

# Edward III and the Hundred Years War 1337-1377

## CE – War and Rebellion B1 or B2

### 1. General Introduction

The name "Hundred Years' War" is misleading

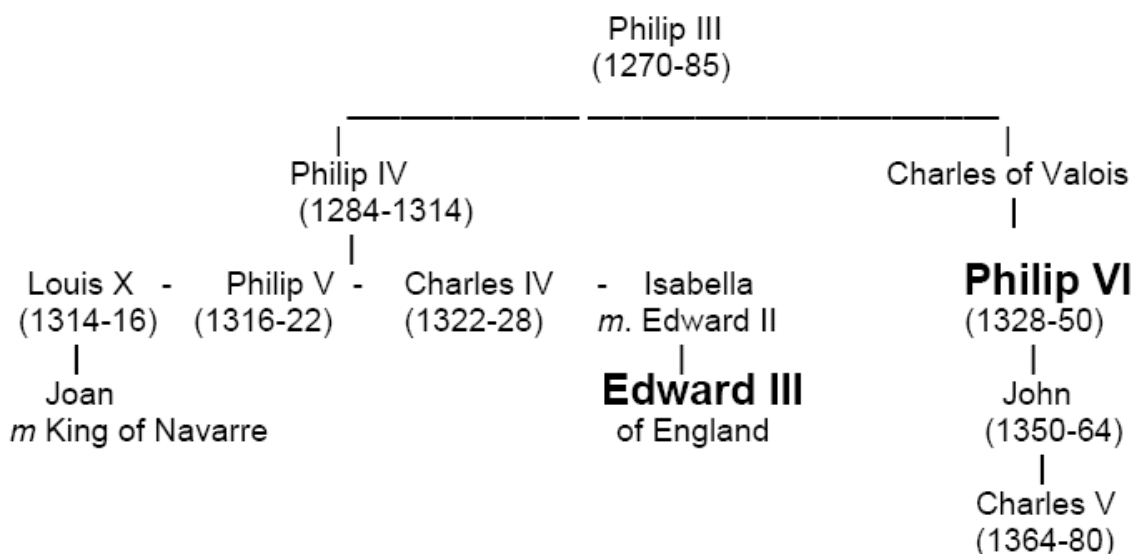
- The dates of the conflict (1337–1453) cover a 116 year period
- There was not continual fighting for a hundred years. (Truces, Black Death)
- The actual time fighting, when added up, comes to much less than one hundred years
- People at the time did not see the battles as part of a single campaign and probably referred to the conflict as the “**French Wars**”

What we call the Hundred Years' War was a series of battles during the latter part of the Middle Ages in which the English kings tried to assert their right to the French throne and was resisted by the French.

The Hundred Years War is often divided into **three wars**

- 1) The **Edwardian War** 1337 – 1360
- 2) The **Caroline War** 1369 – 1389
- 3) The **Henrician War** 1415 - 1453

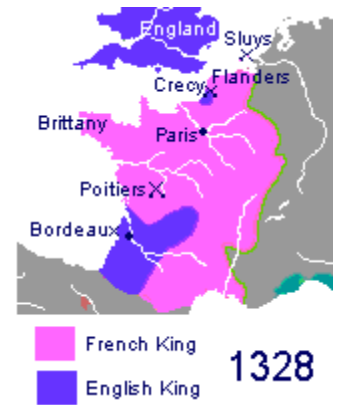
## French Royal Family Tree



## 2. What were the causes of the war?

### Long term causes

1 Ever since William I, English kings holding land in France had proved a concern for French kings. France was a traditional enemy of England with William II, Henry I, Henry II, Richard I, John, Henry II, Edward I all going to war with France at sometime or other. Henry II had ruled more French lands than the king of France. This history of dispute and friction made it more likely that war would break out.



### Short term causes

Between 1327 and 1377 a series of events led Edward III to declare war on France. This was not a knee-jerk reaction but a measured response to what was seen as French aggression and provocation.

#### **Claim to French throne - Dynastic**

2: In 1328, King Charles IV of France had died leaving no male heir. **Edward III** put forward his **claim through his mother**, daughter of Philip IV. The French ignored his claim firstly as it was through a woman (Salic Law) and secondly because he was the King of England. The French wanted the English out of France not ruling it! Edward was disappointed but not surprised and chose at this stage to do nothing. In 1337 in response to French actions he renewed his claim.

#### **Wool Blockade – Economic/Financial**

3. English wool was the best in Europe and preferred by Flemish merchants to French wool. Philip ordered the Count of Flanders to ban the export of wool to Flanders. Philip VI also encouraged pirates and French navy to attack English ships carrying **wool** to Flanders. The French were trying to strangle the English wool trade. Wool was the medieval equivalent to oil in terms of wealth creation. This was bad for England's economy.

