Battle and Bloodshed

Battle and Bloodshed:
The Medieval World at War

Edited by

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**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**

P U B L I S H I N G

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PREFACE

War is one constant which shapes nations, cultures and individual lives in any age; it is, however, a factor of particular significance in the shaping of Western Europe in the Middle Ages. The eleventh to fifteenth centuries witnessed fundamental changes in societal and political structures, the establishment of national identities and boundaries, as well as conflicts of religious ideology, all of which have determined much of Western Europe as we know it today; and warfare, at the local, national and transnational levels, was the primary means by which such changes were brought about. Significant developments also occurred in the nature of warfare itself, as technological advances drove changes in military strategy, fortification, weaponry and armour over the course of the Middle Ages, and established the art of war for centuries to come.

But warfare was not just the arena within which Western Europe battled with the major issues of the day, it was an integral part of the structure of society; the warrior role was encapsulated in the knightly estate whose *raison d'être* and function were to fight. The knight had recognised and high status in medieval society, and the elements of secular power—land ownership, wealth, local and national government—belonged to him. The dominant knightly class therefore also boasted the wealth to commission works of literature, art or architecture, and had the leisure to enjoy them; and hence the warrior class was the major source of literary and cultural patronage and taste of the period.

For these reasons, the study of warfare, of battles and consequent bloodshed is of one of vital importance to scholars of the Middle Ages, and it is a subject that demands approaches from a range of disciplines: from history, archaeology and the study of material culture, through iconography to analyses of literary works of various genres in the major European vernaculars. It is precisely this range of perspectives that the present volume of essays succeeds in bringing together.

This collection shows us the complexities of the medieval world at war by focusing on a series of overarching themes which include both iconic aspects of medieval warfare such as armour and the crusades, but also take in the richness of textual traditions and matters of crucial importance at the time—the justification for war and the means by which peace can be re-established. Within each overarching theme, the editors have brought

together essays from different disciplines and perspectives from different geographical areas within medieval Europe, in order to exemplify both the pervasive influence of warfare in the Middle Ages and some of the current methodological debates in the field.

The collection features a significant number of essays devoted to literary treatments and representations of warfare, not just from historiographical works, but also from romances in Old French, Middle High German and Middle English; these help to remedy the relative neglect of the study of combat or battle scenes in medieval literary texts, as well as setting them within their broader historical context. The essays in this volume are the work of emerging and more established scholars in their respective fields, but the insights they afford into the subject of medieval war, and the possibilities they open up for disciplinary dialogue and collaboration should appeal equally to early career and to more seasoned researchers.

—Penny Simons
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INTRODUCTION

This volume was borne out of the June 2009 conference *Battle and Bloodshed: Representations of War in the Middle Ages* which took place at the Humanities Research Institute, University of Sheffield. The majority of articles contained herein were presented at the conference itself, while the rest were later additions. The impetus for the conference and this publication was that the 20th and 21st Centuries had seen war in many different guises, meaning that discussion of it seemed a pertinent choice. However, we soon found that the medieval world at war was in fact a very different proposition; one could even go so far as to say that medieval warfare coloured everyday life, playing an integral role in the creation, structure and development of society. Not only have we concentrated on weaponry, warfare and the practical implications of waging war, we have also tackled its after effects, such as the legalities of war treaties and the medieval peace process as a whole. This collection presents a thematic and interdisciplinary approach to the study of medieval warfare. The articles have been written by researchers in the fields of archaeology, history, literature and law, which gives an exciting breadth to the topic within a single volume.

Part I, entitled *Knights in Shining Armour*, looks at the iconic and legendary figure of medieval society, the knight. While his armour may not have shone quite as brightly as modern interpretations of the chivalric ideal would have us believe, it was certainly his status symbol and integral to his role in society. Ralph Moffat's article discusses the importance of armour on the battlefield both by way of identifying the wearer and implications for ransom, as well as the protection it provided. The symbolic significance of donning armour follows in an article by Robert Jones, who uses the context of medieval romance literature to look at how wearing armour influenced the knight's perception of himself and the attitudes of those who came into contact with him. Iain MacInnes tackles Barbour's description of Scottish arms and armour in *The Bruce*, championing the value of this work as a credible historical source not simply as pure narrative invention.

Part II, *Fighting the Good Fight*, deals with the Crusades, specifically the Third Crusade. The two contrasting articles offer insights into both

sides of the conflict, providing new perspectives on these turbulent times. Aya Sakkal offers us Muslim visions of the battle of Hattin, with an emphasis upon the symbolic imagery prevalent in the writings of two contemporary chroniclers. In a complementary article, Tara Foster provides a comprehensive overview of attitudes towards the exploits of Christian knights in the Holy Land through the eyes of four medieval authors, all of whom provide differing accounts.

Part III, *Noblesse Oblige,* discusses the role played by the nobility in warfare. Jonathan Cox's article looks at war and styles of lordship in north-eastern Scotland between 1371 and 1435, particularly participation in the cult of chivalry and the crusading movement. The article by Frederic Aparisi Romero and Vicent Royo Perez hones in on the case study of the kingdom of Valencia during the later Middle Ages. The exact nature of the interplay between nobility and warfare is examined, with emphasis upon the role of the minor nobility and the way in which they fared offering military service to the Crown. The section is concluded with an article by Valentina Mazzei who examines the iconography of the mid-fourteenth century bloody civil war in Brittany, as represented in the Book I manuscripts of Froissart's *Chroniques*.

