The Battle of Verneuil (17 August 1424): Towards a History of Courage

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This article challenges the theory of battle history set out in the works of Lieutenant-Colonel Alfred Burne. For Burne, tactical factors determined the outcome of any given conflict. His didactic solution to medieval battle reconstruction rested on the application of his theory of 'inherent military probability'. Here a case study is used to reveal the fallacy of Burne's approach. Detailed consideration of the battle of Verneuil (17 August 1424), one of the most important of the Hundred Years' War, exposes Burne's account as a misleading fiction. In its place the author proposes an entirely different model that allows real understanding of the mental outlook of the participants.

In the mid-1950s Lieutenant-Colonel Alfred Burne devised a template for medieval battles still widely used today. Burne's system presented a narrative for all stages of battle. He isolated the tactical element and gave it primacy in explaining outcome. To do this Burne created a concept that came to underpin all his reconstructions. As he explained in one book, 'when in particular doubt or difficulty I have applied the test of what I call "Inherent Military Probability" to the problem and what I.M.P. tells me I usually accept'.[1] Whilst historians have expressed reservations, Burne's methodology has never been subjected to serious scrutiny. His accounts are relied on in standard narratives and his approach to battle reconstruction frequently imitated. This present article will use a case study, that of Verneuil on 17 August 1424, to reassess Burne's approach, and to argue for a radically different interpretation of medieval battle history.

What was inherent military probability? Burne based it on a knowledge of terrain and source material. He deduced a tactical factor from the victor's preparations, which shaped the subsequent narrative, and was used to reconcile problems of evidence, and conflicting contem-

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[1] A.H. Burne, *The Agincourt War* (London, 1956), p. 12. For a recent discussion of Burne's approach to military history, see *The Battle of Agincourt: Sources and Interpretations*, ed. A. Curry (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 400–01.

porary accounts. Thus Burne developed IMP as a way of making sense of medieval battles. But how much can one make sense of them? R.C. Smail, in his *Crusading Warfare,* gave the following warning: 'A commander could make a plan . . . draw up his troops and send them into action. But once he had launched them into battle he had little or no control over them'.[2] Smail emphasized the factors that made medieval warfare so unpredictable. For him, any decision to engage in battle was 'a conscious acceptance of risk'. Burne's reconstruction of the battle of Verneuil formed a striking contrast. It was a confident rehearsal of how superior tactics would determine any outcome. As Burne put it in his summary: 'I cannot call to mind any medieval battle that involved so happy a co-operation of different formations at a critical juncture'.[3]

The present case study will offer a different perspective, drawing on the pioneering work of the Belgian historian J.F. Verbruggen. Verbruggen defined tactical factors such as choice of terrain, the relative strength of the armies, their initial dispositions and changes in approach to battle. But these elements were placed in a larger dynamic: the importance of rallying-points, standards and banners, and war cries, in fast-moving and often chaotic fighting. Above all, he stressed the general mental outlook of the participants. The importance of their accounts lay 'not so much in the meticulous description of battles and marches, as in the accurate portrayal of the state of mind, the desire for battle or the fear of it'. Verbruggen described this as 'the whole psychology of the soldier'.[4] This will be the basis for an alternative methodology, which places tactical factors in a broader context, the role of chivalric ritual in inspiring courage.

The battle of Verneuil was one of the great English successes of the Hundred Years' War, ranking alongside the victories at Crécy, Poitiers and Agincourt. It had also been one of the least understood, so the clarity of Burne's account had considerable impact. Burne described Verneuil as a 'second Agincourt', in which a smaller English army had decisively defeated a much larger French force. Victory was once more determined by English archers. Burne believed they formed a mounted unit that intervened with considerable effect in the main part of the battle, a fierce clash between dismounted men-at-arms. He drew this explanation from the account of an eyewitness, the Burgundian Jean de Waurin, who fought on the English side, and used additional

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[2]   R.C. Smail, *Crusading Warfare, 1097–1193* (Cambridge, 1956), pp. 12–13.
[3]   Burne, *Agincourt War,* p. 210. Burne briefly mentions other factors, such as the courage of the English (p. 206), but their significance is undercut by his reliance on inherent military probability.
[4]   Verbruggen's original 1954 study has now been revised and translated. The quotation is from J.F. Verbruggen, *The Art of Warfare in Western Europe during the Middle Ages,* trans. S. Willard and R.W. Southern (Woodbridge, 1997), p. 18. I aim to develop ideas first expressed in P. Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages,* trans. M. Jones (London, 1984), pp. 250–59, from which the concept of a history of courage is taken.

chronicle material to show the ineffectiveness of the French cavalry and the way the main breakthrough occurred.[5]

Burne's explanation has been frequently copied. Carleton Williams, in her biography of the English commander, John, Duke of Bedford, used sources not consulted by Burne, but came to the same conclusions. These reinforced the view of tactical determinism. She saw Verneuil as a 'text-book battle'. The reserve was launched at the decisive moment. There was perfect coordination between the main units of the English army. The success of their commander, Bedford, 'owed nothing to chance, but was due to a carefully thought-out plan, from which he never deviated'.[6] Burne's account has remained influential and is relied on in surveys of the period, while his key ideas have been universally adopted. Verneuil was an 'easy victory' for the English. An intended mounted envelopment, similar to that attempted at Crécy and Agincourt, was defeated by Bedford's mobile reserve.[7]

Before discussing this major battle it is important to clarify the labels 'English' and 'French'. 'English' meant those supporting the English claim to the throne of France, set out at the treaty of Troyes in 1420. By 1424 this meant recognizing Henry V's younger brother, Bedford, as regent of France on behalf of the infant Henry VI. These included Englishmen, but also French: the majority Normans and Burgundians. 'French' applied to those who refused to accept the treaty of Troyes, and instead recognized Charles VII as rightful king of France. These consisted of many French from the regions of the Loire and the south. At Verneuil they were supported by their allies the Scots, and contingents from Italy and Spain. The distinctions are important, and Burne, who consistently underestimated the French element within Bedford's army, was to neglect vital Norman source material on the battle.

I. A Battle-seeking Campaign?

Burne believed the French had no desire to fight. Their behaviour in the campaign prior to battle seemed to validate this. Both sides were

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[5]   The interpretation is set out in Burne, *Agincourt War,* pp. 196–215, drawing heavily on the eyewitness account of Jean de Waurin, *Recueil des Croniques et Anchiennes Istoires de la Grant Bretaigne,* ed. W. and L. C. P. Hardy, 5 vols, Rolls Series (London, 1864–91), III, pp. 107–22. The English translation, *A Collection of the Chronicles and Ancient Histories of Great Britain by John de Wavrin,* trans. W. Hardy, 3 vols (London, 1864–91), III, pp. 67–82, will be used for all subsequent references, unless otherwise indicated. This version of the battle elaborated on a view first put forward by Sir Charles Oman, *A History of the Art of War in the Middle Ages*, 2 vols (London, 1924), II, pp. 391–92.

[6]   E. Carleton Williams, *My Lord of Bedford, 1389–1435* (London, 1963), pp. 110–17.

[7]   Burne's account is used in works such as E.F. Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century, 1399–1485* (Oxford, 1961), pp. 243–44; M.H. Keen, *England in the Later Middle Ages* (London, 1973), p. 383. Jean Favier, *Dictionnaire de la France Médiévale* (Paris, 1993), p. 955, has victory achieved by Bedford 'sans difficulté', against the numerically superior French. The tactical role of the mobile reserve is stressed in R.E. and T.N. Dupuy, *Encyclopaedia of Military History* (New York, 1977), p. 416.

heading towards Ivry, a small town on the Norman frontier. The castle had fallen to the French, and an English besieging force reached terms with its captain. These allowed a respite, after which Ivry would surrender if not relieved. If relief arrived it would meet the English on an agreed day of battle, a *journée*. This was the chivalric convention that allowed a battle to be set up, under strict rules. Burne did not feel it was significant. Although both sides were approaching with large armies, only the English drew up outside Ivry on the appointed day. Apparently, the French got no further than Nonancourt, some 28 km away. Realizing that they had come too late to prevent the surrender, they swung west to Verneuil, which they entered by trickery. They intended to capture several Norman towns and then retire. The Scots, however, wanted battle. This led to a series of disagreements, only resolved when the English army arrived outside Verneuil on 17 August. But the English were also non-committal. Knowing they held a tactical ascendancy, demonstrated at Agincourt, they took time off, celebrating the feast of the Assumption (15 August) at Evreux instead of maintaining contact with the enemy, an action Burne strongly censured.[8] So Burne had already identified features that would shape the subsequent battle: it was a chance encounter, with the French lacking real motivation and the English confident of victory. We should now reconsider this portrayal.

The preparations on the French side were substantial. The feudal levy had been summoned in areas loyal to Charles VII. Troops were assembled, from as far away as the Dauphiné, to rendezvous with an army forming in the Loire region. These men only expected to be in the field a short period of time (two months), and no siege train was collected, suggesting a battle-seeking strategy.[9] It was an expensive undertaking. An army of 6500 men had been recruited from Scotland. Its wages and expenses were met by the French government and lavish rewards given to its commanders, the Earl of Douglas receiving the duchy of Touraine. The Scottish army contained a high proportion of bowmen, an indication that the French were hoping to counter the

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8   Burne, *Agincourt War,* pp. 199–201. Here Burne followed a revised chronology of the campaign, now commonly accepted, that placed the *journée* on 14 August 1424. I argue below for a return to the old orthodoxy, putting the agreed date of battle at Ivry on 15 August instead. The movements of the army are set out in Figure 1.
9   The summons was issued on 16 March 1424 and soldiers began to assemble from 24 June. It was expected that Charles VII would lead the army in person: R. Delachenal, 'Les gentilshommes dauphinois à la bataille de Verneuil', *Bulletin de l'Académie Delphinale*, 3rd ser., xx (1885), pp. 347–58; P. Guérin, 'Recueil des documents concernant le Poitou contenus dans les registres de la chancellerie de France', *Archives Historiques du Poitou,* xxvi (1896), pp. 417–19. The risk of battle, and the alternatives available to a medieval commander, are discussed in J. Gillingham, 'William the Bastard at War', reprinted in *Anglo-Norman Warfare,* ed. M. Strickland (Bury St Edmunds, 1992), pp. 143–60.

highly effective fire of the English.[10] The soldiers themselves were prepared for a fight. They had marched north from Tours, pausing at Châteaudun before entering enemy territory. Here the town records showed French and Scottish soldiers drawing up wills and settling their affairs. Battle was expected. Macé Trigneau left the abbey of Saint-Avi a goblet of silver and gold and other precious gifts, so that if he perished at Ivry prayers would be said for his soul. Jean Aubelin left his goods in the keeping of Jean Cador, who was to dispose of them should he not return.[11]

Burne's interpretation was based on an influential contemporary source, the chronicle of Guillaume Cousinot, chancellor of the Duke of Orléans. Cousinot's account was critical of the foreigners in Charles VII's army, and particularly hostile towards the Scots. He believed the French commanders were right to avoid battle and to try to exploit the lack of English troops in the region. Their sound policy was countermanded by the Scots, and there followed a divided council of war, with many young French aristocrats impatiently supporting the call for action.[12] Cousinot was employing a *topos*, hasty youth opposing the wise counsel of elders, which was a feature of many medieval narratives. He also reflected the surge of anti-Scottish feeling after the battle, when they provided a convenient scapegoat for a disastrous defeat.[13] Burne relied heavily on his account of the campaign. Yet it has to be tested carefully.