#### **Invasion of Gascony \_ Economic/Financial/territorial**

4. In 1337, Philip VI of France invaded Gascony. Gascony was the centre of the vital **wine and salt trade** between England and the continent. English merchants wanted to this large part of the wine producing market because it made you very rich. Edward lost money as taxes paid on the import of wine and salt were paid to him (Tonnage and Poundage). Wine was an important part of the Medieval diet due to their high calorie content and their preservative qualities. From Gascony Edward hoped to extend control further into France and gain access to even richer vineyards.

#### **French alliance with Scotland - Political**

5: Edward III wanted to complete his grandfather's conquest of **Scotland**. France had always given help to the Scottish in their fight against England. France has given sanctuary to David Bruce after the defeat of the Scots at Halidon Hill in 1333. In 1337, the English Navy intercepted French Ships carrying troops and weapons to Scotland supporting an invasion of England on behalf of David Bruce. Edward viewed this as an act of war.

#### **Ambition - Political**

6. Edward III was young, ambitious and brave and he **liked fighting**. He wanted the glory and excitement of a war with France. Edward wanted to rebuild the Angevin Empire lost during the reigns of John and Henry III. Like Richard I and his grandfather (Edward I) he was expected to achieve great things in battle. (Criteria for a good king!)

#### **Problems in England - Political**

7. A war against France would **unite the English** barons and stop internal feuding.

### 3. Edward declares war

On the 1st November 1337, Edward III declared himself the true King of France and added the French lilies to the English royal coat of arms. He declared war on France. The War can be divided into two periods of English success and two periods of failure.

### First Period of Success 1340-1360

#### 4. First Campaign 1340-1342

- In 1339 Edward invades France.
- **1340:** Edward III on board the Thomas led 200 ships and defeated the French Navy (and hired Genoese ships) at the **Battle of Sluys**.



The English gained command of the Channel that allowed wool merchants to trade undisturbed.

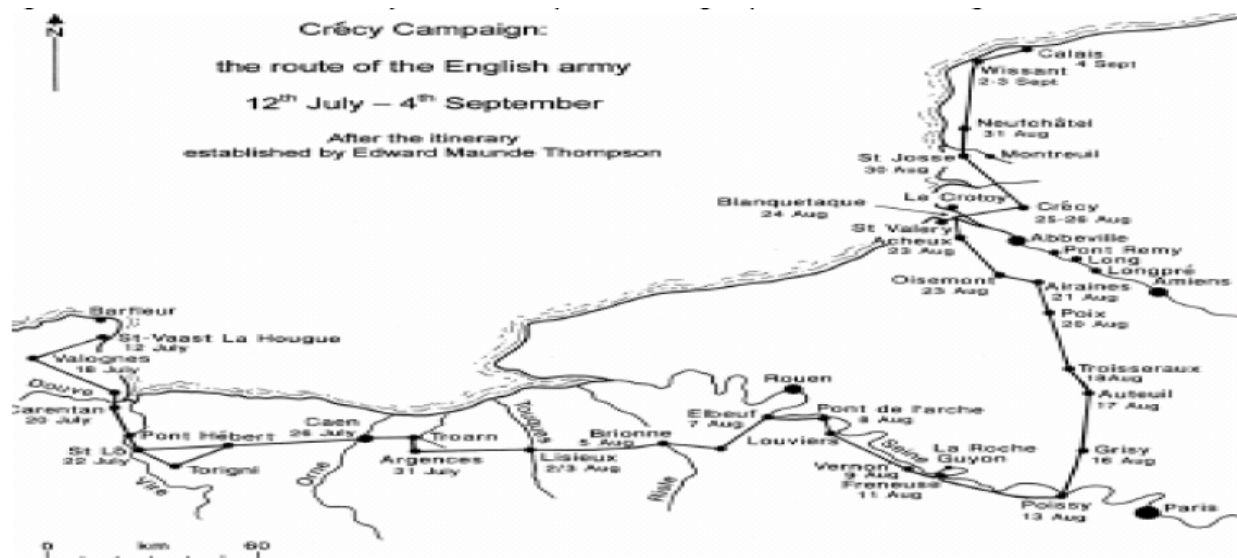
However, Philip's army refused to fight a pitched battle.

- Many of Edward's supporters became unhappy and deserted.
- Edward challenges Philip to personal combat or to decide the matter between a 100 chosen champions from each side. Wisely, Philip declines the offer.
- A shortage of money, troops and supplies forces Edward to return to England.
- The Pope intervenes and a truce was signed in 1343.

#### 5. Edward III and his Second Campaign 1346- 1347

- On 12<sup>th</sup> July 1346, Edward III landed an invasion force (some 4,000 men-at-arms and 10,000 archers (longbow men) in Normandy.
- Edward's army marched west along the Normandy coast plundering and burning towns and villages and marched to just 20 miles outside Paris.
- Philip VI of France, uncertain of the direction that Edward meant ultimately to take, advanced against him with some 12,000 men-at-arms and numerous other men.
- Edward then turned sharply north-eastward, crossing the Seine and the Somme, to take up a defensive position at Crécy.