The articles in Part IV, *The Pen is Mightier than the Sword,* are grounded in literature. Rachel Kellett's article encourages us to look beyond the considerable exaggeration of wounds inflicted in combat in some literary descriptions, to the more realistic and physiologically plausible cases such as those of the thirteenth century German epic *Karl der Große*. The somewhat understudied French romance *Floriant et Florete* forms the subject of an article by Helen Neat, who offers an examination of the episodes pertaining to combat and their inter- and intratextual referants drawn from Arthurian and epic literature. We conclude with an article by Ben Parsons, which provides an entirely different perspective on knighthood through the eyes of Chaucer and the *Gawain*-poet.

The final part, *Peace at Last* takes us full circle, illustrating how war and peace were not black and white concepts but instead a constantly evolving state, exemplified by the role of treaties in this delicate balance. Jenny Benham's article focuses on four western European treaties from 994 to 1200, comparing and contrasting similarities and differences in treaty practices. Magda Schusterova continues this discussion, concentrating on the peace project of George of Podebrady, king of Bohemia. She draws up a typology of treaties, enabling the reader to position it against the backdrop of late medieval peace processes.

Part I

Knights in Shining Armour

CHAPTER ONE

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING HARNEST: ARMOUR, HERALDRY AND RECOGNITION IN THE MELEE

RALPH MOFFAT

"Thay hard harnest men, they hewit on in haist." An anonymous fifteenth-century Scots romancer thus described a combat between two men in armour.[1] More famous are the words of Macbeth before his final battle: "Blow, wind! Come, wrack! At least we'll die with harness on our back."[2] In this short essay I hope to demonstrate that armour as personal protection was of greater importance to survival on the medieval battlefield than has previously been assumed. The main focus will be on Anglo-Scottish conflicts but the argument could be extended to include any part of Christendom where "hard harnest men" in a combination of mail and plate armour were to be found fighting.

It has been asserted that the "predictable fate of a soldier, noble or otherwise, who, finding himself on the losing side of a fourteenth century battle, failed to make good his escape, was not to be taken prisoner, it was to die."[3] This has been more recently challenged in the context of Anglo-Scottish warfare. It has been pointed out that the "death toll at many of these battles was exceeded by the count of those taken prisoner, at least amongst the men-at-arms"[4] and the term "ransom bonanza" has been applied to the possibilities for Scots involved in the taking of English prisoners during the Hundred Years War.[5] The process of taking captives and securing ransoms has been shown to be a well established one by the late-fourteenth century. Froissart's claim that when the English and Scots fought "they are so proud of their conquest that they ransom their prisoners instantly, and in such courteous manner to who have been taken, that on their departure they return them their thanks"[6] may seem rather fanciful but it was not so far removed from the truth. Steve Boardman has shown that the ransom paid for Harry Hotspur's younger brother Ralph—captured at Otterburn in 1388—financed the castle building programme of the Scotsmen responsible for his capture. Dendrochronology has proved

that this included the marvellous wood-beamed roof at Darnaway.[7] The continuing importance of the ransom process to the medieval economy is evident in wills. For example, Sir Ralph Hastings bequeathed the ransom money of a prisoner he had taken at Neville's Cross in 1346 and, in 1497, Sir John Broune, citizen and alderman of London, left ten marks to his two cousins "which were taken prisoners by the Scottes towards there raunson."[8] Notable Scots have been described as being "quickly ransomed"[9] after the battle of Humbleton in 1402—an event to which this piece shall return. The culture and process of ransom in the context of the Hundred Years' War has been the subject of a detailed doctoral thesis.[10]

Literary sources, such as chronicles, also abound with accounts of taking captives and extorting ransoms. An English yokel is supposed to have bludgeoned the king of Sicily's son to death after the prince had pleaded for "rancon". "I know you're a Francon", was his reply, but the uncouth rustic had not been "taught to hold gentlemen prisoners for their ransom."[11] An English chronicler and veteran jested that Archibald, the earl of Douglas, had "lost one of his stones, for his raunson" in battle at Shrewsbury in 1403![12]

The process of the "laws of ransom" has been alluded to by Maurice Keen, citing the ordinances of Earl Archibald Douglas. R.C. Reid also made a case study of the fate of prisoners taken at the battle of Kirtle/Lochmaben in 1484. Their conclusions were that a superior was entitled to a third of the ransom of the captive of a tenant:[13] more detail as to the workings of the process in England and France is to be found in Ambühl's thesis.[14] When duke John of Burgundy ordered the execution of prisoners by a contingent of English knights in his service, he was informed that "they were not come thither as bochers" and they appealed twice to the "lawe of armes."[15] If prisoners were to be taken, how, then, was a soldier to know who was worth ransoming and who was not? The most obvious sign may have been heraldic bearings and it is to this I will now turn.