The senior French commander was Jean d'Harcourt, Count of Aumâle. He had recently won an important victory against the English, at La Gravelle in Maine (26 September 1423), and had followed it with a raid into western Normandy. Aumâle wrote to Charles VII describing this achievement in rousing terms. It was a feat of arms that showed the French could now vanquish the feared longbow. Cavalry attack, unsuccessful at Agincourt, had been mastered to turn the English position. Aumâle appealed to Charles to provide a larger army that

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[10] B.G.H. Ditcham, 'The Employment of Foreign Mercenary Troops in the French Royal Armies, 1415–70' PhD thesis, (Edinburgh University, 1979), p. 46, puts the composition of the army at 2500 men-at-arms and 4000 archers. Scottish archers had been recruited by the French from the autumn of 1418, but only in relatively small numbers: P. Contamine, *Guerre, État et Société à la Fin du Moyen Âge* (Paris, 1972), p. 253.

[11] J. Augis, 'La bataille de Verneuil (jeudi 17 août 1424) vue de Châteaudun', *Bulletin de la Société Dunoise,* XVI (1932–35), pp. 116–21.

[12] *Chronique de la Pucelle, ou Chronique de Cousinot,* ed. A. Vallet de Viriville (Paris, 1859), pp. 222–24.

[13] B.G.H. Ditcham, ' "Mutton Guzzlers and Wine Bags": Foreign Soldiers and Native Reactions in Fifteenth-century France', in *Power, Culture and Religion in France,* ed. C.T. Allmand (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 1–13. And on boasting by young aristocrats, see M. Strickland, *War and Chivalry: The Perception of War in England and Normandy, 1066–1217* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 107, citing the example of the council of war before the battle of Lincoln in 1141.

would invade Normandy and defeat the English in decisive battle.[14] News of Aumâle's success, and another victory against the Burgundians at La Buissière, produced a sense of euphoria. An ambitious plan was devised for the new campaigning season. The English would be brought to battle and defeated, and Charles's army would then march to Reims to secure his coronation. With this exciting prospect in mind the French king wrote to Tournai on 9 October 1423. His letter amplified the plan, and referred to a massive army being recruited in Scotland for the purpose.[15] The Scots were the vehicles of an aggressive strategy, not the instigators of it. Their army, which arrived in France in the spring of 1424, was to strengthen an offensive which would destroy the English in battle.

It is important to compare Cousinot's account with the majority of chronicle sources. Most tell a different story. On the day appointed for battle the two armies were only 2 leagues (9–10 km) apart. French reconnaissance showed the terrain was not advantageous. Jean de Waurin, present with the English army, caught the drama of the occasion. Bedford was ready to receive the surrender of Ivry. It was known that the French were close by. Suddenly there was a great tumult. Some forty riders appeared, sent to reconnoitre the field of battle. Waurin reported that 'they saw they could not advantageously fight the English *at this time*' (my italics).[16] Other sources provided more detail. The French mounted scouts saw Bedford's position was too well set out. His troops had been deployed intelligently, on a plain protected by a large hill, so that they could not be attacked in the rear.[17] The crucial issue at Ivry was terrain. Inexplicably, Burne ignored it.

Cousinot does alert us to two important factors: the lateness of part of the French force and a disagreement in their council of war. These can now be interpreted differently. The French were planning to use heavy cavalry against the English. A key part of this force was Lombard horsemen recruited from the duchy of Milan. Document evidence showed that this vital contingent had been delayed, and only passed

[14] For Aumâle's victory, see J. Le Fizelier, 'La bataille de la Brossinière', *Revue Historique et Archéologique du Maine,* I (1876), pp. 28–42. His letter to Charles VII is printed in *Revue des Questions Historiques,* LXXXVI (1909), p. 570.

[15] B. Chevalier, 'Les Écossais dans les armées de Charles VII jusqu'à la bataille de Verneuil', *Jeanne d'Arc: une Époque, un Rayonnement* (Paris, 1982), p. 89.

[16] Waurin, III, p. 70.

[17] *Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris, 1405–1449,* ed. A. Tuetey (Paris, 1881), pp. 194–5. Future references from this source will be taken from *A Parisian Journal, 1405–1449,* trans. J. Shirley (Oxford, 1968). The strength of the site is also noted in the Picard Chronicle, Bibliothèque Nationale (henceforth BN), MS Fr. 23018, fol. 449*v*. It is important to stress Bedford's skilful use of natural terrain, for the field of battle remained unaltered. At La Capelle in 1339 Philip VI of France refused to attack the English positions, despite a challenge to battle, because they had been heavily fortified: J. Sumption, *The Hundred Years' War: Trial by Battle* (London, 1990), pp. 285–88. Philip's challenge had stipulated the absence of ditches and hedges, and that the battle was to take place on even ground. Here the English were drawn up on the flat plain, with no obstacles in front of their army. I owe this point to Dr Matthew Strickland.

through Tours on 13 August, a week after the rest of the army.[18] If battle was joined at Ivry it could not be deployed in time. If the French swung south-west they would be able to unite with their cavalry and fight on more favourable ground. However, it meant breaching the convention of the *journée,* the strict agreement to fight on a certain day at a certain place. Waurin told how the captain of Ivry showed Bedford the French lords' promise of support, with seals of authentication attached.[19] Disregarding this compromised personal honour, and may have left some in the camp unhappy. Pragmatism carried the day, but the chivalric element, consistently underestimated by Burne, is crucial to an understanding of campaign and battle.

Confirmation of French resolve is found in an episode relegated by Burne to a footnote. Between Ivry and Verneuil several Norman and Picard knights deserted the English. Burne believed they returned to their homes. In fact they went over to the French.[20] These men were taking a colossal risk. They had sworn a personal oath of loyalty to Bedford. The English would regard them as traitors. One of the suspects, Charles de Longueval, seigneur de Mégrement, was seized by the garrison of Chartres in the battle's aftermath. He was imprisoned and had his estates confiscated.[21] Longueval was eventually able to clear his name. Guillaume d'Estouteville, seigneur de Torcy, went over to the French with his entire retinue. He died in battle and his lands in the Pays de Caux were granted out to others.[22] To take such a step the defectors must have been confident that the French intended to fight and their chances of victory were high.

It seems unlikely that the march south-west was to avoid the English. Bedford and his commanders were angry that the town of Verneuil was captured by a ruse, the false claim that the English had already been defeated at Ivry. But the town's capture raised a more worrying issue. The French invading army contained those who had been great landowners in Normandy before the establishment of the English regime. Their arrival posed a question of allegiance, emphasized by Estouteville's sudden defection. Verneuil was part of the patrimony of the young Duke of Alençon, present in the French army, and he had support within the town. The French commander-in-chief, Aumâle, was anxious to recover his Norman estates and had encouraged an

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[18] Archives Communales de Tours, CC21, fol. 95.
[19] Waurin, III, p. 69.
[20] The fullest detail on the defection is given in the Picard Chronicle, BN, MS Fr. 23018, fol. 449*v*, which stated that it happened during the night of 15 August. According to Waurin, Estouteville and Longueval deserted because they thought the French would win, on account of their superior numbers.
[21] The process against Longueval is found in Archives Nationales (henceforth AN), Collection Dom Lenoir, 22, fol. 91.
[22] Estouteville was slain at Verneuil. Material on his retinue is drawn from AN, JJ172/600.

uprising to coincide with the invasion.[23] Any delay by the English would show doubt of their own cause, the validity of Henry VI's rule over France. Rather than avoiding engagement, the French wished to meet their opponents on a site of their choosing. The majority of chronicles made this clear: the French knew the English were coming and prepared accordingly. The armies would meet on the open plain north-east of Verneuil, ideal cavalry country. When English heralds renewed contact with the French, and asked if they still intended to offer battle, they were met with a blunt answer: their commander should come as quickly as he could, they were ready to receive him.[24] Waurin, who fought in the battle, brought out the drama of the occasion. As the English army emerged from the forest of Piseux and came out on the wide plain, the town of Verneuil was clearly visible. In front of its ramparts was the entire strength of the French army, in full battle array. Waurin was moved to declare: 'I have never seen a finer company, nor any place where there were so many nobles as there were there, nor better ordered, *or showing greater appearance of wanting to fight*' (my italics).[25] The movements of the armies are shown in Figure 1.

Burne believed that the English were overconfident, that their commander, Bedford, 'had taken the measure of the French generals', and they were not taking the campaign seriously.[26] Yet the preparation of their army showed real urgency. When intelligence revealed the French were to raise the siege of Ivry with a great army, the English decided to resist them. Part of their force was drawn from the garrisons of Normandy. Almost every garrison was required to send men and, unusually, most of their captains were also to serve.[27] There was an obvious risk in denuding the country of troops, and calling up so many experienced captains. The gravity of the situation merited such a step. There was a sense of a presence-list, a gathering of soldiers of distinction before a great, climactic battle. It was reminiscent of the roll-call of captains before battle on the plain of Troy, the epic martial conflict

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[23] *Chroniques de Perceval de Cagny,* ed. H. Moranville (Paris, 1902), pp. 133–34. Information on Aumâle is taken from AN, JJ173/104. The lands formerly held by both men in eastern Normandy are marked in Figure 1 (based on the research of Gareth Prosser).

[24] College of Arms, MS M9, fol. 54. This source, known as Basset's Chronicle, is closely linked to Sir John Fastolf, and thus the circle of the Regent Bedford: B.J. Rowe, 'A Contemporary Account of the Hundred Years' War from 1415 to 1429', *English Historical Review,* XLI (1926), pp. 504–13.

[25] Waurin, III, p. 73.

[26] Burne, *Agincourt War,* p. 200.

