**Illustration 15: Videos of combat from an event posted on the Sword of Mercia group Facebook page**

There were also some composite albums that were shared on the St Dysmas group page by the administrators, which gave a wider perspective of an event.



**Illustration 16: Pictures from the Mortimer's Cross event 2016 shared on the group page**

The photo record of events also forms a useful learning resource for new members. In this series of pictures, the full range of the group's activities can be seen. These include cookery,

gunnery and preparation for choral singing by one of the participants. The ferret belongs to members of another group who were also attending.

In addition to these resources there was a focus on the sharing of information about making of artefacts. This “online participatory culture” (Song and Lee, 2014:512) was seen as very important to the participants in helping them share research about skill development. This dialogue that was evident in these posts showed information sharing, not just about sources of research but also practical help and advice about processes. This was evident for a number of skill areas, but did focus on the making of armour and other equipment. Within these posts there was evidence of participants sharing information and expertise, which was then used by other members of the group.

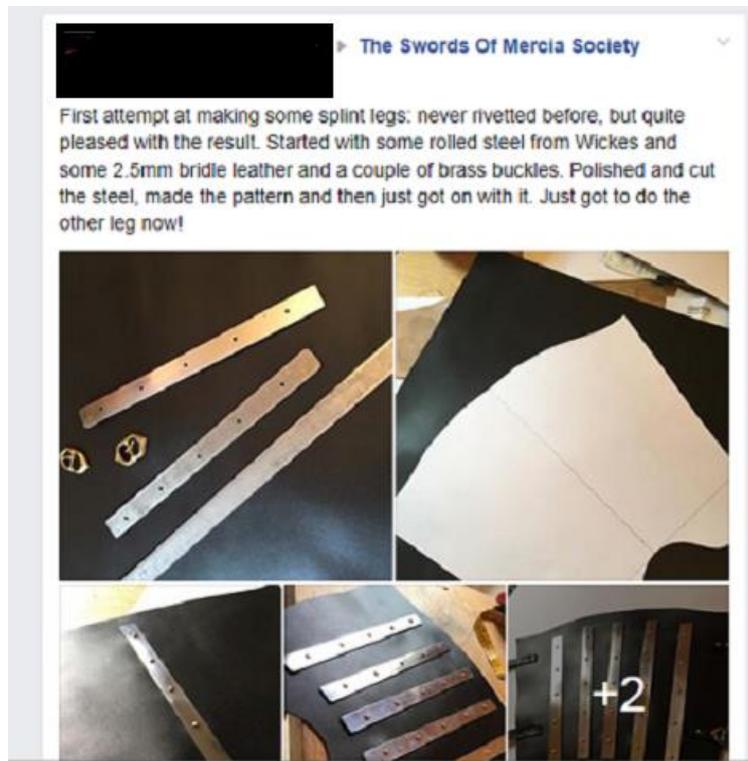
Matthew, an experienced armour maker, shared his post about progress in making protective armour. This which prompted another member, Des, to ask questions about the materials used, as he was in the process of making similar armour. A few weeks later Des shared his armour to the group pages, showing that he had used advice from the earlier post regarding sources of material.



**Illustration 17: Post from Matthew showing riveting of armour**



**Illustration 18: A conversation between Des and Matthew in response to the post about materials used**

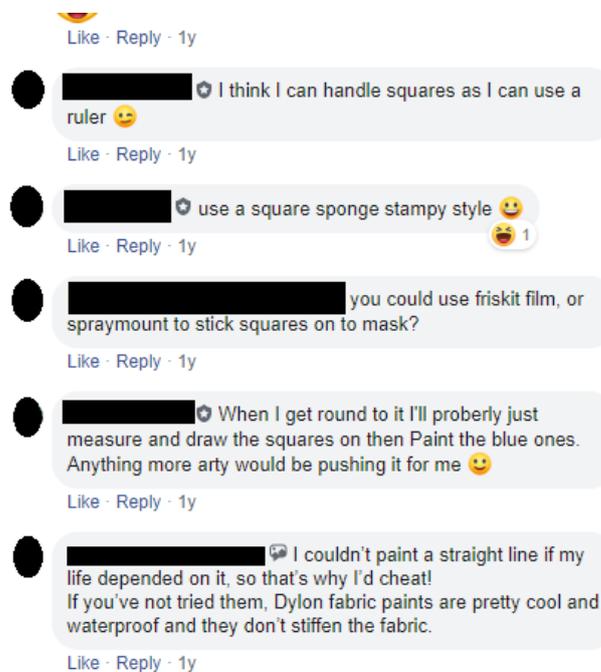


**Illustration 19: A later post by Des showing his progress with similar armour**

These types of dialogue show evidence of both the trial and error present in this learning and of the asking for help from others (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012). This is also evident in this post by another member of the group.



**Illustration 20: Asking for help with the creation of a resource**



**Illustration 21: Responses suggesting various methods and resources**

Within many of the exchanges there are examples of second order knowledge (Mi, 2015), where participants identified aspects that they did not know how to do. The above exchange shows the advice being given by other members on how the desired outcome might be achieved. It is evident in this exchange that only some of them have undertaken this process, but that they are suggesting different methods to try. As well as process posts there were also general information sharing posts when members had found relevant research. Often this was directly related to other member's roles.



**Illustration 22: Sharing blog information to the Swords of Mercia group page**

When thinking about the re-enactment group Facebook pages as virtual communities of practice (Amin & Roberts, 2008) it is evident that there are social relationships developing between the participants (Tough, 1999). These are not solely related to friendships, but also for learning. For less experienced re-enactors one of the key aspects of interaction with a community of practice is knowing where the expertise lies “who knows what” (Bryan-Kinns & Hamilton, 2012:3) and who is willing to share this knowledge. By posting about their work on the group page, and sharing expertise, it is easy for others to identify where to go for help.

There is clear evidence in the exchanges between group members of the “working at leisure” (Leadbeater & Miller, 2004:21) aspects of the pro-am. None of the participants are doing this for professional development, just to support their hobby. Although this was

undoubtedly a useful resource, particularly for new members of the group, the way that the information is shared means that it is somewhat ephemeral. One of the main disadvantages of this type of information sharing is that, due to the volume of information posted, useful and relevant posts can quickly get lost. This was as there was no tagging or categorisation used by participants. As with the knowledge that is lost from communities of practice when members leave, online knowledge is only really useful if it can be easily accessed in the future. This is not the case the majority of posts from participants. Participants were often using name tags to draw posts to the attention of other members, but there were no other content tags used that could help with finding information.

### Personal Facebook pages

This sharing of information in response to requests for help was also evident on personal pages. Colin has an extensive collection of armour and weapons for different periods, and had posted this in response to a request for information.



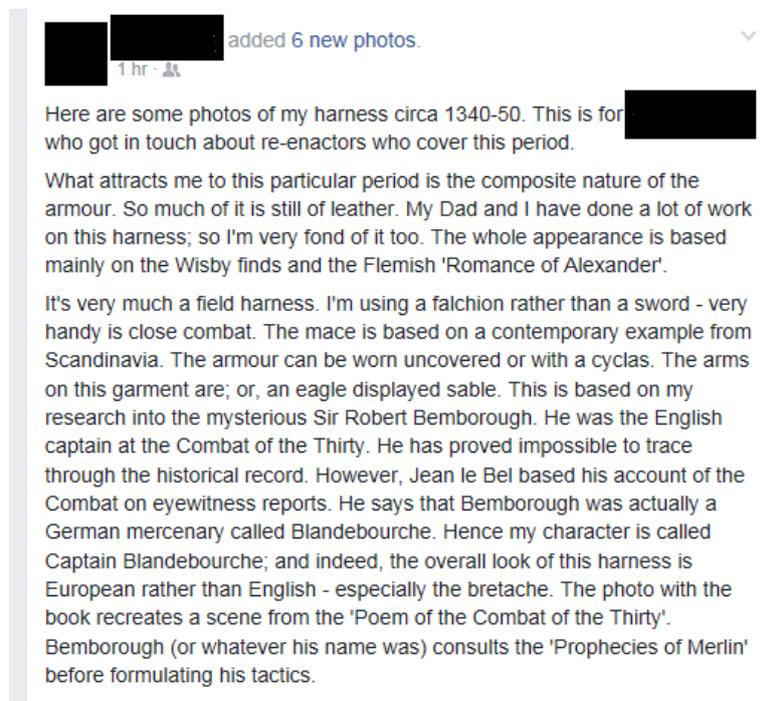
Illustration 23: Post with photos of specific period armour

As well as the pictures he had included detailed information about his research, and the specific character he had based his armour on, evidencing his leatherwork.



**Illustration 24: Information about the armour and research**

This level of detail was common within personal posts. As with interaction within group pages, there was evidence of questions and response from the wider community.



**Illustration 25: Detailed response about construction to a query from another re-enactor**

For personal pages the administration is the responsibility of the page owner. The community they interact with will understandably vary. Many of the participants had extensive virtual friendship networks within the re-enactment community. It was noticeable that many these friends were identifiable through profile pictures that showed them in costume. The importance of identity has been discussed previously within this analysis. It was significant that both participants, and their friendship groups, used re-enactment role pictures for Facebook profile and / or banner pictures in a majority of cases.

In looking at other examples of individual Facebook pages Kathleen's "Kat's Hats" page pictured overleaf has a dual purpose.



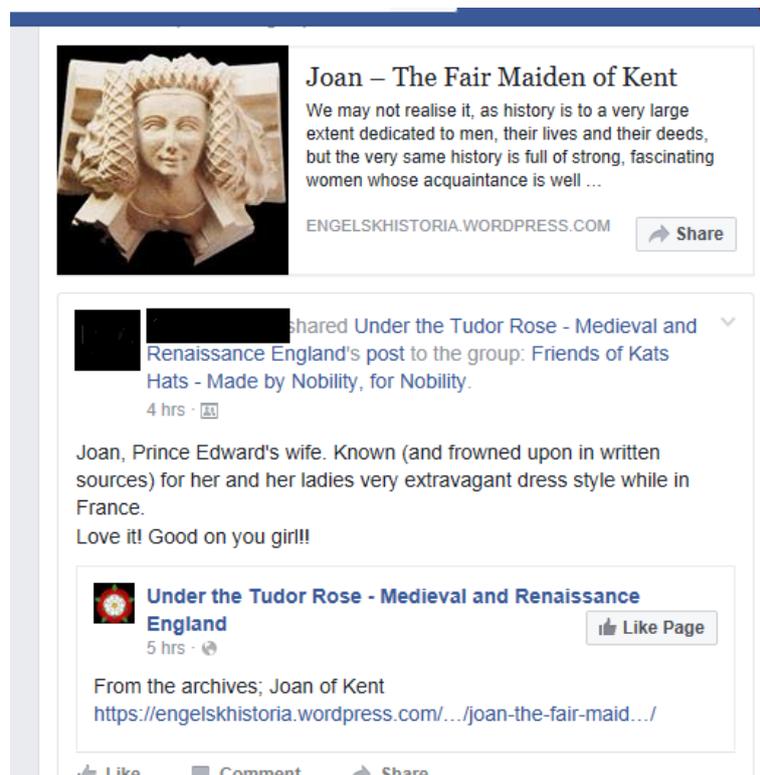
**Illustration 26: The banner on Kat's Hats page showing some of her creations**

One is to share information with fellow re-enactors about her processes. She often posted detailed work in progress posts, mainly regarding the specifics of her gold work and beadwork. These posts included summaries of her research, as well as illustrations of items as below.