It has been stated that "on the battlefield, knights were probably distinguished by the pennon or banner they were carrying, and perhaps by their superior armour, although this may be open to discussion."[16] The subtleties of the various types of banners and standards in use have been described in a detailed article by Elizabeth Armstrong.[17] The case should be made that heraldic display of this nature might indicate battle position, but it would not reveal the individual identity of a magnate or similar high-status combatant.

In the context of Agincourt (1415) and Towton (1461), and by extension all medieval battles, the role of the herald in identifying the dead

has been expressed.[18] The argument concerning this ability of heralds to identify corpses in this manner is complicated by the tendency to strip the dead not long after they had been dispatched. Archdeacon John Barbour's epic poem *The Brus* (*c*. 1375) describes the defeated English at Bannockburn, "And quhen thai nakyt spulyeit war / That war slane in bataill thar."[19] Bishop Ruthall wrote of the treatment of the Scots at Flodden in 1513 by his men. They "wer not so soon slayn but forthewith dispioled out of their harnais and array and lefte lying naked in the felde."[20] Heraldic garments could be comprised of very costly materials; an example is Sir John Fastolfe (a veteran of an English victory over a Franco-Scots army at Verneuil in 1424) who had two "Cote Armours of silke aftir his own armys" and one "of whyte silke of Senyt George."[21]

Commentators have created a simplified model with armour as the blank (or metallic) canvas onto which the colours of heraldic coat armours may be splashed.[22] In the late medieval period this model becomes much more complicated. The first complication is that the surface of armour was not always plain metal. Indeed, at the start of the fourteenth century most plate armour was covered with fabric or leather, or its construction, such as gauntlets, necessitated an integral covering and lining. Detailed regulations survive for the armourers of Paris of 1296, describing this method of manufacture.[23] If not covered, armour was frequently described as "burnished."[24] There are numerous references to armour covered with material decorated with the arms of the owner. An example is Prince Edward of Caernarfon, who had two pairs of *cuisses* (thigh defences) embroidered with his arms ("ij par' de Quissotz broudat' de armis d[ic]ti d[omi]ni")[25] in 1303. The statutes of the Armourers of London of 1322 were concerned with the inspection of "bacynetz" being "tut new & desgarnice" before being covered. These helmets are described as being purchased from the "Feure" (smith) or other man who made the iron [parts] for bascinets ("autre ho[m]me q' fait les fers des bacynetz").[26]

Documentary evidence reveals the sumptuousness of this decoration. Amongst the inventory of the armour of Roger Mortimer, made in 1332, is a pair of shin defences gilt, powdered with pierced mullets ("deskynbaudz dorrez poudrez des moletz percez").[27] Edward III had a penchant for plates (torso defences) covered with white leather with gilt scallops ("couert de blanc quir oue scalopes dorez") and his son, the Black Prince, gifted a pair covered with black velvet powdered with feathers ("cou[er]tz de noir veluet pouudrez oue pennes").[28] Writing his *Traytese of the Poyntes of Worship in Armes* in 1434, John Hyll, "Armorer Sergeant in the Kinge's Armory", could remember when judicial duels were fought with covered

armour: "for by the oold tyme in such a bataile there shulde noo thing have ben seyn here save his basnett & his gloves."[29]

The second complication is that armour was not all of a uniform quality or cost. In academic studies, there has been more of an attempt to distinguish between low-quality "munitions" armour produced in bulk, and armour of superior quality and craftsmanship, reflected in the price.[30] For example, the three armours costing 500 gold francs that were gifted to William, earl of Douglas, and two Scottish knights in 1377, would undoubtedly have been more lavish than the 1000 "off the peg" armours sent as part of an expeditionary force by the French to aid the Scots against their mutual enemy England.[31]

Heraldic insignia and armour cannot be divorced. Kings of Scots, England, and France had bascinets with crowns surmounting. Dukes also had coronets over their helmets. An example of this is the coronet bandied about the Scottish host by the killers of the duke of Clarence at the battle of Baugé in 1421.[32] This is also reproduced on the duke's tomb effigy. According to Barbour, Bruce wore a crown over his bascinet of *cuir bouilli* (hardened leather).[33] There are numerous references to French kings' bascinets with crowns. In 1382 for example, Guillame de Lyons, heaumier (i.e. plate armourer), made two "bacines à visiere pour le roy, c'est assavoir l'un fait à couronne et l'autre sens couronne" ("visored bascinets for the king, that is to say, one with a crown and the other without a crown").[34] A bascinet formerly in Chartres cathedral shows "traces in patination of its original *fleur-de-lys* ornament."[35] The child's armour there also has miniature silver-gilt fleur-de-lys along the edge of the sabatons (foot defences) and it has been suggested that this once extended throughout the entire armour.[36]

Although it has been more recently brought into doubt whether the evolution of armour and its covering of identifiable features was the catalyst for the development of heraldry, the Kintyre Pursuivant, Adam Loutfut, in a translation of a French heraldic treatise states that:

> "þai war ordanit þat in þe dedis of armis quhen knychtis and men of werschip wer in armes and þar visagis coverit þat þai mycht be knawin be þar connysance þai bur abon þar harnes."[37]