[27] The list of captains present is taken from the Norman receiver-general's account: BN, MS Fr. 4485, fols. 295–306. The mood of anxiety comes across in the records of Mantes (Archives Communales de Mantes, CC23, fols. 21–21*v*), where captain and garrison contingent were serving in the army, along with the town militia. A stream of messengers attempted to gain news of the engagement. The composition of the army is discussed in A. Curry, 'English Armies in the Fifteenth Century', in *Arms, Armies and Fortifications in the Hundred Years' War,* ed. A. Curry and M. Hughes (Woodbridge, 1994), p. 63.
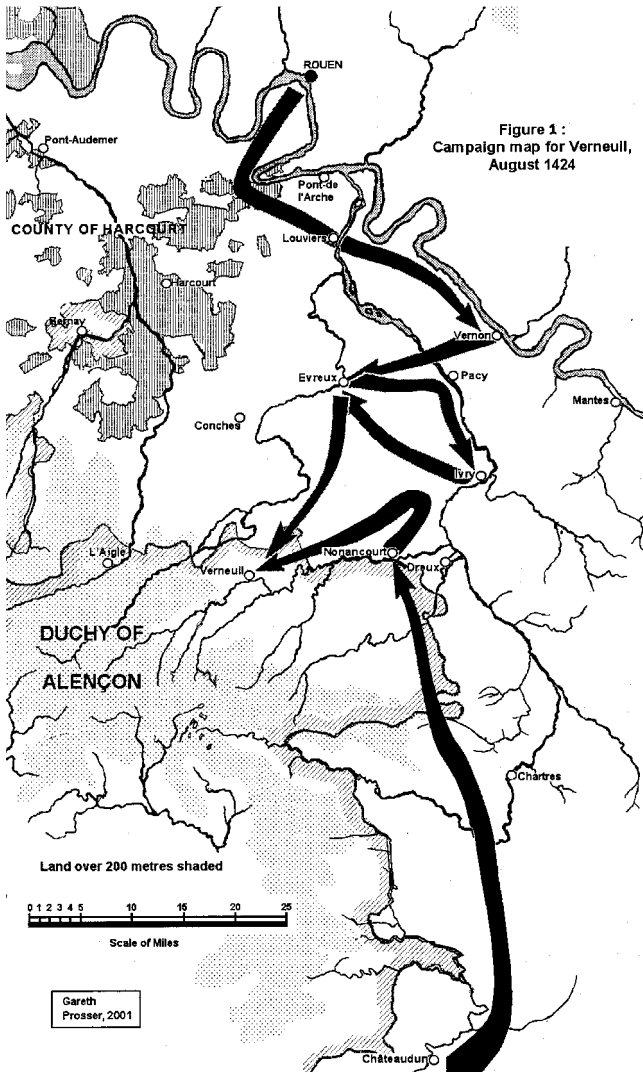
Figure 1 A plan of the campaign of August 1424, showing the diversion of the battle site from Ivry to Verneuil. The movements of the French are shown from their mustering point at Châteaudun, the English from Rouen and Vernon. Areas of potential support for the French army, the duchy of Alençon and the county of Harcourt, are marked (with thanks to Gareth Prosser).

of enduring fascination to its medieval audience, celebrated in Lydgate's *Troy Book.*[28]

Similar purpose marked the summoning of the Norman feudal levy, at Vernon in eastern Normandy on 3 July 1424. All landowners were expected to attend, and if prevented by age or infirmity to send a sub-

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[28] For the assembly of men of valour on the plain of Troy, see *Lydgate's Troy Book,* ed. H. Bergen, Early English Text Society, xcvii (1906), pp. 395–415.

stitute. In the past there had been some laxity around this stipulation. Here Bedford enforced it to the letter. He supervised the levy personally, and a list was made of any fiefholder who failed to respond. The sanctions were punitive, confiscating lands and goods from absentees, only rescindied if a proxy had been sent.[29] Bedford's firmness showed the importance of the Norman levy. Unlike other formations, it consisted solely of men-at-arms, of considerable value if the English were planning to fight the battle on foot. Since the French also wanted to appeal to the Normans, there was a moral advantage in having most of the duchy's nobility lining up on the English side. Sources closest to Bedford were careful to describe his assembling army as Anglo-Norman, a feature neglected by Burne, who left them out of his battle plan entirely.[30]

Burne's picture of English confidence rested largely on previous scholarship, which laid out a basic chronology of the campaign. This established the proposed date of battle at Ivry as 14 August 1424. When the French captured Verneuil instead the English merely returned to Evreux, where the following day (15 August) they remained inactive, with their commander, Bedford, celebrating the feast of the Assumption. Martin Simpson, who established this dating, was highly critical of English conduct. In his eyes the 'sojourn' at Evreux served no useful military purpose. Having made contact with the enemy, Bedford abandoned the initiative for two days, effectively taking 'a holiday at the crisis of the campaign'.[31] Burne, adopting Simpson's version of events, echoed these sentiments: 'However we look upon it, we cannot palliate such a transgression of an elementary principle of strategy, one which makes it impossible to rate John of Bedford in the very highest rank of military commanders'.[32] For Burne the only possible explanation was the tactical mastery of the English, manifested in the course of the battle. This vital order of chronology, followed by all subsequent authorities, must now be re-examined.

Simpson's argument rested on his interpretation of a comment of Jean de Waurin: that Bedford spent the whole of the feast of the Assumption at Evreux, in honour of the Virgin Mary (a loose trans-

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[29] Names of those who did not respond were sent on to Bedford, who dealt with them personally (BN, MS Fr. 26047/257). The enaction of severe penalties is shown in the confiscation of the lands of one absentee, Philipot de Saint-Martin. Saint-Martin gained their restitution by demonstrating that a proxy had been sent to Verneuil on his behalf: Archives Départementales de la Seine-Maritime (henceforth ADSM), 2E, 1/171, fols. 391–92. On the general use of this levy, see A. Curry, 'Le service féodal en Normandie pendant l'occupation anglaise (1417–1450)', *La France Anglaise au Moyen Âge: Actes du 111 Congrès National des Sociétés Savantes* (Paris, 1988), pp. 233–57.

[30] Thomas Basin emphasized that the English had with them 'all the nobility of Normandy': T. Basin, *Histoire de Charles VII,* ed. C. Samaran, 2 vols (Paris, 1933–44), I, p. 92. See also College of Arms, MS M9, fol. 53, where it was said of Bedford 'il assembla tout a ce qu'il pot bonnement, tant anglois comme normans'.

[31] M.A. Simpson, 'The campaign of Verneuil', *English Historical Review,* XLIX (1934), pp. 93–100; the quotation is from p. 99.

[32] Burne, *Agincourt War,* p. 200.

lation of 'la sejourna le duc tout le jour Nostre Dame en l'honneur de la glorieuse vierge'). Although Waurin put this in the build-up of preparations, that is, before Bedford and his army left Evreux for the expected battle, Simpson argued that the chronicler had in fact inserted this information in the wrong place. He supported his hypothesis by translating a further phrase of Waurin, that the surrender of Ivry was to take place on 'la nuit de l'Assumption Nostre Dame', as 'the eve of the Assumption of Our Lady' (i.e., 14 August), allowing the English army to return to Evreux before the feast.[33] Simpson produced two pieces of evidence to support his assertion. The first was the statement by two contemporary Parisian authorities that the reduction of Ivry took place on the 14th. The second was a receipt (*quittance*) from one of the captains in Bedford's army, summoned to appear at Ivry on 14 August for the *journée* with the French.[34] Although Simpson's dating and sequence of events have been generally accepted, his argument is less convincing than first seems.

The chivalric protocol of the *journée* allows an alternative reading of Simpson's evidence. To offer *journée* the besieging army had to be drawn up in battle array, on the appointed site, for a certain number of hours. Normally this was from *prime* (6 a.m.) to *soleil couchant*. In other words, the *journée* customarily ended when the sun set.[35] Hence the passage from Waurin could be translated more literally as 'nightfall of the feast of the Assumption' (i.e., 15 August). To effect the *journée* properly the besiegers had to be in place the previous day, to block the approach route to the town or castle, and to be ready for the formal assembly, in battle array, at *prime* the following morning. Thus captains in Bedford's army would arrive the day before the *journée*, and this explains the summons on 14 August (recorded in the *quittance*), and also the possible confusion of the Parisian accounts, which were civilian sources. As one of the best informed soldier's chronicles instead gives 15 August as the agreed date, the evidence presented by Simpson remains inconclusive, and needs to be tested further.[36]

Crucially, Simpson's version of events goes against the sense of contemporary accounts. Simpson believed that on hearing of the French capture of Verneuil, Bedford abandoned the initiative and took time off. Yet every chronicler emphasized the opposite, the speed and urgency of the English response. Waurin related:

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[33] Simpson, 'Verneuil', p. 97.
[34] *Journal de Clément de Fauquembergue, Greffier du Parlement de Paris, 1417–1435*, ed. A. Tuetey, 3 vols (Paris, 1903–15), II, p. 140; *Parisian Journal*, p. 196. The *quittance* from John Montgomery, captain of Domfront, is now filed under BN, MS Fr. 26285/454.
[35] This is brought out in the surrender terms for Guise. *Journée* was to be held 'depuis l'heure de prime jusques a soleil couchant': *Chronique d'Enguerran Monstrelet*, ed. L. Douet d'Arcq, 6 vols (Paris, 1857–62), IV, pp. 199–205.
[36] BN, MS Fr. 23018, fol. 449v. This anonymous Picard chronicler was closely linked to Bedford's Burgundian ally Jean of Luxembourg, and thus well-informed on the war effort.

> When the Duke of Bedford was veritably informed that the French were in great force before the town of Verneuil . . . he deliberated with his people, and swore by Saint George never to rest or halt until he should have fought his enemies, unless they fled shamefully; and he immediately had published with sound of trumpet that everyone should turn out and make ready to follow him.[37]

The Bourgeois of Paris (a source used by Simpson) said of the French change of plan: 'the Regent, the Duke of Bedford, moved with his whole army as fast as he could and followed the Armagnacs [the supporters of Charles VII] night and day'. The Norman, Thomas Basin, gave a similar scenario: 'when they realised what had happened the English collected their forces from all sides and marched quickly and bravely towards Verneuil to give battle to their enemies'. Basset's Chronicle, a source particularly close to Bedford, described how the English rode hard (*chevaucha droit*) after their adversaries.[38]

Document evidence resolves the issue. The Norman receiver-general's account detailed the movement of Bedford's army from Evreux to Ivry. It set out on 14 August, stopped briefly at Pacy, and reached Ivry later the same day. On 15 August, with his troops drawn up for battle, Bedford sent a messenger back to Rouen with a last letter for his wife. The date of the surrender of Ivry was clearly given as 15 August.[39] Further confirmation is provided in the wording of the pardon (*lettre de rémission*) issued to the townspeople of Verneuil by the regent the day after the battle. The detail given here is specific: the date of the *journée* was 15 August, and the French had made it clear that they accepted the terms and would fight on that day.[40] This fresh evidence revises the accepted chronology. It shows that the English did not take a holiday at a moment of crisis. Back in 1895 the French historian Germain Lefèvre-Pontalis provided the most plausible reading of Waurin's statement, from the order of events given by the chronicler, that the day spent by Bedford in Evreux was the Sunday before the feast of the Assumption (13 August).[41] The following morning the English army rode out of the town.