From your belt you would hang your pouch or "Aumonière," a very important accessory for both the man and woman in Medieval Times. There were no pockets, so money had to be carried in the pouch. There were 124 craft persons called

"faiseuses d' aumonières sarrazinoises" listed in the Parisian Guild ordinances. A guild, comprising of women, as embroidering was a stitching art. Men, surprisingly, belonged to this Guild too. Some sources describe Noble Ladies embroidering these pouches themselves, but more likely, to be sewn by a professional embroideress. (Kathleen – personal page Facebook post 2017).

She also shared relevant resources from her own research, both picture and text based. In this way Kathleen acts as a conduit for other re-enactors. This is illustrated by the sharing of many other resources from blogs, manuscript databases and museum collections.



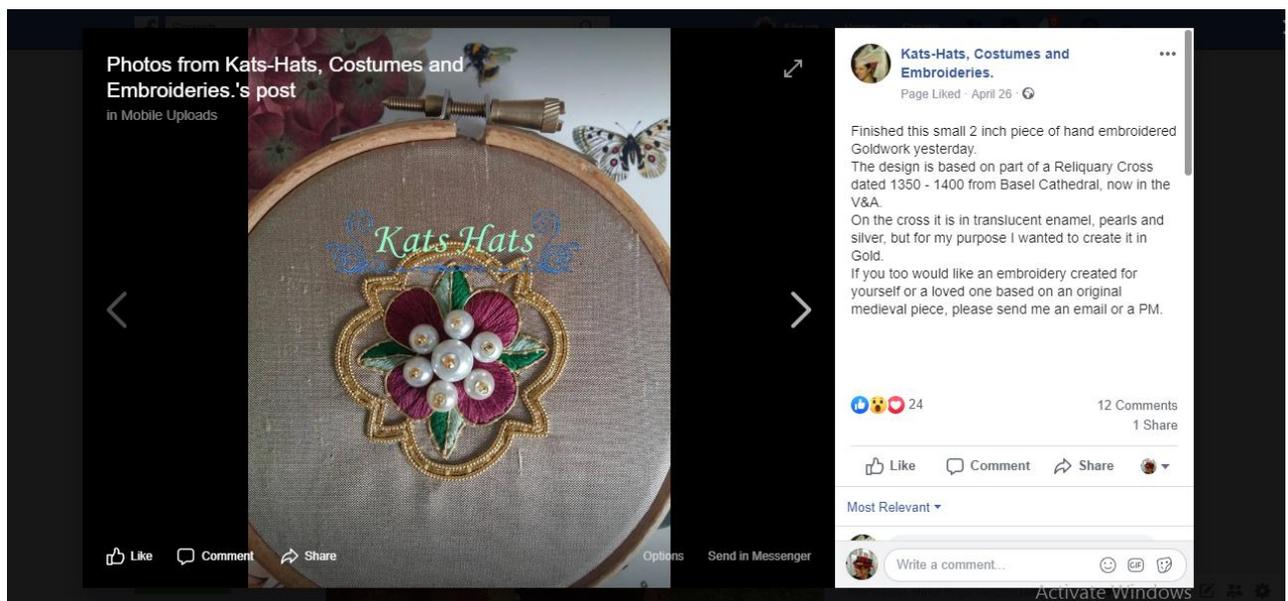
**Illustration 27: A link to another blog shared with information about Joan, one of the characters that Kat portrays**

One of the particularly significant aspects of the knowledge that was being shared in this page relates to the use of original source material for designs. As previously discussed, primary sources such as manuscripts, paintings and effigies were used extensively by the participants. This is an important aspect of Kathleen's work, which is why she was cited by

participants as a significant authority due to her research. An example of this is below where she shared the source for an embroidery for a head dress embellishment.



**Illustration 28: The original photograph of the piece used as inspiration for the embroidery**



**Illustration 29: The finished piece with detail of the origin and location of the artefact**

This level of detail extended to every piece that she has made with source material such as manuscripts used for head dresses and costume. Not only does this serve as provenance for

her own creations, it also serves as information for others as to styles appropriate for particular activities, as in this reproduction of a hunting hat.



Illustration 30: A post from an event showing Kathleen with her head dress talk display



Illustration 31: The painting from which the hat design was taken, the original is on the far left of the painting

As part of the head dress display pictured Kathleen has produced an accompanying resource to show members of the public. This shows the original source material and explains the context of the original hats that she has made.



**Illustration 32: A photo of an original manuscript used to show the origin of the hat design**

Her research has always been extensive. In addition to being a re-enactor and making her own costume, she also now sells items through private commissions. This business aspect developed from her earlier creations for the hobby, and has been a relatively recent facet of her re-enactment career. Thus she also has an objective of promoting her services through the Facebook page, which is its secondary purpose. Although there is this commercial aspect, most of the content relates to personal creations for herself and her family to be shared with the re-enactment community. The exact nature of community linked to her page is unknown, though there are 309 likes for the page and 325 followers. Given that these are likely to cross over the resource has reached over 300 people. In terms of regular engagement that is more limited. There is an average 20 responses in terms of likes and comments per post. Kathleen is the sole administrator and moderator of the page. The information is freely shared, though all photos are watermarked to avoid unacknowledged usage. In building this repository of knowledge Kathleen is creating a very specific and useful

database for other re-enactors. This is one that was very much valued by the participants who made costume and head dresses. She acts both as a writer and as a reader in her extensive research, which covers a wide range of sources.

Her accompanying Kat's Hats website was also mentioned by participants as a source of information. The website predates the Facebook page and has a focus on the history of each type of head dress, with a summary of research for individual styles.

*Made by Nobility, for Nobility*

**The Reticulated Headdress - The Cross Tree C.1399 -1422**

[Home](#)

[Crown](#)

[Hood and Lingerie](#)

[Man's Cap](#)

[Chaperon](#)

[Torque](#)

[Bycocket](#)

[Crispinette](#)

[Tressour Crispinette](#)

[Nebule](#)

[Templars](#)

[Cross Tree Headdresses](#)

[Heart Shaped Headdress](#)

[Attor de Gibet](#)

[Jewelled Coif](#)

[Headdress](#)

[Flowerpot Headdress](#)

[Halo Bonnet](#)

[Reticulated Caul](#)

[Flemish Hood](#)



*The Reticulated Headdress known as the "Cross Tree," "Gibbet," "Winged," or "Box" Headdress started life as Crispinettes from the reign of Richard II. The Cross Tree consisted of gold or silver cauls (nets) which projected out more over the ears than the Crispinettes. Above the cauls at right angles to the head are pieces of wire, which curve upwards to carry a rectangular veil that hangs like a curtain. Width was the dominant feature. Worn on top of this was a Coronet. This style was very much in vogue during Henry IV's reign and even elderly middle class women wore this style along with a wimple at the throat. It was thought, by some, to be "Ugly and Unbecoming."*

*A Holy Bishop tells us in writing of a "gentlewoman who came to a feast having her head so strangely attired with long wires and pins, that her headdress resembled a "Gibbet". She was consequently scorned by the whole company, who said she carried "Gallows upon her head." This Headdress can be seen on the beautiful effigy of Princess Beatrice of Portugal, Countess of Arundel in the Fitzalan Chapel, Arundel Castle.*

*Ladies of a lower rank used a circular roll of material, ornamented with jewels and plaques of enamel, in place of the coronet and wore this style without the wires. A beautiful effigy of Lady Shelton 1423 in Great Snoring Church, Norfolk shows this, as does the effigy of Lady Katherine Greene at Lowick, Northamptonshire.*

*Sometime during the reign of Henry V the cauls extended upward into vertical points. A circular veil was then draped over the points. This style of headdress was known as the "Horned Headdress" or "Snail Headdress". An effigy of Lady De Thorpe, Ashwellthorpe Church in Norfolk can be seen wearing this style of Headdress.*

**Illustration 33: An example of the information for a head dress, similar information is available for all other styles from the links seen on the left on the photo**

Although Kathleen does not share detailed information on how to make head dresses or costume on her web site, there are other sources that do. These were often shared by the participants through posts on their personal pages. One particular source, the Sempster, who has both a blog and Facebook page, had been mentioned by several of the participants as an information source who could be trusted. This was as they had met her in person at re-enactor's markets. The Sempster makes garments commercially. She also works as historical interpreter who has been used by organisations like the BBC, and various museums. Her research and information is not only for her own business, but also to share amongst the re-enactment community. The value of these resources was that video was often used to illustrate processes. There were also very detailed descriptions and photos of how garments were made to enable people to construct their own from this information.

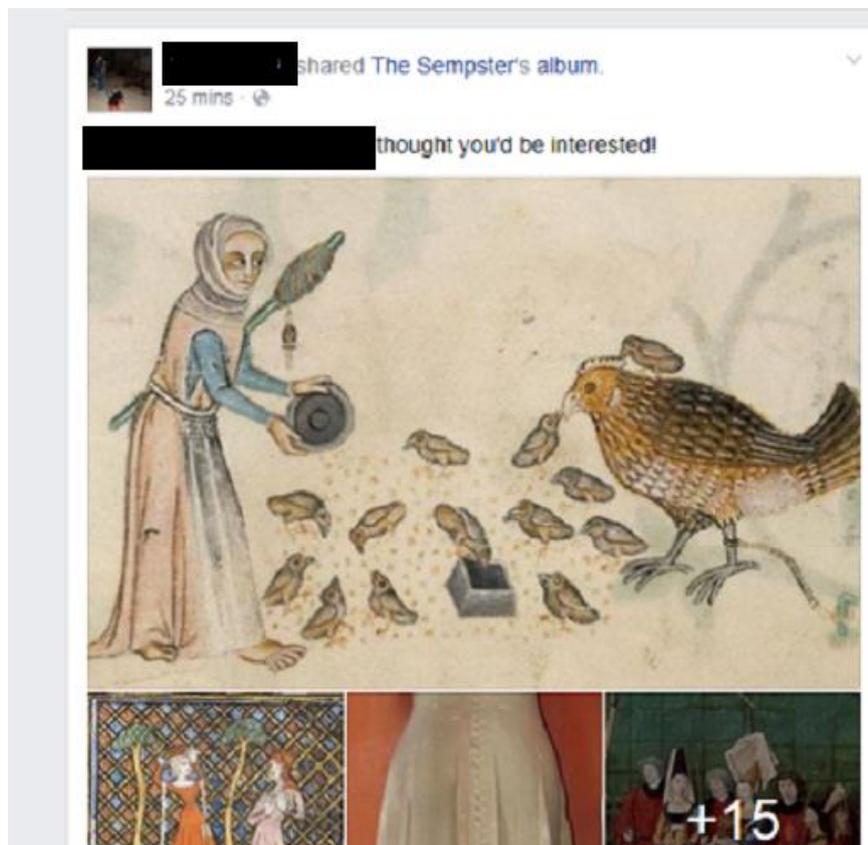


Illustration 34: A post about constructing garments showing manuscript source



Illustration 35: The complete album showing construction photos, source paintings and finished costume

Heo and Lee's (2013) three dimensions of adult learning identify acquiring information, reflecting and making meaning, and engaging in a community with social benefits. All three dimensions were evident in the data obtained from all sources. Kathleen's Facebook page showed evidence of reflecting and making meaning of her extensive research. She often posted updates on previous research or previous makes. These also have a reflection on the process, or an evaluation of how her skills had developed since that artefact was constructed. Similarly, the posts on the group pages would refer back to previous iterations of artefacts, previous works in progress and reflection on previous lack of skills. Acquiring information related particularly to the sharing of particular aspects of research. These were usually from these other sources, such as the Sempster's Facebook page, or other collective sources. In this image below Sarah had shared a collection of pictures of various types, and has tagged other participants into the post.