*(It was during Edward's taking of Caen, on the way to Crécy, that the "mooning" incident occurred. Several hundred Norman soldiers exposed their backsides to the English archers and many of them paid a high price for doing so.)*

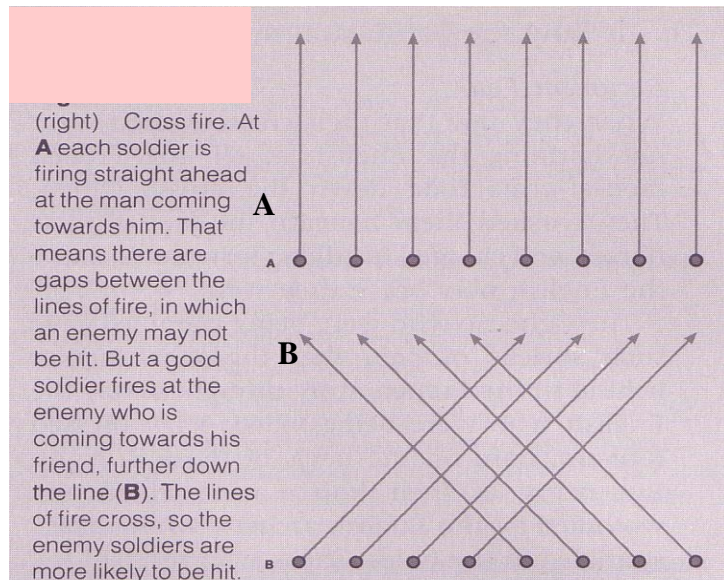


## 6. The Battle of Crécy 26<sup>th</sup> August 1346

1) Edward chose his ground carefully on a slope of a hill with his flanks protected by river, marsh and woodland. (*Reduced threat of knights and being surrounded/outflanked*)

2) French forces numbered approximately 36,000.

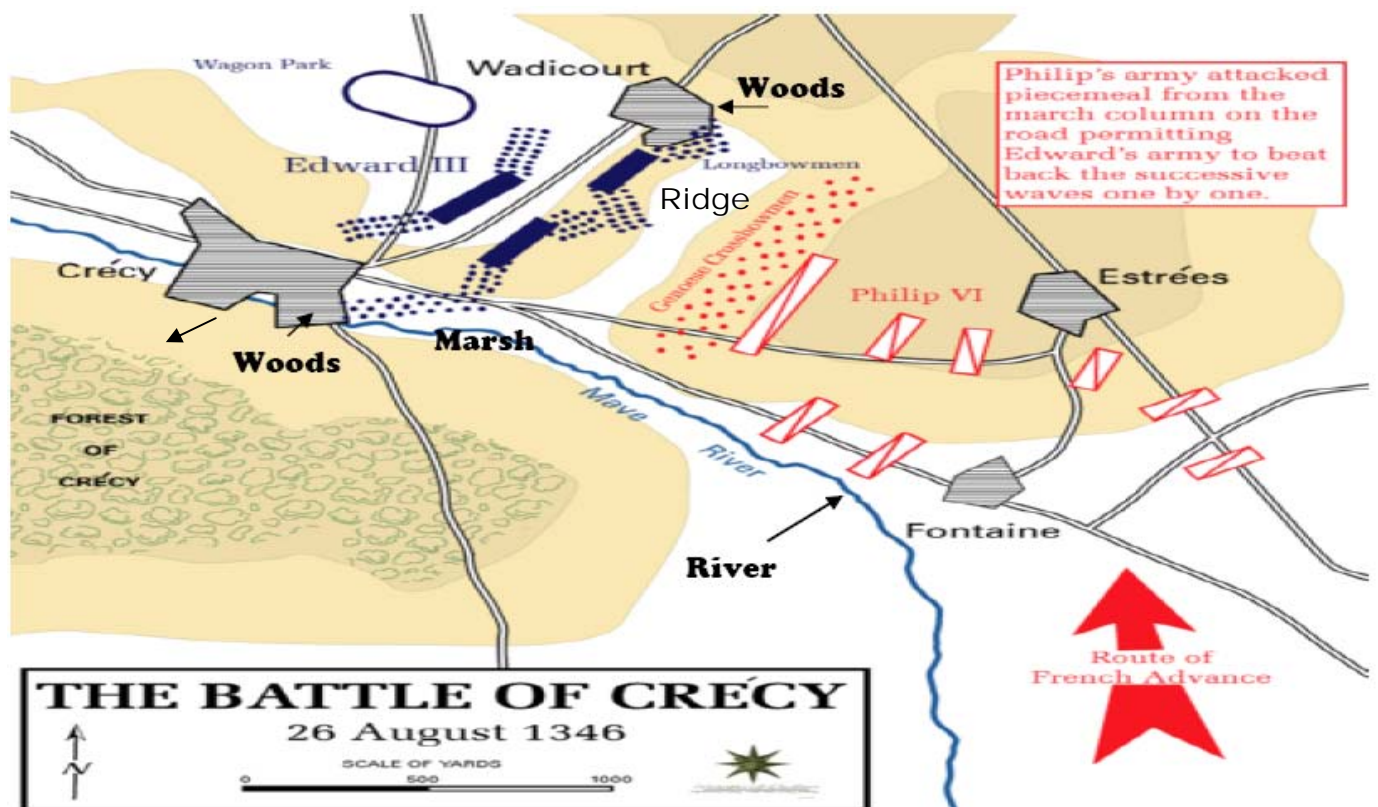
3) English forces numbered approx. 12,000, including 7,000 archers