It is important to understand the anger felt when the stipulations of the *journée* were breached. The formality of such agreements is

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[37] Waurin, III, p. 72.
[38] *Parisian Journal*, p. 197; Basin, *Histoire*, I, pp. 90–99; College of Arms, MS M9, fol. 54. M. Harbinson, 'Verneuil – the events of 17 August 1424: an examination of the sources and the account of Thomas Basin', *The Hobilar*, XXX, (1998), pp. 18–22, provides an accurate translation of Basin; the quotation is from p. 18. Harbinson uses this Norman source to make a valuable reappraisal of the battle.
[39] BN, MS Fr. 4485, fols. 295, 412.
[40] Bedford's pardon is printed in *Actes de la Chancellerie d'Henry VI Concernant la Normandie sous la Domination Anglaise*, ed. P. Le Cacheux, 2 vols (Paris, 1907–08), I, pp. 103–4. The date of the proposed *journée* is clearly given as 15 August: 'le quinziesme jour de ce present mois d'aoust, noz ennemis ou adversaires, qui publioient en ce temps de venir combatre devant Ivry cedit jour'.
[41] G. Lefèvre-Pontalis, 'La guerre des partisans dans la Haute-Normandie (1424–1429)', *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, LVI (1895), pp. 468–69.

revealing. They delineated the field of battle: at Grancey in 1434 these marked the boundary by named trees and buildings.[42] They gave the day and sometimes an exact time for the engagement. These features were intended to secure fair conditions: the analogy is with a judicial duel. Breaching them sullied honour. Etienne de Vignoles, besieged in the fortress of Vitry, emphasized the seriousness of such arrangements: 'If we do not surrender on the day appointed we hold ourselves false, wicked and for traitors . . . And if there is any fault on our part, they may hold us, and each one of us, dishonoured.'[43] The force of this is clear from Bedford's battle reports. He stressed the falsehood of the enemy and their trickery. It had been a matter of honour to confront them. The word chosen by Bedford, *poursuivre,* in the sense of chase to death or capture, is striking.[44] This was not a chance encounter between two armies. It was a carefully orchestrated engagement, where the French had broken the accepted rules, sworn on the solemn oath of their commanders, to gain the advantage. Here, application of inherent military probability to the mind of a commander prevents real understanding of his outlook.

Instead we return to what Smail characterized as 'the conscious acceptance of risk'. The English were substantially outnumbered. Estimating the strength of medieval armies is notoriously difficult. We have document evidence for some of the detachments, chronicle assessments, drawn from the heralds' tally, and contemporary letters and reports. Burne's estimate seems largely right. The English had around 8000 men; the French between 14 000 and 16 000.[45] At Ivry the English had been in a prepared defensive position. At Verneuil they were advancing to an open battle in ideal cavalry country. As one contemporary observed, they had left a well-placed site for a wide plain with nothing to protect them.[46] Waurin's report of the English battle orders showed Bedford was aware of the danger. The archers would carry sharpened stakes, to be driven into the ground to break the force of a mounted attack. The army would fight on foot, and their horses would be tethered together, three or four deep, next to the baggage

[42] M.H. Keen, *The Laws of War in the Later Middle Ages* (London, 1965), pp. 129–30.
[43] Ibid., p. 130.
[44] This is found in Bedford's report of the victory to Sir Thomas Rempston: R.A. Newhall, *The English Conquest of Normandy, 1416–1424* (New Haven, 1924), pp. 319–20. For the chivalric dimension to leadership: M.K. Jones, 'Somerset, York and the Wars of the Roses', *English Historical Review,* CIV (1989), pp. 285–307. I explore the theme in a forthcoming book for the Tempus military campaign series, *Bosworth, 1485: Psychology of a Battle.*
[45] The relative strength of the two armies is discussed in Newhall, *English Conquest,* pp. 315–17. Newhall estimated the size of the English force at Ivry as 10 000 men, but this was before the defection of the Norman and Picard knights and the loss of the Burgundian contingent. Burne followed Newhall's calculation.
[46] *Parisian Journal,* pp. 195–98.

train.[47] It was hoped that this living wall would prevent the French cavalry outflanking their position and attacking from the rear.

If tactical factors alone determined when battle should be fought or avoided, there was little ground for overconfidence. These conditions were simply too unfavourable to risk engagement. But for Bedford and his captains this was no longer just a matter of tactics. It was about honour and courage. The distinction between bravery and rashness was well understood. A prudent commander avoided unnecessary risks or the pursuit of personal glory.[48] The English were mindful of the battle of Baugé some three years earlier, when a combined Franco-Scottish army had defeated Thomas, Duke of Clarence. Clarence, who had not been present at Agincourt, had rushed precipitately into battle, and may have fallen into an ambush.[49] Bedford maintained his reconnaissance, sending an advance detachment under the Earl of Suffolk to ensure their way was clear of traps. Nevertheless, willingness to take risks for a right cause was the hallmark of real honour, or 'worship'. As the chivalric aphorism put it: 'do the right thing, come what may'.[50]

II. The Role of the Lombard Cavalry

We now return to Burne's description of the battle. His view is encapsulated in the plan of the engagement (see Figure 2). The French and Italian cavalry were placed on the wings of their army. At the start, they rode round the English position in an attempt to penetrate it. They were met by an English mounted guard, separated from the baggage in the form of a mobile reserve, which defeated the cavalry contingents, one after another. Meanwhile the main English force of

[47] Waurin, III, p. 74. Placing the horse-wall adjacent to the wagons was unusual, and a sign of the risks the English were taking. A wagon fortress was normally constructed with the baggage and horses inside, as at Mons-en-Pévèle and Crécy: K. de Vries, *Infantry Warfare in the Early Fourteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 1996), p. 193.

[48] *The Boke of Noblesse,* ed. J.G. Nichols, Roxburghe Club (London, 1860), p. 65, discusses 'courageuse' behaviour, distinguishing between the prudence of the 'manly' man and the rashness of the 'hardy' man. But the overriding importance of honour is rightly stressed in D.A.L. Morgan, 'From a Death to a View: Lewis Robessart, John Huizinga and the Political Significance of Chivalry', in *Chivalry in the Renaissance,* ed. S. Anglo (Woodbridge, 1990), pp. 93–98.

[49] College of Arms, MS. M9, fols. 42v–43; *The Brut, or The Chronicles of England,* ed. F.W. Brie, Early English Text Society, old ser., CXXXI, CXXXVI, 2 vols (London, 1906–08), II, p. 427; *Parisian Journal,* p. 159.

[50] A translation of 'fais ce que dois, adviegne que peut', from Guillaume de Machaut's chivalric text, *Le Comfort d'Ami.* On this see F. Autrand, 'La déconfiture: la bataille de Poitiers (1356) à travers quelques textes français des quatorzième et quinzième siècles', in *Guerre et Société en France, en Angleterre et en Bourgogne,* ed. P. Contamine, C. Giry-Deloison and M.H. Keen (Lille, 1991), pp. 95–96; C. Rogers, 'Edward III and the Dialectics of Strategy', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society,* 6th ser., IV (1994), pp. 94–95. I have enlarged on this theme in an earlier case study: M.K. Jones, 'The Relief of Avranches (1439): an English Feat of Arms at the End of the Hundred Years' War', in *England in the Fifteenth Century,* ed. N. Rogers (Stamford, 1994), pp. 42–55.
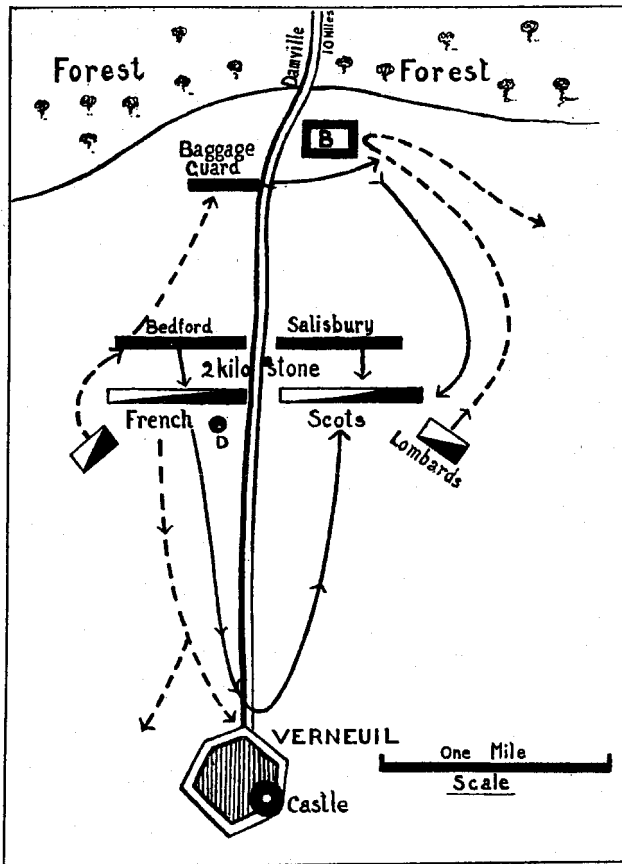
Sketch Map 7; VERNEUIL

D Ferme St. Denis   ⟶ } English
B English baggage   -•◄--▸ } French

Figure 2 Burne's diagram of Verneuil shaped the account of the battle. Taken from his *Agincourt War*, with permission of the publisher.

dismounted men-at-arms, interspersed with archers, advanced in two divisions. The French, also dismounted, had less hunger for the fight. Bedford's division broke through their line, and pursued them back to Verneuil, where many were slain attempting to gain entrance to the town. His troops returned to the battlefield, where fierce fighting continued between Salisbury's division and the Scots. Bedford's force now struck from the rear, and the victorious mobile reserve from the flanks. The resulting envelopment overwhelmed the Scottish position and led to complete victory. This explained a number of features. The intervention of the reserve harmonized with Waurin's belief that English archers joined the main line, with a great shout, which encouraged the troops.[51] It accounted for the horrific casualties suffered by

[51] Waurin, III, p. 77.

the Scots. The cohesion of the English battle plan, and the happy cooperation of the various units, is superficially attractive. But on closer examination the facade begins to crack.

Burne mentioned in passing a reference by one of his sources to a body of English fleeing the battlefield. In his view this was the result of a temporary panic, which occurred while the mobile reserve was beating off the French cavalry. Their preoccupation allowed the Lombard horsemen to pillage the baggage train, before they in turn were driven off.[52] But Burne's explanation does not stand scrutiny. The source in question did not describe the flight of a few pages and varlets, but no fewer than 500 English soldiers. And they were not fleeing out of a temporary panic, but because they believed the English had lost the battle.[53] According to Burne this contingent should not have been within the baggage train anyway, for it had already separated to form the mobile reserve. And nothing had occurred to justify the dramatic announcement that the battle was lost. The flight of combatants during battle would provoke severe punishment; indeed the chronicler related that the captain involved was subsequently executed.

Further investigation reveals the episode as more serious than Burne had imagined. The document evidence of later pardons showed widespread flight, involving a substantial number of soldiers. The small garrison of Conches was faced with the sudden arrival of English mounted troops, in disarray, some fighting each other. When questioned they announced the battle of Verneuil was lost. At Bernay a body of troops publicized the regent's defeat. When news of a French victory reached Pont Audemer it provoked a local uprising. Fleeing English soldiers were robbed of their horses and armour. Small uprisings took place in the surrounding countryside, as those loyal to the English regime desperately tried to ascertain the truth.[54] A later reward to Jean Le Moine, acting *bailli* of Evreux, brought out the atmosphere of panic and fear. Le Moine was the senior official present in the town when news arrived of Bedford's defeat. He rallied the inhabitants, exhorting them to remain loyal to Henry VI, and through his vigilance prevented insurrection.[55] This evidence makes clear that many English soldiers fled the battlefield, in the genuine belief that their army had suffered a disaster. Their testimony was serious enough to encourage revolts against English rule. This forces us to discard Burne's view of an easy victory. Something had gone terribly wrong. What was it?

