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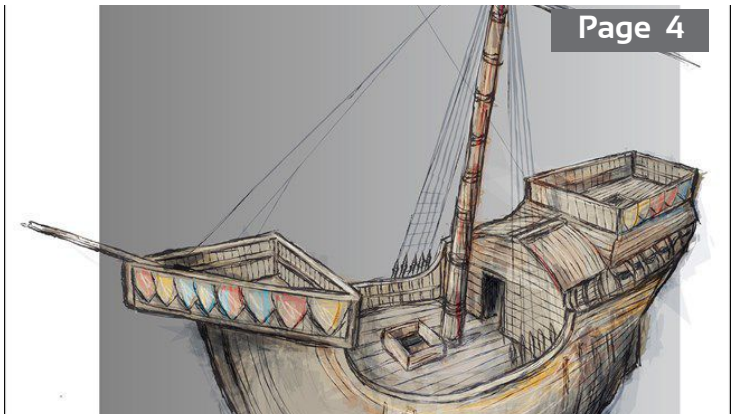

Has one of Henry V's warships been discovered?

Researchers believe they mjght have found rhe remains of a 15th century English ship from the lfeet of Henry V

A Medieval Love Letter

'I pray you, my own sweet cousin even as you love me, to be happy and to eat your meat like a woman.'

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THE MEDIEVAL MAGAZINE

Edited by:
Peter Konieczny and Sandra Alvarez

Website: **www.medievalists.net**

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Cover Photo: The Battle of Agincourt, depicted in *Vigiles du roi Charles VII de Martial d'Auvergne* (15th century)

Has one of Henry V's warships been discovered?

Historic England is taking steps to protect and investigate a shipwreck in Hampshire that is believed to be the second of four 'great ships' built for Henry V's royal fleet.

Experts from Historic England believe the wreck that lies buried in mud in the River Hamble near Southampton, is the *Holigost* (Holy Ghost). The *Holigost* was a major part of Henry V's war machine, playing a key role in the two battles that broke French naval power and enabled Henry to conquer France in the early 15th century.

The *Holigost* joined the royal fleet on 17 November 1415 and took part in operations between 1416 and 1420, including two of the most significant naval battles of the Hundred Years War. It served as the flagship of the Duke of Bedford at the battle of Harfleur in 1416, suffering serious damage, and was in the thick of the fighting off the Chef de Caux in 1417.

It was rebuilt from a large Spanish ship called the Santa Clara that was captured in late 1413 or early 1414, then acquired by the English Crown. The name of the ship is derived from Henry V's personal devotion to the Holy Trinity.

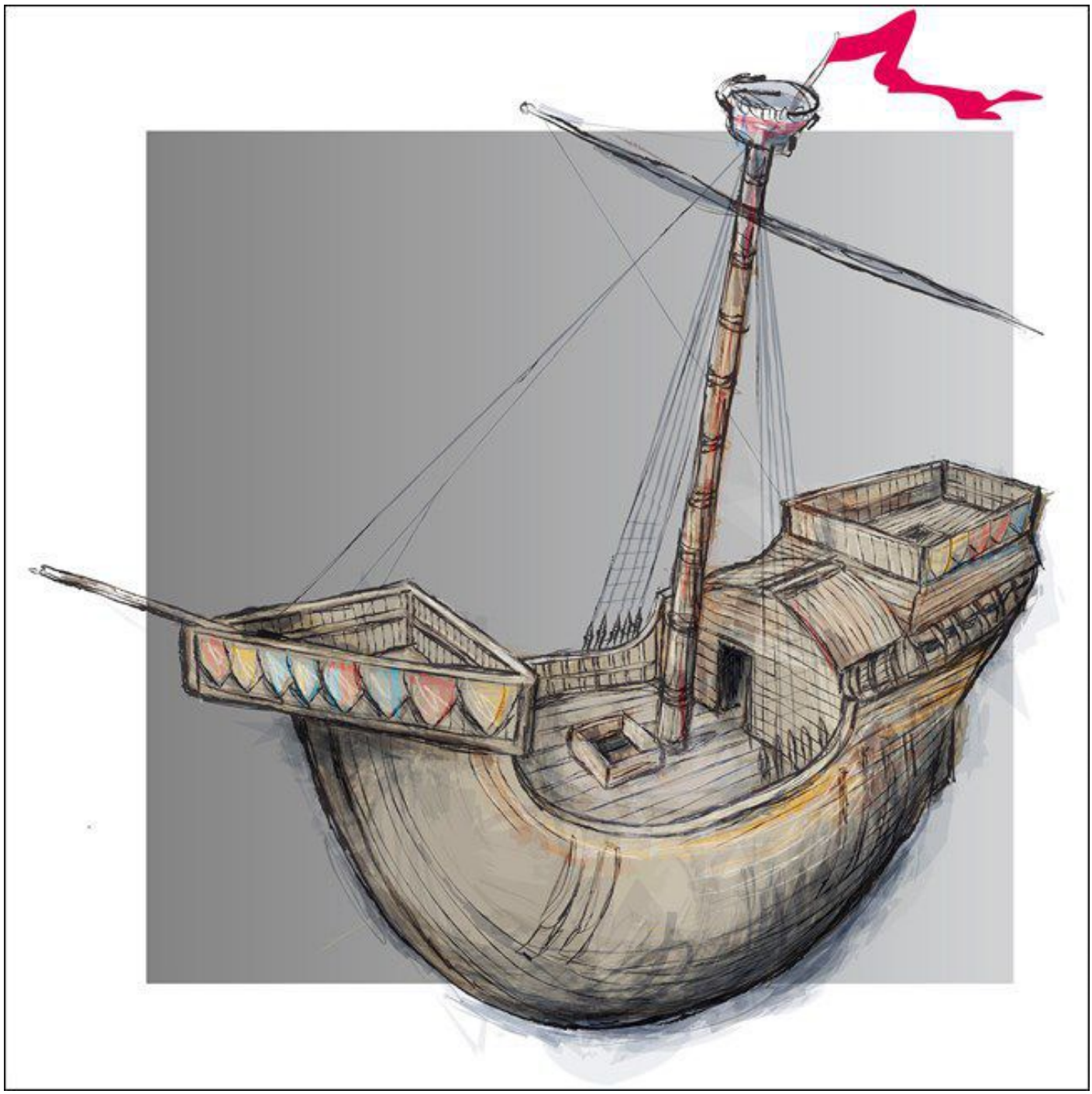
The find was made by Dr Ian Friel, historian and an expert adviser to Historic England when he worked for the former Archaeological Research Centre. He was re-visiting documentary evidence for his new book, *Henry V's Navy* and brought his findings to Historic England.

Friel's new book, *Henry V's Navy,* is published this month by The History Press,. It looks at the men, ships and operations of Henry's sea war, and tells the dramatic and bloody story of the naval conflict, which at times came close to humiliating defeat for the English.

Friel said: "I am utterly delighted that Historic England is assessing the site for protection and undertaking further study. In my opinion, further research leading to the rediscovery of the *Holigost* would be even more important than the identification of the *Grace Dieu* in the 1930s. The Holigost fought in two of the most significant naval battles of the Hundred Years War, battles that opened the way for the English conquest of northern France."

Duncan Wilson, Chief Executive of Historic England, which is now beginning further research and assessing the boat for protection said: "The Battle of Agincourt is one of those historic events that has acquired huge national significance.

"To investigate a ship from this period close to the six hundredth anniversary is immensely exciting. It holds the possibility of fascinating revelations in the months and years to come. Historic England is committed to realising the full potential of the find."



Artist's impression of the 'Holigost' © Historic England

The ship had a crew of 200 sailors in 1416, but also carried large numbers of soldiers to war, as many as 240 in one patrol. Conditions aboard must have been crowded and unpleasant, and that was before they got into battle.

The ship carried seven cannon (guns were not so important in sea war then), but also bows and arrows, poleaxes and spears, along with 102 'gads' - fearsome iron spears thrown from the topcastle that could easily penetrate the body armour of the period.
If verified, the *Holigost* would be a tangible link with the life and times of Henry V. Like all the great ships, it was built to further Henry's war aims, but its decoration and flags also reflected both his personal religious devotion and his political ideas. Unusually, this included a French motto Une sanz pluis, 'One and no more', which meant that the king alone should be master.

The ship was a clinker-built (using overlapping planks of timber) of around 740-760 tons. Despite huge expenditure on maintenance work, the Holigost began to succumb to leaks and timber decay.

maintenance work, the *Holigost* began to succumb to leaks and timber decay.

In 1423 a 'dyver' named Davy Owen, probably a Welshman, was employed to dive under the ship to stop up cracks, perhaps, the earliest-known instance in England of a diver being used in ship repair.

Future scientific research on the ship could reveal much about late medieval ship design and construction, both in England and Spain. The wreck might also improve current understanding of life aboard ship, ship-handling and naval warfare in the 15th century.

Given the care with which the ship was laid up, the site itself might also preserve information about contemporary dock-building and docking practices. Historic England experts use a range of research methods, including sonar, remote sensing including aerial imaging using drones, and dendrochronology.

The remains of the largest of the four ships, the *Grace Dieu*, were identified in the river Hamble in the 1930s and have been protected since 1974.