Heraldry was undoubtedly of importance when it came to identification. English chroniclers have alluded to Robert Bruce's use of covering coat armours with white shirts and the death of earl of Gloucester at Bannockburn due to his lack of one.[38] An example of the importance of the role of heraldry is the "body double" technique often used by royalty. The Welsh chronicler Adam Usk counted among the dead at Shrewsbury

in 1403 "two noble knights who were wearing the king's armour, each of whom had been decked out to look like the king."[39] Abbot Walter Bower records the death of three men who "were wearing tunics with coats of arms and royal coronets on top of their helmets."[40] The man who had felled them was Archibald, earl of Douglas, who exasperatedly cried: "Have I not already killed two King Henrys [...] with my own hands?"[41] The author of the fragmentary *Ynglis Cronikle* also refers to the pair who were "slane in þe king*is* cot armour" by Archibald. The Auchinleck chronicler uses a synedochical terminology when relating the death of "gentill men" at the battle of Brechin in 1452. There were slain "wele till iij[xx] of cotarmouris oñ þat syd."[42]

The importance of the coat armour, however, should not be overplayed. In the popular Scots romance *Eger and Grime*, Sir Grime disguises himself as his wounded friend to fight in his stead. It is not only Sir Eger's coat armour that the knight needs to complete the transformation: "Your coat armour than shal I take, / Your basnet and your gloves of plate."[43] The chronicler Andrew of Wyntoun explains that Alexander, earl of Mar, whilst campaigning for the duke John of Burgundy against the Liègeois, fought in personal combat with two "weirelyk men" before the main battle. It is not through their heraldic blazons that the earl recognises their status but: "All lyk tyll lordis in honour*e* / As aperyt be þar*e* armowr*e*."[44] Barbour's tale of the death of Edward Bruce in Ireland involves the royal heir refusing to wear his "cot-armour" and having his minstrel/herald don it instead. When the English come to decapitate the corpse they "wend schyr Eduuard is it had bene, / Bot for ye armyng yat wes schene." By "armyng" the poet means armour rather than weapons or coat armours. This is evident when Sir James Douglas takes "wapnys & armyng" from his recaptured castle and de Bohun is "armyt in armys gud & fine" for his single combat with the king before Bannockburn.[45] Further difficulties with recognition are outlined by the poet. At the same battle the English knights:

> Armys and quyntys that that bar
> With blud war sa defoulyt thar
> That that mycht nocht descroyit be[46]

Mud, as well as blood, could also so besmirch heraldic bearings. Indeed, the coat armour should not be viewed as the only means of identification. In the context of the civil wars in England in the second half of the fifteenth century the increasing importance of livery badges and sashes has been propounded.[47] Barbour tells of the idiosyncratic Sir

Thomas Richmond who wore a "furryt hat apon his helm" which was taken as a trophy by his killer Sir James Douglas.[48]

The role of heraldry is all very well, assuming soldiers had a good personal knowledge of heraldry, when it came to fighting "at handstrokes."[49] It has, however, been suggested that, "in the press of the *mêlée* the intricacies of the heraldry of coat-armour would surely have been lost."[50] One of the prominent features of Anglo-Scottish warfare was the use of archery, whose effects have been described as being oblivious to the "niceties of chivalric convention" and, I would add, certainly oblivious to the subtleties of heraldry.[51]

Integral to my argument is the ability of armour to protect its wearer against arrows. This long-running, and indeed long-ranging, debate is one which has suffered greatly from an over-reliance on chronicle source evidence at the expense of surviving material culture and, at times, even common sense. Clifford J. Rogers, a proponent of the efficacy of archery, with particular emphasis on the penetration of armour, has stated that he is "willing to concede […] that in the decades *after* the end of the Hundred Years' War in 1453, armour improved."[52] However, previous to this date it is clear that improvements were underway. A series of extremely detailed articles by Charles Buttin has revealed that proofing of some sort was taking place in the first half of the fourteenth century.[53] The torso defence known as plates or pair of plates was composed of metal plates riveted to a fabric or leather garment, it has been described by a leading arms and armour scholar as one of the most popular defences of the early-fourteenth century.[54] Buttin has shown that, in 1340, twenty plates "proofed and half-proofed" ("vint plates de prove et de demie prove") were received amongst "des armes" by a Norman shipmaster.[55] Likewise, Montalbanais merchants in 1345 and 1348 sold "platas de mega proa" (fully proofed plates) to soldiers ("omes d'armas").[56] To these can be added the information collected by an English spy on the armour of a French invasion force in the 1330s. The troops had "around 4000 doublets and others with iron plates which could not be penetrated by arrows, spears, or other arms" ("bombacia al' cu[m] platis ferreis circa iiij mil que vix penet[ra]ri possunt p[er] saggitas lanceas v[e]l al' armaturas").[57] It must have been some sort of substantial armour that saved the life of Edward I at the siege of Stirling in 1304 from the pot shot of a defending crossbowman. According to a contemporary chronicler the king was unharmed: "[…] and he rode up to a certain place within range of a crossbow shot, a bolt was shot from the castle, it stuck in his armour without any injury to his body" ("[…] ac quodam loco infra jactum

balistarum obequitando appropinguaret, jaculum qouddam de castro emissum, superiori ejus armaturæ affixum sine ulla corporis læsione").[58]

