

The Medieval Cannon 1326-1494

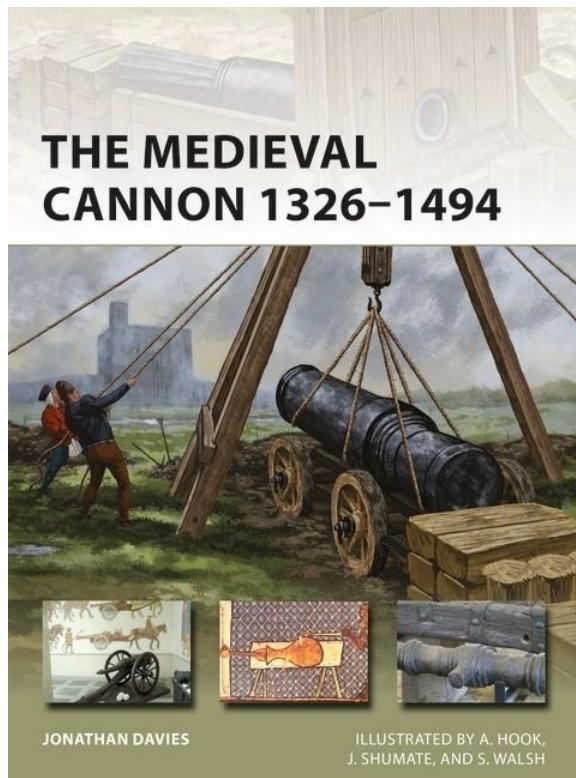
Osprey New Vanguard series No. 273 (2019)

By Jonathan Davies; illustrated by Hook, Shumate and Walsh

£11.99, 50pp.

Review by Rob Morgan

The book is very well written indeed, and I cannot praise its simplicity of approach and competent detail too highly.



Jonathan Davies opens with a succinct account of the origins of cannon in Christendom, then briefly explores the economics of that amazing product --gunpowder. His account of the manufacture of guns deals with all of the types encountered: bronze, wrought-iron, cast-iron and the most magnificent military manufacture of the period, that's the bombard! The first plate, showing the making of a wrought iron gun is very useful, as are his comments on gun-arrows and ammunition. The discovery of glass cannon balls in Poland (p.17) is a new one on me, anyone know more of that, please?

The author goes on to examine the use of cannon in warfare, the recruitment and role of gunners, many former archers; the powder, the range of projectiles, and the many different mounts and carriages, gun-carts and emplacements which were used and developed in the late medieval period. He touches briefly on mantlets for medieval guns, another subject I think deserves a deal more exploration.

His final section deals with guns in combat, on both sides in sieges, in the field of battle, and at sea in both northern waters and the Mediterranean, short but informative all the way along.

He offers a strong rebuff to the suggestion that early guns were as dangerous to their crews as to their enemies; '*palpable nonsense*' is the term he uses. He's right!

Jonathan Davies's text, easy reading, is supported by numerous colour plates and drawings, along with a number of splendid photographs of guns of all sizes. Sadly, I thought plate C, dealing with the logistics of artillery was a bit simplistic, the cart at (1) doesn't look adequate! Nor does the rope tackle in plate B look sturdy enough to hoist 'Mons Meg'! Several of the illustrations come from Zurich sources which will be new to many, and there are some good and very interesting photographs. I'd like to know more about the cart-mounted gun at the Middelaldercentret in Denmark shown on page 41, for instance. Overall, there's little to criticise in one of the best 'Osprey' titles for a very long time.

I heartily recommend the book to all medievalists, and wargamers
10 out of 10!