**Illustration 36: A shared collection of painting, effigy and manuscript sources**

Although there is a short comment there is no particular annotation of the images, this has just been passed on as information. These shares, as illustrated by posts below from Christine, were mainly passive activities. Although she did respond to a comment offering another resource in the form of a Youtube video, the information was mainly just being passed on. The participants were mostly not engaging with the content in any specific way, apart from mentioning their own skills.



**Illustration 37: Post showing examples of women using spindles, this was obtained from another Facebook page and contained a collection of images**



**Illustration 38: Responses to the post by other re-enactors**

## The use of the forum

The Living History forum is a web based discussion board structured around topics with threaded posts. There are currently over 5000 members, and a total of 153113 posts in 10025 topics (Living History, 2019). The site is organised as a series of topics. There are distinctions between more generic social aspects, events information, and skills development. There are also separate areas for different time periods, though all members can post in any topic area.



The screenshot shows the forum's index page with a navigation bar at the top containing 'Quick links', 'FAQ', 'Donate', 'Notifications [0]', 'Private messages [0]', and a user profile for 'Alison of Mercia'. Below the navigation bar, it displays the current date and time: 'It is currently Wed Aug 07, 2019 3:40 pm' and 'Last visit was: Tue Aug 06, 2019 9:49 am'. A 'Mark forums read' link is also present. The main content is a table with two sections: 'FRIENDS, DISCUSSIONS AND GENERAL' and 'SKILLS'. Each section has a header row with columns for 'TOPICS', 'POSTS', and 'LAST POST'. The 'FRIENDS, DISCUSSIONS AND GENERAL' section lists five topics, and the 'SKILLS' section lists one topic. Each topic row includes a moderator name and a link to the latest post.

FRIENDS, DISCUSSIONS AND GENERAL		TOPICS	POSTS	LAST POST
 Forum Technical Support and News Please post your thoughts, questions, bugs, etc here. I will post announcements here. Moderator: Moderators	73	499	Re: Our user data has been st... by Waringmatt  Tue Jul 23, 2019 9:29 am	
 Friends and Gossip General goss and chatting Moderator: Moderators	115	10261	Re: 4 Word Story by Lord Byron  Sat Aug 03, 2019 8:54 pm	
 Re-enactors Wanted Job adverts for re-enactors, schools, film, tv and events organisers please post here. Moderator: Moderators	78	233	Re: Re-enactment wanted for G... by Tafskie  Thu Mar 28, 2019 10:33 pm	
 Pictures Yourselves, events, parties, costumes... Moderator: Moderators	933	9303	The Pursuit to Mons 1918-2018... by Stan Watts  Mon Oct 15, 2018 8:49 pm	
 Traders Discussion For traders and related people to share Moderator: Moderators	918	5664	Re: Hardwood Supplier? by bourbon  Sat Jun 22, 2019 7:35 pm	

SKILLS		TOPICS	POSTS	LAST POST
 Costumes Making, Pictures, Queries, Resources Moderator: Moderators	1649	17656	Re: Where can I put my sword? by Graham S Cooley  Wed May 01, 2019 8:17 am	

Illustration 39: The index page of the web based forum

The forum had been the prime means of learning for many of the more experienced participants, but for a number of reasons use of it had declined. An analysis of posts showed that for the many of the topics the last post was between 2015 – 2018. Some of the social topics showed some more recent activity. Identity was identified as a factor in the decline of use. Although small pictures or avatars are used, there was little available background information about who was posting. The fact that the forum was also accessible to the public, and had no closed groups, was also cited as an issue in terms of validating information given in response to queries. There was also limited opportunity to contact individuals outside the forum. Private message facilities were available within the forum, but this depending on people accessing the forum to see that they had been messaged. Some participants however, had been very active as both readers and writers in the forum

for a number of years. They had used it for discussion of various topics such as legislation affecting carrying weapons and specific information about creating resources.

The screenshot shows a forum thread on a light blue background. The main post is titled "14th century flags in England?" and is by user "Melons de Cantilupe" (profile picture: a red shield with a blue and white checkered pattern and a crown). The post text asks for help in making a flag for an English baron of 1340, discussing dimensions, shapes, and materials like banneret, batchelor, and various types of flags (lances, pavilion masts, battlefields). It ends with "Pictures or diagrams would be most helpful." and "Thanks, Nick". The reply is titled "Re: 14th century flags in England?" and is by user "Shadowcat" (profile picture: a black and white cat). The reply text says "When I had to make a banner for a Ricardian knight, I contacted the College of Arms, who recommended a very helpful book which I found in my local library, written by one of the Heralds. As this was a very long time ago, I no longer have the reference, but you could try looking at the website, and getting in touch." followed by the URL "http://www.college-of-arms.gov.uk/" and "S.". Both posts have social media sharing icons at the bottom.

**Illustration 40: Forum post by Neil asking for help with flag making**

The forum is moderated by a small group of re-enactors who work as volunteers. There are specific rules about posting in certain cases, such as directing people to topics rather than posting everything in general information. Moderators respond to incorrectly placed posts as needed. The advantages of this forum as a source of learning are clear when analysing the content of the topics. One query posted in 2012 about licences needed for a musket had 96 replies over 3 years, and a total of 62,490 views. Although many of those viewing may not have been considering gun purchase, the discussion contained a wealth of useful information about personal experiences of gun licensing, and interactions with the police firearms officers.

The screenshot shows a forum post titled "Re: Licencing - muskets etc." by user "Db" (profile picture: a black square). The post text says "Good advice, I suppose (I'm a member myself) except not everyone who uses blank firers does WWII (or even 20thC....)." and then discusses the relevant act, mentioning that an unlicensed blank firer needs a permanent drill-resistant blockage in the barrel, and that gases from combustion cannot be directly vented through the barrel. It also mentions that the use of obstructive devices within the barrel structure has been permitted in the past, citing Pietta/Sutler's Stores and Derbyshire Arms. The post concludes by stating that blank firers abroad (France, Belgium, Germany etc.) tend to be constructed differently and allow projectiles to be launched, which is illegal in this country. At the bottom, it includes an edit: "link to the relevant part of the VCRA legislation: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2011/1754/made>".

**Illustration 41: Response showing discussion of firearms legislation**

As the site still holds a wealth of information, there are no plans to stop hosting it. It functions as a very significant repository of interaction, and shared learning knowledge from its members. It does have disadvantages, in terms of its size, complexity in finding specific information within the threads, and the lack of ease of posting pictorial resources. However, these are outweighed by its value as codified knowledge on a wide range of topics.

### **Analysis of interaction**

Interaction on the individual posts in both Facebook pages and forums was about often about participation (Song & Lee, 2014), as well as just gaining knowledge about the process. This was evident from some of the questions and discussion shown by the participants. Participants were acting as readers and writers of information in most cases (Heo & Lee, 2013), the exception being Kat's Hats Facebook page and website. Here most of the participants were reading information. Writing was limited to short comments, mainly thanking the writer for the information. This concurs with what has been found in other research about web based learning (Heo & Lee, 2013; Valencia-Garcia et al., 2012) where the knowledge becomes collective, rather than individual intelligence. Being able to return to the knowledge held in these sources enables reflection on them at a future date, and also enables multiple perspectives to be shared (Park et al., 2011). Although their research was carried out on blog use rather than Facebook pages, the same can be seen about aspects such as process in the discussions on these pages.

This is also unique data in that it enables capture of discussions that also took place in real life at events, but were often not recorded (Wilson et al., 2012). The forums and blogs demonstrate some of the only codification of knowledge by re-enactors. The resources contained in these Facebook groups, individual posts, and websites, represent a wealth of knowledge about individual research and skill development. This is shared not only with fellow re-enactors, but often other interested public as well. As discussed, the knowledge would benefit from enhanced organisation to enable it to be accessed more easily, but it represents a very significant resource for learning.

There have been previous studies that have looked at Facebook usage (Noor Al-Deen & Hendricks, 2012; Wilson et al., 2012; Back, 2013) but few of these have concentrated on the

content of the interaction. This analysis has shown evidence of use of specific forms of interaction that support learning. The use of the group and individual Facebook pages support existing networks such as specific re-enactment groups (Honeycutt & Cunliffe, 2010). They also allow the creation of specific interest groups. Thus web sources can offer benefits in terms of the availability of information. They also offer the ability to use others', and own reflections to analyse knowledge gained. The digital resources contained evidence of the "three dimensions of community – mutual engagement, sense of joint enterprise and shared repertoire of resources" (Amin & Roberts, 2008:354) that denote a community of practice. Participants in this type of learning do recognise issues of validity and credibility. Their online interactions were in the main closely linked to their real life ones, with people using real identities within the Facebook pages, and meeting others at events throughout the year. Re-enactors create their own learning environments with a mixture with the use of favoured digital databases and collaborative learning through individual interaction. This supports the face to face interaction within the community of practice, and offers valuable support for new members.

## **Chapter 8 Conclusion**

In this conclusion there is a review of the contribution of this thesis to knowledge and evaluation of both the research questions and my methodology. There is also identification of areas for future research. The aim of this thesis was to look at the role of learning within medieval re-enactment in the UK through an ethnographic approach which explored the experiences of participants who had a diverse experience of engagement in the hobby. This was both in terms of their length of participation and the areas that they had chosen to focus on for their learning. Motivation to join groups was more varied than previously envisaged. It relied on personal contact in a majority of cases, rather than an interest in re-enactment which had prompted direct engagement with a group with a view to joining. Most of the participants had known little about involvement before joining. This meant that many people developed their skills or knowledge in a way that directly related to this first contact, rather than a possibly more informed choice based on the most suitable group. This meant that in some cases participants had later moved groups or initially found it difficult to determine a skill area that they wanted to develop. The role of the community of practice was in both enabling legitimate peripheral participation for newcomers, and in supporting learning through “mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire” (Wenger, 1998:73) that are key features of these groups.

### **Contribution to knowledge**

In examining the contribution to knowledge it is useful to look at the research questions again and evaluate the findings of the thesis in light of these.

