

From Crecy to Agincourt and Beyond The Hundred Years War (1337 – 1453)



Battles of the Hundred Years War

Name	Date	Winner
Battle of Cadsand	1337	E
Naval Battle of Sluys	24 June, 1340	E
Battle of Auberoche	1345	E
Siege of Calais	1346	E
Battle of Crecy	26 August 1346	E
Battle of Saint-Pol-de-Leon	1346	E
Battle of La Roche-Derrien	1347	E
Battle of Saintes	1351	E
Battle of Ardres	1351	F
Battle of Mauron	1352	Anglo-Breton
Battle of Poitiers	Sept. 19 1356	E
Battle of Auray	Sept. 29, 1364	E
Battle of Navarrette (Najera)	3 April, 1367	E
Battle of Montiel	1369	F
Battle of Chiset(Chizai)	1373	F
Siege of Harfleur	18 Aug. -22 Sept. 1415	E
Battle of Agincourt	25 October, 1415	E
Siege of Rouen	July 1418 - Jan. 1419	E
Battle of Baugé	March 21, 1421	F/S
Battle of Cravant	July 31, 1423	E
Battle of Verneuil (Vernuil)	August 17, 1423	E
Battle of St. James	March 6, 1426	E
Battle of Jargeau	June 11-12, 1429	E
Battle of Beaugency	16-17 June, 1429	F
Siege of Orleans	1428-1429	F
Battle of Patay	18 June 1429	F
Siege of Compiègne	1430	F
Battle of Gerbevoy	1435	F
Battle of Formigny	April 15, 1450	F
Battle of Castillon	July 17, 1453	F



The Hundred Years War (1337-1453)

The basic cause of the Hundred Years War was the dynastic quarrel that began with the conquest of England by William of Normandy which resulted in a state that existed on both sides of the English Channel. In the 14th century the English kings held the Duchy of Guienne in France but they resented paying homage to the French kings and feared the increasing control exerted by the French crown over its great feudal vassals.

Other immediate causes of the Hundred Years War were the dissatisfaction of Edward III of England with the nonfulfillment by Philip VI of France of his promises to restore a part of Guienne taken by Charles IV, the English attempts to control Flanders which was an important market for English wool and a source of cloth, and Philip's support of Scotland in recent wars against England.

<https://infoplease.com/encyclopedia/history/modern-Europe/wars/hundred-years-war/causes>

The Hundred Years War (1337 – 1453)

The conflict began with the passing of the French King Charles IV who died without a male heir in 1328. Edward III of England believed he had a right to the French throne through his mother but the French did not want a foreign King and Phillip VI of France also made a claim to the throne by stating that under Salic Law a woman could not rule, or pass on the right to rule, to a son. As a result of the above the two countries went to war.

As the population of France at the time was 17 million compared with only 4 million in England, France at first had the upper hand but after a fierce naval battle at Sluys the English defeated the French navy and took control of the Channel. The French and their Genoese allies tried to stop an English landing at Cadzand but their first introduction to the long bow soon cleared them from the shores. However the English did not have the funds or resources at the time to take advantage of their victory and both sides entered into a temporary truce while they searched for the funds to continue the struggle. The English found the necessary funds by taxing the wool trade which was the best-organized commercial interest in England at the time.

Winston S Churchill, *The History of the English-Speaking Peoples*. Cassell, Volume 1.1956
The Birth of Britain

