Located in Boston, Lincolnshire is the headquarters of the Knights of Skirbeck, a medieval re-enactment society who depict the life of a noble household in fifteenth century England, more specifically the reign of the House of Lancaster from 1399-1471.

The group portray this particular period of time because the first Lancaster Monarch, King Henry IV, was born in Bolingbroke Castle, which is located just 15 miles from Boston.

Although the group focus on this area of history, they do not re-enact specific events. They simply show what life was like for people living in a noble, military based house during this time.

Members of the group are also free to take on their own characters and re-enact other periods of time as long as they are authentic to the specific period and are executed to a high standard. This is something that they call ‘first-person living history’.

The Skirbeck house, which was formed in 2008 by three experienced re-enactors, now has 26 active members in total.

Their growth over the last decade has led to a lot of media attention in recent years. The group have appeared on the BBC’s The One Show and in films such as Gangsters, Guns and Zombies and Outlaw.

More recently, Noisey made a documentary about the group called ‘Big Narstie: The Real Game of Thrones’, in which British grime artist Big Narstie spends some time with the group and attends one of their shows.

The reason behind Big Narstie’s visit to Boston is for him to live out his ‘Game of Thrones dreams’ of medieval nobility and warfare.

The Knights of Skirbeck are regularly linked with the immensely popular TV show ‘Game of Thrones’ and they accept and enjoy this, but they feel their connection to the show is very loose in theory.

“Some of our members are misfits. They don’t fit into any particular social group but they find that in re-enactment they can become part of a family. I think this is because we don’t care what religion, race or sexuality you are. As long as you muck in and have fun we don’t care. This makes me really happy; I love the fact that we are completely non-judgmental.

It would be nice to expand the group, but the problem with growing too much is that we may become impersonal. I like to treat everyone as a friend, which means that I can look at someone and see if something is wrong. I fear that I won’t be able to do this if the group grows beyond 25-26 people. One of our members was going through a severe bout of depression a couple of years ago and we all rallied around to support him and make sure that he was okay. If the group grows too m­­uch I fear this level of support will no longer exist.

The whole social and family aspect is the most important aspect of a group like ours.

We’re not the most authentic group in the world, as we don’t re-enact specific events. You have to be able to portray a character from the 15th century and be able to get it right. That’s our authenticity standard. Our arena shows are entertaining as well as educational. We love to be able to explain to people that a lot of what people think happened in the middle ages is actually not true. We spend a lot of time researching these things.

At shows, in between arena demonstrations, we set up a little area for children to come and try out the equipment and weapons.

A typical Knights of Skirbeck show includes an authentic medieval encampment consisting of 10-15 tents. You will be welcomed to come in and explore the environment. There will be a fully stocked armoury where members of the group will invite you to try on armour and use weapons. There will be a working kitchen where Alice Puddy will be cooking the food for the day. Throughout the day, there will be pre-staged incidents that take place, such as somebody may rush over complaining about his a wound on his arm. Alice, who is also a physician, will inspect the problem in front of the audience, who will be able to see a dozen maggots wriggling around the wound. Alice will then clean the wound up and remove the maggots. In order to clean the wound up fully she will cauterize it. She will get a red hot iron out of the fire and places it on the wound. It smokes and sizzles six feet away from the audience, before she places the iron in a cold bucket of water.

Sir Bryan will also hold a manorial court hearing if he’s feeling arrogant. He will have people brought to him for various offences. A favourite of the Skirbeck group is to get a female member of the audience and accuse her of being a witch. Sir Bryan will then carry out a scientific test to see if she is in fact a witch. He do this by looking through a hag stone, a stone which has a hole through the middle of it. According to myth, a witch can disguise as an attractive lady, but if you look at her through a hag stone you can see her real identity. Sir Bryan gets his hag stone and looks at the member of the audience. However, the moment he looks at her, one of the male members of the group steps in front of her. Therefore, all Sir Bryan can see through his hag stone is an ugly man so he screams out “She’s a witch”.