1. How can the learning within re-enactment groups be contextualised using theories of communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation?
2. What are the skills learned and knowledge acquired by participants within medieval re-enactment through involvement in these communities of practice?

3. In which ways does the 'master and apprentice' relationship contribute to the learning of these skills and how is 'expertise' within this learning defined and validated by participants?

4. How do online forums, blogs and social networking communities aid skill and knowledge development within these communities of practice?

There has been an original contribution in the way that theoretical aspects have been applied to this particular type of learning. The work of learning theorists and educational researchers (Bernstein, 1999, 2000; Fenwick & Tennant, 2004; Wenger 1998,2000) has been used both to analyse the relationships within the communities of practice, and how that has supported the learning within the group. Although communities of practice as a theoretical framework has been used to study many vocational groupings, it has not been used extensively for looking at learning through hobby and interest groups.

There has also been little in the way of previous research about how re-enactment groups function as communities of practice, and how new re-enactors are involved through legitimate peripheral participation. Therefore, this research makes a contribution to knowledge about the actual process of becoming involved. It is important to consider that their participation and skill development was affected by, in many cases, accidental membership of a particular group. This was particularly relevant when thinking about how gender influenced participation. Although this has been previously explored by Hunt (2004, 2008), this was in the context of American Civil war re-enactment rather than medieval. Therefore, there has been a contribution to knowledge of how re-enactors are dealing with the dual aspects of trying to give an authentic portrayal of medieval life, within contemporary equality legislation.

One of the significant aspects to come from data was that learning was not only evident in re-enactors gaining knowledge themselves, but also providing support for other group members, particularly the new members. The participants felt that much of this learning was about aspects such as confidence to engage with the public and communication skills. This was evident in both the one – to – one and group engagements participants were involved in with visitors to the events and was a very important part of individuals' re-

enactment interaction. It formed a very significant part of their move from being on the periphery of a community of practice to becoming an insider within that community.

Although there has been some research into re-enactment groups (Hunt, 2004, 2008; Dreschke, 2019) much of the previous work has focused on particular aspects such as authenticity (Brædder et al., 2017). This was found to be an important part of all of the participants' involvement. It related very strongly to the support given by the community in developing what was considered to be authentic recreations of medieval life. The data showed that there were many other factors that were involved in the pursuit of this. Many of these related to the type of group that participants were involved in, or to their gender. Thus there were many more aspects to be considered than the simple question of something being authentic. Thus this thesis can hopefully contribute to the expansion of this debate within re-enactment.

There was evidence of a very strong dedication to original sources being used despite lack of easy access to these. There was a considerable amount of time and money dedicated to this by participants outside of events, with visits to museums, churches and historic sites. This reading and research outside events had not been considered in previous research reviewed. Therefore, this thesis makes a contribution to knowledge in detailing what the individual participants have undertaken in pursuit of their learning.

There has also been research that looks at the role of re-enactment as an aspect of heritage management (Agnew, 2004,2007) or as part of tourism management (Carnegie & McCabe, 2008; Halewood & Hannam, 2001). However, there has been little focus on what the individual participants have learnt from their involvement, and in particular how that learning has been supported by digital resources. An investigation into how social media was being used to support these communities of practice showed evidence of continuing discussion relating to skill and knowledge development. This took place away from the events themselves and was acknowledged as importance in keeping the communities in touch with each other when away from the events. It was also one of the only aspects of codification of this knowledge. Most groups did not codify their knowledge in any way. Thus there was very much a reliance on oral traditions of passing on knowledge, aside from what

was posted via social media. Therefore, the thesis makes a contribution to work on how learning can be supported by platforms such as Facebook.

In terms of master and apprentice relationships and determining expertise, there was little in the way of formal relationships though these were more evident in certain skill areas. Previous research has looked at the role of both medieval and modern apprenticeships (Bednarski & Courtemanche, 2009; Fuller & Unwin, 2003) and what this work has sought to do is to link the historical and contemporary aspects together. There were features of social learning, such as observation and assimilation evident. However, these were only really in costume, gunnery and combat. In all others there were much less formal and more fluid relationship within the community of practice. Expertise was based on individual reputation but also on group membership, as some groups were seen to have a higher status than others.

### **Review of the methodology**

The ethnographic approaches were well suited to the research questions. Interviews and participant observations gave a wealth of data. One of the realisations early on in the research collection phases was that the participant observations, while very valuable as evidence, were not going to be feasible to use in coded form. This was due to the fact that there were usually multiple people were involved in each of these and so there was a wealth of data generated from each observation. Therefore, the decision was taken that field notes were to be used as general support for analysis, rather than attempting to code for specific evidence in an individual observation. One of the key aspects of the data collection was the limitation on the number of people able to be interviewed. Although the original intention was to interview 25 participants, far more could have been interviewed as there were many other volunteers who had to be rejected due to time constraints.

Although originally the intention was to interview one male and one female participant, the gender sampling proved difficult to do for certain skill areas. There are few female archers, and the chosen contact was not available during the data collection period. There also had to be a change in the chosen female sword combatant, due to the original choice of

participant becoming pregnant. There is somewhat of an irony here as discussion with her was going to be about whether she had experienced anything different to her male counterparts, clearly not many medieval knights go on maternity leave.

Although the original intention was to take all pictures and video personally while not in costume, it became clear that this was preventing me from being able to capture data spontaneously on occasions. Therefore, during the second phase of the research, there was use made of a visual amanuensis on a number of occasions where it was not feasible to be out of costume.

There are limitations to any research and as discussed in the methodology chapter concerns of “representativeness, reactivity, reliability, replicability “(Mishler, 1986:108), are of paramount importance. The data was revisited many times, using reflexivity at all points in the process so as not to let personal impressions and previous knowledge override what was being heard and read. However, there is always the risk that what is contained in this thesis interprets the participants in ways that they did not intend. There were some particular moments where reflexivity was used to try to understand personal bias, one of these occurring early on in the data collection period. In reviewing the content of the first set of interviews there was a realisation that there needed to be an acknowledgment of the affective domain. On reflection there was a realisation that the performance aspects of re-enactment had not been considered as something that people would need to develop their skills in. Throughout my professional life I regularly ‘perform in front of the public’. It did not occur to me that people would talk about the affective domain in terms of developing their confidence in this. Originally I did not see talking to the public as a skill, I was perhaps too focused on the psychomotor aspects, and artefact creation when so much of what is done is verbal. There was initially too much focus on product rather than process, which was revised within later interviews and observations.

In terms of representativeness these participants are only a very small sample of the thousands of people who participate in re-enactment and each of their stories is unique. What this research has sought to do is tell some of those stories. It has sought to explore the blend of scholarship, enthusiasm and dedication, to a pursuit that has been the subject

of very little research. That which does exist has looked primarily at re-enactment at macro rather than micro level with reference to whole groups or the wider re-enactment community. The hope is that through this thesis the voices of these participants have been represented fairly, and with recognition of their contribution, not just to this thesis but to the overall field of historical scholarship.

### **Further research**

In developing the initial proposal two additional areas of data collection were envisaged. These then had to be removed due to the scope of the study then being too large. One of these was looking at formalisation of combat training using four groups as case studies. The other was looking at this with respect to the demands of heritage organisations for increasing awareness of health and safety from groups. These are still areas that would be pertinent for further research. This is particularly relevant in looking at the intersection between learning and the staged aspects of combat training that were evident within the data from this thesis.

Although the role of re-enactors in acting as educators has been mentioned within this thesis, there is scope for further research that looks in more depth at this. This would be useful from the points of view of both the public that attend events, and the heritage organisations that host them. Some work has been carried out in this area (Malcolm – Davies, 2002; Pirker, 2011). However, this has focused on the role of costumed interpreters, who are paid members of staff, or site specific volunteers, rather than re-enactors. Therefore, this would be a fruitful area to explore.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 Ethical forms – Participant information and consent forms

**University of Huddersfield**

*School of Education and Professional Development*

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#### Participant Information Sheet

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You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with me if you wish. Please do not hesitate to ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

#### **What is the study about?**

This research is part of the study for my Doctorate. I am looking at the role of informal learning within medieval re-enactment. I am interested in how people learn skills and acquire knowledge through participation in re-enactment.

#### **Why I have been approached?**

As you are a re-enactor I would like to ask you about your experiences, I have chosen people who are interested in a range of areas such as costume, embroidery, armour and weapons to interview.

#### **Do I have to take part?**

It is your decision whether or not you take part. If you decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form, and you will be free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

#### **What will I need to do?**

If you agree you will take part in a semi structured interview, it will be recorded and it will take about twenty minutes. I will also need permission to use relevant data from posts that you put on Facebook or other forums that you use such as Living History, such as sharing of information about the areas we discuss. The actual posts will only be used as background evidence for ongoing skills development and no information relating to personal data shared on Facebook will be used.

#### **Are there any disadvantages to taking part?**

There should be no foreseeable disadvantages to your participation. If you are unhappy or have further questions at any stage in the process, please address your concerns initially to myself as the researcher if this is appropriate. Alternatively, please contact my research supervisor Helen Jones, School of Education & Professional Development, University of Huddersfield.

#### **Will my identity be disclosed?**

If you prefer, all information disclosed within the interview will be kept confidential, except where legal obligations would necessitate disclosure by the researchers to appropriate personnel. The doctoral study will only be marked by University tutors and External Examiners.

**What will happen to the information?**

All information collected from you during this research will be kept secure and any identifying material, such as names will be removed in order to ensure anonymity. It is anticipated that the research may, at some point, be published in academic journals. However, should this happen, your anonymity will be ensured, although it may be necessary to use your words in the presentation of the findings and your permission for this is included in the consent form.

**Who has reviewed and approved the study, and who can be contacted for further information?**

The research supervisor is Helen Jones . They can be contacted at the University of Huddersfield.

Email; [h.m.f.jones@hud.ac.uk](mailto:h.m.f.jones@hud.ac.uk)

Name & Contact Details of Researcher: Alison Ryan

Email; [alison.ryan@hud.ac.uk](mailto:alison.ryan@hud.ac.uk)

**Participant Consent Form**

**Title of Research Study:** Informal learning within medieval re-enactment

**Name of Researcher:** Alison Ryan

**Participant Identifier Number:**

- I confirm that I have read and understood the participant Information sheet related to this research, and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
  
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.
  
- I understand that all my responses will be anonymised.
  
- I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses.
  
- I agree to take part in the above study

**Name of Participant:** .....

**Signature of Participant:** .....

**Date:** .....

**Name of Researcher:**

**Signature of Researcher:**

**Date:**

## **Appendix 2**

### **The structure of an event**

In order to give an indication of how I developed the research questions and to contextualise the data that I have collected this appendix discusses in more detail what actually takes place at a re-enactment event. For this purpose, I have chosen to discuss two different types of events that groups take part in. These are a single group one, and a multi group one, that are two of the events where data was collected.