Documents collected in Victor Gay's magisterial *Glossaire archéologique du Moyen Âge et de la Renaissance* reveal the nature of this testing process. In 1378, "viretons d'espreuve" (proofing crossbow bolts) were purchased in Angers—an unambiguous reference to crossbow bolts for proofing.[59] Buttin has also discovered that it was revealed by an Italian curator in 1890—studying the Gonzaga archives—that the duke of Milan had his harness tested by this process in 1401. The duke had ordered a Venetian armourer to make "vna coraza da proua" (a cuirass of proof) and to "aprouare la dita coraza como vno bono balestro da cidello" (proof the said cuirass with a good crossbow *da cidello*)—that is—a rack- or windlass-drawn crossbow.[60] By the time the Iberian fight master in the service of the Milanese, Pietro Monte, was writing in the 1450s and 60s this procedure was commonplace. Sydney Anglo has rediscovered and translated the work of this remarkable individual:

> He had even pondered the practicalities of armour manufacture and the tempering process. As he explains, if you want to combine lightness with security, then you must obtain the best possible iron and steel which was originally to be found in Innsbruck in Germany, where the masters tested their products with bolts from the crossbow. It was commonly believed that this high quality was due to some virtue in the local water: but Monte reckons that any old water would have done, and that the superlative results were achieved solely by skill in the tempering process. Indeed, the Germans made such excellent steel that they even considered making their breastplates resistant to the arquebus—a "type of small cannon".[61]

That the quality of German steel was well appreciated is attested in many sources. The author of an early-fourteenth century arming treatise recommended "plates de alemayne" for war.[62] The fifteen-year-old Charles, duke of Touraine (later Charles of Orleans), in 1387, had three ells of fine Rheims cloth bought to make a pourpoint as a pattern to send to Gemany for the forging of plates ("pour faire un patron à un petit pourpoint, pour mons. le Duc de Thouraine, pour envoier en Allemaigne, pour faire et forger unes plates d'acier pour son corps").[63]

The importance of crossbow proofing was understood and enshrined in armourers' statutes in France from 1450 and 1488.[64] These clearly differentiate between the different types of crossbow used for proofing. The statutes of the armourers of Angers of 1488 have been referred to several times with their "harnois blancs" (steel armour) "de toute épreuve" and of "demie espreuve" depending upon the type of crossbow with which

they had been tested.[65] The effects of the more powerful crossbow have
been viewed as being of significance to the development of plate armour
by a leading arms and armour specialist,[66] and, by the fifteenth century,
according to a prominent historical metallurgist, "suits of armour [*sic*]
were expected to be proof against the crossbow."[67] A "salade d'espreuve"
(proofed helmet) was purchased from a Parisian armourer in 1423[68] and
the noble poet duke Charles of Orleans (who was captured at Agincourt)
described "harnois de bonne espreuve" in his verses.[69] There may be
documentary evidence for the proofing of armour in England. Around
1418 Thomas, duke of Clarence, made payment for a great deal of plate
armour. He also paid a goldsmith ("Henrico Aurifabro London'") for
buckles, pendants, and arming "poyntes" and a further 5s. for it all to be
taken "de London' usque Grenewyche pur assayng' del dit herneyse"
("from London to Greenwich for testing the said harness").[70] Jack
Wiedemer has demonstrated that of the three brigandines (flexible torso
defences) made for Henry VI before the First Battle of St Albans in 1455,
only the one that survived the "shot" of the yeomen of the crown was
accepted and covered with purple velvet for the protection of the royal
person.[71] Claude Gaier has found reference to the duke of Burgundy's
purchase, in 1441, of 456 "viretons pour faire 'essayer' des pieces
defensives" ("crossbow bolts for 'testing' the defensive pieces"), and the
equally cautious bishop of Toul, in 1455, buying a brigandine and other
armour that had had 16 bolts broken off them by two crossbowmen from
Brussels for his men.[72] There are dents which are suspiciously crossbow-
bolt-shaped on the front of the Milanese 'Avant' armour (*c*. 1440) at
Glasgow Museums.[73] Certain parts of this armour are almost 4mm thick. It
also has religious invocations inscribed at certain points.