The English Longbow



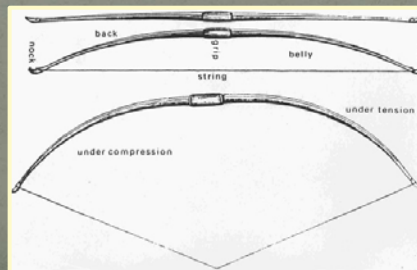
Bodkin

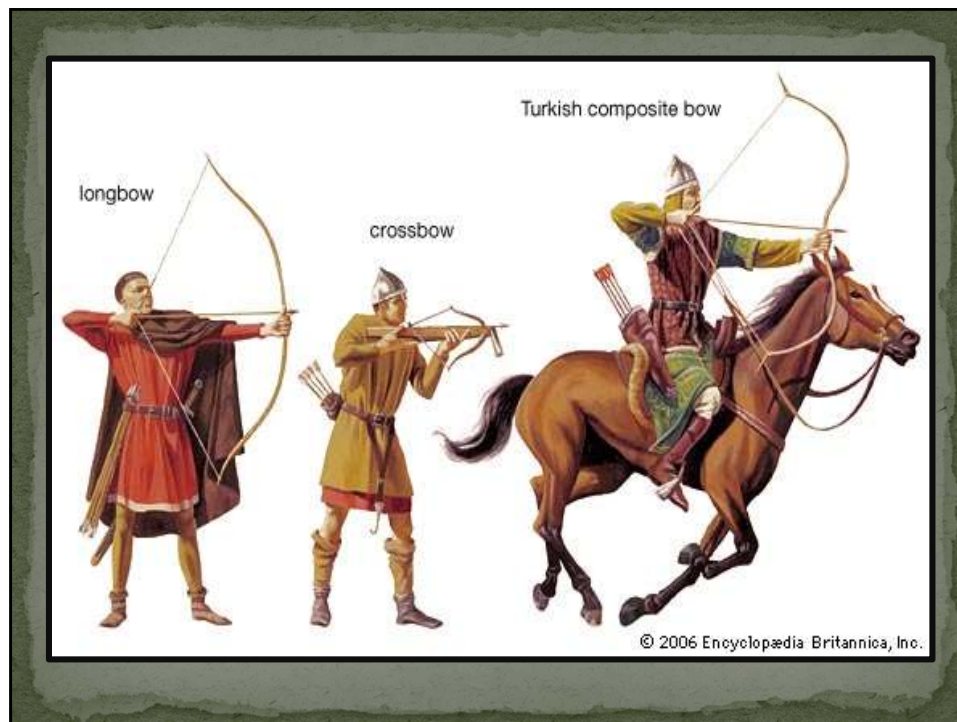
- The longbow was first used by the Welsh when they were attacked by the English. After it was referred to as “the English longbow”.
- Every medieval longbow was made to measure.
- The length ranged from 6 to 7 feet.
- Bows were made of mainly of Yew but also from Ash, Hazel and Elm.
- The wood was protected by wax, resin or fine tallow.
- A skilled man could fire 10 to 12 arrows a minute.
- A longbow arrow could pierce armour at ranges of more than 250 yards.
- The string was made from hemp being the strongest fibre available and was soaked in glue for protection against moisture.
- It was particularly effective against plate armour.
- The arrows were straight and about 3 ft long.
- Long Bodkins were used for piercing mail. Short bodkins were for piercing armour plate. Swallowtails were used for bringing down horses.

Lordsandladies.org

Longbow Training

The English Archery Law in the 13th Century decreed that all Englishmen must become experts in the use of the bow and arrow. Every man between 15 and 60 had to acquire one and attend obligatory archery practice on Sundays and holidays. There was also a law that an archer would be pardoned of murder if he killed a man during archery practice. As warfare played an important part in the Medieval life it was necessary for all archers to become expert marksmen. They had to attend training sessions in “the Butts”. These were areas especially assigned for archery training on the outskirts of villages and towns. Each longbowman trained from an early age to fire 10-12 arrows a minute. The bow required a draw strength of 36 to 45kg. Each archer carried around 24 arrows and also carried swords, axes, billhooks or mallets. (History of War. Issue 59. P.53 – 60. “Crecy”)





Other Types of Bows used in Warfare

Crossbow

- The crossbow was made of wood, iron and steel.
- It had a span of 2 to 3 feet.
- It had a range of 350 to 400 yards.

Advantages

- The crossbow was easy to use.
- The crossbow required minimal training
- The crossbow required little strength
- The crossbow could kill a knight in full armour

Disadvantages

- The crossbow was expensive and time consuming to make.
- The crossbow could only fire about 2 bolts per minute

What do you know about the following?