The single group Ashby de la Zouche event is one that Swords of Mercia have been undertaking for the last 16 years. It takes place over one weekend in July. The event is managed by English Heritage. They book a number of different groups, at various locations throughout the summer months, to do single group shows at their castle sites. The Swords of Mercia group primarily do the same kind of activities at all of these events, whether it be at Ashby, or at Bolsover or Peveril castles. There will be some differences, as the event will be linked in some way to the setting. There may also be particular demands that the property managers have for that weekend, such as sharing the venue with wedding parties. The events are usually booked about six months in advance. All members are expected to attend unless they have notified their absence to the group leader. This is solely for purposes of planning the event, as there is no minimum attendance requirement at events group for individuals within a year. Payment is made by English Heritage to the group as a whole for all of the year's events, which normally equates to around £150 per event. The visiting public consists of either people who are already members of English Heritage, who can attend for free, or non-members who pay a fee for the event. Staff from English Heritage are on hand to encourage non-members to sign up.



**Illustration 42: The Swords of Mercia reenactment group at Ashby Castle 2016**

The event is set up on the Friday night. Group members arrive after the site is closed to the public to pitch the canvas reproduction medieval tents that form the encampment. This area will be one focus of the event's activities. The group currently have four individually owned tents of different sizes. These are used as sleeping accommodation by the tent owners and to store equipment and modern clothing during the day.



**Illustration 43: The group's encampment at Ashby de La Zouche Castle**

Members without their own tents either drive to the event every day or stay in local hotels. None of the tents are currently open to the public as part of the display as there is no, 'living history', element to the event. Therefore, there are no demonstrations of cookery or displays of tent furnishings. Other displays are set up on the Saturday morning of the event. These consist of weapons and armour, head dress and costume, barber surgery and a king's awning where the king, queen, and ladies in waiting receive members of the public. The displays are set up on specially designed racks in the case of the weapons, for the others benches and chairs are used. In addition to the encampment three areas of the castle grounds are roped off. These are used for the children's knight's training, the tournament and the children's joust. All of these have their own equipment such as wooden swords and shields, and a mini tilt yard with hobby horses and joust poles. There are also flag poles around the tournament arena where the individual knight's heraldic flags are displayed.

The schedule for the day is negotiated with the castle manager in advance. This would normally consist of the same programme for each of the two days starting at 11am and finishing at 4pm. This is available to members of the public as a printed programme given on entry. Within this there will be some elements which are repeated morning and afternoon to give visitors chance to experience things whenever they arrive. These include the weapons and armour talks, barber surgery demonstration, and costume and head dress talks. There are also repeated sessions of the children's knight's training and joust.



**Illustration 44: Queen Isabella and companion sewing in the tent awning area**

The other elements take place at set times once a day. There is a children's battle re-enactment. This involves a battle between the Scots and the English with children dressing in tabards with the relevant country's heraldry on. These have been made by the group and are distributed at the start of the event to interested children. All of the group take roles in a short scenario describing the battle's events. The children get to shout as loud as they can to defeat the enemy, and pretend to throw spears. Later on in the morning there is a, 'dressing the knight', talk. One group member is helped into full armour by squires, while another member gives information about the equipment. This talk precedes a short demonstration of fighting techniques with some of the combatants. The final element of the day is a foot combat tournament. This is one that does not involve horses, where the knights and squires in full armour and heraldry fight each other. This part of the event is centred around a historically based story relating to why the tournament is taking place. Here it is related to the king, Edward II and his knights trying to control the baron's rebellion. This is led by Sir Roger Mortimer and his retinue, aided by the Queen, who historically Mortimer was involved in an illicit relationship with.

All of the interaction with the members of the public is designed to be child friendly and age appropriate. Group members also spend time talking to adults in more detail about aspects of interest as required. Although the re-enactors identify themselves as their character, and will introduce themselves as such, they are also happy to use third person language to discuss the character if asked. For example, one of the group who portrays Sir John de Warenne will introduce himself to members of the public by name. However, if asked a question about when and where John lived, he will switch to third person and describe John's life and death, wealth and other historical facts. All conversations are conducted in modern English. Group members also use improvisational acting techniques, particularly within the battle and tournament. There are prompts for action given to fellow members rather than rehearsed lines learnt. There is also use of humour and spontaneity in reacting to what happens during the activities. This does mean that members have to be confident in speaking to a wide variety of people of all ages. The public are encouraged to handle and try on weapons and armour and head dresses. As well as the ones for adults that have been made to a high standard of authenticity, there are children's head dresses which are simpler and more robust to withstand repeated handling. All these have been made by members of

the group. All of the group take part in their particular specialist areas as required with everyone participating in the children's battle and the final tournament. At other times members not directly involved in an activity would be engaging with the public. This would involve answering questions, encouraging participation, and giving the opportunity to look at everything on display.

The multi group Tatton Medieval Fayre takes place over the same weekend in June every year. It is located in the grounds of Tatton Old Hall within Tatton Park. This is a large historic property in Cheshire which also has a National Trust house on site. The event is managed by Eventplan. This a specialist re-enactment event company set up by a re-enactor which has been in operation for around 25 years. The event is supported by approximately 40 re-enactment groups of various sizes. The groups book to attend the event in response to information provided through the organisation's website and on social media. Booking opens around 6 months before the event and closes two weeks before the event. This is so that relevant information can be sent to groups in advance. Groups specify in advance which type of camping is required for the group tents, and potentially how many re-enactors will be taking part in the battle in which roles. There is no payment made to any of the groups that attend. Eventplan pay for all additional services needed such as staffing, security, portaloos and also organise a medieval market, caterers, and an external bar. This is funded by tickets sold at the event to the public. Due to the constraints of the site layout only the area surrounding the Old Hall can be managed for ticketing. This means that members of the public who do not want to pay to enter the Old Hall area can still access some of the event. This includes the living history area outside the Old Hall, catering facilities and the battlefield. They do however have to pay to access the Tatton Park site in a vehicle.

There are two camping areas available so as the re-enactors arrive on the Friday night they are directed to their booked area. Groups generally camp together, whether in the living history encampment or the general camping field. This is situated some way from the event out of sight. This is known as the, 'plastic camp', as opposed to the, 'authentic camp' of the living history section of the event. The living history area surrounds the Old Hall and also extends beyond its wall to run along beside the battlefield arena. This provides both a backdrop to the battle and also an area where group's displays can take place. The living

history encampments are freely accessible to members of the public. Some things such as fires and cooking areas may be roped off for safety reasons. Not all of the canvas reproduction medieval tents will be open to the public. However, it is expected that a significant proportion will be. The public can enter these, look at, and touch the items within.



**Illustration 45: Hand painted chest made by a reenactor with illustrations copied from manuscripts**

Most groups will have some members with tents in this area, even if there are others in the general camping. There are usually around 100 tents of various sizes in total grouped around communal areas with fires and displays. The re-enactors who are camped in the general camping will spend much of their day with their fellow members in the living history area. Here strict rules apply about not wearing modern garments and hiding all modern equipment between the, 'curfew', hours of 10am to 5pm, when the event is open. Various displays take place within these group encampments on an ongoing basis throughout the day. These cover areas such as combat training, cooking, weaving, spinning, forge work, weapons and armour talks, embroidery and leatherwork as the skills of the group members can support.



**Illustration 46: Tatton living history encampment**

Due to the larger size of the event and the many activities taking place the public may visit the encampments at any time. Therefore, there are no set times for these displays. The re-enactors will be working in these areas as and when the public arrive. They will then bring them into the activity by asking and answering questions. Again modern English and a mix of first and third person is used when talking about characters and actions.

As well as rules about authenticity of clothing there are also expectations that the group's encampment will be accurate for the characters portrayed. This means they will need to reflect social status and appropriate artefacts. The encampment area contains a mix of groups. There are those who only portray small militias, with basic shared soldiers' campaign tents, a fire basket and basic seating. Others will portray a lord's household with large tents. These will be completely furnished with full sized double beds, fabric hangings, tapestries, storage chests, dining tables and chairs. There is also an expectation that the age of the re-enactor will match the age of the character they are portraying. This is to enhance the authenticity of the portrayal. Where re-enactors are representing a known historical figure, such as Sir Roger Mortimer mentioned earlier, this is even more important. Thus re-enactors who participate for a long period often have to retire from roles and take on new persona. This also means that a reenactor who portrays a historical figure within their own

group shows will take on other personas at larger shows. This may mean portraying a character's son, grandson or mother at the other larger shows, depending on the time period represented. This means that the reenactor has to not only know their character's personal history but family timeline as well, and be prepared to switch roles at different events. This representation is monitored by the organisers. Groups who do not adhere to the guidelines sent to all groups before the event are given feedback. This may mean that they may potentially not be booked in to future events if the errors are not addressed. The expectation is that group commanders will take responsibility for checking all of these things on a day to day basis as well. They are also responsible for dealing with any issues promptly.

As with the individual group event at Ashby, there is also a set programme for both days. This is for the parts of the event that take place within the area of the Old Hall. This programme is displayed to the public at the entrances where they pay to get into the event, at the entrance to the Old Hall. Within this walled area there is the medieval market, additional catering, and a beer tent. There is also a small arena area, as well as additional living history encampments. The Old Hall is also open to the public during the event. The event programme is a full day's entertainment. This consists of combat displays, tournaments, gunnery and archery displays, a falconry display and a children's battle.



**Illustration 47: The gunnery display at Tatton**

These arena displays are in the main put on by individual groups. The exception is from the falconer who is a paid professional entertainer. The programme for the event is the same both days, apart from an earlier final event on the Sunday to enable camps to be packed up. A large lord's tent with all the equipment takes around three hours to set up and slightly less to pack away but this cannot be done until after the public leave at 5pm to preserve the authenticity of the camp. Therefore, many re-enactors in the living history area choose to stay overnight on the Sunday and pack up on Monday morning.

The final part of the event begins with a muster of all of the troops inside the walled area. They then march out onto the battlefield where there is a semi-scripted battle lasting approximately half an hour. This is narrated by a member of the organiser's team through a PA. As with the Ashby event the battle is themed around the location, in this case a dispute over land between two local lords. The battle usually has around 100 combatants. There is a mix of swords, longer pole arms, archers and gunners. The event is controlled by marshals who organise the battle. There are also water bearers and first aiders who are there to give the troops water and administer basic first aid on the field. All these non-combatants must also be in authentic costume and wear helmets.



**Illustration 48: Water carriers, marshals and combatants on the battlefield**

The 'warning orders' are sent out to all groups a week before the event. These contain the battle outline and general information about the site. They also outline the rules regarding suitable armour and weapons for the event time period, safe combat and general safety rules. These are also reiterated at a morning meeting at 9.30am each day known as the commanders' meeting. All groups have to send a representative to this or they cannot take part in the battle. The commanders are also responsible for checking their troops' weapons and equipment in camp before muster. A further weapons check is done by the marshals at muster. Any issues to do with breaches of these rules, or other incidents are dealt with initially on the battlefield by the marshals. They will then also be discussed at the commanders' meeting the following morning. As with the camp authenticity any repeated infringement of authenticity or safety rules will result in a group being barred from future events.

The purpose of these descriptions is to outline some of the key features of the events that were used in this research and to give additional information that there was not space for in the introduction. The other events used within the research are similar in format to these and all have the key features of a focus on living history displays, combat and public interaction.

