

# MYSTERIOUS AFAN CUDD BOW AND ARROW MAKERS

Medieval fletchers, or arrow makers, and bow makers, or bowyers, often worked together.

In an arrow, the sharp arrowhead is balanced by the feather “fletchings” at the back of the arrow. The feathers helped to stabilize the arrow in flight and improve its accuracy.

The fletcher would choose a straight-grained piece of wood that was the right length and thickness for the arrow, generally from birch, ash, or hazel wood, which were good for making a strong, straight arrow.

They would make the arrowhead from stone, bone, or metal. The fletcher attached it to the front of the shaft and glued it on with glue made from pine pitch, beeswax, or animal fat.



[http://special.lib.gla.ac.uk/images/chaucer/H59\\_0006v.jpg](http://special.lib.gla.ac.uk/images/chaucer/H59_0006v.jpg) John Gower: *Vox Clamantis* and *Chronica Tripertita* in Glasgow Univ. Lib., MS Hunter 59 (T.2.17) folio 6v. Wikimedia Commons

# MYSTERIOUS AFAN CUDD



Two fletchers at work, finished arrows packed in barrels. Alexander Romance, 14th century  
<https://medievalbritain.com/type/medieval-life/occupations/medieval-fletcher-arrow-maker/>



Welsh archery training: Psalm 79; Luttrell Psalter (détail) 1325  
Geoffrey Luttrell, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

The fletching was usually made of bird feathers. The fletcher would choose the feathers of the right size and shape, and then trim them. Then he would glue or tie the feathers to the shaft, with the two outer feathers angled slightly differently from the middle feather to create a slight spin on the arrow in flight. As well as making arrows, fletchers would also repair damaged arrows and make other items, such as tool handles, barrels, and furniture.

They were in great demand; it was an important job. Bowyers had long training to become an expert in bow making, usually apprenticed to an expert bowmaker. Most bowyers had their own workshops in which they could store their tools and work in progress.

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Medieval Bowyers used lots of different woods and tools to make longbows, crossbows and arrows.

Gerald of Wales described the Welsh bows in 1188:

“They are made neither of horn, ash nor yew, but of elm.”

Welsh bowmen were renowned for their skill. Gerald was said to be a skilled archer himself.

He praised the Welsh bow as a weapon of great power and accuracy, that could pierce armour at short range. He wrote of arrows penetrating ‘a hand’s width deep into an oak door’ and said that the bows of Gwent were “stiff and strong, not only for missiles to be shot from a distance, but also for sustaining heavy blows in close quarters.”

Text adapted from websites:

[https://medievalbritain.com/type/medieval-](https://medievalbritain.com/type/medieval-life/occupations/medieval-fletcher-arrow-maker/#google_vignette)

[life/occupations/medieval-fletcher-arrow-maker/#google\\_vignette](https://medievalbritain.com/type/medieval-life/occupations/medieval-fletcher-arrow-maker/#google_vignette)

<https://archeryhistorian.com/welsh-archery-the-welsh-bow/>

<https://legendarchery.com>

<https://www.bow-international.com/features/arrows-in-the-middle-ages/>



Illustration in the 'Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung' (1426-1549), Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg, Amb. 317.2°, fol. 76r.

<https://www.medievalchronicles.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/medieval-bowyer.j>