Dr Friel first spotted the wreck site on an English Heritage aerial photograph of the Bursledon stretch of the river Hamble when he worked in the former Archaeological Research Centre (ARC) at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

He made the connection with documentary evidence that Henry V's *Holigost* had been laid up there. Subsequent probing of the site by ARC revealed the presence of a solid object under the mud of the river Hamble in Hampshire, but no further work was undertaken.

Dr Friel has included the air photo in his new book, *Henry V's Navy* and brought the site to the attention of Historic England. Historic England has moved to protect the ship and will soon begin further research.

The *Holigost*

Tonnage (burden): 760 tons

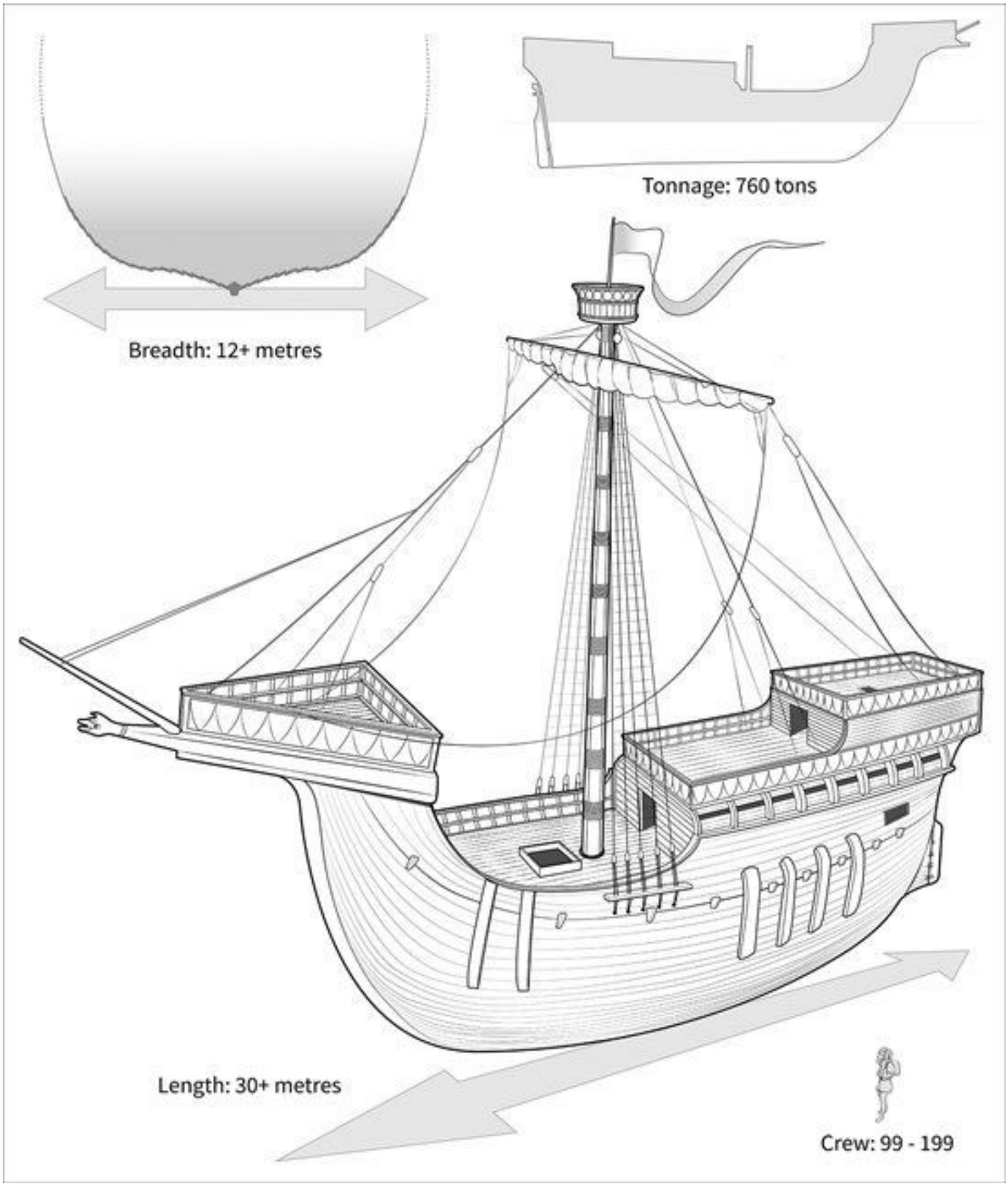
No of masts: 1

Crew size: 99-199

Origin: originally the Santa Clara [Saint Claire - of Assisi, an Italian Saint and early follower of Saint Francis of Assisi], a ship belonging to the Queen of Spain; captured late 1413/early 1414 by one of William Soper's ships [Soper was one of Henry V's key admin men]; rebuilt 1414-15 as the Holigost

Disposal: docked at Burseldon (Hamble) in 1426; last mentioned in records 1447-52

Summary: only ever used in war operations; participated in Earl of Dorset's expedition to the Seine (1416), the battles of 1416 (off Harfleur) and 1417 (in the Bay of the Seine) (the ship was damaged in both), and the Earl of Devon's seakeeping voyage of 1420. Varying tonnage figures due to the addition of upperworks for specific expeditions.



Technical drawing reconstructing the 'Holigost' © Historic England

History wars: archaeologists battle to save our heritage from the nighthawks

By Mark Horton

Like grave-robbers, they come at the dead of night, wearing camouflage and dark clothes to avoid detection. Armed with increasingly powerful metal detectors, they work their way across the fields, digging holes wherever they find a target. Landowners wake to find their crops trashed and dotted with holes. Nobody can ever know what they found, as any artefacts are rapidly sold through online auctions or smuggled out of the country. They are called nighthawks – and they are the bane of archaeologists across the country.

The English landscape is filled with ancient sites – from prehistoric forts and barrows, to Roman towns and villas, medieval villages and industrial remains. Each archaeological site has a unique story to tell and will often contain buried artefacts that help us to understand our history. Around 37,000 of these sites have been identified as ancient monuments: protected from development and treasure hunters.

For many years, archaeologists have been deeply divided on the subject of metal detecting. Some see detectorists as an army of keen amateurs, who go brave all weathers in the hope that one day, they will strike lucky. Provided that they work within the law and with the permission of landowners, they are generally seen as harmless, even beneficial.

Detectorists are encouraged to report their finds to the **Portable Antiquities Scheme** – a massive recording operation run through the British Museum – which maintains a database of every item that has been reported. The website contains pictures of more than 1m objects, based on more than 700,000 records. This huge amount of data has helped archaeologists to find new sites and to better understand little-known periods of our history as represented by artefacts, rather than buildings and physical remains. Some suspect that this is just the tip of the iceberg of the many important finds that have been made – possibly **as many as 4m** – in recent years.

But there is a dark side to this seemingly harmless hobby. A small minority of treasure hunters try to evade permissions and go onto well-known, protected sites, wielding powerful metal detectors with the intention of stealing valuable artefacts.

England and Wales are unusual in that metal detecting is legal, provided that detectorists avoid ancient monuments and declare any treasure (defined as gold and silver or prehistoric metalwork) to the Coroner. In Scotland and Northern Ireland, detectorists must obtain a licence to search anywhere, while in most of continental Europe, metal

while in most of continental Europe, metal detecting is a crime.

The rather more liberal approach taken in this country means that we now know about many more sites than archaeologists alone could have discovered. But it also means we have a serious problem with looting which, until now, authorities have largely failed to face up to: police often neglected to prosecute and magistrates were reluctant to convict. In the past, the ambiguous legal position on heritage crime has often allowed those arrested to plead ignorance, by claiming they didn't realise that the site was protected, or that they even needed permission.

Caught in the act

In a joint investigation between the University of Bristol and the BBC, we set out to discover just how prevalent night-hawking is. Fortunately, we now have new motion sensing, infrared camera traps, which can film at night time without artificial lighting – a technology largely developed for wildlife photography.

We set up six of these cameras around a well-known Roman settlement and protected ancient monument in the Cotswolds, and retired for a week to see what we might capture. There were, of course, several deer and foxes, but to our amazement our cameras also caught the full details of a night-hawking operation.

The group arrived at 10.30pm, wearing full camouflage and beanie hats, and armed with powerful metal detectors. They stayed for around four hours, and we filmed them scanning the fields and digging holes across the site. A getaway car finally picked them up at 2am. We have no idea if they found anything significant or not but they were clearly equipped with the intention of looting, just as a burglar with a crowbar is equipped to steal. The investigation aired on Inside Out West, and you can view the whole episode on **BBC iPlayer**.

Infrared cameras catch a nighthawk in action. BBC/University of Bristol, Author provided

Coincidentally, around the time of our investigation, the Sentencing Council – which produces independent guidelines on sentencing for the judiciary – revised its recommendations on heritage crime. Now, night-hawking is classed as an aggravated harm, along with stealing from war memorials and stripping church roofs.

We hope that stiffer sentences will deter the nighthawks, and that new technologies will make it much easier to collect evidence of wrongdoing. Now, for the first time, it looks like we might just have the tools we need to defeat the nighthawks, and save our heritage for future generations.

