

Institution: University of Southampton
Unit of Assessment: 30 History
Title of case study: 30-01 The Soldier in Later Medieval England, and the Battle of Agincourt
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>University of Southampton research into the Battle of Agincourt, and on the late medieval soldier more generally, has impacted widely on the public, enriched popular understanding and enjoyment of history, and challenged widely held beliefs. The work has inspired individuals, groups, students and academics – in the UK and across the world – to explore their family and community heritage, thereby enriching the quality of life. Notable outputs included an online database of soldiers in Henry V's army, which received over 3.4 million hits in the three months after its launch in July 2009. Further impact has been made through television documentaries, media coverage and contributions to museums in England and France.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Henry V's victory of 1415, Agincourt, is one of the most famous battles of all time. It occupies a special place in English consciousness and, as a result, has suffered from centuries of mythologizing. Several misconceptions have arisen from post-medieval re-writings of the event, including the most famous cultural depiction of the battle, Shakespeare's 1599 play <i>Henry V</i>. Specifically, it has been widely accepted that the English army was severely outnumbered by the French. It was also believed that 'professional' soldiery did not emerge until the early modern period.</p> <p>Anne Curry has been Professor of Medieval History at the University of Southampton since 2004. She was the first historian to analyse critically all the available sources for Agincourt, revealing how traditions and misconceptions developed through both history and literature [3.1, 3.2]. From 2004 she compiled a database of around 8,000 soldiers in Henry's 1415 army, published in a book of 2005. This complemented her existing database of men-at-arms serving between 1422 and 1450. Her research of 2004-5 included an in-depth investigation of contemporary narratives; a new look at the terrain where the battle was fought; and a careful analysis of the surviving financial and administrative records – the first time this had ever been attempted. Her findings allowed a reconstruction of the battle from the English and French perspectives. Administrative records showed that the discrepancy in size between the French and English army was much less than commonly believed, indicating that the French army was about 12,000 strong and the English army 9,000. The research also showed that the French army suffered as a result of internal political divisions, and that the English maintained pressure on France through raising another large army in 1416 [3.3].</p> <p>In 2006 Curry received an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) grant of £500,000 for a three-year project on 'The Soldier in Later Medieval England'. The research was undertaken by Curry together with Professor Adrian Bell of Henley Business School, University of Reading, who had completed a PhD under Curry during her time at Reading. Dr Andy King at Southampton was one of two post-doctoral researchers employed on the project [3.4, 3.6].</p> <p>This research extended Curry's existing databases by collecting all military service records for the English army between 1369 and 1453. It created three online databases on a dedicated website launched in July 2009 [3.5]. To date this constitutes the largest assemblage of searchable online medieval personal data, exceeding 250,000 entries. The research revealed that professionalization in the soldiery increased between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as short expeditions gave way to long-term occupation of territory. It demonstrated that there was career progression and family traditions of service, and that soldiers served under a range of captains and over many different theatres: thus the traditional view of armies as the private retinues of the nobility was incorrect. Soldiers came from all parts of England, confirming, as Curry had already claimed in her Agincourt study, that the dominance of Welsh archers was a myth. Foreign soldiers also served the English crown. This research has transformed our understanding of the late medieval military</p>

community, revealing a level of organisational and social sophistication in English royal armies previously held to be the creation of the early modern period [3.4, 3.6].

3. References to the research

- 3.1 Anne Curry, *Agincourt. A New History* (Tempus Publishing, 2005, 319 pp; pbk 2006, 357 pp). Submitted to RAE 2008. Well reviewed (TLS, Daily Telegraph).
- 3.2 Anne Curry, 'The battle speeches of Henry V', *Reading Medieval Studies*, vol. 34 (2008), pp. 77-97. (refereed journal)
- 3.3 Anne Curry, 'After Agincourt, what next? Henry V and the campaign of 1416', *The Fifteenth Century*, VII (2007), pp. 23-5. (refereed journal)
- 3.4 *Anne Curry, Adrian Bell, Andy King and David Simpkin, 'New regime, new army? Henry IV's Scottish expedition of 1400', *English Historical Review*, cxxv, 517 (2010), pp. 1382-1413. (Refereed article in the leading historical journal in English speaking world; A rated by ESF. Also available online. Submitted to REF 2014.)
- 3.5 *www.medievalsoldier.org. Web site resulting from AHRC project. Includes searchable database of c. 250K service records, as well as case studies (some of which are by Curry)
- 3.6 *A. Bell, A. Curry, A. King, D. Simpkin, *The Soldier in Later Medieval England* (OUP, 2013). 318 pp. (Three excellent referees reports received: proposal accepted immediately by the Delegates for publication. Submitted to REF 2014.)