It is clear that at certain angles, distances and forces, arrows were able
to penetrate armour, at least at the weaker points.[74] The existence of
talismanic symbols in certain areas of surviving armour is evidence that
this danger was perfectly well understood by contemporaries.[75] The
overall consensus is that armour was "useful against archery."[76] Severe
criticism of the ability of armour to protect also begs the question: if
armour was as useless as a defence, as some have made it out to be, why
did soldiers bother to wear it at all?[77] The majority of high profile injuries
caused by bowshot appear to be facial ones. Kings David II and John II
were hit in the face at Neville's Cross and Poitiers respectively. Earl
Archibald Douglas lost an eye at Humbleton and the following year at
Shrewsbury prince Henry survived an arrow to the face whilst Harry
Hotspur did not. The Prince's physician even invented a specialised
"instrumentum" to remove the arrowhead embedded six inches into his

skull.[78] A French chronicler recounted how his compatriots inclined their heads at Agincourt so the arrows would not strike their visors.[79] Precise measurements have shown that the "visor snout" was one of the areas of a bascinet where the metal was thinnest.[80] The sharpshooters' ability to land an arrow on a small target (such as an open visor) has also been described.[81] A contemporary account of the First Battle of St Albans (1455) succinctly reveals that most of the archery injuries were not to the body:

> At this tyme were hurt lordes of name; the Kyng our sovereyne lord in the neck with an arrowe, the Duke of Buckingham with an arrowe in the visage, the lord of Dudle with an arowe in the visage, the lord of Stafford in the hond with an arowe […]."[82]

Professor Rogers relies very heavily on chronicle accounts for his evidence for the efficacy of archery—especially when it comes to piercing plate armour. There are, however, several examples of sources of this type describing the efficacy of armour against bowshot. Walsingham has an account of the bellicose bishop of Norwich putting down a peasants' revolt in 1381. His knights took heart when "they saw their bishop had become a knight and had put on a helmet of metal and a tough hauberk which arrows could not pierce."[83] The standard bearer of an Iberian nobleman described an attack on Poole in 1405:

> The standard and he who bore it were likewise riddled with arrows, and the standard bearer had as many round his body as a bull in the ring, but he was well shielded by his good armour, although this was bent in several places.[84]

Similarly, in Richard Vaughan's study of Philip the Good, he translates a contemporary account of the battle of Brouwershaven in 1426:

> The English advanced marching in step, ignored a brief salvo fired at them by a cannoneer from Dordrecht, and then suddenly emitted a frightening yell and a fanfare of trumpets and bugles. […] the Dutch "shot simultaneously at the English with over a thousand crossbows. But these did about as much harm to them as a shower of rotten apples:" they returned fire [sic] with their deadly longbows and drove the Dutch back in disorder. However, arrows could make no impression on Philip and his heavily-armed knights, who now arrived on the scene. The chronicler points out that Andrieu de Valines was killed by an arrow in the eye because he was not wearing a helmet. Duke Philip was there in person, his banner carried by the lord of l'Isle Adam, whose armour, and the shaft of

the banner he was carrying, were soon festooned with numerous arrows that had lodged in them; and arrows dented or damaged many a cuirass.[85]

It should be argued that a complete reliance on chronicle sources alone undoubtedly provides a somewhat slanted interpretation. A case study, to conclude the main argument of this piece, will, however, rely on material of this sort.

Returning to the battle of Humbleton in 1402, contemporary chroniclers provide some insight into the tactics used by the English, with a little help from a seasoned soldier of the Anglo-Scottish wars: the Scottish earl of March. According to Bower, the impetuous Harry Hotspur was anxious to engage the Scots: most probably to wreak his revenge for the humiliation of Otterburn. The Scots force was led by Archibald, earl of Douglas. Douglas's old political adversary George, earl of March, "reined [Henry] Percy back saying that he should not move, but should send archers who could easily penetrate the Scots as targets for their arrows and defeat and capture them."[86] This is reiterated by a second Scottish source. This states that the earl of March "would not allow this Henry to stir from his place, but advised and urged him only to send his archers against them, so that by harassing and wounding them they should in course of time so exhaust them that they should easily overcome them and take them prisoners without a struggle."[87] It would appear that the death of the Scots or, more importantly, those of rank, was not the aim of March's tactic. Adam Usk dispassionately records that the Percys:

> "slaughtered many thousands of Scots in battle at Homildon Hill in the march of Scotland, where, by the fortunes of war, they also took many noble prisoners, including the aforementioned Douglas, whom they carried off into captivity."[88]

It has been suggested that the high death toll of this battle was due to the "indiscriminate lethality of massed English archery", which "like guns, bows were a great social leveller, killing without reference to rank."[89] I would argue, bearing in mind the accepted ability of armour to protect the wearer, that the opposite is the case. This "very harsh rain of arrows"[90] served as a sort of brutal winnowing. The wheat—those with suitable armour to protect them—separated from the chaff—those without; those who could afford armour, and were therefore worth ransoming, from those who could not.

There is more than a hint of *schadenfreude*[91] in Walsingham's account of earl Archibald's defeat at Humbleton. The English chronicler relates that the earl and his men were "confident, without doubt, in their own

complex armour" (which they had spent three years working on) as they descended the ridge to engage the enemy. However, the English archers shot "so vigorously, so boldly, so violently" that "all armour was penetrated, helmets bored through, swords broken, spears split, and all light armour transfixed". Archibald was pierced with five wounds despite his "most sumptuous" armour by the time he was captured.[92] The language employed is suspiciously similar to the Lanercost chronicler's poetic account of Neville's Cross in 1346, with "shields clashing, arrows flying, spears piercing, wounded men shrieking, and troops crying out, arms shattered, heads split open."[93] Yet, despite losing an eye, the earl was still alive and was captured according to March's plan. Earl Archibald would go on to survive another battle at Shrewsbury in which archery was employed to murderous effect—again on the advice of the earl of March. He survived this too with the loss of one testicle! To continue in the Wildesque vein of the title, for a combatant to lose one body part may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose more, looks like carelessness! Earl Archibald did, however, take great care in ensuring he was properly armed. He finally lost his life in battle against the English in France where it had been agreed beforehand that no quarter would be asked or received.[94]