4) Edward ordered most of his men-at-arms to dismount. He then arranged three groups of men-at-arms and spearmen, with archers placed on their sides. The archers formed ranks resembling an outward 'V'. Small pits were dug in front of them to trip up horses.

5) Edward held a reserve division of men at arms and archers to plug any holes and allow for an escape if necessary.

6) The battle line was 2,000 metres wide.



7) The French were extremely confident with the French nobles discussing whom they were going to take as prisoners. The King of Majorca had already named Edward III as his prisoner! The French king Philip VI ordered the raising of the banner of St Denis. This signified that there was to be no mercy shown to the English and that no prisoners would be taken. Edward III replied by raising his 'Dragon' banner stating that no quarter would be shown to the French. The mind games had started!

8) Edward waited for the French to attack.

9) At 4pm The French king, Philip VI sent forward his **Genoese crossbowmen**, while his knights were preparing for a charge to annihilate "The contemptible little English army." As they advanced, a sudden rainstorm swirled around the two armies. The English archers removed their bowstrings to cover inside their jackets and hats; the crossbowmen could take no such precautions with their cumbersome weapons.

10) The Chronicler Froissart describes the Genoese as "whooping and shouting." Once the English formation was within crossbow range the Genoese fired their bolts; but the rain had loosened the strings of their crossbows and their shots fell short. The intention was for the Genoese to create a hole in the English lines, which could then be entered by French knights who would then attack the English from the rear whilst another division of French knights attacked from the front.

11) Froissart then says: "The English archers each stepped forth one pace, drew the bowstring to his ear, and let their arrows fly; so wholly and so thick that it seemed as snow." The Genoese crossbowmen were no match for the English archers who outranged them and had a quicker fire rate. (16per min – 3per min) ***(Each English archer carried two sheaves of arrows (48) into battle. Re-supply was accomplished by going back through the lines or having more arrows brought forward.)***<sup>15)</sup> *Arrows, depending on type and weight, could be shot 250 to 300 metres. The English archers could shoot an average of 10 arrows per minute.*

12) The barrage inflicted significant casualties on the Genoese and forced them to retreat.

13) The **French knights** became **impatient** and began their attack riding down many of the unfortunate Genoese as they went. As the French knights charged, they had to ride to their right to avoid a ridge, which squashed the French knights into a compact unit! The English archers shot a blanket volley of arrows right into the charging knights. Their horses swerved, plunged and reared. Soon the French knights were in total disorder.

14) The French knights in the rear mistook the agonising cries of the crushed Genoese as those of the English and charged forward, eager not to miss out on an opportunity to grab their prisoners. Repeatedly the French knights tried to charge but each time they were met with a hail of deadly arrows.

15) The total number of **arrows shot** during the battle is estimated at ½ million

16) From the **start** of the battle at **4:00 pm** until the **end at midnight**, there were **14 to 16 charges made against the English lines.**

17) Casualties were estimated from 5,000 (low) to **10,000 or more (high) for the French Knights** and Genoese crossbowmen. **English casualties were several hundred.** (700)

18) Edward, the sixteen-year-old Black Prince won his spurs.

19) **A small, trained professional army had defeated a large disorderly feudal army.**

## **7. Uniforms, arms and equipment at Crécy**

The power of the medieval feudal army lay in the charge of its mass of mounted knights. After the impact delivered with the lance, the battle broke into hand to hand combat with sword and shield, mace, short spear, dagger and war hammer.

### **Knights**

Depending upon wealth and rank a mounted knight often wore jointed steel armour incorporating back and breast plates, a visored bascinet helmet and steel plated gauntlets with spikes on the back; the legs and feet protected by steel greaves and boots, called jамbs. Weapons carried were a lance, shield, sword and dagger. Over the armour a knight wore a jupon or surcoat emblazoned with his arms.

### **Crossbowmen**

The French had a force of Genoese crossbowmen, their weapons firing a variety of missiles; iron bolts or stone and lead bullets, to a range of some 200 yards. The crossbow fired with a flat trajectory, its missile capable of penetrating armour.

### **Longbowmen**

The weapon of King Edward's archers was a six foot yew bow discharging a feathered arrow a metre in length. Arrows were fired with a high trajectory, descending on the approaching foe at an angle. The rate of fire was up to 12 arrows every minute against the crossbow's rate of 3 shots every minute; the crossbow requiring to be reloaded by means of a winch. For close quarter fighting the archers used hammers or daggers to batter at an adversary's armour or penetrate between the plates.