~ Mark Horton is Professor in Archaeology, University of Bristol

This article was originally published in ***The Conversation***

New Edinburgh Castle rock trap to be installed

Edinburgh Castle is to have a new, permanent wall and rock trap installed. The new installation, which is being taken forward by new heritage body Historic Environment Scotland, in collaboration with the city of Edinburgh Council, will replace a temporary barrier installed in mid-2013 and follows a public consultation exercise.

The new structure will consist of a 1 metre high stone boundary wall with 1.5 metre high metal railings on top. The current structure is 3 metres high but the loss in height is compensated for by increasing the wall's distance from the base of the rock, creating a rock trap and gravel blanket at the base of the castle.

The work began last week and is due to be completed in March 2016.

Barbara Cummins, Director of Heritage Management for Historic Environment Scotland, who manage Edinburgh Castle said: "It's important that the public are assured that we have no immediate concerns regarding the rock face, however as impenetrable as the castle rock might appear, it's not immune to the effects of the weather. The constant freeze and thaw during the winter months can open up cracks in the rock face, which then allows a plant known as valerian to take root. Once this germinates the bulb expands and, over long periods of time, this process can cause rocks to fracture and fall.

"At the moment we have a temporary structure in place which offers significant protection, and we supplement that by having our highly trained staff abseil down the rock on a regular basis to carefully remove loose fragments from the surface. Whilst these measures help to minimise the risk of rock falls, the regular monitoring and scaling is time consuming and ultimately disruptive to visitors to the castle and drivers on Johnston Terrace, which has to be closed whilst work is being carried out. The new rock trap will enhance our current risk control arrangements and reduce disruption in the process."

A traffic management plan has been agreed with the City of Edinburgh Council and will be in place for the duration of the project.

A Medieval Love Letter (and eat your meat)

This medieval letter has been called "one of the most charming of all private letters of the time that have survived." It was written on June 1, 1476, by Thomas Betson to Katherine Riche. Thomas was in his mid-30s and worked as a wool merchant in Calais. Katherine was the 13 or 14 year old step-daughter of William Stonor, Thomas' business partner. A couple of months earlier Thomas had written to William in which he indicates that he was planning to marry Katherine. Now, in this letter, we get a very personal correspondence, along with some pleading from Thomas that his fiancée needs to eat more meat:

Mine own heartily beloved Cousin Katherine, I recommend me unto you with all the inwardness of my heart. And now lately ye shall understand that I received a token from you, the which was and is to me right heartily welcome, and with glad will I receive it; and over that I had a letter from Holake, your gentle squire, by the which I understand right well that ye be in good health of body, and merry at heart.

And I pray God heartily in his pleasure to continue the same: for it is to me very great comfort that he so be, so help me Jesus. And if ye would be a good eater of your meat always, that ye might wax and grow fast to be a woman ye should make me the gladdest man of the world, by my troth; for when I remember your favour and your sad loving dealing to me towards me, forsooth you make me very glad and joyous in heart; and on the other side again, when I remember your youth, and see well that you are not eater of your meat, which would help you greatly to grow, forsooth then you make me very heavy again. And therefore I pray you, my own sweet cousin even as you love me, to be happy and to eat your meat like a woman. And if you do so for my love, look what you will desire of me, whatsoever it may be, and by my troth I promise you by the help of our Lord to perform it to my power.

I can say no more say now but, on my coming home I will tell you much between you and me and God before. And whereas ye, full womanly and like a lover, remember me with manifold recommendation in divers manners, remitting the same to my discretion to depart them there as I love best, forsooth, my own sweet cousin, you shall understand that with good heart and good will I receive and take to myself the one half of them and then will I keep by me; and the other half with heatedly love and favour I send it to

Codex Manesse, UB Heidelberg, Cod. Pal. germ. 848, fol. 32v

will I keep by me; and the other half with heatedly love and favour I send it to you, my own sweet cousin, again, for to keep by you; and over that I send you the blessing of our Lady gave her dear son and ever well to fare.

I pray you greet me with well my horse and pray him to give you four of his years to help you withal; and I will at my coming home give him four of my years and four horse loaves till amends. Tell him that I prayed him so. And cousin Katherine, I thank you for him, and my wife shall thank you for him hereafter; for you do great cost upon him, as is told me.

My own sweet cousin, it was told me but lately that you were at Calais to seek me, but could not see me nor find me, forsooth you might have come to my counter, and there she you should both find me and see me, and not have faulted of me; but you sought me in the wrong Calais, and that you should well know if you were here and saw this Calais, and would God ye were at some of them with you that were with you at your gentle Calais. I pray you, gentle cousin, commend me to the clock, and pray him to amend his unthrifty matters; for he strikes even in undue time, and he will ever afore, and that is a shrewd condition. Tell him without he meant his condition that he will cause strangers to avoid and come no more there. I trust to you that he shall amend again against my coming, which shall be shortly, with all hands and all feet, with God's grace.

My very faithful cousin, I trust to you that though I have not remembered my right worshipful mistress your mother previously in this letter, you will of your gentleness recommend me to her mistress-ship as many times as it shall please you; and you may say, if it please you that in next Whitsun week I intend to go to the mart. And I trust you will pray for me and, so be it, none so well, And Almighty Jesus make you a good woman, and send you many good years and long life and health and virtue to His pleasure.

Written at Calais on the side of the see, the first of June, when every man who was gone to his dinner, and the clock struck noon, and all our household cried after me and bade me come down: "Come down to dinner at once!"; and what answers I gave them you know it of old.

By your faithful cousin and lover Thomas Betson.

I send you this ring for a token.

May this letter be delivered in haste to my faithful and heartily beloved Cousin Katherine Ryche at Stonor.

Here is how the letter was written in Middle English:

My nowne hartely belovid Cossen Kateryn, I recomande me unto yow withe all the inwardnesse of myn hart. And now lately ye shall understond þat I resseyvid a token ffrom you, the which was and is to me right hartely welcom, and with glad will I resseyvid it; and over that I had a letter ffrom Holake, youre gentyll Sqwyer, by the which I understond right well þat ye be in good helth off body, and mery at hart.

And I pray God hartely to his plesour to contenew the same: ffor it is to me veray grete comfforth þat ye so be, so helpe me Jhesu. And yff ye wold be a good etter off your mete allwaye, that ye myght waxe and grow ffast to be a woman, ye shuld make me the gladdest man off the world, be my trouth: ffor whanne I remembre your ffavour and your sadde loffynge delynge to me wardes, ffor south ye make me evene veray glade and joyus in my hart: and on the toþersyde agayn whanne I remembre your yonge youthe. And seeth well that ye be none eteter off youre mete, the which shuld helpe you greately in waxynge; ffor south þan ye make me veray hevy agayn. And therffore I praye you, myn nown swete Cossen, evene as you loffe me to be mery and to eate your mete lyke a woman. And yff ye so will do ffor my loveff, looke what ye will desyre off me, whatsomever it be, and be my trouth I promesse you by the helpe of our Lord to perfforme it to my power. I can no more say now, but at my comyng home I will tell you mych more betwene you and me and God beffore. And where as ye, ffull womanly and lyke a loffer, remembre me with manyffolde re|comendacion in dyversse maners, remyttynge the same to my discresscion to depart them þer as I loveff best, ffor south, myn nown swete Cossen, ye shall understond þat with good hart and good will I resseyve and take to my self the one halff off them, and them will I kepe by me; and the toþer halff with hartely loveff and ffavour.

I send hem to you, myn nown swete Cossen, agayn, ffor to kepe by you: and over that I send you the blissynge þat our Lady gaveffe hir dere sonne, and ever well to ffare. I pray you grete well my horsse, and praye hym to gyffe yow iiij off his yeres to helpe you with all: and I will at my comynge home gyff hym iiij off my yeres and iiij horsse lofes till amendes. Tell hym þat I prayed hym so. And Cossen Kateryn I þannke you ffor hym, and my wiff shall þanke you ffor hym hereafter; ffor ye do grete cost apon hym as it is told me.

Myn nown swete Cossen, it was told me but late þat ye were at Cales to seeke me, but ye cowde not se me nor ffynde me: ffor south ye myght have comen to my counter, and þer ye shuld bothe ffynde me and see me, and not have ffawtid off me: but ye sought me in a wronge Cales, and þat ye shuld well know yff ye were here and saw this Cales, as wold God ye were and som off them with you þat were with you at your gentill Cales. I praye you, gentill Cossen, comaunde me to the Cloke, and pray hym to amend his unthryffte maners: ffor he strykes ever in undew tyme, and he will be ever affore, and that is a shrewde condiscion. Tell hym with owte he amend his condiscion that he will cause strangers to advoide and come no more there. I trust to you that he shall amend agaynest myn commynge, the which shalbe shortely with all hanndes and all ffeete with Godes grace. My veray ffei theffull Cossen, I trust to you þat thowe all I have not remembred my right worshipfull maystres your modyr affore in this letter þat ye will

Godes grace. My veray ffei theffull Cossen, I trust to you þat thowe all I have not remembred my right worshipfull maystres your modyr affore in this letter þat ye will off your gentilnesse recomaunde me to her maystresshipe as many tymes as it shall ples you: and ye may say, yff it plese you, that in Wytson Weke next I intend to þe marte ward. And I trust you will praye ffor me: ffor I shall praye ffor you, and, so it may be, none so well.

