

## Mini documentary

*Hafan: Archer*

### Jeremy Spencer:

My name's Jeremy, and I'm the art and design lecturer, but my passion is actually making bows.

I've been making bows for about 15 years now. Originally, from Coombe Martin in North Devon. I came to study here in university. Love Wales. I came on a walking tour to Caerwent and then fell in love with that even more. It's a fantastic place. It's absolutely dripping in history. You've got all of the early Christian, Roman stuff is part of Gwent, it's fantastic.

Making a bow quite often starts with finding the right tree. You can't impose a bow on a piece of timber; you have to work with that timber. Because it's split I know it's followed the natural rhythms in the wood and then it's a case of tapering it down, getting the right profile that's going to withstand the stresses and the strains and then you put in on the tinnering tree with the string, draw it down. And then you remove bits that are stiff, you leave alone bits where it's bending a lot. And then when you finish that, you add your horn nocks. They help the string sit on the bow. And then you want to season it to protect it against the elements. So, you're looking a period finishes like waxes, beeswax and oils. And then you're ready to go out and shoot your bow.

I'm always excited. It's like a childlike excitement wells in me and how's it going to shoot, and I love getting a war arrow in it and just the fun of shooting it in the air and just seeing the arrow ark away. I'm particularly interested in medieval Welsh archery. So that's the sort of bow I make.

Wales is right up there, particularly with the military bow. We have accounts from Gerald of Wales, and this is from the reasonably early medieval period, and he says that in Gwent, people are more skilled with a bow than any other part of Britain at that time.

Living in Wales is fantastic. There's so much picturesque, beautiful countryside. You can just feel all the history in this place; it's so rich with it. I've always been interested in medieval

history and you can't go anywhere in Wales without seeing a castle and that really appeals to me. I never had any inclination to move whatsoever. So now my family lives here, raised a family here and this is where I'm staying.

When you've made something, you kind of have a natural connection with it, you know. I just really enjoy making bows. I think they're a thing of beauty. Just like a musician always wanting to write another song, I always want to make another bow.

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