- Composite Bow
- Compound Bow



The Lead-up to the Battle of Crecy

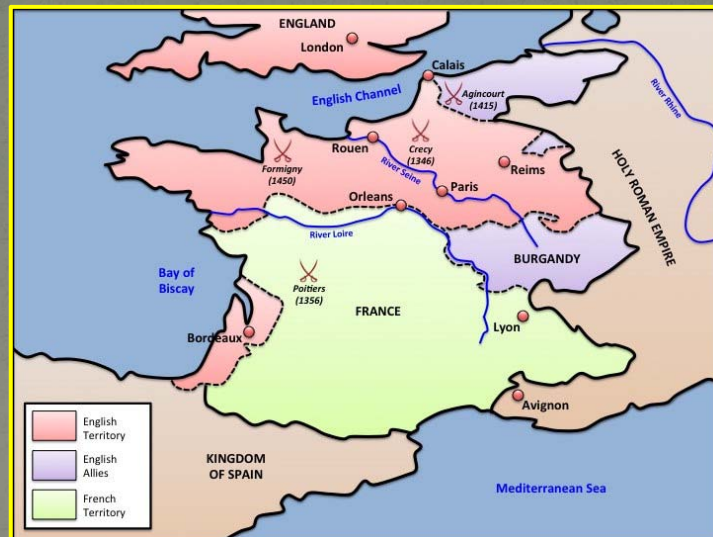
Shortly after becoming king on the death of his father, Edward II; Edward III renewed the war against Scotland and had a decisive victory over the Scots at Halidon Hill. This victory was largely due to the English archers who broke up the Scottish schiltrons. The descendants and followers of Robert Bruce took refuge in France. The Scots had been receiving constant aid from the French Court arousing deep antagonism. Thus the war in Scotland led on to the invasion of Flanders

The young Prince Edward, with the support of workers in Flemish towns who had long suffered from the tyranny of the Counts of Flanders with regards to the wool industry, now had an excuse to pursue a war with France. Running sea-fights with the French were already a reality.

In 1336 Edward decided to move in a decisive manner. He decreed an embargo of all exports of English wool which caused a huge crisis in the Netherlands that resulted in power over much of the Netherlands shifting away from the aristocracy into the hands of the burghers. Worried by the threat of aristocratic revenge they appealed to England for aid which Edward was only to pleased to supply. Edward then repudiated his homage to Philip VI and the Hundred Years War began. It was never concluded until the Peace of Amiens in 1802 when the English sovereign formally renounced his claim to Valois and the Bourbons.

Winston. S. Churchill "A History of the English Speaking Peoples. Volume 1. The Birth of Britain

Map of France 1337



https://www.google.com/search?q=Map+showing+the+battles+of+the+100+years+war&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=SVybFgriefWgSM%6253A%6252CcAozln3FiyToeM%6252C_&usq=Al4_-kTYUvUif6WYO_-cdCH2JCUtFkaMhw&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjzOilguLfAhXKL8KHYYLBRwQ9QEwE3oECAIQBA#imgre=djX7slbbVWKNnM:

The Battle of Crecy August 26, 1346

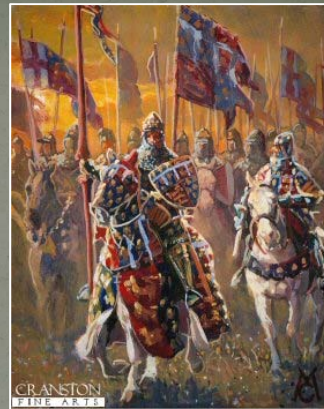
On 13th of July 1346 Edward landed on the Cherburg Peninsula in an armada of ships containing around 15000 men and began a destructive invasion of Northern France and the Low Countries. Following this he moved on to cause considerable damage in Normandy. These tactics were designed to intimidate the local population and reduce productivity in the regions. Towns and the local countryside were burnt. The inhabitants were robbed, killed and assaulted without mercy. Vast amounts of silver and gold were stolen. Edward wanted Phillip to come to negotiate or seek a deciding battle. King Philip began to gather his forces.

After there were a number of minor battles including the Battle of Blanchtque where the French forced the English to reterat but missed the chance to do any real damage. As a result the English were able to withdraw and prepare for the inevitable battle that occurred two days later.

Edward found the perfect position for the coming battle near the small town of Crecy-en-Ponthieu.