And Almyghty Jhesu make you a good woman, and send you many good yeres and longe to lyveffe in helth and vertu to his plesour. At greate Cales on this syde on the see, the ffyrst day off June, whanne every man was gone to his Dener, and the Cloke smote noynne, and all oure howsold cryed after me and badde me come down; come down to dener at ones! and what answer I gaveffe hem ye know it off old.

Be your ffei theffull Cossen and loffer Thomas Betson.

I sent you this rynge ffor a token.

To my ffei theffull and hartely belovid Cossen Kateryn Ryche at Stonor this letter be delyvered in hast.

Two years later Thomas and Katherine were married – and they had five children together before Thomas passed away in 1486. Although Katherine remarried afterwards, her heart seems to have remained with her first husband. When she died in 1510, she had remains laid by the side of Thomas Berton at the church of All Hallows-by-the-Tower in London.

You can read more about letter and the story of Thomas Berton in Eileen Power's book ***Medieval People***. The original letter was first published in ***The Stonor letters and papers, 1290-1483***, edited by Charles Lethbridge Kingsford.

Why was the Longbow so effective?

By Danièle Cybulskie

One of the most feared military weapons of the Middle Ages was the longbow, used to legendary effect by the English in The Hundred Years' War. While the longbow has gone down in history as a mighty weapon, what exactly was it and why was it so effective?

A longbow was typically about 6 feet long (two ells), meaning it could be as tall as – or taller than – a medieval man. It seems to have been generally agreed that the best wood for a long-lasting and effective longbow was yew, and there are records of yew bows being imported from Spain and Ireland to supplement the English's own yew bows (Wadge, 2012). Alternatively, good bows could be made out of wych elm, and lesser bows from basically any kind of wood. The best bows contained a combination of outer wood and heartwood, to give them both strength and flexibility (Wadge, 2012). Given their size, unstrung longbows were heavy enough to be effective bludgeoning weapons on their own. Bowstrings were made from hemp or flax (Wadge, 2012), and were strung by the archer before use (keeping a bow strung all the time damages it). Extra strings were part of an archer's normal kit.

Medieval arrows were made of light wood – ash seems to have been preferred – with steel or iron heads (Roth, 2012). They were fletched with a variety of feathers from goose to swan (even peacock!) attached by either glue, birch tar, or wax and string (Roth, 2012). In *With a Bended Bow: Archery in Medieval and Renaissance Europe*, Erik Roth says medieval people generally preferred three feathers per arrow for most purposes, as we do today.

Given the length, design, and wood of the bows, historians estimate that longbows had a draw weight of around 100 lbs (Wadge, 2012) more or less, draw weight being the amount of weight it takes to pull the string to full draw. To put this in perspective, current male Olympic archers' draw weights are approximately 48 lbs. Longbows were serious weapons, and their power was immense. Arrows could penetrate chain mail with relative ease, and frequently did, making plate armour more and more necessary. A famous passage by Giraldus Cambrensis in the twelfth century mentions a Welsh arrow going through a mounted man's mailed leg and his saddle, killing his horse. Cambrensis also recounts an arrow driving through an oak door "four fingers in thickness" (Roth, 2012). Clearly, longbows were a force to be reckoned with.

hickness" (Roth, 2012). Clearly, longbows were a force to be reckoned with.

While medieval crossbows were also very powerful range weapons, longbows were cheaper, easier to make, and faster to shoot. Because of this, it was easier to outfit infantry with longbows than crossbows, although longbows required much more strength and practice to be used effectively. Modern reproductions of medieval longbows have been shown to have a range of over 250 yards (Roth, 2012), so a well-trained army of archers would have had an impressive range to go with their rapid firing.

Longbows were not so effective that they replaced the major medieval tactic of a cavalry charge; rather, they were used to harass the enemy and to prevent the enemy from spreading out enough to threaten the sides or the flanks of an army. Archers could thin out the ranks of the enemy army, or kill the horses that were essential to the enemy's cavalry charge. Handily, longbows could be used on uneven terrain, and (unlike the more unwieldly halberds) to hunt game to feed the army, too. They were meant to make the bulk of the fighting a little less difficult for their own army, but no one won a war with an army of archers alone.

As far as their place in history is concerned, longbows were a major factor in the English victories at Sluys, Crecy, Poitiers, and Agincourt during The Hundred Years' War. At Sluys, longbows were used to win a decisive naval victory for the English by killing many of the French at long range. At Agincourt, archers thinned out the French army, and kept them tightly packed together, giving the rest of Henry V's army the chance to fight effectively, outnumbered though they were (Bennett, et al., 2005). While the role that longbows played in the Battle of Agincourt **has been disputed**, the longbow was definitely a significant part of medieval military strategy, especially for the English.

For everything you ever wanted to know about medieval archery, check out Richard Wadge's *Archery in Medieval England: Who Were the Bowmen of Crecy?* and Erik Roth's *With a Bended Bow: Archery in Medieval and Renaissance Europe*. Both of these are great resources, and highly recommended. For military techniques more broadly, I still love *Fighting Techniques of the Medieval World* by Matthew Bennet (et al.).

The Battle of Agincourt: Five Views

On Friday, 25 October 1415, the armies of England and France met at the Battle of Agincourt. Considered one of the most important battles of the Hundred Years War, it ended with the English vctories and thousands of French soldiers dead or captured.

Here is the story of the Battle of Agincourt from five different accounts, starting with one from the fifteenth-century. They reveal the changng view of the battle over time, and how historians have reflected on what happened on this battlefield.

The *Chronique de France* by Enguerrand de Monstrelet (d.1453)

Their archers, amounting to at least thirteen thousand, let off a shower of arrows with all their might, and as high as possible, so as not to lose their effect: they were, for the most part, without any armour, and in jackets, with their hose loose, and hatchets or swords hanging to their girdles; some indeed were barefooted and without hats. The princes with the king of England were the duke of York, his uncle, the earls of Dorset, Oxford, Suffolk, the earl marshal, the earl of Kent, the lords Cambre, Beaumont, Willoughby, sir John de Cornewall, and many other powerful barons of England.

When the French observed the English thus advance, they drew up each under his banner, with his helmet on his head: they were, at the same time, admonished by the constable, and others of the princes, to confess their sins with sincere contrition and to fight boldly against the enemy. The English loudly sounded their trumpets as they approached, and the French stooped to prevent the arrows hitting them on the visors of their helmets; thus the distance was now but small between the two armies, although the French had retired some paces. Before, however, the general attack commenced, numbers of the French were slain and severely wounded by the English bowmen. At length the English gained on them so much,

and were so close, that excepting the front line, and such as had shortened their lances, the enemy could not raise their hands against them. The division under sir Clugnet de Brabant, of eight hundred men-at-arms, who were intended to break through the English archers, were reduced to seven score, who vainly attempted it. True it is, that sir William de Saveuses, who had been also ordered on this service, quitted his troop, thinking they would follow him, to attack the English, but he was shot dead from off his horse. The others had their horses so severely handled by the archers, that, smarting from pain, they galloped on the van division and threw it into the utmost confusion, breaking the line in many places. The horses were become unmanageable, so that horses and riders were tumbling on the ground, and the whole army was thrown into disorder, and forced back on some lands that had been just sown with corn. Others, from fear of death, fled; and this caused so universal a panic in the army that great part followed the example.

The English took instant advantage of the disorder in the van division, and, throwing down their bows, fought lustily with swords, hatchets, mallets, and bill-hooks, slaying all before them. Thus they came to the second battalion that had been posted in the rear of the first; and the archers followed close king Henry and his men-at-arms. Duke Anthony of Brabant, who had just arrived in obedience to the summons of the king of France, threw himself with a small company (for, to make greater haste, he had pushed forward, leaving the main body of his men behind), between the wreck of the van and the second division; but he was instantly killed by the English, who kept advancing and slaying, without mercy, all that opposed them, and thus destroyed the main battalion as they had done the first. They were, from time to time, relieved by their varlets, who carried off the prisoners; for the English were so intent on victory, that they never attended to making prisoners, nor pursuing such as fled. The whole rear division being on horseback, witnessing the defeat of the two others, began to fly, excepting some of its principal chiefs.