Grants

AHRC Research Grant, 2006-9; 'The Soldier in Later Medieval England'; PI Anne Curry; CI Adrian Bell, University of Reading; Value: c.£495K + PhD studentship

British Academy Fellowship 2004-5, The English Army in Normandy 1415-50. Curry replacement post c. £30K

4. Details of the impact

The research findings have been widely disseminated through a book, a website and numerous events, exhibitions and talks. The work has prompted a global audience to re-think the past and explore their own family history. It has influenced popular literature, contributed to television documentaries and received extensive media coverage.

Since 2008 Curry has given around 40 talks on this research to branches of the Historical Association [5.1], local societies and schools, reaching a total audience of 1,500. Feedback shows the extent to which audiences have been captivated and inspired, with several of the 65-strong audience at the Eden Valley Festival in 2011 going straight online to research their family history. [5.2]. Similarly a Henry V study day at Southampton University in 2013 prompted attendees to question their current notions of history and the king. [5.3] Feedback also indicates the personal benefit of Curry's books. One USA reader commented in Feb. 2011: "Authors and historians like you are so instrumental in opening doors to the past and finding out where we all came from." A UK reader in Nov. 2010: "I have just returned from a short break... my companion was your book on Agincourt. How much I enjoyed it, so full of facts giving absolute detail on the enormous task." [5.4]

Several museums have benefited from this research. Since 2001 Curry has been involved in the creation of the Centre Historique at Azincourt which has welcomed more than 400,000 visitors to date. She is now a member of the committee for its 2015 refurbishment. In 2008 she provided soldier case studies to facilitate the opening of Shrewsbury Battlefield Centre.[5.5] At the Victoria & Albert Museum, in 2009 Senior Curator Dr Rowan Watson was able to date a manuscript using Curry's research. In 2012 Curry's expertise on Agincourt led to her appointment to the English Heritage Battlefields Panel. She has also been appointed co-Chair with the Chair of Trustees of the Royal Armouries for the 600th anniversary commemorations of Agincourt, and her input is shaping

a major 2015 exhibition at the Tower of London [5.6]

The greatest impact in terms of reach has been achieved through the online database at www.medievalsoldier.org, which was subsequently adopted by www.forces-war-records.co.uk to provide a larger resource for the public [5.7]. Within three months of its launch in July 2009 the site received over 3.4 million hits from over a quarter of a million different visitors. Even in mid-2013, it still often reached 3,000 hits a day, with users from 124 other countries and across every continent. The site is used by historians and genealogists as well as academics and students, many of whom send messages expressing their personal benefit from the resource. Queries also demonstrate how the site has stimulated people to carry out their own research. Contributions from amateur historians have been supported, as have those from a wide range of enquirers, young and old. One school pupil was especially excited in 2012 to have Curry's help with a project for the Canadian National History Day competition [5.4].

Curry has responded to around 30 public queries prompted by her research, including one in June 2011 from a bridegroom who used information she provided for his wedding speech [5.4]. Other beneficiaries have included: the author Bernard Cornwall, who took an archer from her list in *A New History* as the hero of his 2008 novel *Azincourt*; re-enactors at the annual Kelmarsch Festival of History, where Curry provided the script for an imagined archer at the siege of Harfleur (2008 onwards); and the Royal Armouries and Musée de l'Armée in Paris, where she provided text for a Froissart Exhibition (2008-9) [5.6].

Reviews on Amazon.com indicate the debate her work has provoked, as does an article published by the New York Times in October 2009 [5.8]. She has received hate mail from the Welsh and others wedded to traditional views on Agincourt. An email from Australia in October 2009 objected: "The heroic victory of the British over the French is something that cannot be rewritten." Her work was also included in a Pearson Key Stage 3 online learning unit. Year 7s were asked to "read this article in which Anne Curry suggests that the English were not heavily outnumbered. Now, in your own words, write a paragraph explaining 'Why the English victory at Agincourt is a myth.'" New South Wales senior schools also use the NYT article in history education [5.8].