"Crecy" History of War P.53 - 59. Issus 59. Great Battles "CRECY" Tom Garner

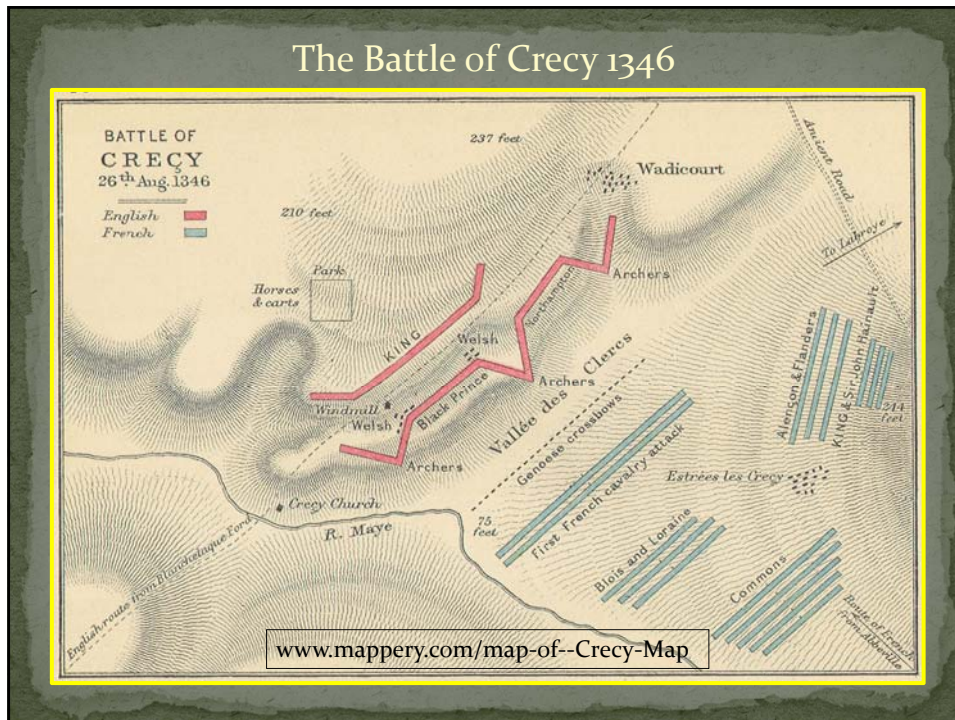
On the day of the battle King Edward positioned his forces on a hill which had a very distinctive windmill on its summit. Bellow them was an open space called "Valley of the Clerks". The English army was protected on all flanks. Edward set up his command post and deployed his army. His 16- year- old son Edward the Prince of Wales led the troops on the right flank and center. Edward commanded a reserve division from the windmill which provided excellent views of the battlefield. Edward's force consisted of 2,000 mounted men-at-arms. They were actually the least important members of his force. They were protected with chain mail; unlike the French knights who were better protected by newer plate armour. Archers armed with longbows formed the bulk of the army. Such tactics were unique at the time. Each archer was capable of firing 10 to 12 arrows a minute and carried around 24 arrows as well as secondary weapons such as swords, axes, billhooks or mallets. Edward well-understood the power of the Longbow having seen what it could do against the Scots and at Sluys.



French knights moving up
For the charge.

"Crecy" History of War P.53 - 59. Issus 59. Great Battles "CRECY" Tom Garner

The Battle of Crecy 1346



The French force was considerable. It was reported to have consisted of from 20,000 to 40,000 men. There were large numbers of men-at-arms including Genoese Crossbowmen. In addition to these Philip's army included knights from all over Europe

In actuality the French army was too large and was impossible to control. When those at the front tried to stop moving forward they were pushed on from behind. The roads were blocked by spectators expecting to see the English defeated.

Philip ordered the Genoese crossbowmen to make the first attack and they advanced to within 180 meters of the English. They were, however, very tired from the long march up to the battle line. In addition a sudden thunderstorm had drenched their bow strings. Even though the rain stopped they were suddenly looking straight into the evening sun. The English archers stepped forward and began releasing volley after volley of three foot long arrows down upon them. They dropped their bows and retreated. Upon seeing the retreat Charles, Count of Alencon, ordered his cavalry to "Ride down the rabble!" They trampled over the Crossbowmen. All the time the English arrows were raining down on them. The confused mob was being decimated. The same fate was waiting for the charging knights. They were mown down in the hundreds. Then Henry's cannons were fired making a noise and frightening the horses if nothing else.

"Crecy" History of War P.53 – 59. Issus 59. Great Battles "CRECY" Tom Garner

Some of the French knights managed to reach the English lines through pure courage and weight of numbers. They smashed into the Prince of Wales's Division and the king's heir was knocked over. His men defended him until he could stand and requests were sent for reinforcements but the king refused to send them in order that his son win his spurs and any other honor that may come his way. Crecy was the foundation of the Black Prince's reputation.

Things were not going so well for the French. The blind king John of Bohemia lost his life by riding into the English and doing the best they could with their swords. The French charged 15 times into the English during the battle and each time were cut down by the English archers. The English gave no quarter and refused ransoms. The French attacks continued until nightfall making 15 charges but each time were cut down by the English archers. The English gave no quarters and refused ransoms. The French King Phillip was forced by his men to quit the field and rode off to Amiens. His defeat was an absolute disaster for the French.