### **Edward III's Infantry**

The Welsh and Irish infantrymen, carrying spears and knives, made up a disorderly mob of little use during battle, being mainly concerned with ransacking the countryside and murdering the inhabitants or pillaging a battlefield once the combat was over. A knight or man-at-arms, knocked from his horse and pinned beneath its body, would be easily overcome by the swarms of these men.

### **Artillery**

The English army possessed simple artillery; improvements in gunpowder reducing the size of guns and projectiles and making them sufficiently mobile to be used in battle. It seems that the French had not by the time of Crécy acquired artillery.

## **8. Why did Edward III win the Battle of Crécy?**

## **Battle Position**

He chose his battle position well. He was outnumbered. His sides were protected by woods and river which would prevent the French from surrounding him or attacking his army from behind. Woods did not suit French knights on horseback. There was a slight slope upwards to the English army. This would favour his archers and make a horse charge more difficult. Slope disadvantaged crossbow fire but aided longbowmen. Slope also gave Edward better view. Philip's view was not as good.

## **Battle formation**

English outnumbered 3-1. Edward had to ensure that he used all his soldiers. He arranged archers in outward V shape. This meant that all his archers could fire at the same time and hit a deeper and larger area of French troops. Knights dismounted, armed themselves with polearms, to give protection to archers who were also placed behind wooden stakes and pits.

## **Battle Tactics**

Edward's use of archers was decisive. Archers firing diagonally ensured greater hits. They could pick off the French from a distance. Edward realised that although the days of the knight (heavy cavalry) were nearly over, his 5,000 knights were no match for the 20,000 French.

## **Mental attitude**

Despite being outnumbered, the English were organised, had a clear plan of action and were positive in their minds. Edward countered French mind games.

## **9. Why did the French Lose?**

### **Overconfidence**

French believed that they just had to turn up and the battle was won. They were discussing who was going to take which prisoners. Over confidence led to complacency. Mistakes and wrong decisions were made.

### **Battle tactics**

Knights were no longer the threat or force that they had been over the previous 150 years. Counter tactics to the knight had been developed (pits, pikes, longbow). French had not adapted to evolution (change) of warfare. Crossbow limited use against longbow (fire rate, distance, reliability). Limited width of battlefield meant that French could not deploy all their troops at the same time.

### **Lack of command**

French army was feudal (English was professional). Men from different regions would not co-operate with each other or take commands. Units of French army were working independently of each other with no central co-ordination or command.

## **10. The Siege of Calais (Sept 4th 1346 to Aug. 4th 1347) 2<sup>nd</sup> Campaign**

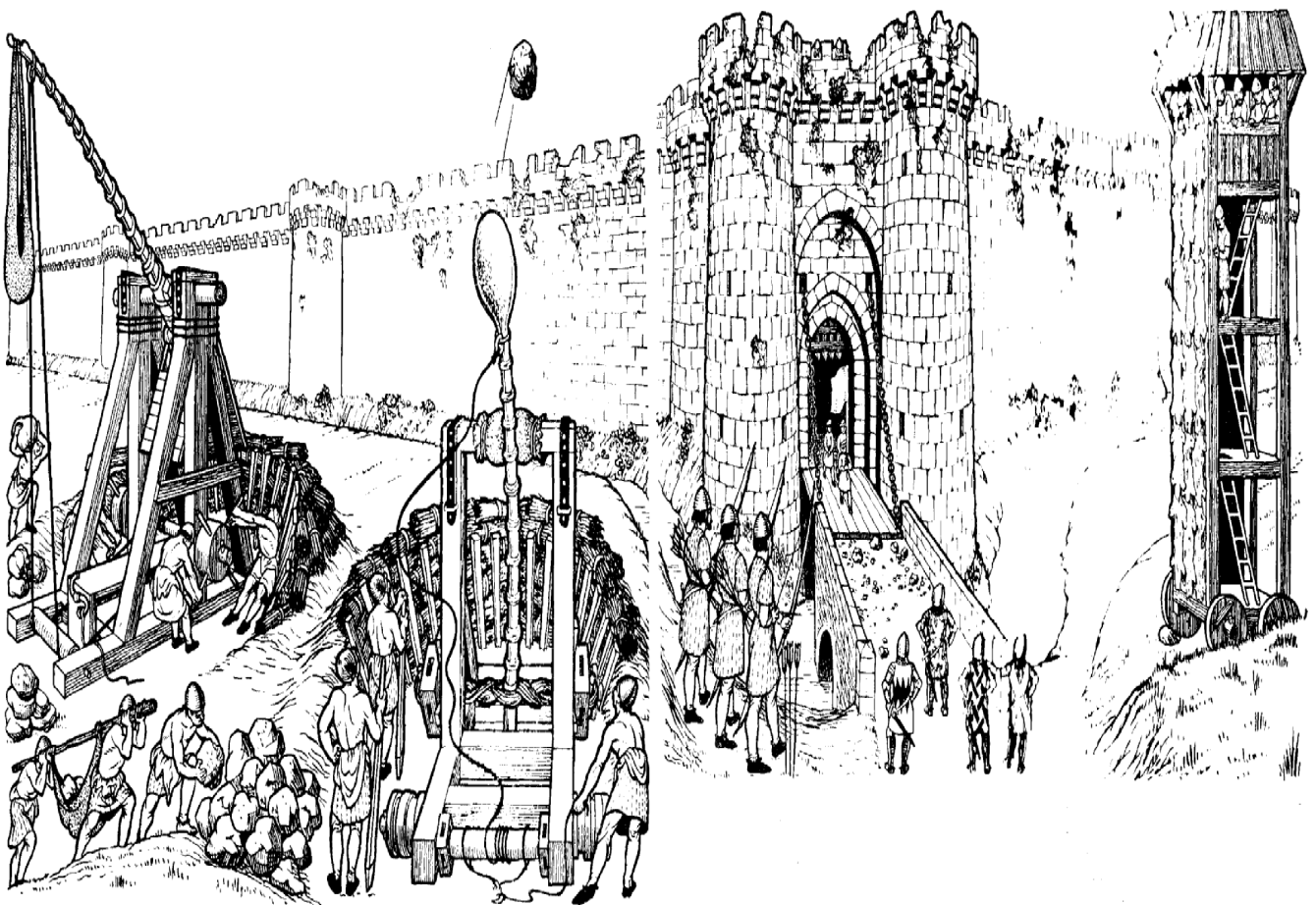
After Crécy, Edward realised that his army was not big enough to follow a lengthy campaign. He marched to the coast and laid siege to Calais. Calais was an important port and had been home to many of the pirates who were harassing English ships in the Channel.