### **Appendix 3 Interview questions**

Q1 – Could you please tell me why and when did you start re-enacting?

Q2- Could you please tell me what have you learnt through your time in re-enactment about x ?

Q3- Could you explain how have you learnt this about this area?

Q4 – Is there anyone in particular who has helped you in learning these skills?

Q5 – Can you describe to me the process of becoming involved in the group?

Q6 – What sort of relationships with do you have with Y (the master if mentioned previously) and have you helped others in that way?

Q7 – Can you be more specific about your use of online sources; do you contribute to or maintain sources such as forums, blogs and Facebook pages?

Q8 When using online sources how do you check how valid and authentic the information is?

Q9 – Can I ask you about your participation in re-enactment as linked to being male/female (delete as appropriate)? Do you think it has made a difference to what you have done and learnt about?

## **Appendix 4 Field notes example – Ashby de La Zouche event May 2016**

Interviews took less time than expected, Sarah 18 mins, Phil 28, Sean not sure as could not record due to technical issues with recorder. Realised that I only have an hour on the digi recorder which is only enough to do two interviews so will need to have two of these in future. Was able to make notes though and think I got everything down, glad that I had left lots of space on question notes sheet.

**Sarah** very easy to interview, mentioned specific skill as had recently completed dress so was keen to talk about that. Talked a lot about confidence both in making the dress and generally within re-enactment. That seemed to come primarily from having her Master Emma with her at every step, she mentioned that for the next dress she would still like Emma around but she would be able to do more things herself while Emma worked on her own things.

**Sean** interview not recorded, initial interest was in fight training not re-enactment but had been encouraged to come along to show. Also mentioned confidence in talking to the public which I had not considered, actually said public speaking as a skill.

**Phil**, needed quite a few prompts to get to the specifics as talked a lot about trust and seeing group as a family, slightly reluctant to name his master Ken as he is a former member. I had forgotten that he did his apprenticeship with Ken for the weapons talk and he was actually doing the weapons talk at the show as Liam was away so it was good to observe him doing that though did not film it as was in kit. Also talked a lot about confidence.

For all three I gave a little bit of feedback to them after, I had not expected people to mention confidence or public speaking so that is something that I will also look out for in other interviews.

### **Participant observations at this event –**

**Phil's weapons talk** to crowd of about 50 people on Sunday, noted he had a louder voice than previously, he also interacted with the crowd well, sense of humour and asking questions of them as well. Went through the properties of different swords, maces and hammer giving information about use and effect as well as referencing specific battles that his character's ancestors had fought in against Robert the Bruce – referencing the children's battle that was to take place later.

**Sean's combat test** 6 x 3 min fights against Stephen and Matthew with 2 min rest in between, using both hands alternately and having to show attack and response. Other members of the group there timing and supporting with water and general encouragement. Feedback given verbally by Matthew and Stephen and he passed his test. Need to follow up the criteria used for this test with Stephen and look at how is it different from the other tests, squire, man at arms, knight etc? At what stage do people take them and does it have to be at shows? Symon had been in kit most of the day and had already fought in the tournament. Not filmed but will film future ones.

## **Appendix 5 Video notes example – Darren – the end of the battle at Tewkesbury 2017**

The end of the battle is played out in front of the commentator's area so that the two commentators, one a re-enactor and the other a historian can give a running commentary of the action.

Both Darren and George, who portrays the Prince of Wales, have removed their helmets for this part of the battle. They are the only re-enactors permitted to do this and this was stressed at the morning commanders' meeting. It is clear that they are both genuinely exhausted, it has been a very warm day and they have been in armour for about 3 hours at this point.

They act out the final scene, not just single sword combat but also taunts to each other. This part of the battle relies on acting as well as combat skills as George has to portray his anguish when he realises he is close to losing, and to death.

The battle ends when Darren kills George with a cut to the throat. He raises his hand in victory and shouts, a York, a York' then drops to his knees. He is quickly surrounded by his bodyguard who call for a water carrier. The troops cheer, as does the crowd. George then is resurrected, the two men hug and raise their arms to the crowd while the commentators ask for applause for all of the re-enactors.

## Appendix 6 Interview transcripts – Darren and Sarah

Self-transcribed interviews

### Darren's Interview Transcript

Tatton June 17<sup>th</sup> 2017

*A: Could you please tell me why and when did you start re-enacting?*

D: I started reenacting uhh, about 10 years ago uhh, I'm 29 now so I'm looking at re-enacting when I'm about 19. Uhh, I actually went to Tewkesbury as a member of the public and thought it was really interesting yeh and I wanted to get involved in it. Umm and I actually work with a bloke, Kevin, who used to do it umm. He got me into WW2 sort of thing and I actually fell into medieval. Some guys that do the WW2 see. That's primarily how I got into it.

*A: Thank you, so how long have you been doing medieval?*

D: Medieval, about 5, 6 years I think.

*A: And has that been with the same group?*

D: No We started with a group called the Dudleys, uhh and then we left and went to another group and then we decide to set up our own group, what you see now.

*A: Yeh, I thought I hadn't seen you around until a few years ago.*

D: Yeh, yeh

*A: So how many are there of you now?*

D: There's 20 in the group.

*A: Thank you. Right and when you started was there something in particular that you wanted to learn, were you interested in the combat or ...?*

D: It was probably the combat with myself umm cuz umm I like the Errol Flynn films and Ivanhoe and stuff like, like and swashbuckling so. When I started to look at the combat techniques I started to get more involved in it sort of thing and then it moved on to the armour. I quite liked looking at the armour and being able to see the designs and how they worked and things like that.

*A: So what would you say you've learnt, particularly about combat and being king?*

D: Combat, yeh, I've learnt probably like original 15<sup>th</sup> C fighting techniques umm, so we've had like, I've got manuscripts and books at home that are like, Talhoffer, Reckengess, which

is another German fighting style umm and that's what we use when we are training as well. Umm, and its, when, when I'm doing a king sort of scenario the moves that we've learnt they're quite good cuz they're like showy sort of moves and gets the public interested and engaged, gives them a bit more coz there's a lot more swings and stuff like that instead of the usual pokey, pokey sort of thing you see on the battlefield and stuff like that so. And I just love, I really enjoy my one-to-one fights with people umm with George, he's the other chap that plays Prince of Wales, we look really good together so....

*A: So when you were, were you asked to be the king?*

D: I had to put umm, umm a portfolio ...

*A: Laughs, how were you appointed? Were you voted in?*

D: It was a bit political actually.... Basically when the directors of Tewkesbury found out that, obviously that it was whispered that it was passing on to myself umm they were a bit annoyed because they obviously felt it, it was their duty to determine who should be playing the next king which was fair enough in their rights sort of thing. So what I had to do, I had to put a portfolio together...

*A: Really ... laughs*

D: Yes, I umm had a semi- sort of interview with them and sat there and tell them what we could do as the group that takes over the royal household uhh and then I primarily just left in their hands to make their decision and luckily enough they made what I think is the right decision so we sort of uhh, umm it's gone, I've had 140 tents on king's camp last year, I've got 170 this so it's it's getting bigger and better up there. There's a lot more groups that are wanting to come along and do the proper sort of living history type of thing umm and it looked fantastic last year didn't it Len?

L: We changed it so that it faces the main camp, the market so that you can see it, it's open yeh.

D: Tents were just blocking the view for the public so we said when you come through the hedge and go up that hill we want you to see us, and that's what we did. We basically made sure that there's a gap at the back there straightaway so that's why we did it.

*A: Thank you so basically would you say that your role is not just on the battlefield but also involved in organising things.*

D: Yes, yes, I've been made one of the directors of Tewkesbury, so I'm a director at Tewkesbury so primarily what we have to do is we have to set up, cos for the king's camp we usually rock up a couple of days before the show and we set the fire lanes out, get that all up and running and then when people rock up on the Friday or Thursday we plan the encampment out so that it gives everyone the space, to make sure that it's better for the public to walk through, make sure it's safe. Make sure the fire points are up there and everything so yeh it's pretty much a full-time job when it's Tewkesbury.

*A: What about the role of king, did you do a lot of research?*

D: Yeh, what, what I basically had to do, well I started playing the Duke of Clarence first, so I got some books on the Duke of Clarence and started, tried to learn about why he was that sort of person. Read a couple of books by John Astonmill, really good interesting books uhh and then obviously when I moved on to the king role, umm I started to read a bit more in depth sort of the political sort of books which is Michael Hicks, read his actually, that was interesting, there's a lot information in those books, lots of pages, yeh its interesting. Cuz obviously we do one-to- one characters we need to try and understand to portray them actually as they would have been, and it's just, when I read these information it's to understand the guy's mood, attitude his lifestyle so we can, hopefully portray and accurate sort interpretation of say Edward or whoever we're doing so ..

*A: And you've now got Elizabeth, you got married, so does your wife actually portray Elizabeth?*

D: Yes, yeh, so we umm we had a full 15<sup>th</sup> century medieval wedding at Tewkesbury, so was Liz was already playing Elizabeth Woodville anyway...

*A: Oh is she called Elizabeth?*

D: Yes, so I don't get confused you see, so yeh exactly. So she's been doing that a couple, yeh, three years now umm and she's lovin it now, she's enjoying it and that's what the aim of the game is to make sure everyone is enjoying themselves, the public are happy and that's how you do it.

*A: Right, so you've mentioned books, was there any person that helped you with learning skills?*

D: Well I mean, the guys within the group helped me umm Len helped me quite a lot with the acting, playing up sort of thing, especially when we do the executions and what not umm, other than that it's pretty much we read stuff up, you know, we take as much knowledge in as possible and just to try interpret how better to come across to the public and that's pretty much how we do it.

*A: Yes, before I first started this research I was concentrating on skills like making things and lots of people have mentioned interacting with the public and I hadn't sort of thought of that as a skill.*

D: Yeh, it's how you portray yourself and how you engage with the public, you know, you'll get the few that know their history and it's good that we know as much as we can cuz you know you'll get the awkward questions like you do umm and they try and catch you out you know which doesn't really work with us. Like I said we read the fighting manuscripts so we know the fighting techniques, personal accounts, you know, I've read some of the Paston's documents, some of the letters and what now which is interesting cos it's not only interpreting the character that it's also knowing about the medieval like that would have

been associated with that character and the Paston's are one of the biggest and easiest documents to get hold of to understand some sort of life they had, not the king but obviously a wealthy merchant cuz you can interpret that and take some of that and use it.

*A: Umm, so, do you use any online sources?*

D: I'm quite old fashioned I think cuz when I started in re-enactment, it was like you get these books and you read it. Yeh we do on occasion, we go on the internet and we read bits, yeh some of the family history and what not. We understand all the other characters that we are not portraying, the Lancaster characters and yeh, we do go there and find out things like who was married to who and things like that.

*A: So has it helped in some ways playing a really well known character as there are lots of people writing about him?*

D: Yeh like I said, there's so many books about Edward IV umm so I tend to read them. Liz will go on the computer, have a look at like the other sort of side of the history and look at what lands he had and sort of things about the Duke and Duchess of Clarence you know and I haven't managed to go and see it ye but I want to go and see where he is buried. We did it with Clarence as he is buried in Tewkesbury and it makes it a bit more personal for you, you know I mean I've gone to Windsor castle, you know I've seen where he, supposedly Henry 6<sup>th</sup> died and what not you know and so, we just try and get to see the atmosphere and that.