The French lost many of their senior nobles reaching a total of 1000 lords and knights as well as 10,000 common soldiers. Edward was said to have lost only around 100 men. The victory was a triumph of firepower over armour. Edward III never succeeded in becoming king of France. The Battle of Crecy was the beginning of England's successful campaigns in France that lasted for 116 years.

"Crecy" History of War P.53 – 59. Issue 59. Great Battles "CRECY" Tom Garner

The Black Death

"During the nine year that separated the Battle of Crecy and the Battle of Poitiers Europe was afflicted by one of its greatest disasters, the Black Death. This disease was characterized by terrible symptoms, a swift onset, blotches, hardening of the glands, delirium, insanity and death. It destroyed the life, faith and spirit of the age. However life triumphed along with the will to live and European societies began to recover their spirit."



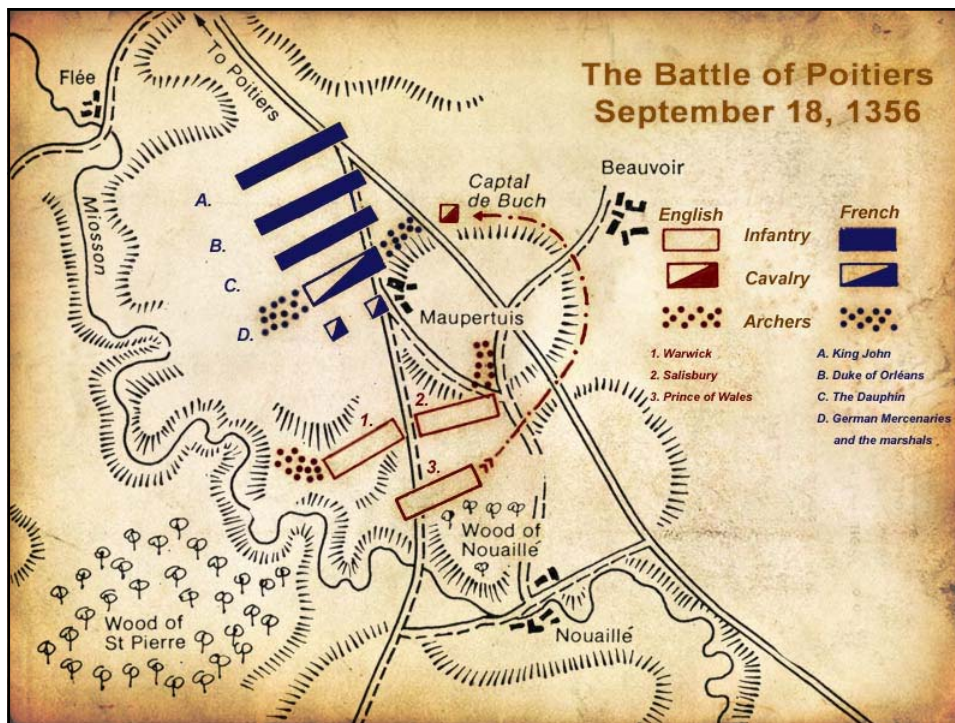
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Lead up to the Battle of Poitiers

In 1355 King Edward obtained large grants for the renewal of war. The plan was that the Black Prince would advance to the north from the English territories of Gascony and Aquitaine towards the Loire. He would have a force of only 4,000 men of which half would be archers. His younger brother, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, would strike in from Brittany and then join forces with his brother. However, the Black Prince was forced to beat a hasty retreat before a force of 20,000 troops of the French royal army. He proposed that his forces be allowed to withdraw and return to England. The French, confident of victory, refused.

The prince was brought to bay at Poitiers. Prince John of France was determined to avenge Crecy and finish the war in one stroke. The Prince negotiated for a withdrawal and return to England but the French refused. They were determined to seek revenge for the humiliation at Crecy. Having learnt the lesson of cavalry attacks on archers King John put his faith in overwhelming numbers of foot soldiers.

The Black Prince understood it would not be as easy to stop the mass attacking him on foot as it had been to stop the mounted horsemen at Crecy. Archery alone would not be enough. Archery alone would not save him. He needed a plan.



The Battle of Poitiers, September 18, 1356

After the Battle of Crecy the French had accepted the fact that horses could not weather the arrow storm. King Edward had won that encounter with an army entirely on foot. King John decided the next battle must be won entirely by men on foot and he could beat the English by seriously outnumbering them.