The siege lasted from **Sept 4th 1346 to Aug. 4th 1347** during which time Edward had supplies and reinforcements shipped in from England. Philip VI tried to cause a diversion by supporting a rebellion in Scotland, but David Bruce was captured at the Battle of Neville's Cross and the plan failed. Philip failed in his attempts to help Calais and the inhabitants were reduced to eating cats and dogs.

The English troops were getting restless and the fleet was threatening to mutiny. Finally Calais starved into surrender on the 4th August, 1347. Apparently at the finish, six of the leading citizens came to Edward with ropes around their necks ready for execution. They brought with them the keys to the town. Edward was about to execute them when Queen Philippa intervened and Edward reluctantly spared their lives.

The capture of Calais gave the English control of the Channel Straits and made Calais the central market for English wool. English people were invited to live in Calais by Edward and it remained in English hands until 1558.

Tired and with the threat of the Black Death looming, Edward made a truce with Philip VI and returned to England to enjoy his triumph.



## 11. Free Companies

Despite the truce of 1347, there were still bands of mercenary soldiers who remained in France. The bands were made up of many nationalities, English, French, Swiss Genoese and Spanish. On each side these ruthless mercenaries made a living by robbery and violence. They stole food, raided houses for valuables, attacked castles, towns and villages and held hostages for ransom. They were quite happy to kill anyone who opposed them. These 'free companies' operated throughout the war even when there were truces. They were not merely hooligan bands, but were often led by respectable barons who fought not only for loot but adventure and for whom war was a sport. They were soldiers of fortune. Among the famous leaders was Bertrand du Guesclin. Even when war was going on these mercenaries sold their services to various princes and dukes. These hired soldiers, often greedy, brutal, and undisciplined, were capable of deserting on the eve of battle, betraying their patrons, and plundering civilians. Much of their mutinous behaviour was the result of their employer's unwillingness or inability to pay for their services. When rigid discipline, sustained by prompt payment, was enforced (as in the army of Maurice of Nassau), mercenaries could prove to be effective soldiers.

## 12. The Jacquerie. 1356-1358

Named after Jacques Bonhomme the popular name for a French peasant. The humiliating defeat at Poitiers was the last straw for many French people. They had been taxed heavily to finance the war and much of their property and land had been looted and destroyed. This was a revolt by French peasants and angry Parisians against the poor leadership and government of France. They plundered and looted villages and towns, killing and raping indiscriminately. The rebellion was particularly savage in May 1358 but was eventually crushed by French overlords in June 1358.

## 13. Treaty of Brétigny. 1360

Edward and John met and it was agreed that Edward should obtain

- The Duchy of Aquitaine
- The port of Calais

but on condition that he should give up his claim to the throne of France.