David Hume's *The History of England* (1778 edition)

Had the French constable been able, either to reason justly upon the present circumstances of the two armies, or to profit by past experience, he had declined a combat, and had waited, till necessity, obliging the English to advance, had made them relinquish the advantages of their situation. But the impetuous valour of the nobility, and a vain confidence in superior numbers, brought on this fatal action, which proved the source of infinite calamities to their country. The French archers on horseback and their men at arms, crowded in their ranks, advanced upon the English archers, who had fixed pallisadoes in their front to break the impression of the enemy, and who safely plyed them, from behind that defence, with a shower of arrows, which nothing could resist. The clay soil, moistened by some rain, which had lately fallen, proved another obstacle to the force of the French cavalry: The wounded men and horses discomposed their ranks: The narrow compass, in which they were pent, hindered them from recovering any order: The whole army was a scene of confusion, terror, and dismay: And Henry, perceiving his advantage, ordered the English archers, who were light and unincumbered, to advance upon the enemy, and seize the moment of victory. They fell with their battle-axes upon the French, who, in their present posture, were incapable either of flying or of making defence: They hewed them in pieces without resistance:q And being seconded by the men at arms, who also pushed on against the enemy, they covered the field with the killed, wounded, dismounted, and overthrown. After all appearance of opposition was over, the English had leisure to make prisoners; and having advanced with

The Battle of Agincourt from Enguerrand de Monstrelet's *Chronique de France*, shown in a miniature by Master of the Prayer Books of around 1495

uninterrupted success to the open plain, they there saw the remains of the French rear guard, which still maintained the appearance of a line of battle. At the same time, they heard an alarm from behind: Some gentlemen of Picardy, having collected about 600 peasants, had fallen upon the English baggage, and were doing execution on the unarmed followers of the camp, who fled before them. Henry, seeing the enemy on all sides of him, began to entertain apprehensions from his prisoners; and he thought it necessary to issue general orders for putting them to death: But on discovering the truth, he stopped the slaughter, and was still able to save a great number.

No battle was ever more fatal to France, by the number of princes and nobility, slain or taken prisoners. Among the former were the constable himself, the count of Nevers and the duke of Brabant, brothers to the duke of Burgundy, the count of Vaudemont, brother to the duke of Lorraine, the duke of Alençon, the duke of Barre, the count of Marle. The most eminent prisoners were the dukes of Orleans and Bourbon, the counts d'Eu, Vendôme, and Richemont, and the mareschal of Boucicaut. An archbishop of Sens also was slain in this battle. The killed are computed on the whole to have amounted to ten thousand men; and as the slaughter fell chiefly upon the cavalry, it is pretended, that, of these, eight thousand were gentlemen. Henry was master of 14,000 prisoners. The person of chief note, who fell among the English, was the duke of York, who perished fighting by the king's side, and had an end more honourable than his life. He was succeeded in his honours and fortune by his nephew, son of the earl of Cambridge, executed in the beginning of the year. All the English, who were slain, exceeded not forty; though some writers, with greater probability, make the number more considerable.

The three great battles of Cressy, Poictiers, and Azincour bear a singular resemblance to each other, in their most considerable circumstances. In all of them, there appears the same temerity in the English princes, who, without any object of moment, merely for the sake of plunder, had ventured so far into the enemies' country as to leave themselves no retreat; and unless saved by the utmost imprudence in the French commanders, were, from their very situation, exposed to inevitable destruction. But allowance being made for this temerity, which, according to the irregular plans of war, followed in those ages, seems to have been, in some measure, unavoidable; there appears, in the day of action, the same presence of mind, dexterity, courage, firmness, and precaution on the part of the English: The same precipitation, confusion, and vain confidence on the part of the French: And the events were such as might have been expected from such opposite conduct. The immediate consequences too of these three great victories were similar: Instead of pushing the French with vigour, and taking advantage of their consternation, the English princes, after their victory, seem rather to have relaxed their efforts, and to have allowed the enemy leisure to recover from his losses. Henry interrupted not his march a moment after the battle of Azincour; he carried his prisoners to Calais, thence to England; he even concluded a truce with the enemy; and it was not till after an interval of two years that any body of English troops appeared in France.

Charles Oman, *The Art of War in the Middle Ages* (1885)

If subsequent campaigns had not proved that Henry V was a master of strategical combinations, we should be inclined to pronounce his march to Agincourt a rash and unjustifiable undertaking. It is, however, probable that he had taken the measure of his enemies and gauged their imbecility, before he sacrificed his communications and threw himself into Picardy.The rapidity of his movements between the 6th and 24th of October,

himself into Picardy.The rapidity of his movements between the 6th and 24th of October, 1415, shows that he had that appreciation of the value of time which was so rare among mediaeval commanders, while the perfect organization of his columns on the march proved that his genius could condescend to details. Near St. Pol the French barred Henry's further progress with a great feudal army of sixty thousand combatants, of whom full fifteen thousand were mounted men of gentle blood. Like the two Edwards at Crecy and Maupertuis, the king resolved to fight a defensive battle, in spite of the scantiness of his force. He had with him not more than fourteen thousand men, of whom two-thirds were archers. The position chosen by Henry was as excellent in its way as could be desired; it had a frontage of not more than twelve hundred yards, and was covered by woods on either flank. The land over which the enemy would have to advance consisted of ploughed fields, thoroughly sodden by a week of rain. The king's archers were sufficient in number not only to furnish a double line along the front of the army, but to occupy the woods to right and left. Those in the plain strengthened their position by planting in front of themselves the stakes which they habitually carried. In rear of the archers were disposed the rest of the force, the infantry with bills and pikes at the wings, the small force of men-at-arms in the centre....

Few commanders could have committed a more glaring series of blunders than did the Constable : but the chief fault of his design lay in attempting to attack an English army, established in a good position, at all. The power of the bow was such that not even if the fields had been dry, could the French army have succeeded in forcing the English line. The true course here, as at Poictiers, would have been to have starved the king, who was living merely on the resources of the neighbourhood, out of his position. If, however, an attack was projected, it should have been accompanied by a turning movement round the woods, and preceded by the use of all the arbalesters and archers of the army, a force which we know to have consisted of 15,000 men.

Such a day as Agincourt might have been expected to break the French noblesse of its love for an obsolete system of tactics. So intimately, however, was the feudal array bound up with the feudal scheme of society, that it yet remained the ideal order of battle. Three bloody defeats, Crevant, Verneuil, and the Day of the Herrings,' were the consequences of a fanatical adherence to the old method of fighting. On each of those occasions the French columns, sometimes composed of horsemen, sometimes of dismounted knights, made a desperate attempt to break an English line of archers by a front attack, and on each occasion they were driven back in utter rout.

John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (1976)

The period of waiting - three or four hours long, and so lasting probably from about seven to eleven o'clock - must have been very trying. Two chroniclers mention that the soldiers in the front ranks sat down and ate and drank and there was a good deal of shouting, chaffing and noisy reconciliation of old quarrels among the French. But that after they had settled, by pushing and shoving, who was to stand in the forward rank; not a real argument, one may surmise, but a process which put the grander and the braver in front of the more humble and timid. There is no mention of the English imitating them, but given their very real predicament, and their much thinner line of battle, they can have felt little need to dispute the place of honour among themselves. It is also improbable that they did much eating or drinking, for the army had been short of food for nine days and the archers are said to have been subsisting on nuts and berries on the last marches. Waiting, certainly for the English,

must have been a cold, miserable and squalid business. It had been raining, the ground was recently ploughed, air temperature was probably in the forties or low fifties Fahrenheit and many in the army were suffering from diarrhoea. Since none would presumably have been allowed to leave the ranks while the army was deployed for action, sufferers would have had to relieve themselves where they stood. For any afflicted man-at-arms wearing mail leggings laced to his plate armour, even that may not have been possible.

Anne Curry, *Agincourt* (2015)

We might ask why the French entered the trap. They had no choice once battle had been decided upon, even if Boucicaut and others knew the value of stakes as protection. They were aware of the presence of large numbers of archers, but if archers were in flanking woodland and hidden down the slopes at either side of the field, they may not have been fully apprised of the total English strength. The French tactic was to throw as large a number of men-at-arms as possible at the English men-at-arms: they had many more soldiers of this type and consider that they could overwhelm their English equivalents by sheer weight of numbers. This tactic would naturally involve the attempt to capture Henry and his leading nobles.

However, as they approached the English men-at-arms they were so damaged by the arrows that the impetus of their attack was reduced. As John Keegan notes, the French were forced to halt. That is always an extremely dangerous position in a battle. Yet their plan had not been unrealistic. They had understood the need to send cavalry against the archers to undermine their impact. Had that happened as planned, Agincourt would have been a very different battle. The narratives suggest that it proved difficult to persuade men to join the cavalry group. This implies weak authority of the commanders who had ordered a cavalry attack on the archers. The explanation must lie in the French assumption that their large foot advance would be successful and would win great gains, not simply noble prisoners but also political advantage in the capture or death of Henry.