The Black Prince did not believe he could win based on triumphs of the past and he knew the huge numbers of mailed foot soldiers approaching his forces would not be stopped as easily as the horsemen at Crecy. He therefor broke away from the conventions of the time. The French nobility left their horses behind but the Black Prince kept all his knights mounted. As the French knights struggled forward ponderously on foot through vineyards and scrub in their heavy armour many fell to the English rain of arrows. The English spear and axe men then charged down upon the ranks of the fatigued and disorganized French. At the same time a strong detachment of mounted English knights rode around the French left flank. The result was a slaughter greater than that of Crecy. The French army was driven into ruin. King John and the flower of his nobility were captured or slain.

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Lead up to the Battle of Agincourt

The Black Prince, Edward of Wales, died in 1376, leaving his 10 year old son as the heir to the throne of England. His father, Edward the Third, died in the following year. The Black Prince's son was recognized as King the day his grandfather died and the crown of England passed to a minor, Richard II. In 1399 Richard was overthrown and replaced by Henry IV who struggled in the position until he passed away in 1413 to be replaced by a giant of the English throne, Henry V.

Henry V was 26 and unlike his father he was sure of his position. He came to the throne when people were tired of constant strife. He was slender but strong and active. He was orthodox, chivalrous and just. He led the nation away from domestic discord to foreign conquest. Under the new King a wave of reconciliation the land. He spared many of those who had in some way been disloyal. When strife arose in France between Orleanists and the Burgundians, Henry allied himself with the Burgundians who acknowledged him as the King of France. When he led the knights of England across to France he could now count on many of the French people for support.



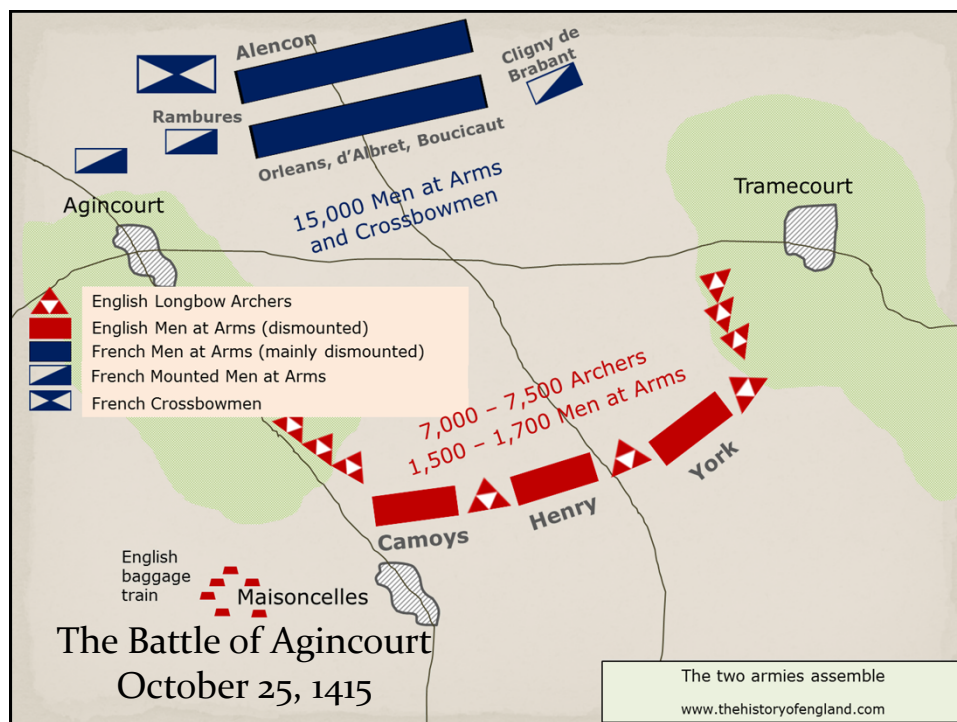
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The Battle of Agincourt October 25, 1415

During the whole of 1414 Henry V was busy making plans for the invasion of France by land and by sea. He built many ships especially for the royal navy, including six "Great Ships" accompanied by over 1500 smaller ones. His force included 6000 archers of whom half were mounted and 2500 armored warriors along with their attendants. On August 11, 1415 the 10,000 warriors landed at the mouth of the Seine without opposition. They successfully besieged Harfleur but were already suffering from attrition and disease and the Council of War advised returning to England. The King would have none of it. He sent home some of the sick and wounded and set off to his fortress at Calais with about 1000 knights and men-at-arms and 4000 archers.