#### 14. First Period of English Decline. 1360-1375

The English power began to decline because:

- The Black Prince decided to heavily tax the barons of Aquitaine to pay for the war in Spain. They refused to accept the rule of Edward III and rebelled against him.
- Edward III was becoming an old, senile man and was no match for the new and able French King Charles V
- Charles V appointed Bertrand du Guesclin as his general. He was to prove to be one of the most brilliant military figures in the history of medieval warfare.
- Du Guesclin's plan was to avoid pitched battles with the English. He realised from the lessons learnt at Crécy and Poitiers that the Longbow was only effective if used in a defensive formation. He decided to let the English wear themselves out marching across France chasing the enemy and tire themselves laying siege to castles. Bit by bit Du Guesclin regained territories lost to the English.
- In 1372, the English fleet was destroyed at the battle of La Rochelle and therefore lost command of the seas.
- French angered by the massacre at Limoges in 1370. (Black Prince)
- The Black Prince caught dysentery whilst fighting in Spain in 1372. He had to return home and died in 1376.
- John of Gaunt took over from the Black Prince, but with little success. The English troops were not being paid and were becoming dispirited and in England people were beginning to grow weary of paying taxes to finance a war that England appeared to be losing. The feuding that was to result in the Wars of the Roses was beginning to show its ugly head.

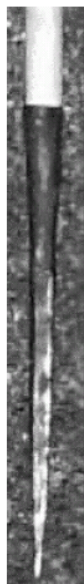
Finally in 1375, Edward III signed the Treaty of Bruges. Only Calais, Bayonne and Bordeaux remained in English hands.

## 15. Longbow v Crossbow

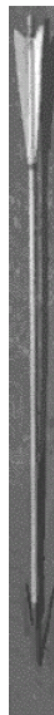
	LONGBOW	CROSSBOW
Popularity	England and Wales	Europe particularly the Genosese
Accuracy	Only at short range. Fired from chest/shoulder and not sighted by eye. Relied on mass attack at longer distance (blotting out the sun with a hailstorm of arrows)	Easier to aim than longbows because the crossbowman doesn't have to use a hand to hold the string back while aiming
Range	A heavy arrow cut through armour with equal efficiency at medium ranges of 150-300 metres. Each archer would have carried a few selected light arrows for shooting at extreme ranges and could probably have reached 500 metres with these. Archer tired during long spells of shooting.	Most powerful crossbows could penetrate armour and kill at 200 metres. However, his volume of fire was not as limited by fatigue as with longbow.
Firing rate	10-12 per minute. Behind palisade of stakes, safe from cavalry attack.	3 per minute. In open field vulnerable to attack from cavalry
Reliability and maintenance	Bow strings frayed, but easily replaced. Often kept in cover when not used. Spare strings kept. Bow and strings protected with wax and oil.	Mechanism prone to jamming. Not easily repaired. Rusted in damp conditions.
Archers	Trained professionals. Trained from early age and therefore difficult to replace. Became expensive to employ. Required enormous upper body strength.	Easier to train in use. Anybody could be trained.
Readiness	Could not be pre loaded, string had to be pulled back. Bow string detached when not in use.	Can be loaded long before the Bowman might need to fire. In this way, the Bowman would be able to fire immediately if surprised.
Cost	Relatively cheap	Expensive.
Effects on Archer	Skeletal deformations caused by the stresses of archery: the bones of his left forearm showed compression thickening, his upper backbone was twisted radially, and the tips of the first three fingers of his right hand were markedly thickened.	None apparent.
Misc	Of little use to enemy if it fell into their hands	Could be used by enemy
Weight	Lightweight and easy to carry	Heavy.



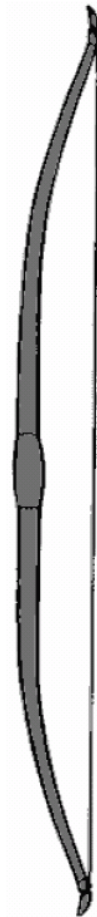
Sheaf Arrow



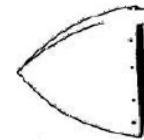
Bodkin (Armour Piercing)



Arrow



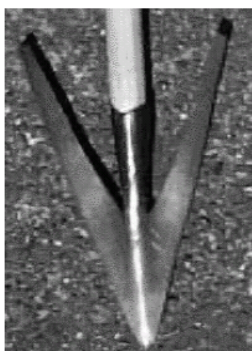
Longbow



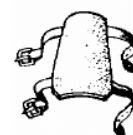
Helmet



Dagger



Hunting arrow



Bracer

## 16. The Longbow

In 1188 William de Braose, an English knight fighting the Welsh, reported that an arrow had penetrated his chain mail and clothing, passed through his thigh and saddle and finally entered his horse. The English now realised that even mail-clad knights were not safe from the power of the longbow. The longbow was soon adopted by the English army. This was one of the weapons used by the English Infantry from the reign of Edward I until the Tudor period. It enabled the English to win the victories at the Battles of Falkirk (1297), Halidon Hill (1333), both against the Scots; and Sluys (1340), Crécy (1346), Poitiers (1356), and Agincourt (1415) against the French.