The French had taken particular care in their recruitment of Lombard cavalry. They wished to use them to maximum effect. This had led them to abandon the *journée* at Ivry and instead seek battle at Verneuil. The chief characteristic of this force was the substantial armour worn by the horses, protecting them from the arrows of the English

[52]   Burne, *Agincourt War,* pp. 207–08.
[53]   *The Brut,* II, pp. 564–67; the reference to the flight of soldiers is on p. 565.
[54]   Le Cacheux, *Actes,* I, pp. 97–99, 124–27, 173–76.
[55]   AN, Collection Dom Lenoir, 22, fol. 99.

longbow. The Milanese were the most advanced armourers in Europe, and had perfected the use of horse armour. The captain of this contingent was a Lombard, named by the French Le Borgne Caqueran. He had first come into French service in 1421 when he served with a small force of Lombards against Burgundians threatening Lyons. He was involved in cavalry recruitment in 1422, and the following year was promoted to one of Charles VII's principal captains in south-eastern France.[56] It was here in September 1423 that a significant military experiment was made. A unit of several hundred Lombard heavy cavalry, with full horse armour, was deployed against a Burgundian force at La Buissière in the Maconnais. They were successful and regarded as a chief reason for the French victory.[57] The following year Charles VII's council of war decided to recruit a much larger number and make them the spearhead of their battle plan against the English. Borgne Caqueran was sent back to Italy, and intensive diplomacy led to a military alliance with Francesco Visconti, duke of Milan, at Abiate on 17 February 1424. This paved the way for the arrival of a large body of armoured cavalry that summer, at a strength of around 2000 men.[58]

Deployment of this heavy cavalry was the French ace in the pack. It could be used on the flanks of their army. But the superb protection offered to the horses, and the quality armour of their riders, allowed a different tactical formation. Here we need to refer to Vegetius, the Roman military manual still enormously influential in the medieval period. Although Vegetius stressed that cavalry were normally to be posted on the wings, he also pointed out that heavily armoured cavalry could better be used in front of a battle formation, where they could breach the enemy line.[59] Here Vegetius realized that force of impact was crucial. It allowed a tactic similar to the deployment of a line of elephants, a frontal attack to disrupt the enemy position.

Such a formation would have the additional advantage of surprise. The English had little knowledge of the battle of La Buissière, or experience against the Lombard cavalry, who had been deployed away from the main arena of war. They had scant intelligence on Caqueran's new mounted force, since it had arrived at literally the last moment of the campaign. It seems they expected the plan attempted at Agincourt, and successfully carried off at La Gravelle, a deployment of cavalry in a flanking manoeuvre. According to Waurin and the Bourgeois

[56] Ditcham, 'Employment', pp. 29–30. The use of full horse armour is stressed in Basin, *Histoire*, I, p. 92; *The Book of Pluscarden,* ed. F.J.H. Skene (Edinburgh, 1880), p. 272. These references indicate the horses were barded in full plate. On the development of horse armour in Italy in the early fifteenth century: C. Blair, *European Armour circa 1066 to circa 1700* (London, 1958), pp. 184–87.

[57] Ditcham, 'Employment', pp. 41–42.

[58] Chronicle estimates of this force vary from 500 to 3000. I have taken the figure of 2000 from the records of Tours, which detail Caqueran's force passing through the town on 13 August 1424: Archives Communales de Tours, CC21, fol. 95.

[59] *Vegetius: Epitome of Military Science*, ed. and trans. N.P. Milner (Liverpool, 1993), pp. 98, 111. On its general use: D. Bornstein, 'Military manuals in Fifteenth-Century England', *Medieval Studies,* XXXVII (1975), pp. 469–77.

of Paris, the English anticipated the Lombards would try to turn their position once battle was under way.[60] Hence the importance of setting up the horse wall, with the horses coupled together and fastened, with the wagons to the flank, to prevent attack from behind. The possibility of using heavy cavalry in a frontal attack gave the battle a unique, unpredictable quality. Although a one-off, destined not to be repeated, it was the key tactical factor. But Burne, seeking a determinist view, was only looking for tactics from the winning side.

Burne's placing of the cavalry was again heavily reliant on Cousinot's chronicle. Cousinot characterized the Lombards as interested in plunder, not fighting. He put them on the wing of the French army, where they struck the flank of the English archers but passed round them to plunder the baggage, after which they did nothing further.[61] Cousinot's criticism was echoed by other French court chronicles, and from the English side, by the Bourgeois of Paris. The English were hostile towards the Lombard contingent for a different reason: during their plunder of the baggage train they had killed a number of pages. This was regarded as an unchivalric act against non-combatants, and the Bourgeois repeated the taunt that the Lombards were more interested in plunder than real fighting.[62]

On the face of it this justified Burne's thinking the Lombard cavalry were a failure. But again he was selective in his use of material, neglecting the accounts of the battle from Norman sources. Thomas Basin drew on a strong oral tradition, derived from the nobility of the Pays de Caux region. Basin described how the Italian horsemen, who were completely armoured, were drawn up in front of the French line, with the infantry following behind them. They charged straight at the English position with such force that they carried through the entire battle line. The shock of their impact was terrifying. Men-at-arms were knocked sprawling to the ground. Others divided, voluntarily or involuntarily, to let the horsemen through with the least possible damage.[63] Their frontal attack was graphically portrayed in another Norman chronicle, with English soldiers forced to drop to the ground to let the Lombard cavalry ride over them. Again it was emphasized that the horsemen were able to pass through the entire battle line. The *Book*

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[60] Waurin, III, p. 74; *Parisian Journal*, p. 197; C. Phillpotts, 'The French Plan of Battle during the Agincourt Campaign', *English Historical Review*, XCIX (1984), pp. 59–66. The background to this tactical formation is provided in J.F. Verbruggen, 'La tactique de la chevalerie française de 1340 à 1415', *Extrait des Publications de l'Université de l'État à Elisabethville*, I (1961), pp. 39–47. I am grateful to Dr Matthew Bennett for providing me with a copy of this article.

[61] *Chronique de la Pucelle*, p. 225.

[62] *Parisian Journal*, pp. 198–99; BN, MS Fr. 23018, fol. 450. Antoine de Chabannes, a French page captured at Verneuil, was freed without ransom by Bedford, making clear the English view that pages were non-combatants: Contamine, *Guerre, État et Société*, p. 414, n. 76.

[63] Basin, *Histoire*, I, pp. 94–96. Harbinson, 'Verneuil', pp. 2–23, rightly stresses the importance of this source, and argues for an alternative battle reconstruction, with one frontal cavalry charge against the English position.

of Pluscarden, the chief Scottish source for the battle, also described the horse armour, and the power of the frontal attack. And Waurin made clear that the French gave overall command of the cavalry to the Italian Borgne Caqueran, implying they were grouped in one formation.[64] There existed strongly conflicting versions of this opening stage of the battle.

Further evidence helps us to resolve this issue. Part of Jean de Bueil's war story, *Le Jouvencel,* discussed military tactics, and gave factual illustrations from the key engagements of the Hundred Years' War. Verneuil had been de Bueil's first battle. As an 18-year-old he had been a page in the viscount of Narbonne's division, so he drew on first-hand knowledge. The battle had an enormous impact on him, for many of his kinsmen were killed or captured. De Bueil made reference to it in his section on cavalry tactics. After indicating that cavalry were normally placed on the wings of the army, he stressed that at Verneuil a completely different formation had been adopted, placing the horsemen at the front instead.[65]

Confirmation of this comes from a very different source, a 15th-century wall-painting of the battle, recently discovered in a house adjoining the medieval priory of the *hôtel-Dieu* of Verneuil. The painting depicts the charge of heavily armoured cavalry on the plain outside the town, fitted with the armour of the early 15th century. The location is shown through the depiction of the *tour grise,* Verneuil's most prominent landmark, above the action of battle (see Figure 3).[66] The painting vividly portrays the force of a massed charge. The lowered lances of the horsemen are seen in the right-hand corner, indicating the continued momentum of the assault. In the top left are dismounted men-at-arms, scattering in the face of the onslaught. The centre of the picture shows piecemeal resistance by mounted men with swords. The composition is probably based on an eyewitness view. The French army had deployed on the plain of Verneuil one mile north of the town. Seen from the ramparts, the cavalry charge would have formed one of the most enduring images of the battle.

The Lombard and French cavalry were probably deployed in front of their battle line, so Burne's placement of the English troops must also be reconsidered, starting with the archers. Burne believed they were placed on the flanks of each division, as wedges in the English battle line. This formation derives from his interpretation of the *herce,*

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[64] *Les Croniques de Normendie,* ed. A. Hellot (Rouen, 1881), p. 73; *Book of Pluscarden,* p. 272; Waurin, III, pp. 74, 77.

[65] J. de Bueil, *Le Jouvencel,* ed. C. Favre and L. Lecestre, 2 vols (Paris, 1887–89), II, pp. 63–64.

[66] The picture shows cavalry using the more advanced helmet, the armet (which appeared in Italy *c.*1410), allowing greater visibility and thus more effective deployment. Dr David Grummitt has drawn my attention to this. On the armet see Blair, *European Armour,* pp. 86–91. I am grateful to the William Lambarde fund for a small grant enabling me to inspect the painting, discovered in 1997 during renovation work, and to its owner for discussing the find with me.
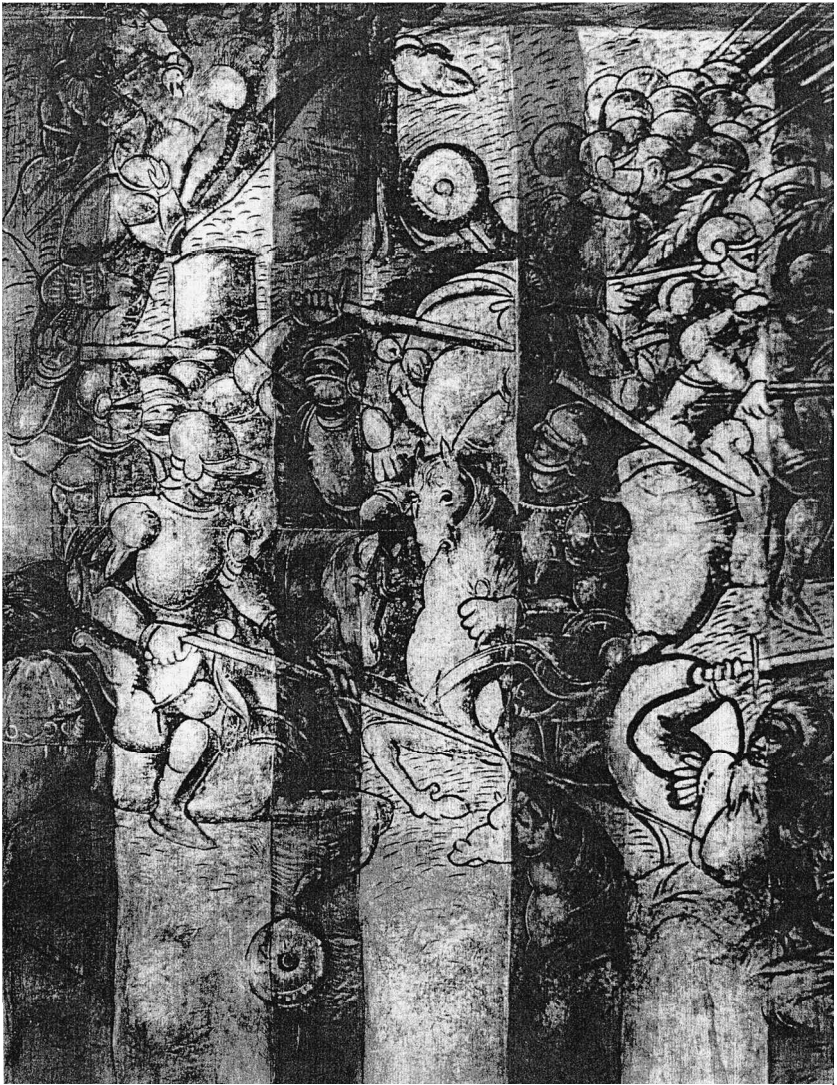
Figure 3 A fifteenth-century wall-painting of the battle, found in Verneuil during recent renovation work on the house next to the priory of the *hôtel-Dieu*. Reproduced by kind permission of the owner.