Agincourt

Great Battles Series

By Anne Curry

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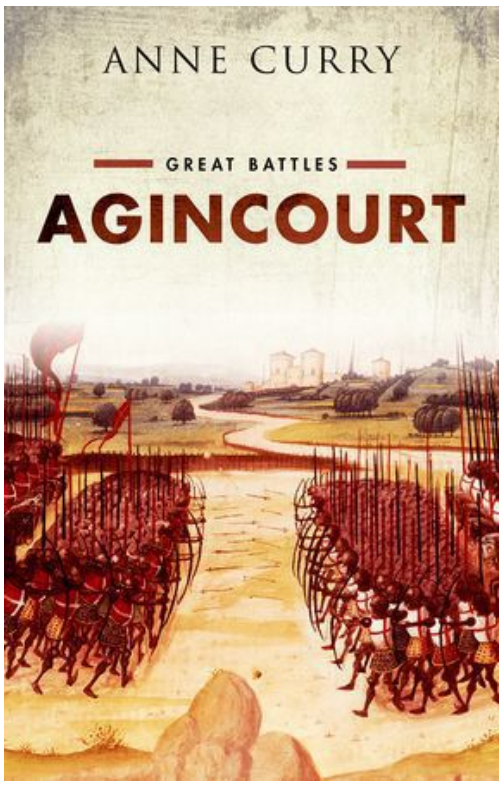
Click here to visit the publisher's website



Five Fun Facts About Medieval Archery

By Danièle Cybulskie

I recently spent some time learning all about medieval archery, and found some really interesting and odd facts to share with you. Here are five fun facts about medieval archery which you can use to impress your friends:

1. Medieval archers liked to wear decorative bracers.

As any archer will tell you, it's very handy to wear a bracer (or armguard) on the inside forearm of your bow arm for those times when your form starts to slip and the bowstring can whack you as you release. This is a very painful occurrence, and can leave a big, long-lasting bruise. Like modern archers, medieval people wore bracers, some of them very fancy indeed. Bracers could be made of leather (the most common), but also horn, silver, or even ivory, as Erik Roth notes in *With a Bended Bow: Archery in Medieval and Renaissance Europe*. These could be carved or decorated to suit the taste of the archer, or of the lord he served.

2. Some feudal agreements required the service of a badly-equipped archer.

Feudalism was centered around the basic concept that people were permitted to own land under the condition that they owed military service in return. Feudal agreements spelled out each lord's obligation to the king, often in very specific terms, and sometimes these obligations seem a little strange. For some lords, land ownership was contingent on providing an archer to the king when he requested it, either for military duties, forestry duties (like hunting with or for the visiting king), or both. In some agreements, the archer in question was to appear when summoned without working equipment. As Richard Wadge notes in *Archery in Medieval England: Who Were the Bowmen of Crecy?*, the weirdest of these is in a record from the fourteenth century: "In 1342 Hugh de Grey was recorded as having held the manor of Waterhall in Buckinghamshire for the service 'of finding a man on a horse without a saddle ... a bow without a string and an arrow without a head in his army when the king shall order'" (2012). This poor archer might have felt pretty nervous at the prospect of battle if he was ever summoned.

3. An increase in archery meant an increase in archery-related crime.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as emphasis was placed on training soldiers to be proficient in using longbows for The Hundred Years' War, perhaps a predictable outcome was the increase in crime related to archery. As Wadge notes, bows and arrows seem to have been mostly used for premeditated crimes, as "a bow has to be strung first before it is used" (Wadge, 2012), but an unstrung bow could also inflict some serious damage when wielded as a club. We also have records of bows and arrows being stolen, and of bows and arrows being used to apprehend criminals (Wadge, 2012). Everyone was being encouraged to have

Everyone used a bow and arrow in the Middle Ages ;) – from British Library MS Royal 10 E IV

Everyone was being encouraged to have these weapons around and to know how to use them; it seems that they were definitely using them, for better and for worse.

4. Medieval archers often shot barefoot.

Medieval shoes didn't have the advantage of modern rubber grips; instead, most of them were leather soled. When archers shot a bow that was the same height as they were, with a draw weight in the neighbourhood of 100 lbs, it helped to have a little bit of grip to keep the bow and the arrow steady enough for an accurate shot. There's nothing quite like bare toes to keep you hanging on. (This factoid was brought to you by *Fighting Techniques of the Medieval World*.)

5. Medieval fire arrows were pretty impressive.

In his book, Roth gets into a pretty great discussion of fire arrows, which were used to devastating effect with some regularity. After all, many medieval structures and all medieval boats were made of wood, and therefore were extremely vulnerable to fire. Roth notes that European fire arrows had arrowheads in an s-shape (in cross-section) to better hold onto thatch, and used "pitch, resin, oil or naphtha on cotton or tow" (2012). Apparently, the Muslim armies had even more impressive fire arrows which featured glass vials of naphtha at the tips that would ignite as they flew, allowing the arrows to explode in fire on contact (Roth, 2012). These must have been terrifying weapons, and the fear of every sailor.

The Last Kingdom: An Interview with Bernard Cornwell

Bernard Cornwell is one of the most famous authors of historical fiction, having penned over fifty books, including bestselling series about Richard Sharpe, a British soldier during the Napoleonic War, and ***The Saxon Stories***, now at nine novels, which is set in ninth-century England during the reign of Alfred the Great. The first novel in that series, ***The Last Kingdom***, has been turned into a TV series airing on BBC 2 in the United Kingdom, and BBC America in the United States. Muffet Jones of Boise State University, who is reviewing the series for Medievalists.net, had a chance to interview Bernard Cornwell to learn more about him, his writing, and the TV series:

Muffet Jones: So here we are on the eve of the BBC America premiere of The Last Kingdom, based on your novel of 2004. First I have to tell you what an honor it is to be communicating with you since I have read most of your novels and continue to look forward to the rest. Oddly, I read the Saxon Novels of which *The Last Kingdom* is the first out of order and had just started TLK when I heard about the series. I was beyond excited to see it brought to the screen. I know the Sharpe novels were made into a very successful series in the '90s. Were you a screenwriter for any of the episodes in The *Last Kingdom* or Sharpe episodes?

Bernard Cornwell: I wrote none of the Sharpe scripts and none for *The Last Kingdom* either . . . and had no wish to try!

Muffet Jones: Television, movies or theater are generally collaborative media. Is that a challenge after you've had sole ownership of everything that happens to a character on the page? How much control did you have over the TV series?

Bernard Cornwell: Absolutely none, and I didn't want any. I worked in television for a decade and learned that I know nothing about producing TV drama, so any interference by me is likely to be obstructive. Besides, the producers, casting directors, directors, actors all have their own creative contribution to make and why not let them do it? The result might be an improvement on the books!

Muffet Jones: One of the things I most enjoy about Uhtred is his disdain for, and sometimes downright hatred of, Christianity. Will that also be a part of the television show?

Bernard Cornwell - source: Youtube

television show? I hope so, because many of his best lines in the books are at the expense of the Christians. It always seemed mischievous and mostly light-hearted to me (except when he does one of the monks in, but they always deserve it).

Bernard Cornwell: I don't know! I haven't seen the series! I've watched the first episode and that stayed remarkably true to the books so I assume that they will reflect Uhtred's disdain for Christianity. I hope so!

Muffet Jones: I think most medievalists have a pretty clear grasp of the realities of life during that period. Your books never pull any punches when it comes to depictions of violence or how difficult it all was, romance not-withstanding. What do you find most compelling about the period and would you have liked to live then? I think most medievalists would say yes, even with the lack of antibiotics.

Bernard Cornwell: I'd have hated it! Bring on the antibiotics! What I find most compelling is the struggle to create a country which became England, a struggle that must have seemed hopeless at times and which roiled Britain in constant fighting. We think of England (especially) as a peaceful landscape, but in the 9th, 10th and 11th centuries it was horribly brutal and merciless.

Muffet Jones: I wonder if you could tell us a little about your background? What drew you to history and especially military history? Were you in the military?

Bernard Cornwell: I was not! But I was adopted by fundamentalist Christians who, among many other things, disapproved of military service. I'm afraid that all of the things they disliked became my wish-list . . . and that's where my interest in military history began . . . it was forbidden fruit!

Muffet Jones: I find even your early novels really accomplished. The voice, of course, differs from book to book, and Uhtred's is particularly vivid for me. Did you write other things when you were beginning? Junior or wanna-be writers always want to know the foundation stories of our literary heroes and heroines.

Bernard Cornwell: I began by writing Sharpe! And that was an accident . . . I fell in love with an American, was denied a Green Card (work permit), so told her I'd make a living by writing a book! It was a crazy decision, of course, but worked out ok! We're still married 35 years later. So writing was a desperate attempt to make a living. The Sharpe books, of course, are derived from Hornblower (though Sharpe and Hornblower are very different characters). You could say I learned my trade with Sharpe?

Muffet Jones: :In many ways, The Last Kingdom and other books in the series are also very much about Alfred the Great, although seen obliquely through Uhtred's eyes. Uhtred is certainly ambivalent about him; did you find it difficult to create a psychological character that felt true to you and still mirrored the historical figure of Alfred? Do you find him admirable?

Bernard Cornwell: I do find him admirable! And I enjoyed writing him. Alfred was a great man, but almost certainly he was not a great warrior . . . he suffered from a chronic disease for his whole life (probably Crohn's disease), and we know from his own writing and from Bishop Asser's biography, that his passion was for literacy and the church. He was also a very intelligent man and, forced to fight to save his country, he used his intelligence to defeat the Danes. He was also, of course, extremely pious, which is bound to irritate Uhtred who, like me, has no tolerance for puritanism!

Muffet Jones: I'd like to ask you a little about your process. I'm sure you have researchers, but in the earlier books, how did you begin? I love that you give credit to your sources, but wonder how your translate all of that information into narrative?

Bernard Cornwell: Researchers? I wish! No, I do it all myself. And I never forget that I must be primarily a story-teller, not an historian. The history will always take second place to the plot. I suspect (hope) that people read historical novels for entertainment, not education, but they can still be portals to history. A good historical novel should entice some readers to discover more, but it isn't my job to educate!