The bow stave was made of **yew** and measured **6 feet** and had an average range of **250 metres** and could pierce the armour of mounted knights. It could pierce a 5 inch thick plank of oak at 100 metres. A good longbowman could fire 12 arrows in a minute compared to 3 shafts from a crossbow.

Although not as lethal as a crossbow it was more accurate. At ranges up to 55 metres the arrow flew straight, and the heavier type known as a 'sheaf arrow' was used, which gave better penetration. At longer ranges a 'flight arrow' was used. This meant that the longbowmen could fire volley after volley of arrows onto the enemy, often with devastating effects. They were particularly effective from a defensive role, firing on charging cavalry.

**Bow-strings** were made of **flax or hemp** and waterproofed with **beeswax**. Each **arrow** was just under a metre long, were made from **deal or ash**. The feather was plucked from the feathers of geese and then coloured. The tip was made from iron. The arrows were carried in a waterproof, **leather quiver** that held 24 arrows, (a sheaf). Bowmen used a mixture of wax, resin and tallow to coat their bows.

Bowmen would often ride a pony to the battlefield and then dismount. Along with their archer equipment they carried a shield and a sturdy wooden post with a reinforced metal tip. Just before battle the archers hammered these posts into the ground with the sharp metal point facing at a 45° angle towards the enemy. They carried a long handled mallet for this job. The archers then positioned themselves behind their shield. From behind this deadly barricade the bowmen were protected from charging cavalry. Many preferred to strip themselves to the waist before the action started.

The archer's fingers were protected from being damaged by the bow-string, by a leather guard called a **tab** and his wrist by a **bracer**. On his head he wore a metal helmet with a leather cap inside.

An archer required years of training in order to use the longbow to its greatest effect. Practice was carried out firing at a butt. In fact, archery was made a compulsory sport by law. In an attempt to make the English the best longbowmen in the world, a law was passed ordering all men earning less than 100 pence a year to own a longbow. Every village had to arrange for a space to be set aside for men to practice using their longbows. Every Sunday, after church, all men between 16 and 60 had to practise. In 1314, Edward II became concerned by reports that young people were more interested in playing a new game called football than practising archery. King Edward's answer to this problem was to ban football in England.

The longbow continued to be a popular weapon for the English army until Tudor times, when the development of firearms (muskets and pistols) and artillery made the longbow obsolete. Although far superior to early firearms in its accuracy and rate of fire, the shortage of trained archers and the expense of employing archers, forced the English armies to abandon the longbows. The longbow was really only effective in a defensive role and was of limited value in attacking. The development of firearms gave more flexibility to military tacticians. However, it wasn't until the American Civil War in the 1860's that a rifle with the same killing range as the Longbow was developed. The French so feared the longbow that if an archer was captured he had his arrow fingers cut off. Before battles, in defiance, English archers used to put up two fingers to the French, the origin of the infamous 'V' sign.

## 17. Staff Weapons - Polearms

With the development of archery, cavalry charges became pretty pointless and so men at arms fought on foot. Therefore new weapons were needed - long handled weapons came in to use - two handed swords, partisans, halberds, glaives and the pole-axe as well as the pike. The pikes were about 16 feet long and, used in ranks or blocks of men, they kept the enemy at bay.



Bill Hook



Gisarme



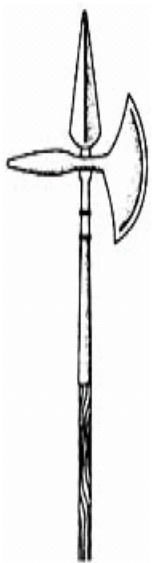
Glaive



Halberd



Holy Water Sprinkler



Poleaxe



Partisan



War-scythe



War-axe



Fork



Sword

## 18. The Crossbow

The crossbow needed less strength, skill and training. The crossbow was also more expensive to produce than the longbow and was therefore never going to become a national weapon. It was chiefly the weapon of the mercenary soldier. It was made of yew, and whalebone and later of steel. The bow was pulled back using a series of cogs and pulleys. Crossbows fired 45cm bolts or quarrels unlike the 90cm longbow arrow. The crossbowman could aim straight at his target, sighting with his eye, and had the advantage of being able to preload his weapon and release it quickly with a trigger. However, the slow rate of fire (three per minute) and its weight were major problems. A longbowman could shoot four arrows in the time a crossbowman could fire one! Crossbowmen took to wearing a large shield called a **parvis** on his back. When he had fired, he turned his back to his enemy to reload. The wounds the crossbow inflicted were so severe that the Lateran Council of 1139 outlawed it, as a barbarous invention. The crossbow and its relatives such as the arbalest were prone to jamming and the mechanism often broke. However, the coming of the longbow did lead to improvements in the design of the crossbow, namely the arbalest. Until gunpowder appeared, crossbowmen were as important in continental warfare as the longbowmen were to England.

Type of Weapon	Draw weight	Bolt weight	Speed of bolt
Longbow	68 lbs.	2.5 oz	133.7 fps
Crossbow	740 lbs	1.25 oz.	138.7 fps



Crossbows