a description by Froissart of English archer deployment at Crécy. His reading of this term has been challenged. No source on Verneuil described the archer position in the way he set out, and the formation rested entirely on his notion of inherent military probability.[67] The

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[67]   A recent discussion of this issue is found in M. Bennett, 'The development of Battle Tactics during the Hundred Years' War', ed. A. Curry and M. Hughes (Woodbridge, 1994), pp. 7–8; see also J. Bradbury, *The Medieval Archer* (Bury St Edmunds, 1985), pp. 95–104.

clear statement of the eyewitness Jean de Waurin that the archers were placed on the wings of the battle line was dismissed, along with other contemporary evidence. The Burgundian Monstrelet provides most detail on the English archers. Monstrelet refined Waurin's description, indicating Bedford put the archers in front of the line, in a formation where the greatest strength was on the flanks.[68] If the English were faced with an entirely unexpected tactic, the deployment of heavy cavalry for frontal attack, they may have pulled some of the archers from the wings in the hope that their fire, and the row of stakes driven into the ground, might break the force of a charge. This is supported by the Scottish source, the *Book of Pluscarden*, which said many English archers were put in front of the line, and met the full force of the cavalry assault.[69]

We move to the main English formation, the dismounted men-at-arms. Burne believed it was in two divisions, one under Bedford, the other under the Earl of Salisbury. He drew this from a London source, which described how Bedford drove back the French while Salisbury was preoccupied with the Scots. Burne projected this back to a starting line-up.[70] Although it fitted well with his theory for the battle, every contemporary source contradicted it, making clear that the English formed their dismounted men-at-arms into one large body, or battle, and that the French did likewise. If during the engagement the English men-at-arms divided into separate divisions, the heavy cavalry charge provides an explanation: their line was broken by the force of the onslaught. Basin emphasized that the Lombard horsemen split the main English formation: 'the whole battle line of the English army was deeply penetrated. The English themselves half opened to let the Italian cavalry pass through with the least possible harm.'[71] The *Book of Pluscarden* brought out the same idea. The Italians charged through the archer position, and then, 'on others coming up, *they made a gap through them*' (my italics).[72]

Finally we reach the baggage train and the heroic performance of Burne's mobile reserve. Once again, there was no contemporary evidence for his decision to separate out this force. All chroniclers agreed it was deployed simply to protect the baggage. Burne moved it some distance away, and gave it a separate tactical purpose through the application of IMP. Yet Waurin stated that these men 'were appointed to guard the baggage and horses . . . so that their army should not be attacked from the rear'. Other sources repeated this, adding that only some of this detachment was mounted, and that all were lightly

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[68] *Chronique d'Enguerran de Monstrelet,* IV, p. 193.
[69] *Book of Pluscarden,* p. 272. Clearly the stakes failed to halt the Lombards. Perhaps there was insufficient time to drive them in properly, as at Patay (1429). But the collapse of the line is testimony to the force of the heavy cavalry charge. On Patay see A.J. Pollard, *John Talbot and the War in France, 1427–1453* (London, 1983), p. 17.
[70] *The Brut,* II, p. 565; Burne, *Agincourt War,* pp. 203, 207; and see Figure 2.
[71] Basin, *Histoire,* I, pp. 94–96; the translation is from Harbinson, 'Verneuil', p. 19.
[72] *Book of Pluscarden,* p. 272.

armoured. Estimates of its strength ranged from 500 to 2000 men.[73] Burne had no difficulty imagining that this scratch force, after roundly dispatching units of French cavalry, would quickly see off the Italian horsemen. But those chronicles best informed on the Lombards present a more likely picture. A Picard source described the entire baggage guard fleeing in terror, many on horseback, with Lombards chasing after them. The Berry herald, one of the French sources, vividly described the pandemonium in the rear of the English position as the cavalry broke through. Berry added that the English now faced imminent defeat, and that the Lombards later returned to the battle-field expecting to find the engagement won by the French.[74] This surely was the moment of crisis when fleeing English soldiers announced the battle as lost.

We now return to the comment that prompted Burne's battle plan. Waurin described the morale-boosting arrival of English archers, who threw themselves into battle with a great shout. The chronicler did not have a clear idea how this happened. He was in the thick of the fighting, and acknowledged honestly, 'I could not see or comprehend the whole since I was sufficiently occupied in defending myself'. His belief that the archers came from the baggage guard was thus a best guess in the chaos of battle conditions. Yet Waurin emphasized that these men were 'fresh and new', which hardly described a mounted detachment that had just fought with enemy cavalry.[75] Another possibility is that the archers came from the dispersed front line. The *Book of Pluscarden* told how these men initially fled from the shock of the Italian charge, but then units reformed 'and joined the column of the Duke of Bedford where they rallied'. The Scottish source then added the significant detail: 'And thus the English lords, inspired by their arrival, renewed their battle cries'. Basin also spoke of the 'reorganisation' of the English line after the cavalry passed through.[76] On balance, this seems to fit better with the detail of Waurin's account.

III. The Mêlée

In the present reconstruction, the English line attempted to regroup amid the dust and confusion of the cavalry charge. It was frighteningly clear that if the Lombards returned to the field, all would be lost. The extreme danger of their position was stressed by the Berry herald and

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[73] Whilst Waurin gave the strength of this force as 2000, Jean Le Fèvre put it at 500, 'armez legierement', and Cousinot stated that only 200 of the archers were mounted: *Chronique de Jean Le Fèvre, Seigneur de Saint-Remy,* ed. F. Morand (Paris, 1876), p. 85; *Chronique de la Pucelle,* p. 225.

[74] BN, MS Fr. 23018, fol. 450; *Chroniques de Roi Charles VII, par Gilles le Bouvier, dit le Hérault Berry,* ed. H. Corteault and L. Cellier (Paris, 1979), pp. 117–19.

[75] Waurin, III, p. 77.

[76] *Book of Pluscarden,* p. 272; Basin, *Histoire,* I, p. 96.

the *Book of Pluscarden*.[77] Yet the English kept their presence of mind, despite the shock of the onslaught. Waurin related how the line of men-at-arms moved onto the offensive. Their only chance was to take the battle to the French before the Lombards reappeared. They showed extraordinary discipline. According to Waurin, the entire body went forward, keeping good order. The line would briefly pause, let out a shout, and then continue its advance.[78] The French also moved forward, hastily or eagerly, as some of the chronicles related, because they believed the battle was now theirs.[79] In fighting between dismounted men-at-arms it was vital to keep formation. In these difficult circumstances hope now arose for the English. All sources agreed that the advancing French got out of alignment, some adding that the Viscount of Narbonne's contingent was ahead of its main battle and reached the English before the others.[80] This was a multinational army, with Scots, Spaniards and Italians all fighting on the French side, and maintaining cohesion in an advance would have been particularly difficult. The English could use their full force in the forthcoming mêlée as the French units arrived piecemeal.

The struggle that followed was of exceptional ferocity, and maps or diagrams are no longer of use to us. Contemporaries had no clear idea of the order of battle. If some chroniclers believed Salisbury engaged with the Scots and Bedford met with the French, others had Bedford hard pressed by the Scots, and Salisbury fighting Narbonne's division.[81] The mêlée, the collision of armoured warriors in battle formation, had the intensity of a heavyweight slugging match. It was the most chaotic

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[77] Berry, *Chroniques*, p. 118; *Book of Pluscarden,* p. 272.

[78] Waurin, III, p. 74.

[79] Berry, *Chroniques*, p. 117, stated that Narbonne and Douglas got out of alignment, whereas the English kept good order, and Cousinot, *Chronique de la Pucelle,* p. 225, repeated this. For the Norman chronicler Basin, *Histoire*, I, p. 92, this was a result of the superior training of the English. A comparison of English and Franco-Scottish military ordinances shows keeping of ranks in the 'battle' or division to which a company was assigned was a feature of the former, not the latter: M. Keen, 'Richard II's Ordinances of War of 1385', in *Rulers and Ruled in Late Medieval England,* ed. R. Archer and S. Walker (London, 1995), pp. 47–48. Discipline in combat was stressed in the orders given to the Anglo-Burgundian army at Cravant in July 1423, and here the better organization of the English army paid off. It was the vital moment of the battle, when the shock of the cavalry charge needed to be properly exploited by the troops coming up behind them: B. Schnerb, 'La bataille rangée dans la tactique des armées Bourguignons au début du quinzième siècle', *Annales de Bourgogne,* LXI (1989), pp. 24–25; J.F. Verbruggen, 'La tactique militaire des armées de chevaliers', *Revue du Nord,* XXIX (1946), pp. 164–68.

[80] *Chronique de Jean Raoulet,* in *Chroniques de Charles VII, Roi de France par Jean Chartier,* ed. A. Vallet de Viriville, 3 vols (Paris, 1858), III, p. 186, has Narbonne reaching the English line before Aumâle. In a clash between dismounted men-at-arms the side that lost alignment was almost always at a disadvantage (*Le Jouvencel,* II, p. 37). Regular training was crucial. The necessity of this was repeatedly stressed by Vegetius. As the *Boke of Noblesse,* p. 27, put it: 'men of armes well learned . . . is of a grettir tresoure than any precious stones'.

[81] Here the two chief sources on the English side present completely different versions. Waurin, III, pp. 76–77, has Bedford engaged with the Scots under Douglas; in *The Brut,* II, p. 565, it is Salisbury.

part of the struggle. The encounter ebbed and flowed as retinues from either side pitched in. Waurin brought out the terrifying nature of the combat: 'many a capture and many a rescue was made there . . . the blood of the dead, spread upon the ground, and that of the wounded ran in great streams about the field . . . without being able to perceive to whom the loss or victory would turn, the two parties fought with all their might'.[82] The Bourgeois of Paris put it bluntly, 'the battle was a bloody one; no-one could tell who was winning'.[83] In the limited visibility and sheer din of the fighting, men looked to their battle standards for inspiration. Here their leaders stood with their closest followers and men could take heart from their example.