These actions were designed to tempt the French to battle but in this he was not successful. Henry marched his army to near Peronne. He had been pushed deep into France. The French established their HQ at Agincourt. The victory at Crecy was against great odds on the defensive. Poitiers was a counter-stroke. Agincourt was a vicious assault. It was one of the most heroic of all English land battles.

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The Battle of Agincourt

The French troops numbered about 20,000 were drawn up in three lines with a proportion mounted. They were looking forward to the battle against an enemy of only a third their number. King Henry mounted on a small grey horse and dressed in his royal finery brought his men into position. The archers were in six wedge-shaped formations supported by groups of men-at-arms. Henry made one more attempt at avoiding the fight but could not reach an agreement with the French. Shortly after 11 o'clock on St. Crispin's Day the English shouted out their battle cries and advanced to within 300 yards of the heavily grouped French. The archers banged down their stakes and let loose their arrows.



The French were once again overcrowded in three lines preventing both their crossbow men and the newly introduced cannon from firing effectively. Under the deadly arrow storm they plodded thirty deep through a quagmire of mud. Once again the English arrows cleared all before it. The English archers put down their bows and joined the infantry in slaughtering the disordered French.

At one stage in the battle the English king believed that he was being attacked from the rear and thinking the English were in serious trouble he ordered all the prisoners to be slaughtered. It was not necessary and the King long suffered from remorse. The battle was over and the English had won. Henry had won against odds of three to one. The English then returned to London and the victory at Agincourt made Henry the supreme figure in Europe.



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Joan of Arc



The attempts by British armies, despite all the difficulties, to conquer the whole of France with their small armies and lack of money and food reached its climax at the Battle of Verneuil. A strong, deep sense of nationality was growing in France centered on the Dauphin, soon to be King Charles VII. In addition a marriage between the English Duke of Gloucester and Jacqueline, Princess of Hainault, gave deep offence to the Duke of Burgundy and the follow-up military actions caused relations between England and Burgundy to turn very bad. By October 1425 the Duke was in charge of the war against England and France had reached a point where all hung in balance. Then Joan of Arc appeared on the scene.

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Joan of Arc served in an inn in the Domremy near the Vosges Forest. It was here that she was reported to have had visions where St Michael appointed her to command armies to save France from the English. Despite her family's objections she made a journey across France and appeared before the King. She told him she had seen visions that he would be crowned in Rheims.

After passing a number of tests she was appointed to lead French forces to relieve the city of Orleans under siege from English soldiers who had been abandoned by the Burgundians. The Maid led a convoy to their rescue. The superstitious English lost their will to fight and the city fell to the French. After this the English forts fell one by one and their troops were slain. Joan then took part in other battles including Patay. Charles was crowned in Rheims but after that Joan became tired and her voices faded. She had also made enemies on the French side.

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In a latter battle Joan was captured by the English and tried for heresy, found guilty and condemned to be burned at the stake. From that time on the war turned against the English.

After the death of Joan of Arc, the tide of war changed permanently against the English. The whole of the population of France turned against them. The French abandoned the tactic of heavy cavalry attacks against the English archers and adopted tactics of manoeuvre and surprise. The French artillery became the best in the world. Seven hundred engineers with a heavy artillery battering – train was used to overcome the castles that the English still held. All northern France, except Calais, was reconquered.



Early French Cannon 15th Century

The Change in Military Technology and the decline of the Longbow



Between the Battle of Crecy and the Battle of Poitiers the terror of the Plague was not the only change. A new weapon was rapidly changing the ways in which wars were fought. Legend has it that crude cannons were fired during the Battle of Crecy. That may or not be so but the early 15th Century saw the end of the rule of armored men and the advent gun powder and the weapons that used it.

Until around 1429 the English forces had the better of the battles that took place between the English and the French on the Continent. However, from about 1429 the tide turned and the French were the winners of the seven remaining battles on French soil. There were several reasons for this turnaround.

Culverins

The Culverin was a medieval cannon with a relatively long barrel and light construction. It fired light (8–16-pound [3.6–7.3-kg]) projectiles at long ranges along a flat trajectory. The culverin was adapted to field use by the French in the mid-15th century and to naval use by the English in the late 16th century. During the 17th century, cannons were classified according to the weight of projectiles fired, and the name culverin became obsolete.