Muffet Jones: You are very prolific, and your fans are very grateful for that fact. Do you write every day? I know you spend part of your year in Cape Cod – it's in your bio in all the books so not giving anything personal away. Do you write there or in England or elsewhere?

Bernard Cornwell: I do most of my writing in Charleston, South Carolina, where we have a winter home. I do some in Cape Cod, but my summers there are mostly spent on stage at a repertory theatre which leaves no time for writing! And yes, you write every day, there isn't another way!

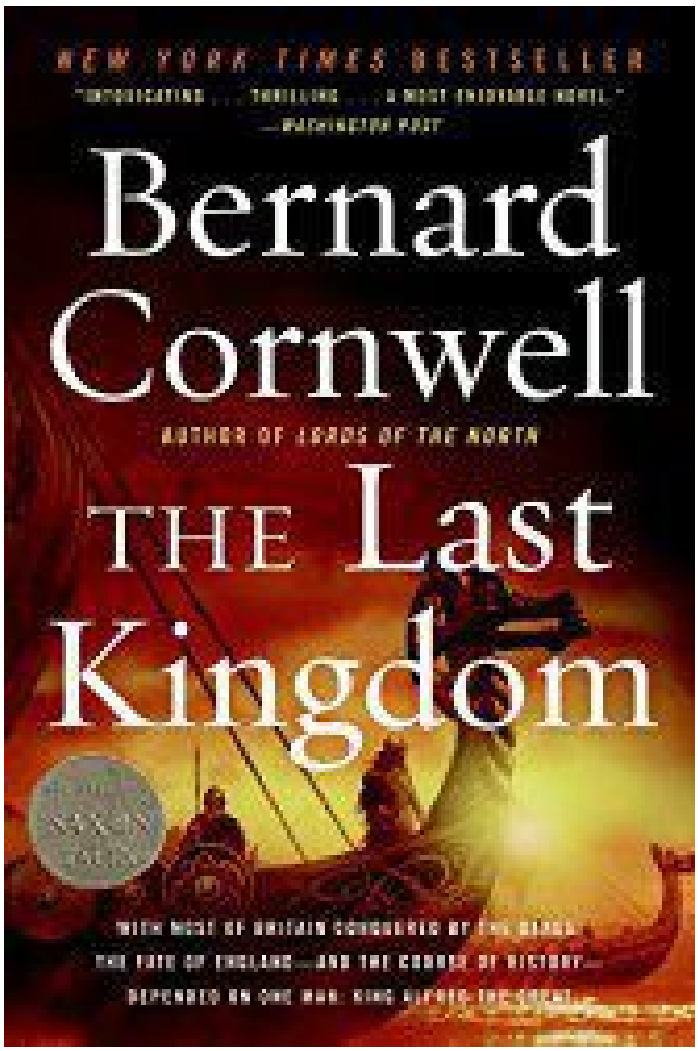
Muffet Jones: I was sorry not to see a fifth Starbuck novel. Could you tell us if we might read more of him in future?

Bernard Cornwell: I somehow doubt it . . . though if I live long enough I might return to him.

Muffet Jones: You have written about 6th century England, Saxon England, England and France during the fourteenth century and Sharpe's Napoleonic period, Revolutionary America, the Civil War period in America and more. Is there one period that you feel most at home in? England or America? Chateaubriand wrote that in America nothing is old but the trees, but to most of us Americans the Revolutionary period and the Civil War feels old to us. Wars seem to bring

most of us Americans the Revolutionary period and the Civil War feels old to us. Wars seem to bring people and history alive – is there another period you'd like to write about?

Bernard Cornwell: I think my stories are rooted in British history, mainly because I know Britain's history best and hear British voices. Fans constantly ask me to write about other places and eras, the other day someone pleaded with me to write the story of the Slavic tribes, but hell, I'd need to learn languages first, let alone discover the geography and all the nuances. Yes, I'd love to write about late 16th and early 17th Century London . . . it will happen!



Muffet Jones: You wrote that you were annoyed with the publisher in America who changed the name of the first Grail Quest novel from Harlequin to The Archer's Tale because of possible confusion with the romance Harlequin novels. As you pointed out, there is an abundance of romance and bodice-ripping in the Grail Quest novels. But one of the things I most appreciate about your books is that they are romantic and sexy without being graphic. I'm guessing that the BBC version will have to be a whole lot more explicit in their interpretation of Uhtred's relationships for the cable demographic. Are you happy with that aspect of it?

Bernard Cornwell: I'm happy with whatever they do! I have enormous faith in their skill and taste!

Muffet Jones: What else would you like your enthusiasts to know about The Last Kingdom?

Bernard Cornwell: I just hope they enjoy it!

Muffet Jones: Again, thank you so much for entertaining these questions. I know the readers of Medievalists.net will read your thoughts with great interest and I can't wait for the show!

Medieval Television Review:

The Last Kingdom

By Muffet Jones

The first two episodes of BBC America's drama ***The Last Kingdom*** based on the novels by Bernard Cornwell aired last week. They followed – roughly – the first half of the first book from which the series takes its name. I have waited for this show with great anticipation – this summer I read nothing but Cornwell, and I'm a great lover of all pop culture placed in anything resembling the Middle Ages, so this promised to be huge.

Cornwell's novel is set in 9th century England and, like all his books, gives you a rollicking adventure, great characters, and good history to boot. I was also a little trepidatious about the show – would the BBC version be true to the novel or just *Game of Thrones* lite? Based on last night's episodes I have to say – a little of both, but definitely worth watching.

For those unfamiliar with the novel, *The Last Kingdom*, follows the life and times of Uhtred, Ealdorman of Bebbanburg, an impregnable fortress on the Northern coast of present-day Northumbria. The story opens (and spoiler alert from this point forward) with Danes coming ashore and Uhtred – or Osbert as he is originally called since it's his older brother who is Uhtred, son of Uhtred – watching as his father sends his older brother to track the Danes and gathers his men to drive them out.

The Danes are led by Earl Ragnar, a fierce and successful Viking, but one who is more interested in occupying the rich farmland of Northumbria than taking its plunder (although he does that, too). Later that day Earl Ragnar and some of his men return to Bebbanburg on horseback to deliver the head of Uhtred's older brother who had gotten too close and challenged them. Lord Uhtred, played by the ubiquitous but always welcome Matthew MacFadyen, tells his younger son that now he is Uhtred, son of Uhtred, and to please his Christian wife has the boy re-baptized. Ragnar's Vikings have passed Bebbanburg by and moved on to Eoferwic, or present-day York, where a larger army of Danes have assembled under Ubba, a powerful and superstitious Dane.

When the scene shifts to the town, we see the name "Eoferwic" which then morfs into "York" – a very nice touch, I thought, since the opening pages of Cornwell's books list the early place names and present-day equivalents. We then see the battle for Eoferwic with Lord Uhtred's men alongside two of the other "kings" of Northumbria against Ubba's army. It doesn't go well for the Saxons, and young Uhtred ends up in the hands of Earl Ragnar. At first a slave in the household, Uhtred saves Ragnar's daughter, Thyra, from an attack by Sven, the son of one of Ragnar's men, inspiring Ragnar to take him as his own son, sealed with an unceremonious Viking "baptism" by tossing him off his horse into a river. Ragnar punishes Kjartan and his son Sven for Thyra's ordeal by blinding Sven in one eye and banishing them from his lands. Uhtred's "pagan childhood," comes to an end when Kjartan and Sven take their revenge. Uhtred and Brida, another Saxon child who had grown up with Uhtred in Ragnar's household and who is now his lover, are exiled into the world and finally driven to the court of Alfred of Wessex – the last English kingdom – to fight against the Danes.

The first two episodes telescope much of the action of the novel; events are presented in different order, and a number of scenes and events are included which are not in the novel at all. In the book Uhtred is only twelve when he loses his Danish family, but he grows up much more quickly in the series – no doubt in order to up the sex appeal quotient. And the casting is quite good. MacFadyen makes a good Lord Uhtred, remote and gruff but not as uncaring as his young son believed. Young Uhtred as played by Tom Taylor is really terrific – good child actors often have such intensity! – and Rutger Hauer is a fabulous Ravn, Ragnar's blind father and the scald, scop, or bard of the house. The child Uhtred becomes Ravn's eyes and Ravn educates Uhtred in all things Dane. Ian Hart's Father Beocca is better looking in the series than he's described in the book, but he delivers Beocca's sense of caring and decency. I don't think Ivar the Boneless made the show, but Ubba Is played to psychopathic perfection.

Cornwell is all about the battle scenes, so getting the shield wall right was crucial. When Lord Uhtred's Saxons confront Earl Ragnar's Danes we see the Saxons move forward warily, fearfully, as Cornwell has described ordinary men facing bloody hand-to-hand

When Lord Uhtred's Saxons confront Earl Ragnar's Danes we see the Saxons move forward warily, fearfully, as Cornwell has described ordinary men facing bloody hand-to-hand combat doing. And the forming of the Danish shield wall looks formidable. The two armies meet with enough brutal, up-close hacking and hewing to really illustrate what going all Medieval on someone's head might really mean. In the novel the Saxons also know all about shield walls, but in the show when the Danes form up it seems to take them by surprise. No matter, the ensuing bloodbath was graphic enough for all.