In February 2012 The Dutch Society of Anaesthesiologists – keen to learn how to cope with disaster – chose Curry's *New History* as the course text, and invited her to lecture to a training event on lessons from military history. In September 2011 her research was used by the USA's National War College, Washington DC. Her work on military professionalism in her Osprey book on the Hundred Years' War was a core text for the 200 participants on its international officer training course, which she also addressed in person [5.9].

Public interest therefore has been high: the online database of soldiers was reported by national newspapers including the Daily Mail and The Sun, as well as BBC news online (all July 2009) [5.8]. Contributing further to public discourse, Curry has acted as an adviser for several TV programmes. In February 2012 the first episode of BBC4's 'Bullets, Boots and Bandages' was based on her research on the siege of Harfleur. In response to her input to Sky Atlantic's 'The British' (2012), producer Robert Andrew wrote, "Your expertise on Agincourt also really helped with the development of our script and has produced a much more polished programme." The series spearheaded a major educational initiative aimed at inspiring schoolchildren to explore British history. In 2013 Curry was consultant for episode 3 of BBC 4's 'Chivalry and Betrayal: The Hundred Years' War', which attracted 750,000 viewers. Producer Graham Johnston wrote that she "was instrumental in shaping the outline and script. Her contribution to the overall flow of the film was invaluable." [5.10] A transcript of her appearance on *In our Time* (Agincourt) was selected for Melvyn Bragg's *Companion* to the series in 2009.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[5.1] Responses to talks to HA branches: file held by Curry. Indicative responses: "We all enjoyed your presentation at Richmond. We counted an audience of 36, much larger than usual. We are still struggling to keep the branch going but you gave us an enormous boost;" "We at Grimsby were fascinated by your ground breaking research and the way you explained your findings... I was

particularly interested in the meticulous records of the men who fought." Fuller corroboration available from Mr Ian Mason, Chair, Branches and Members Committee, Historical Association.

[5.2] Email from Mr D. Garman, Secretary of Eden Valley Festival, Kent, 12 June 2011.

[5.3] File of questionnaires from the Lifelong Learning event on 9 March 2013, attended by 75 people. Indicative comments: *'Have the talks today changed your understanding and attitude towards the subject matter?'* "Yes, A better understanding of this period in history and of the ambiguity of the motives and morality of continuing the war with France." "Yes they have increased my knowledge of the period of Henry V; they have helped me to understand how much information there is on this topic." "Fascinating introduction to medieval history, this study day has provided an excellent opportunity to develop an in-depth appreciation of the subject matter." *'Will you use the ideas?'* "Yes, to stimulate and contribute to discussions on medieval history with local groups and societies. Contribute to discussion on forthcoming exhibition." "Will follow up by visiting various websites and historical sites in the country."

[5.4] Curry holds a select archive of comments and queries. Indicative comment by Mrs B. Woodward (May 2010): "I heard about your website on Radio 4 and looked straightaway and was amazed. I chose my Grandma's maiden name of Bradley and discovered we had 31 entries on the muster roll and 6 of them fought with Henry V. Also we had 17 Bradleys in the garrisons in various places and dates."

[5.5] Impact on Centre Historique d'Azincourt (Director, Christof Gilliot); on Shrewsbury, email Feb. 2008 from Chris Fern, Fern Archaeology; <http://www.battlefield1403.com/exhibition>

[5.6] Royal Armouries. Corroboration from the Chair of Trustees, Wesley Paul.

[5.7] The on-line searchable database provides corroboration via Loganalyser and Google Analytics, with data held by Curry at the University of Southampton.

[5.8] Media attention for the web site and Curry's Agincourt can be tracked via Google search. NYT, Oct. 2009 nytimes.com/2009/10/25/world/europe/25agincourt.html?pagewanted=2&hp. NSW Senior History Extension Blogsphere: extensionhistory.wordpress.com/2009/10/26/historians-reassesses

[5.9] Email Feb. 2012 from Dr H. Medina Palomino, Stichting Medina Care, Rotterdam; letter of 16 Sept 2011 from Rear Admiral Douglas J. McAneny, Commandant, National War College.

[5.10] TV programme viewer figures, 750K for initial showing of episode 3 of 'Chivalry and Betrayal', Feb. 2013. Information from the producer, Graham Johnson. For *The British* see thebritish.sky.com.