Armour thus provides a two-fold purpose. Not only does it protect against bowshot and handstrokes, it also acts as a means of recognition when prisoners are to be taken. According to later chroniclers, Archibald's father and namesake (Archibald "the Grim", a natural son of the "Good Sir James" Douglas) escaped from his English captors at Poitiers by a clever ruse. It was because of his armour ("propter armaturam") that his captives believed he was the son of some great lord, which in effect, he was.[95] They described him as "most nobly armed" ("noblissime armatum") in "splendid armour." A fellow Scots knight (also an old hand at the ransom game, having been previously taken at Neville's Cross) blamed the young Archibald for taking his lord's armour, the result of which his lord was killed by a flying arrow, and proceeded to bash him with his boot. The English chastised the knight for his actions but he informed them that the boy was merely a scullion in his lord's kitchen. On hearing this, the English let him off with a small ransom.[96]

The flipside to this coin was that those of rank who did not wear their armour could suffer. An extreme example of this is the murder in custody of Antoine, duke of Brabant, at Agincourt. The duke was clearly *au fait* with changing armour fashions, as in 1412 he commissioned two of his Bruxellois armourers to craft "a complete harness as made in the realm of the French" ("een volhanasch na het meacke van Vrancryc").[97] In his haste

to join the fray the duke did not arm himself properly. Antoine's lack of heraldic insignia has been viewed as the cause of his murder, but I believe that had he armed himself suitably he would have been amongst the few, such as duke Charles of Orleans, that were spared.[98] Charles had spent a large sum having the inside of his armour lined with black satin a month before the battle.[99]

Amour was integral to the ransom process. It may just have been a figure of speech that Sir Matthew Redmayne is stated to have used at Otterburn to take only those Scots who could pay 100 marks for their helmets, but it should be argued from the context that this has a more literal meaning.[100] In the same vein, a rather optimistic French knight, Jean Jewel, had engraved on his helm the challenge "Qui Jehan prendra, cent mille frans aura."[101] He died in custody due to the prolonged debate over his ransom. Maurice Keen has stressed the role of the gauntlet as a token in the process using English and French evidence but it is not clear in the Scottish context what the "takin [token] of his prisoner" was.[102]

Earl Archibald was not the only Scot of rank to survive Humbleton. The father and son pair Sirs Thomas and Robert Erksine were also taken. Robert had been gifted one of the "troiz harnas" that Charles V spent 500 gold francs on in 1377.[103] Also surviving were Jacques de Heilly and Pierre des Essarts, who had led an expeditionary force of Frenchmen.[104] The upwardly mobile burgess Adam Forrester and his son John were also taken and may have been knighted for their pains. If the identification is correct at least one of these may be shown in armour on a tomb effigy.[105] The fates of many of the Scotsmen involved in this military *débâcle* can be traced in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Captives included the duke of Albany, the earls of Angus, Orkney, and Moray, captured knights: Thomas and Robert Erskine, David Fleming, William Graham, John Montgomery, William Seton, Adam and John Forrester, and William Stewart of Jedworth (executed following the battle). Those slain included the knights Adam Gordon, John Swinton, Alexander Ramsay of Dalhousie with two kinsmen, and John Hamilton of Cadzow.

It has been argued, rather curiously, that while Scottish magnates lavished vast amounts on tombs, these men did not consider armour a sound investment.[106] I would argue that the surest and speediest way for someone to end up interred in a tomb would be to fail to invest in good armour. Those who survived battles such as Humbleton did so because of their rank and wealth. Their captors did not judge this by the intricacies of heraldry, nor by their accents or polite manners. It was by the quality of their armour. Armour made of the best quality metals proofed by crossbow bolt at short range. Having already provided protection from both the

"winnowing" process of long-range archery and the dangers of close quarter weapons at handstrokes, good armour provided one last defence. It proved that its wearer was a member of the wealthy elite—a man literally worth taking. In the context of Anglo-Scottish warfare, and undoubtedly beyond, the "importance of being harnessed" cannot, and should not, be underestimated.

Notes

[1] *The Taill of Rauf Coilyear: A Scottish Metrical Romance of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. W.H. Browne (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1903), 830.

[2] William Shakespeare, *Mr. William Shakespeares comedies, histories & tragedies*, 1st Folio, 1623 (Oxford: Clarendon Press)

[3] C. Given-Wilson and F. Bériac, "Edward III's Prisoners of War: The Battle of Poitiers and its Context," *English Historical Review* 116 (2001): 808.

[4] A. King, "'According to the custom used in French and Scottish wars': Prisoners and Casualties on the Scottish Marches in the Fourteenth Century," *Journal of Medieval History* 28 (2002): 266.