We’ll often end up with somebody who has been convicted of a very serious offence, an offence that warrants an execution by beheading. However, there is a problem, the convicted individual is a knight. In this sort of case, I will take him over to the executioner’s block and the executioner will hold his head to stop him from pulling away. The executioner will walk over with his big shiny axe and cut the knights head off. Blood will squirt over the audience and the executioner will hold up his head. We do this one by putting a fake head on the knight just before he is about to be executed. All good, clean family fun!

We also like our shows to be educational. After all the silliness is finished, we will show the audience the various types of weapons that we use and how to use them. We prove that these weapons are sharp by peeling apples with them. However, we also show the audience the blunt weapons that are used for tournaments and battles. This is authentic as blunted weapons have been used in tournament fights since the start of the 13th century. We show the difference between sharp and blunted swords.

The finale of a show is usually a tournament. We get a few junior combatants and they take part in a competitive fight. The audience decides the winner and then we move onto another tournament where more senior fighters compete in what we call full contact sword fighting. We ensure all members of this tournament where full-plate armour so that they don’t receive any serious blows.

As a group we are very successful in national tournaments. A number of our members have won Lancaster’s Armoury’s tournaments in the past. If one of our members isn’t at least in the final then I’d say something has gone drastically wrong. I can’t remember the last time one of our members didn’t make the final.

Sword fighting is an extremely tiring sport. It’s very physically demanding. I lost a final a couple of years ago to one of our members, Ser John Deere, purely because he is half of my age and had a lot more stamina than me. I’m 53 and as far as I know I’m the oldest tournament fighter in the country.

5 qualified knights and one man at arms aiming to complete his spurs test.

Not many people fail the spurs test as we only enter someone if we feel that they are ready to pass the test.

We train hard and fight easy. This means that we train in minimal armour so that we can practice pulling blows. So in fights we can look like we are trying to kill each other, but that’s the opposite to what we want.

It’s an on-going joke that medieval re-enactment is not a hobby it’s a life. If you look around our house, you would find medieval equipment on every wall. We’ve had to buy a van and trailer to transport the equipment, and a garage to house the equipment.

We are cutting down on the number of shows that we are doing this year, as we did 22 shows last year and it got a bit too much for me. It’s one of these hobbies where the more you put in the more you get out. The more you spend on it the more fun you have. The more events you go to the more fun you have.

A basic, single-handed sword is around £130, and that entry-level standard. My newest sword is about £230 and my most expensive one is £360, so it’s a very expensive sport. You can spend a lot of money if you want. However, you can go the other end of the spectrum if you want to and buy a sword for £30, but it will break when somebody hits it. The same goes for armour. A good set of armour is likely to cost you just over £1000, but you can buy a set for much cheaper than that. It certainly wouldn’t protect you though, so we always advise our members to get the highest standard equipment in order to ensure their safety.

He’s a funny guy. He turned up at the front door and said ‘Hi I’m Narstie’. I replied ‘Really?! You look nice enough to me!’.

Big Narstie being from Brixton, he speaks the London dialect. Whereas we speak rural Lincolnshire dialect, so there was quite a lot of translating going on at points.

He put a lot of energy into the documentary because he’s a massive Game of Thrones fan and he wanted to immerse himself in it. He wanted to get a feeling of what it is really like to do this thing that us lunatics do. He wore the clothes and got stuck in.

I’ve seen the documentary and I really like it! There’s no such thing as a bad publicity. I don’t think that it paints us in bad light, which was my biggest fear. I worried that they would make it a ‘come and look at the loony’s’ type of documentary, but it isn’t. I think this is because Big Narstie fully embraced re-enactment. I’ll never forget the excitement on his face when he fired a cannon at the Tatton Park show. He was in his element!

This is what we want to do. We want people to come into our group and say that they have been welcomed and had a good time. We also want members of the public to say that we have helped them step back in time. If this is the case, we know that we have done our job.

Big Narstie understood us because in his world everybody wears the same clothes and listen to the same music etc. Our world is completely the same. We all listen to the same medieval music, we all wear the same medieval clothes and we all have a love for sword fighting.