*A: Right I've got two more questions umm if you are using online sources how do you check how valid and authentic they are, or books?*

D: Umm, well we, with the books, like with the Michael Hicks stuff obviously he's got all his references in there so we can like look at these references and, and then we can check the references online sort. With the online sort of thing we are very careful, we just cross reference it all we usually spend the night doing that, making sure we are up to speed on some more specific knowledge and it's just cross referencing what, make sure that it's the same sort of information that we are getting.

*A: So umm, this is the question that I'm asking everyone, is there anything that you or members of your group can't do because of your gender?*

D: Well, see yes, we're quite good as a group, cuz there's a lot of tension around the male sort of perception of we've got armour we've got swords, we hit each other sort of thing. I try and at some point let the ladies, you know, that's why we have fashion shows, let the ladies show off as well. So we don't really like genderise it, we don't restrict it so we try and make sure everyone's involved into some sort of aspect of what they wanna do. You know, Liz plays musical instruments, she has medieval musical instruments so she can bring that along if she wants to do it uhh.

*A: Would you let women fight within your group?*

D: If they wanted to yeh that's not a problem, I wouldn't, it's entirely up to them really if, if women want to fight on the battlefield. I mean at the end of the day if they dressed as bloke

so its historical interpreted and it's correct then it doesn't bother me whether you're a woman, bloke or whatever you wanna do it you can do it whatever. I mean I know there's Ruth in't there in the Rochesters, Rochesters are brill, yeh, there are the Belgians, they've got five or six women the and they're probably the toughest fighters are going to come across. There's always this thing like maybe I'm not going to hit a girl but they go on the battlefield knowing they wanna do it so.

Discussion amongst other members of the group about the fact that the women in their group portray women in high status roles and have chosen this so have a prominent role within the group as well. Mention of another female fighter Heather who all have fought of their group as combatants and also of the dance displays that they do.

*A: That's brilliant, so my last question is, is there anything that you want to tell me that we haven't covered?*

D: No not really, that's we do really.

### **Sarah's Interview Transcript**

May 29<sup>th</sup> 2017

*A: Hello Sarah*

S: Hello

*A: Could you please tell me why and when did you start re-enacting?*

S: I started re-enacting about 2 years ago now umm, and the why, I, I think I've always wanted to do re-enacting ever since I was a child, I think, I saw various re-enactors at historical sites and museums and I wanted to be them and I never got round to it until I was grown up which is a shame, laughs. But yeh the reason I got into it two years ago was because a colleague I was working with was a re-enactor, we talked about it a lot and I told her that I had always wanted to be a re-enactor and she invited me along to some shows and it just came together organically from that.

*A: Thank you*

*Could you please tell me what sort of things have you learnt through your time in re-enacting already?*

S: Ooh, well that's an interesting one.

*A: Particularly thinking about skills that you might have developed, have you made anything for example?*

S: Laughs ... Yes, uh, I'm not much of a sewer but through re-enacting I have made a couple of items of clothing for myself. So I have made myself a shift, a head covering and my dress as well umm, I wouldn't say I was good by any means but it is a skill I didn't really have a lot of experience of before especially hand sewing umm so yeh it's something I've learnt

through re-enacting that I probably wouldn't have done otherwise, if I wanted to sew I would have machine sewn umm I ...

*A: So you have made the dress you are wearing today?*

S: I have and the shift I am wearing today so yes, very happy.

*A: So apart from the hand sewing, what else have you had to learn to make this dress as opposed to a modern dress?*

S: Umm I think the main difference between modern sewing and this sewing was I had no pattern umm so we had to sort of take measurements and cut the dress out from existing dresses umm and so that was interesting cos in the past my Mum sews and she has only ever sewn from patterns so it was a really interesting process to go through. And then learning different stitches and things like that and the little things that you have to take into account like the, the height of the neckline to cover any modern tattoos and to cover your modesty and things like that, it was all very interesting.

*A: Thank you, and you mentioned that you had learnt and you had to measure, was there anybody who helped you with this process?*

S: Yes ... *laughs*, yes I couldn't have done it without the help of the other members of the group because I, I wouldn't have known where to start umm so having other members of the group explain the process to me and so umm basically hold my hand through every step of the way umm has been invaluable, I really couldn't have done it without them umm yeh as I say I've never sewn anything before so not even knowing where to start so yeh it, it, I would be sitting here in underclothes yeh, *laughs*.

*A: Did you use any books, or did you look at any sources of illustrations of anything like that?*

S: Umm, a couple of books were recommended to me and it's my aim to buy them umm, Medieval Tailor's Assistant and similar books umm I've looked at copies owned by other people but I haven't actually bought any myself or so read them as much as I'd like and umm Facebook resources like umm on Facebook I follow a person called the Sempstress and she has sort of useful advice on how to make things like buttons and buttonholes.

*A: Great, and have you done anything like museum visits or ...?*

I work in a museum, so yeh, I work in a museum of arms and armour so that's been really interesting for the other side of re-enactment that I really enjoy which is the fighting. I'm starting to put things together about the weaponry we use in our re-enactment and where it fits in the wider historical context which I'm really enjoying, umm. I've not really visited any sort of textile museums as research but I think that would be something I'd quite enjoy doing.

*A: Thank you. So, and you mentioned people within the group, who specifically has helped you in the costuming skills?*

S: Am I allowed to name names?

A: *Yes, you are.*

S: So Karen and Emma in particular, she's has been an absolute star in helping me cos she has got quite a clam relaxed way of helping me with patterns and doesn't get too upset if I just say 'Emma I can't do this, can you show me again what to do here,' she's really good.

A: *And you've spent quite a lot of time working with her on this particular dress?*

S: Yes, yes so we held regular sewing days where I would basically come and go, 'Emma what do I do now', and umm she'd explain what process we had to do next and why and what we would be doing and then she's show me and leave me to do it myself and so I could learn for next time. So essentially I wanted to have experience of every aspect to making this dress. I wanted to make it myself but I knew that she needed to help me for the skilled me.

A: *Thank you. So in terms of becoming involved in the group what sort of a process was there when you first decided, yes I want to join re-enactment? What did you do?*

S: I, I don't know if it was the way I came into the group was usual or not because again I, I had Emma holding my hand quite a lot through it cos I'm quite shy, even though I don't come across as it all the time so essentially I, I came along to a show, met everyone umm, I think a couple of weeks beforehand I'd gone to one of the fight training sessions uh held by the group so I knew a couple of the guys there and so basically everyone showed me what happened during the group and lent me some clothes and said 'there you go, get on with it, have fun, if you have any questions ask' and yeh, and it was a good baptism of fire.

A: *So were there things that you found confusing or difficult to understand at first when you were shown what to do? Did you understand what people were explaining?*

S: I, yeh, I understood what people were explaining yeh. There were things that people were explaining that confused me or maybe wrong footed me slightly umm.

A: *Can you give me examples?*

S: Trying to think, umm,

A: *What about things like the words people used to describe things?*

S: Yes, umm I think that was one of the most confusing things, it's the terminology of items of clothing, of weapons. It's, it's learning all of the little words and the customs and the different ways that people act and umm when, when you're in front of the public. So for example, because I am a woman I couldn't necessarily do all of the things I could do as a modern day woman so I would have to rein back my behaviour slightly umm but yeh things like aiglets and lucet cord and umm bassinet, all these words that sound so lovely on the tongue but yeh, trying to work out how to put the clothes on, how a knight would dress

themselves. It, it was a complete culture shock but everyone explained everything to me and I now feel a little bit more confident. I couldn't necessarily name everything still but I feel a little bit more confident in talking to the public, that I wouldn't make a complete fool of myself and that I would know who to point people towards if they had more specific questions.

*A: Thank you. Umm so mentioned about Emma helping you with the costume but you have been fight training. Is there any one person specifically with the fight training?*

S: To be honest it's the whole group, umm, so but obviously Steven leads the training sessions but the whole group pitches in, gives you advice, explains things for you, umm, trains with you, works on the things you need to sort of work on and hopefully, eventually, I would like to fight in a show in front of the public, that would be so much fun.

*A: Okay, thank you and umm, you mentioned the relationship that you have with Emma in relation to the sewing, do you see that continuing, do you think you are going to need help with the next garment?*

S: Yes, laughs, definitely. Yeh, I, I feel more confident in making my next garment umm, I, I kind of understand the process but I don't really have as much confidence to just, just go ahead and do it myself so sewing days where I can sew while she gets on with on something else next time and I can ask questions if I need to.

*A: So you think you will possibly need a little less help next time?*

S: Yes, yes I think so, yeh. Maybe by my twelfth dress I'll be more a little bit more confident, laugh.

*A: Okay, thank you. You mentioned online sources, such as the Sempstress, how did you find that online source?*

S: Umm, I, I can't remember which came first. It was mentioned by a member of the group but I also saw them on stall at TORM, the re-enactor's market umm, and started asking her questions and she was really helpful and she mentioned that she had a Facebook page as well so, so having the two sort of angles, a recommendation from the group and talking to the person herself, sort of helped me. I'm a member of lots of sort of medieval Facebook groups now so I tend to pick and choose which resources I go for according to my understanding of skill level.

*A: I wanted to ask you about how valid and authentic you think the information that you get is? How do you check, you mention that you talked to the Sempstress first and she had a Facebook page but if you come across other sources how do you know that they are telling you correct information?*

S: Yes, this, this is my really big concern as someone who is new at re-enacting. How do you know that you are being told something that's true because everyone has their own take on the medieval life and sort of how to portray it and some people have done more research

that others and so yeh it's always a concern and I think that's what holding me back slightly with a lot of things is that I don't have the confidence to say, 'yes I know you are talking sense or I know you are talking nonsense'. I find that really hard to pick and choose. A lot of it's common sense, if someone was to saying yes they wore silver spangly earrings and flew round on space hoppers then obviously they wouldn't be right. But it's the people who talk with confidence and authority that you have to be careful with. But that's when I know I can go to the group and say is this what you would sort of say is authentic, is it a valid statement, is it something that I could use as a character, as a medieval character to progress my understanding.

*A: So you use the group to validate what people are saying?*

S: Yes, a lot of the time, yeh.

*A: Okay, and what about if you come across things on the internet, do you come across any other kind of validation? Is there anything else you look for?*

S: Umm, I tend to sometimes ask people at work, cos I work in a museum, for example I have curators telling me what armour parts are called when we have trips to stores, and things like that. Umm, online I use a lot of resources like Facebook but always tend to validate with the group just because I don't have that confidence in myself umm, and then I just try and sort of read books but I don't have a lot of time to do that at the moment. I would love to do more research.