[5] A.J. Macdonald, "Profit, Politics and Personality: War and the Late Medieval Scottish Nobility," in *Freedom and Authority: Scotland c.1050-c.1650*, ed. T. Brotherstone and D. Ditchburn (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000), 128.

[6] *Chronicles of England, France [...] by Sir John Froissart*, ed. and trans. T. Johnes, 2 vols (London: Longman, 1848), ii, 368; "[…] si trestost et si courtoisement que chascun se content de son campaignon et que au droit departement ils dient Grant merci!" *Œuvres de Froissart*, ed. K. de Lettenhove, 25 vols (Brussels: Devaux, 1867-1977), xiii, 219-20.

[7] S. Boardman, vol. 2 of *The Edinburgh History of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, forthcoming). I am extremely grateful to Dr Boardman for sharing his discoveries with me.

[8] "[…] istum prisonem quem habui in bello ad dividendum inter eos per equalis porciones." *Testamenta Eboracensia or Wills Registered at York*, ed. J. Raine (London: Surtees Society, 1836), i, 19. *North Country Wills*, ed. J. Clay (London: Surtees Society, 1838), i, 265.

[9] S. Boardman, *The Early Stewart Kings: Robert II and Robert III, 1371-1409* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1996), 247, 280.

[10] R. Ambühl, "Prisoners of War in the Hundred Years War: The Golden Age of Private Ransoms" (PhD diss., St Andrews University, 2009).

[11] K.B. McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 19, citing (in translation) *Chronicon Galfridi le Baker de Swynebroke*, ed. E. Thompson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1889), 62-3.

[12] J. Hardyng, *Chronicle from the firste begynnyng of Englande* (London: Grafton, 1543), fol. lxiiii.

[13] M.H. Keen, *The Laws of War in the Late Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1965), 160; R.C. Reid, "The Merkland Cross," *Transactions of the Dumfries &*

Galloway Natural History Society 21 (1939): 219-27, using evidence from the *Acts of the Lords of Council in Civil Causes, AD 1478-95*, no ed. (London: no pub., 1839). Denys Hay also dealt with English practice but never did "deal with the Scottish evidence elsewhere." D. Hay, "The Divisions of the Spoils of War in Fourteenth Century England," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 4 (1954): 109.

[14] R. Ambühl, "Prisoners of War."

[15] Hardyng, *Chronicle*, fol. l.

[16] F. Lachaud, "Dress and Social Status in England before the Sumptuary Laws," in *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England*, ed. P. Coss and M. Keen (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2002), 115.

[17] E. Armstrong, "Heraldic Insights into the Battle of Agincourt," in *Agincourt, 1415: Henry V, Sir Thomas Erpingham and the Triumph of the English Archers*, ed. A. Curry (Stroud: Tempus, 2000), 125-8.

[18] Armstrong, "Heraldic insights", 129; H. Paston-Bedingfield, "Heralds at the Time of Agincourt," in *Agincourt*, ed. Curry, 134.

[19] J. Barber, *The Bruce*, ed. M.P. McDiarmid (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1980-85), xx, 463-4.

[20] *Facsimiles of National Manuscripts from William the Conqueror to Queen Anne*, Part II, ed. T.D. Hardy (Southampton: HMSO, 1868), 6.

[21] T. Aymot, "Inventory of Effects formerly belonging to Sir John Fastolfe [d.1459]," *Archaeologia* 21 (1827): 256.

[22] I have deliberately avoided employing the word *surcoat* as this was only in use in a heraldic context from 1607. See R. Moffat, "Coat armour," in *A Dictionary of Medieval Dress and Textiles*, ed. G. Owen-Crocker (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

[23] R. de Lespinasse, *Les Métiers et corporations de la ville de Paris XIVᵉ-XVIIIᵉ siècle*, 3 vols (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1886-97), ii, 317, citing Bibliothèque nationale, MS fonds français 24069, fol. 15.

[24] For example, there were 16 "bacinetz garnys de blanc couerture" in Beaumaris castle in 1341 and a further 5 "des queux j est burny e vernice". Of the 7 "bacinetz suffisants" one "est burny" at Caernarfon that same year. London, British Library Additional Charter 7189.

[25] Kew, National Archives [hereafter TNA], E101/363/18.

[26] London Metropolitan Archives, Letter-Book E, fol. 113.

[27] TNA, E101/333/4.

[28] TNA, E101/338/11; E36/278.

[29] Oxford, Bodleian Library Ashmole MS 856, printed in C. ffoulkes, *The Armourer and His Craft* (London: Methuen, 1917), 174.

[30] G. Phillips, *Anglo-Scots Wars, 1513-50* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1999), 72. R. Storey, "Technology and Military Policy in Medieval England, *c.* 1250-1350" (PhD thesis, Reading University, 2003), chapter 6. For a detailed discussion of the cost of armour, see J.E. Wiedemer, "Armour and Armor in England, 1450-70: Their Cost and Distribution" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1967), 49-52.

[31] "[…] cinc cens frans d'or pour paier troiz harnas que nous avons fais acheter, lequelz nous envoions en Escoce, au conte de Douglaz, à Jaque de Douglaz, sons