Overall, the culverin was a significant advance. Since it fired a ball of iron and relied on gunpowder for propulsion, the heavy ball meant a relatively stable flight and the gunpowder propulsion meant a fast and long range. A replica culverin has achieved a muzzle velocity of 408 m/s, and a range over 450 metres (1,480 ft) using only minimal elevation.[3] This velocity and mass implied that the cannonball had a kinetic energy of roughly 600 kilojoules (440,000 ft·lbf) when leaving the muzzle.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culverin#Field_culverins

Culverins were later replaced by the field gun once technology had advanced to the point where cannonballs had become explosive.

The Change in Military Technology and the Decline of the Longbow

The important lesson to learn from military history is that things do not remain the same and it is extremely important to keep up with changes in tactics and technology.

At the Battle of Formigny in 1450 the French used culverines to batter the English archers from a distance. In addition at Castillon in 1453 an attack by Talbot was destroyed by the French who had the use of more than 100 pieces of artillery.(1) The English had become too conservative and relied on the longbow to excess. They believed there was no need for them to change the way they were doing things. They were being left behind.

There were also changes in England itself. People were becoming tired of the endless wars with France carried out to foster the vanity of the aristocracy. The expenses for these undertakings were becoming unbearable as were the deformities that resulted from a lifetime of practice. The longbow was also losing its domination of the battlefield to gunpowder-based weapons. In the villages around the country the mandatory archery sessions were being abandoned as the lands on which the Butts were located were used for other purposes and people became busier with activities relating to their livelihood.(2)

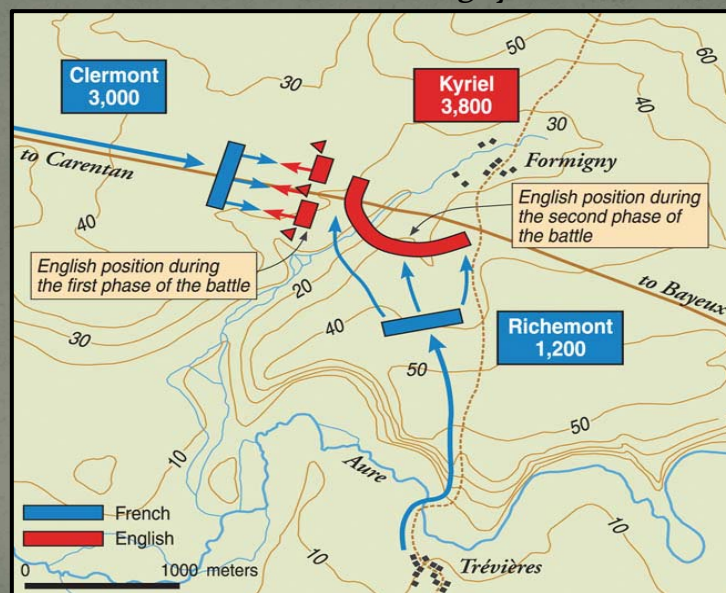
(1)Britannica.com, (2) Winston. S. Churchill "A History of the English Speaking Peoples. Volume 1. , The Birth of Britain



Early examples of French gunpowder based weapons.

<https://www.deviantart.com/keirea/art/Big-badda-boom-196109273>

Battle of Formigny



Early Gunpowder weapons



"The most successful soldiers of the late middle ages, the English and the Swiss, had such a long sequence of success that there seemed to be no need for them to adapt their military systems to meet the changing needs of their times. They knew how to win battles, so much so that an occasional defeat was assumed to be the result of poor or faulty execution of their own system rather than any virtue on the part of their opponents. Thus, whereas their opponents were forced to evaluate themselves, the English and the Swiss became ultra-conservative and succumbed to a changing military order."

Battle of Formigny April 15, 1450



Geoffrey Regan. "Great Military Disasters." A Historical Survey of Military Incompetence. M. Evans & Company Inc, New York

Winston. S. Churchill "A History of the English Speaking Peoples. Volume 1. , The Birth of Britain History of War Issue 59 "Crecy" P.53 - 59



The Battle of Castillon is known for two things; the end of the Hundred Years War and the first really effective use of gunpowder weaponry on the battlefield. The Earl of Shrewsbury, John Talbot, who was besieging Castillon in southwestern France, attacked the French but soon found it was defended by 300 cannon and hundreds of handgunners. It was claimed that each of the cannon balls fired by the French hit five or six Englishmen killing them all. The English leader, John Talbot, was thrown off his horse and finished off with a battle axe. The era of gunpowder had arrived, the long bow was obsolete and the Hundred Years War was over.

Historyextra.com