*A: Okay, thank you that is really interesting. Umm, you mentioned about being female and having to modify your behaviour. Can you go into a little bit more detail about that, particularly with respect to fighting? You said you would like to fight in the group. Do you think the fact that you are female means that would be different participation?*

S: Umm, yeh, I, I think it would be interesting. I, I have heard stories and seen women fighting in medieval costume as women and there are historical sources that do include women in the fighting so manuscript 133 in the Royal Armouries has female fighter in it. Whether that was just conjecture or a way of saying this was so easy even a woman could do it I am not sure. Umm, I don't know, I, I umm would like to fight as a woman in the group because I'm quite a feminist and I'd like to show girls that girls can hit things with swords too umm but it may be I that have to modify my costume and dress as a male if I want to fight. I'm not sure, I haven't got to the level of skill with my sword fighting to, to sort of talk down that avenue yet but I, I would like to fight whatever happened in whatever costume umm and I would modify any costume I would have to wear to that so I would have to. I may have to wear guy's clothes and pretend to be a guy while I am in those clothes and then change into my women's clothing.

*A: And do you feel that in the fight training you have been supported in the same way a man would be?*

S: Yes, completely.

*A: And nobody has ever said anything to you about, 'well you can't portray that role'?*

S: No, no I, I, think members of the group are seeing it as a bit of an interesting challenge as to how could I do it, how could I fight in front of the public as a woman but there's never been no I can't do this. There's always been an option of if you want to fight in the shows, this is what you'll need to know, this is what you'll need to learn. It's a question of costume I think more than anything else.

*A: Thank you, that's brilliant. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about your skill development or your involvement in re-enactment that I haven't asked you?*

S: Umm, I've not done as much skill development as I would have liked. There's so much out there to find out, to know, umm if I had all of the time in the world I would just immerse myself in books and resources and really dive into it head first and it frustrates me that I'm not progressing as fast as I would like because I see people who have re-enacted for years and you are also comfortable being who you are and doing what you do and I do think sometimes I don't have that confidence and comfort in doing what I am doing as I don't have the time to do the research and make, make, make more of what I know and what I am and you know put my mark on everything. So yeh, yeh I, just not enough hours in the day, laughs.

*A: Yes, yes. That's brilliant, thank you ever so much.*

## Appendix 7 Coded interview data from notes

### Colour coding themes used

Motivation

Skills

Knowledge

Support from group members/others

Other sources

Confidence

Gender and participation

Legitimate peripheral participation

Public interaction

Authenticating knowledge /authenticity

#### Emma - Swords of Mercia - Templecombe June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2016 – Costume and head dress making

Q1. Started at the age of 11, 14 years ago, 'I visited an event with family at Bolsover Castle and joined as I wanted to be a princess, I have been in the same group since starting.'

Q2. Skills. Learnt how to make costume, too young at 11 but over the years I have learnt to make things such as head dresses. I have made a linen shift and a peasant dress with gores. I have also done alteration of other dresses I have been given to fit. I start with an existing garment and make a pattern. I like to sew; I use a machine then hand finish seams. I have also made 2 circlets to match a dress that I have. Also do talks on costume and head dress with other ladies in the group.

Q3. Sources. Used Kat's Hats website as she does a lot of research and makes things for herself and others. I have bought things from her such as a circlet and pouches and now use her photos. She shares her work and also pictures of effigies and manuscripts. I have just used her website for research about the crown. Also used the Medieval Tailor and other books. Also visited the market for ideas, TORM to see how things are made. Also use information from people in other groups. I do visit a lot of museums but there are few textiles so it is more for manuscripts and effigies. I have also used the Sempstress tutorial for buttons.

Friend Kerry has helped, making dresses together on sewing weekends, we have worked out the process together.

Q4. Group involvement. At the end of the first show they said they were looking for new members so we joined. Had a lot of help from the group, lent kit, weekends making head dresses and made crispinette and torque, this was led by Kat. Have made kit with the group checking for authenticity, originally when we joined there was a 3-month trial period. I have also done some fight training but given up now due to non-related injury. I was never sure about whether I wanted to fight in shows but started drills with a plastic sword and have

progressed up the levels with the squire's test. I know about moves and positions. I have passed the stamina test and have got to the second level.

Q5. Sadie a friend and colleague who I recruited two years ago, last off season we made a dress for her. **We looked at books, looked at other people's kit, looked at dresses on FB before she decided to make a long – sleeved buttoned dress. We had not made anything like that before. We used my dress as a pattern and added sleeves.** Buttons are different for medieval dresses as they are sewn on the edge rather than flush with fabric. **I have a lot more sewing experience but learnt through working with her.**

Q6. **Online sources. The Sempstress, Kerry had found her and had met her at markets, she runs workshops and we got her business card. There are videos on her website with instructions and pictures. Also Kat's Hats. Looking on Fb for styles. As I now play Queen Isabella I have been looking for images of her and so have used paintings of the queen. Has posted some things on her blog and commented on others. 'Most of what I do is more of an educated guess, at the moment I am not as confident at posting about the process as I need to fill in the blanks'**

Q7. **Validity of sources. I studied archaeology so studied how to assess credibility. Checks source and date of images 'I check if a picture is contemporary as later pieces might be just telling a story and using the fashion of the time'. Effigies are good as they are dated. The Sempstress is used by the BBC and other historians and she advises on her sources. Good reputation for both Kat and the Sempstress, have met them both face to face and knows that Kat would say if pieces were not authentic.**

Q8. **Gender. Not prevented from doing anything but there are things linked to being female. The men in the group make things as well. Our group are supportive about fighting in the shows and discuss about whether to portray male or female. Have done water bearing for a number of years. 'Sometimes there are comments about lack of knowledge of fighting from other re-enactors outside the group. I also have knowledge of armour and weapons through discussions in group so I don't see any divide because of gender.'**

Anything else ...

**'I've also learnt practical things like putting up medieval tents, putting on weapons and armour and how to put different kit on, understanding how armour fits together.' 'I used to do the cooking for the group, lighting a fire and cooking lunch for 20 people, used my Scout knowledge there. I started with assisting the cook and then led the cooking making soup, roast veg, biscuits and hard boiled eggs over an open fire.'**

**Adam - Swords of Mercia– Ashby May 27<sup>th</sup> 2017 – Barber Surgery**

Q1. **Interested in martial arts**, a friend who had been fighting martial arts said he had found the group, wanted to have a go 'fell into it from there'. Always been interested in sword fighting, history all sorts. **Part of motivation was fun**, different way of sword fighting from

Japanese to European, different emphasis, more on shows as well as historical 'and it's fun, that is the main thing'.

Q2. **Historical technology generally** but medicine wise, 'couldn't tell you how I've learned it really' but just fascinating to see the technology. **'I have learned more about the Greek, Galenic or Arabic theory of medicine and how that applies to surgery.'** **'How tools were used and how they evolved and I have learned which instruments make people squirm the most when you explain them, that is quite enjoyable .. laughs'.**

Q3. Done a lot of reading on the internet, **read a few translations of medieval treatises on surgery. 'I am working my way through William of Solicetto's surgery at the moment trying to get a better handle on what he was talking about so he was writing around 1275 so that is close to the period.'** More of the detail of how and why – mentions rose oil. Could not name websites, very good translations in book, **got a few books, 'section on inguinal hernia took me about 3 days to work out what he was on about' mostly websites and books, snippets from TV. I watch a lot of documentaries,** sometimes they get it wrong but usually there are bits and pieces that you can pick up.

Q4. No not a person, **met a few re-enactors and spoke to people doing demos that has been helpful, 'mostly just my own nerdiness'.** Most of the equipment comes from professional re-enactors who make material and equipment for re-enactors, one or two from other periods of modified. **'My retractors are actually 16<sup>th</sup> C eating forks that I have taken a pair of pliers to'.**

Q5. Richard had found the group and Alex had always fancied it, enjoyed being with the guys in training, take it seriously but not too seriously, not authoritarian and you have a good laugh. **'I used to go to shows as a MOP, seemed like a natural progression just to go and help out, never intending to be proper re-enactor, not a real one, just for fun'. 'I like the approach here, it's much about entertaining people whilst at the same time being somewhat educational rather than being incredibly boring and nobody wanting to talk to you because train numbers are more interesting'. 'I used to do stuff in schools as a job'.**

Q6. It's not easy, cross checking, if it is on multiple sites, Wikipedia and the rest of the internet is a starting point, ideas. **My main sources are academic sites or books because they have more chance of being accurate, things that are properly referenced, the usual research signs, preferably the author has worked in the field, is a professional historian.'** **'The translation I am currently looking at is written by a surgeon so he has some sort of background in it.**

Q7. Gender, nobody did **'if you are doing medieval re-enactment and you are going to do it accurately you are talking about a very highly gendered society, umm and it's difficult to get away from that'. 'In terms of what you would do as a professional there was not a lot that men couldn't do'.**

Anything else ...

**'There's a confidence thing, I've always been a bit of a show off but eh, it builds up your confidence when you are out dealing with people, having to talk to people, having to switch from umm, you might be talking to someone who is quite academically minded,**

quite knowledgeable one minute, to somebody who knows absolutely nothing the next and be able to talk to those people equally well. You know to stand up in front of a dozen people and improvise umm, so that kind of thing you know. It's not stuff I've learned anew but it's added to that.'

'It is; it is really important. It's a skill'.

'Also my sewing has improved.. laughs, it's still terrible but it has improved'.

'It has actually made me experiment a bit with cookery, not for re-enactment, just at home, mixing ingredients that I hadn't thought of.'

'Also other things like painting, yeh, repairing stuff, cos we throw everything away in modern society so no I will stitch that, I will stick that, yeh, yeh.'

### **Ben – Thomas Stanley Household - Tatton 2016 – Embroidery and costume**

Q1.1985 when 17, the British Plate Armour Society.

Q2. Skills learnt. Sword fighting, group training. Started embroidery about 10 years ago now but don't do as much now. Learnt through Toby Drus who I saw online, had a good and developed the skills. Am now making more livery and have a business No More Twist. This has involved things like making buttons.

Q3. Sources. Books mainly for the 15<sup>th</sup> C, difficult with some of the 14<sup>th</sup> C stuff as due to the Black Plague there were few sources from then. For 18<sup>th</sup> C it hits a pinnacle, 'I have a metre and a half of embroidery books at home'. Also visits to places like Berrington Hall looking at collection, looking at original garments, the V and A and their books. Have also done some handling sessions and produced artefacts based on handling sessions. I use primary sources and there is lots of stuff people post. 270 hours of embroidery for the waistcoat at the time I needed someone to make that up but now I do more tailoring.

Q4. Medieval clothes help from Alex Kay who is an old re-enactor that does research based on paintings and manuscripts, known for 30 years as a friend.

Q5. Online sources. Facebook as it becomes a community. Pinterest where a lot of the work is done for you. The internet is phenomenally helpful in this respect as long as you can check authenticity. Checking of sources by going and finding the original source and its date. Uses museums online databases. A lot of Georgian sources in the US, LA Museum, Met Museum, online collections such as the NT online database. Cutbacks have affected smaller museums such as the Herefordshire and Cheltenham Museums though they are digitising their collections.

Q6. Gender. Few people specifically making male kit, there is a difference between a seamstress and a tailor and lots of re-enactment traders are female so people might come to me as I am male.