Those present remembered the heroism of the English commanders. Waurin described the bravery of the Earl of Salisbury, 'in the midst of the valiant men who fought under his banner', but also the sheer determination of his opponents. For a while Salisbury was hard pressed to defend himself. His renewal of a vow of pilgrimage to Jerusalem, made in the midst of battle, gave an indication of his plight, for such vows were usually offered by soldiers at times of mortal crisis.[84] Elsewhere, Bedford was seen performing feats of arms with a poleaxe. This was *prowesse*, visible skill in combat, epitomized by the renowned 14th-century knight Geoffrey de Charny, author of the *Livre de Chevalerie*, who was killed at Poitiers defending the *oriflamme* banner.[85] For one Norman chronicle the battle turned on inspirational courage rather than any tactical manoeuvre. It told how in the midst of the mêlée the standard went down and the English lost heart. But it was recovered through the exceptional bravery of a Norman knight, Jean, seigneur de Saâne, who plunged into the French line, and won it back. De Saâne's example inspired the English, who then rallied and pushed forward.[86] According to this source, a signal act of heroism prevented the day being won for the French.

[82] Waurin, III, pp. 75–76.
[83] *Parisian Journal,* p. 198.
[84] *Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland,* VII, ed. F.W. Twemlow (London, 1906), pp. 439–40, telling how Salisbury vowed to visit Jerusalem, and 'afterwards . . . being in a certain battle, he confirmed and repeated the said vow'. The identification of the battle as Verneuil comes from British Library, Add. Ch. 7943, which shows that by June 1426 Salisbury had on three occasions attempted to resign his command and go to the Holy Land, but had been countermanded by the *grand conseil.* General background is provided in M. Warner, 'Chivalry in Action: Thomas Montagu and the war in France, 1417–28', *Nottingham Medieval Studies,* XLII (1998), pp. 67–68. Mark Warner argues for the sincerity of Salisbury's action, noting that in 1426 the earl commissioned a translation of Guillaume de Deguileville's religious allegory, the *Pèlerinage de la Vie Humaine.*
[85] *The Book of Chivalry of Geoffroi de Charny,* ed. and trans. R. Kaeuper and E. Kennedy (Philadelphia, 1996). For an excellent discussion of Charny's outlook: M. Keen, *Chivalry* (London, 1984), pp. 12–15. Bedford's valour is noted in Waurin, III, pp. 76–77; *The Chronicle of John Hardyng,* ed. H. Ellis (London, 1812), p. 393. Hardyng, a soldier himself, said 'the Regent was there that daye a lion', and praised the 'great and hie corage' of the participants.
[86] *Cronicques de Normendie,* p. 73. On the role of standard and banner in battle, see E. Armstrong, 'The Heraldry of Agincourt', in *Agincourt, 1415: Henry V, Sir Thomas*

This reference has received little attention in narratives of the battle. Yet it is of considerable interest. Document evidence brings out the intensity of fighting around the Norman contingent, where the casualty rate was high.[87] And de Saâne, a relatively minor knight from the Pays de Caux, was rewarded by the English with a position of especial trust within their administration. Soon after the battle he was promoted to the *grand conseil*, the supreme governing body of France. In November 1429 he was sent on a mission of particular importance, to speak to king, council and parliament shortly before the coronation of Henry VI. He then reported back to Bedford in Paris.[88] In February 1432, when a daring raid by French partisans captured the castle at Rouen, Bedford put him in charge of its siege and recovery. And at a time of crisis in December 1435 de Saâne led a Norman delegation to England. The English valued his loyalty highly, and he was one of the few members of the Norman nobility to receive money grants direct from the English exchequer.[89] De Saâne's courage at Verneuil may have been the catalyst for a prominent career in English service.

If the standard was a vital rallying-point during a mêlée, soldiers also followed the sound of battle cries. The 'great shout' when the English archers rejoined the line was vividly recalled by participants. It showed the unity of their army. The archers were lightly armoured and most vulnerable in this phase of the fighting. Yet they returned to assist the men-at-arms. The French, whose policy was not to recruit archers from the peasantry, had attempted to exploit the social divisions of their opponents. Before the battle of Baugé they had taunted the English on their reliance on archers, provoking the Duke of Clarence to fight the battle with men-at-arms alone.[90] Here all units of the army were working together.

Showing exceptional resolve, the English at last broke through the French battle line. A full-scale rout developed, with the English cutting down all those they were able to overtake. Great slaughter took place at the ditches of the town which, according to a number of chroniclers,

Erpingham and the Triumph of the English Archers. ed. A. Curry (Stroud, 2000), pp. 123–32.

[87] Henri Longchamp, holding the fief of Bigars (Pont-Audemer) died at Verneuil, aged 22, leaving as heir his son Jean. Olivier Dampont, sergeant of the forest of Rouvray, died leaving lands in the *bailliage* of Rouen. The death of Olivier Dondelay, a landowner in the Norman Vexin, is referred to in Bedford's letter to Rempston: AN, Collection Dom Lenoir, 9, fol. 296; 14, fols. 194–95; Newhall, *English Conquest* pp. 319–20.

[88] This material is drawn from BN, Pièces Originales 2599 (de Saâne), nos. 4 and 5.

[89] Public Record Office, E404/52/98.

[90] On Baugé, the French taunt and Clarence's reliance on men-at-arms, see Berry, *Chroniques,* pp. 99–101; *The Brut,* ii, p. 492. On war cries in general: Contamine, *Guerre, État et Société,* pp. 667–68. There are similarities here to the battle of Auvray (1364), where the archers joined the mêlée, fighting with personal weapons, rather than continuing to shoot with their bows: J. Sumption, *The Hundred Years' War: Trial by Fire* (London, 1999), pp. 518–20. This warns us against an over-reliance on the longbow as a battle-winning weapon. I am grateful to Dr Matthew Strickland for discussing this point with me.

became a brutal killing field. The absence of restraint, part of chivalric convention once battle was won, was unusual. It suggested the ferocity of the mêlée. The fear and confusion of a battle that hung in the balance, and the surge of aggression necessary to carry the day, could lead to instinctive killing.[91] At this stage some of the Lombard cavalry seem to have returned to the field, expecting to find the French victorious. They were driven off by the English. It was an extraordinary recovery, seizing victory out of the jaws of defeat.

IV. The Pageant

The English army had taken significant risks to bring the French to battle. They had shown enormous courage in the actual struggle. It is now important to consider their motivation, examining the ritual of the engagement. A number of episodes will be considered, starting with the review of the English army.

On the afternoon of 14 August 1424 John, Duke of Bedford, rode before his assembled soldiers outside Ivry. Such occasions were highly ritualistic. Chroniclers described Edward III before the battle of Crécy, with white baton in hand, flanked by two marshals, exhorting his men. But at Ivry there was an interesting development. Costume was used to put across a message to the army, in the manner of a pageant. Waurin gave a careful description of what Bedford chose to wear, and asked other soldiers in line to explain the significance of what he was seeing.[92] Bedford wore a surcoat combining the white cross of France and red cross of England. His troops knew these represented the two kingdoms, and that Bedford alone had the right to bear them, as regent of France, on behalf of the infant Henry VI.

Both claimants had originally intended to meet at the *journée*, and as late as June 1424 Charles VII was making payments for coats of arms, standards and trappings, in order to lead his army in person.[93] But Charles's council decided they could not risk the king in battle. This gave the English a moral advantage that they were quick to exploit. Basset's Chronicle proclaimed that the regent's arrival at Ivry had intimidated his opponents.[94] Thus a key element was the presence of Bedford himself. This spectacle could now be used to emphasize the rightness of the English cause.

The justification of Henry VI's title to the thrones of France and

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[91] Strickland, *War and Chivalry,* p. 166. Bedford gave the heralds' tally of enemy casualties as 7262: Newhall, *English Conquest*, p. 320. On the depth of the ditches in the north-east quarter of Verneuil, constructed as a defence line by Henry II in 1169: L. Musset, 'La frontière de l'Avre', *Bulletin Municipal de Verneuil*, VI (1970), p. 11.

[92] Waurin, III, p. 68. On Edward III at Crécy, and the broader issue of raising morale before battle, see M. Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages: The English Experience* (London, 1996), pp. 312–14.

[93] Archives Municipales de Reims, Collection Tarbé, carton 5, pièce 7.

[94] College of Arms, MS M9, fol. 53.

England had already been vividly displayed. In 1423 Bedford had commissioned the Burgundian Laurence Calot to put the claim into French verse. This was hung in the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris next to a picture genealogy, showing two angels, one from the French line and one from the English, presenting crowns to the infant Henry.[95] Bedford's costume before battle embodied this, reminding his soldiers they were fighting to preserve the treaty of Troyes, and to protect the rights of their king. After his army had triumphed, the regent sent Calot to Troyes to announce his success as a vindication of Henry VI's claim.[96] This propagandist aspect brought powerful theatre (*tableau*) into the ritual of battle. In Calot's verse, Charles VII's right to the kingdom of France was invalid because he had plotted the murder of the Burgundian Duke John the Fearless. One of the men indicted for the murder was Guillaume de Lara, Viscount of Narbonne, a French divisional commander at Verneuil. He was killed in battle, but on Bedford's orders his corpse was recovered by heralds and, after a mock trial, strung up on a gibbet and quartered in front of the victorious English troops.[97]

There was more to Bedford's costume. Waurin observed he wore a fine robe of blue velvet cloth. Its significance is revealed in an illumination of the Bedford Hours (see Figure 4), a sumptuous manuscript drawn up for the regent's marriage to Anne of Burgundy in 1423. The individual miniature, a portrait of the regent, is thought to be connected with the battle preparations. Bedford is shown praying to St George. The saint is depicted in the ermine-lined blue sovereign's robe of the Order of the Garter, ready to go into battle: his robe is over full armour, and he is attended by a squire holding the banner of St George and carrying his helmet.[98] Waurin's description creates similar resonance. Bedford's red cross is superimposed upon the white, with blue velvet robe, and banner of St George. The regent was using the ritual of a chivalric order, displaying garter insignia before battle.[99] In the illumination the saint gestures towards the knot fastening his mantle. The knot was one of the badges of the order, and this symbol bound the knights of the order together. By riding in front of his troops in this costume, Bedford shared this concept of unity with the whole of his army.