The pacing is quite fast – a little too fast in some respects. We really don't get much sense of an internal life from any of the characters, except possibly for young Uhtred. The novel tells the story in the first person from an older Uhtred's perspective, but here we're shown everything as if it is happening in real time. We're introduced to characters and we see something of their character – Ragnar is a kind and loving father figure, but we don't get close enough to really be moved by his death. We had an entire season to get to know and care about Sean Bean's Ned Stark in Game of Thrones which made his ultimate end so much more affecting. Cornwell's Uhtred isn't terribly self-reflective, but somehow in the novel we feel like we know him anyway. I hope there will be a little more character development in episodes to come.

And that brings me to my biggest caveat – Uhtred himself. The actor, Alexander Dreymon, looks the part and is certainly picturesque enough to hold our interest, but he seems a little too sweet to be the Uhtred my mind had conjured from the books. He has an upper-class British accent – wouldn't a Northumbrian burr have been a little grittier? – and came across as mild. In the second episode he's charming, but still light weight somehow. He did have a moment, however, at the end of the first episode when he delivers the head of his uncle's spy/assassin to the gates of Bebbanburg in exactly the same way that Ragnar had delivered the head of his older brother years before. He has a wolfish grin as he brandishes the head that promises a wilder Uhtred under the lairdish veneer we've been shown. I hope to see more of that guy in future episodes. In any case, as Cornwell always says at the end of his novels, Uhtred has many battles ahead of him and I'll keep watching.

Muffet Jones is an art historian and teaches at Boise State University. You can follow her on Twitter @MuffetJones

Medieval Movie Review:

Macbeth

By Sandra Alvarez

Macbeth opened earlier this month in London to critical acclaim, so I was excited to see what all the fuss was about. Despite the hype, I was still wary and didn't set the bar too high. I was pleasantly surprised; Justin Kurzel's ***Macbeth*** was a stunning, disturbing, interpretation of Shakespeare's 400 year old play.

Kurzel, who is known for his Australian serial killer horror, *Snowtown* (2011), and for his upcoming movie version of the popular video game, *Assassin's Creed* (to be released December 21, 2016) is at home in this rendition of medieval political intrigue and murder.

Macbeth is a dark, harrowing, and highly stylised film. Kurzel killed it (no pun intended) in the cinematography department; the magnificent backdrops of Scotland mixed with the bleak, depressing colours that surround Macbeth and Lady Macbeth set the tone for the entire film. Add to that, the usual slo-mo, blood--flying-everywhere battle scenes, straight out of an episode of *Spartacus: Blood and Sand*, and you're sure to keep the most inattentive movie goer glued to the screen. To be honest, while these types of scenes are usually over used during medieval films, Kurzel manages not to get carried away. He uses them briefly to lend themselves to the story telling, conveying the horrors of war Macbeth is forced to witness.

The movie is beautifully rendered, even with its oppressive, stark atmosphere. It's perfectly balanced by the bare bones dialogue, faithful to Shakespeare's play, and by the superb acting of Michael Fassbender (*300*, *Prometheus*) and Marion Cotillard (*The Immigrant, Inception*).

Fassbender is stellar as tormented Macbeth. Playing a traumatised general, loyal to his King, he takes us on Macbeth's horrifying journey, from respected Thane to murderous traitor. He is mezmorizing on screen and brings a gritty, human quality to one of Shakespeare's most hated villains.

Cotillard brings Lady Macbeth full circle as a sinister, grasping woman, but one who is also deeply damaged and incredibly fragile. Cotillard doesn't give us a one-dimensional performance of the woman-we-love-to-hate, an evil woman who cajoles her husband into plotting the murder of their king, instead, Cotillard enables us to feel pity, and sadness Lady Macbeth. Back in high school, I always hated Lady Macbeth when I first read the play and remember thinking, 'what a dreadful, evil woman'. Cotillard's performance made me re-think that long standing dislike and see other sides to Lady Macbeth.

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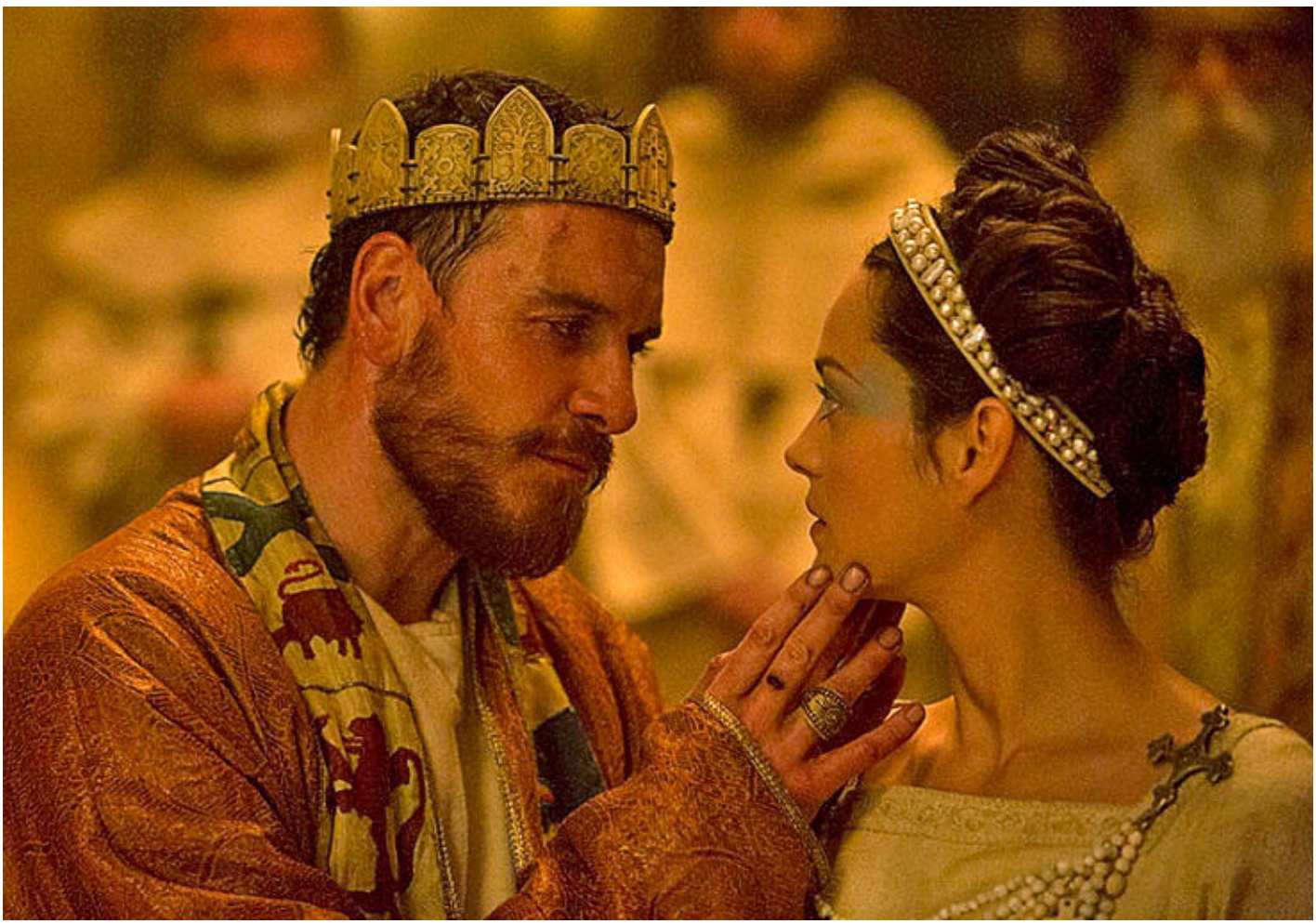
This movie brought out the heavy hitters with an exceptional supporting cast. One of my all time favourites, Sean Harris, did justice to the role of Macduff. The actor, who is well known for his portrayal of Cesare Borgia's hit man Micheletto Corella in 2011 Showtime series, *The Borgias*, delivered a riveting performance as the avenging hero who suspects Macbeth of regicide and eventually brings him down. This wasn't the first time these two men faced off; Harris and Fassbender both appeared in Ridley Scott's 2012 Sci-Fi hit, *Prometheus*. I was happy to see Harris grace the big screen, he's a spectacular actor. Banquo, played by Paddy Considine (*Hot Fuzz, The World's End*) Macbeth's loyal friend who is later betrayed, and Malcom, played by Jack Reynor (*Transformers: Age of Extinction, Dollhouse*) both gave solid performances. Last but certainly not least, another favourite of mine, David Thewlis (*Harry Potter, Kingdom of Heaven*), who is no stranger to medieval films, starred as the hapless King Duncan. He was terrific even though he didn't get much screen time. It was a well chosen cast.

The costumes were a bit stylised, and the make up on Lady Macbeth was a bit weird in some places, but overall, as with the battle scenes, this didn't detract from the movie. The acting carried the day; they could've been wearing paper bags and I would've been riveted to the screen. Kurzel's version of Macbeth is definitely worthy of a place beside classics such Roman Polanski's brutally graphic, but acclaimed, *Macbeth* (1971). Kurzel has the recipe here for a hit, and potentially, an academy award nomination.



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