

Pages From the Longbowman

So this archery malarkey is easy. It's just a stick with a string. It's that childhood thing when you take a bendy branch and tie on a bit of string, cut notches in straight twigs and ping them across the grass. Once I even discovered I could use leaves as vanes so the arrow flew straighter. Now I'm all grown up I thought I'd like to make a proper longbow with a handle, a D-section and horn nocks. I can do that. I think I'll make one. So I did.

Ok, I didn't go out into the forest and select the straightest, finest bough of yew grown in a cool climate with close rings and rich heartwood. I bought a kit. It was a laminated plank, a string, two drilled horn nocks and a bit of leather. It was easy to whittle out the basic shape, the skill, I found out to my cost, is the tillering. Take thin slivers each time and check the shape. The aim was to produce a manly 50lb bow but over whittling produced a spindly 35lb stick. Patience is a virtue. The second part of this stick and string project is the sharp pointy projectile commonly called an arrow. The problems with recurve/compound archers is mostly avoided since the dilemma over carbon Vs Aluminium; spinvane Vs plastifletch; G-nock or plastinock, etc etc is replaced by "it's made of wood and feathers". That is of course until you ask what type of wood, the type of pile, the style of fletching, self nocked or applied nock? This time I have opted for bodkins. They look more authentic than brass piles and allegedly they stick in the boss better. In fact they stick in the boss so well that it takes a long screw driver and a hammer to get them out the other side but I blame the type of glue I used.

Shooting many arrows I found some hit the target more than others. They were mainly true with the odd banana for shooting round corners. There was a mixture of piles but the spine values and lengths were the same. So I weighed them. Interestingly the arrows which hit the target most were within

a weight range of 24-25g. Not to bore you with physics, aerodynamics and velocity there is a relationship between bow weight and arrow weight and spine rating.

Bow weight (lb)	Arrow Weight (gram)	Spine (GNAS units)
30	16.16-19.56	81
40	19.56-25.8	61
50	25.8-32.32	40
60	38.84-45.56	35

My bow weight is 47 lb. How do your arrows fair in this chart. Are you getting the best from your equipment? My next project is barrelling arrows. I t's a lot of work and the best wood is ramin I am told. Watch this space.