Bedford was deeply interested in chivalric protocol. He had his own

[95] J.W. McKenna, 'Henry VI of England and the Dual Monarchy: Aspects of Royal Political Propaganda, 1422–1432', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute,* xxviii (1965), pp. 145–62.
[96] T. Boutiot, *Histoire de la Ville de Troyes et de la Champagne Méridionale,* 6 vols (Paris, 1870–80), ii, pp. 466–67.
[97] Waurin, iii, p. 79; *Parisian Journal*, p. 200.
[98] J. Backhouse, *The Bedford Hours* (London, 1990), p. 55.
[99] I owe the following line of interpretation to Jenny Stratford and Janet Backhouse. For the general approach see J. Flori, 'Chevalerie et liturgie: remise des armes et vocabulaire chevaleresque dans les sources liturgiques du neuvième au quatorzième siècle', *Le Moyen Age,* lxxxiv (1978), pp. 147–78.
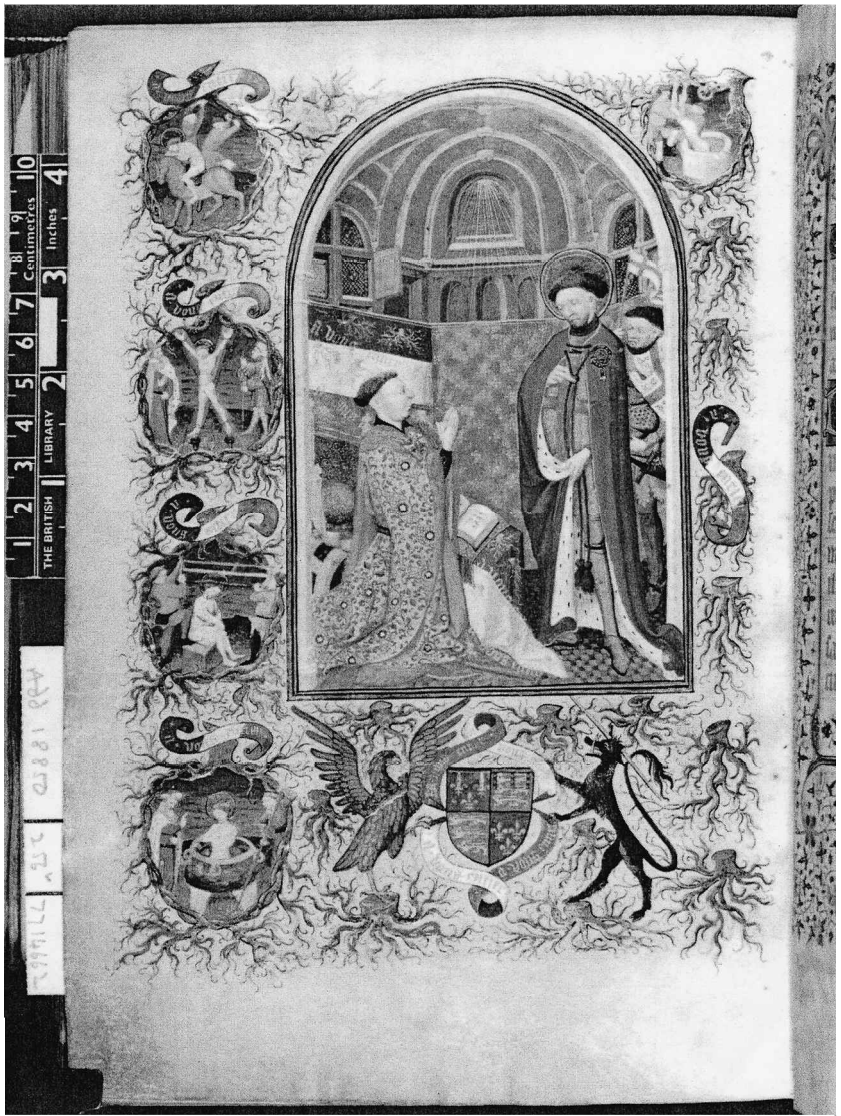
Figure 4 The Bedford portrait, from his book of hours (BL, Add. MS 18850, fol. 256*v*). By permission of the British Library.

order, the root, but the illumination portrayed him as servant of St George. Bedford had close links with the college of St George at Windsor. In December 1421 he had granted it the rich spiritualities of the priory of Ogbourne, a major gift that ensured the foundation's survival. This re-endowment was made in honour of St George and the Order of the Garter. The grant spoke of Bedford's particular devotion

to the saint, to whom he owed all matters of military fortune.[100] His institution of perpetual prayers was echoed in the iconography of his portrait, where the manuscript's facing page also consisted of prayers to St George. Bedford's status as patron was stressed by the college.[101] This gave his use of Garter insignia in the battle preparations particular authenticity.

Bedford's portrait invoked the aid of St George. His pursuit of the French from Ivry to Verneuil was marked by a solemn oath to the saint, witnessed by his army, that he would bring the French to battle.[102] English soldiers strongly identified with St George. They were now bound together in common purpose. Bedford's choice of standard-bearer was the veteran Henry Tilleman, who was at least 70 years old, having served on the Black Prince's expedition to Spain in 1367, and fought at Najera. By honouring him with the standard a living link was made with this battle. It occupied a special place in Lancastrian mythology, expressing a bond between lord and retainers, possibly commemorated by a special livery collar.[103] The message of the battle was recalled: the renown of the commander enhanced the martial spirit of his followers.

V. Dismissing the Burgundian Contingent

With this ritual in mind, two specific incidents will now be considered. The first was Bedford's decision to send away his Burgundian troops, which occurred as the English were to leave Ivry in pursuit of the French army. According to Waurin, shortly before the regent was about to march, he summoned the Burgundian commander L'Isle Adam, and ordered his men to return to the siege of Nesle (in the Tardenois region), where they had been previously employed. He recollected Bedford saying 'he had men enough to deal with the designs of the

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[100] St George's Chapel, Windsor, MS X.4.1. Bedford's chivalric order is identified in *The Bedford Inventories. The Worldly Goods of John, Duke of Bedford, Regent of France (1389–1435)*, ed. J. Stratford, Society of Antiquaries (London, 1993), pp. 101–03.

[101] When the college sent a deputation to Bedford in January 1426 they described him as 'our most singular lord': St George's Chapel, Windsor, MS XV.34.35 (kindly drawn to my attention by Eileen Scarff). For the link between the Ogbourne grant and the iconography of the Bedford portrait, see Stratford, *Bedford Inventories,* p. 116.

[102] Waurin, III, p. 72. On the growing identification with St George by English soldiers: M. Strickland, 'Chivalry at Agincourt', in Curry, *Agincourt, 1415,* pp. 111–22.

[103] Information on Tilleman has been drawn from *English Suits before the Parlement of Paris, 1420–1436,* ed. C.T. Allmand and C.A.J. Armstrong, Camden Society, 4th ser., XXVI (1982), p. 104. The significance of the Najera campaign is demonstrated by A. Goodman, *John of Gaunt* (London, 1992), pp 228–29. Displaying the standard served the same function as knighting before battle, to inspire acts of courage. On knights made before Verneuil see the later petition of John Fauq (AN, JJ172/583) and the comments of Waurin, III, p. 75. For the broader interpretation: J. Flori, 'Pour une histoire de la chevalerie: l'adoubment chez Chrétien de Troyes', *Romania,* C (1979), pp. 21–53.

French, so that he was well able to spare them'.[104] For Burne, that the English commander felt able to detach this contingent when already outnumbered was a sign of his overconfidence.

Bedford had intended this to be an Anglo-Burgundian army. They were his principal allies and had shared victory against the French at Cravant a year before. L'Isle Adam was one of the best Burgundian captains and had brought many troops with him to the rendezvous point at Rouen. Waurin told of Bedford's great joy on his arrival and a number of chroniclers confirmed the honour bestowed upon him, to carry the banner of France at the *journée* at Ivry.[105] Letters given on 13 June 1424, empowering him to take up the siege of Nesle, paid tribute to his military experience. He was given the powers of a royal lieutenant within the region, able to summon the local feudal levy, raise taxes, call up labourers and requisition transport.[106] The siege of Nesle had been left well provided for, and L'Isle Adam had joined the army on Bedford's urgent request, in time for a major battle. The decision to dispatch his force made little sense, for if the regent was confident of easy victory, why send for him in the first place?

Burne took Bedford's comments literally, imagining the English army would simply accept the disappearance of some 1000–2000 quality troops. But an alternative reading is possible, from the diplomatic situation prior to the engagement. On 17 April 1423 Bedford had cemented the treaty of Troyes with a triple alliance with Burgundy and Brittany at Amiens. This took the form of a 'brotherhood-in-arms', a military agreement of mutual support between three knights. But in the late spring of 1424 negotiations had begun behind Bedford's back with the regime of Charles VII, and a treaty between Brittany and France agreed at Nantes on 18 May.[107] Soon afterwards the Burgundians began secret discussions with the French. Their ambassadors returned to Dijon on 8 August having arranged a conference between the two sides under the presidency of the Duke of Savoy.[108] This was

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[104] Waurin, III, p. 72. Burne's pragmatic explanation (*Agincourt War,* pp. 200–01) is not echoed by contemporary chroniclers, who were struck by the number of men sent away, and how the advantage of the French was thereby increased: Berry, *Chroniques,* p. 116; *The Brut,* II, p. 565.

[105] Waurin, III, p. 69; *Chronique de Jean Le Fèvre,* p. 84. The original instructions for the recruitment of the army, issued on 18 May 1424, spoke of it as an Anglo-Burgundian force (BN, MS Fr. 26047/257). For Anglo-Burgundian cooperation at Cravant: Schnerb, 'La bataille rangée', pp. 24–25.

[106] P. Varin, *Archives Législatives de la Ville de Reims,* 11 vols (Paris, 1839–53), V, pp. 576–79.

[107] The treaty and background diplomacy are set out in G. du Fresne de Beaucourt, *Histoire de Charles VII,* 6 vols (Paris, 1881–89), II, pp. 356–57. For Amiens as a brotherhood-in-arms: C.A.J. Armstrong, 'La double-monarchie France–Angleterre et la maison de Bourgogne (1420–1435): le déclin d'une alliance', *Annales de Bourgogne,* XXXVII (1965), pp. 84–85. I have earlier argued for the importance of diplomatic context in understanding chivalric reaction: M.K. Jones, '"Gardez mon corps, sauvez ma terre" – immunity from war and the lands of a captive knight: the siege of Orléans revisited', in *Charles d'Orléans in England (1415–1440),* ed. M-J. Arn (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 9–26.

[108] Beaucourt, *Charles VII,* II, p. 357, n. 1.

in clear breach of Troyes, and the spirit of the compact of Amiens, making it a personal affront to Bedford. News of these negotiations leaked out to the English just before the battle. An inquest on an attempted conspiracy in Rouen revealed that shortly before Verneuil rumour was circulating that the Burgundians had already come to an agreement with the French.[109]

The regent was faced with a dilemma. Burgundian loyalty was now suspect. The English knew that L'Isle Adam could not be fully trusted, and had arrested him on an earlier occasion for conspiracy with the French.[110] Their concern was exacerbated by the defection of Norman and Picard knights, which took place on the evening of 15 August 1424. Bedford nipped any fear of treachery in the bud. His comment that he had men enough to deal with the French was an ironic jest. In sending away the Burgundians, Bedford was making a chivalric statement to his army: trust was more important than numbers.[111] What counted was loyalty, honouring one's oath of allegiance. It was this that would bind his soldiers in battle.

VI. No Quarter to the Scots

The second aspect to be considered is the exceptionally high casualty rate of the Scots. All sources agree that the army of Scotland was virtually wiped out. All commanders of rank were killed and no prisoners taken. The vengeance meted out was picked up in popular chronicles, and even found its way into a child's school book. A London chronicler described the Scots ending up as sheep wash, a grim reference to the killing ground by the deep ditch of Verneuil, where many were drowned. And a song in a Lincoln school-book likened the battle to a wrestling match, where the Scots were thrown, breaking their necks.[112]

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[109] Le Cacheux, *Actes,* II, pp. 48–49. Information gathered on the Richard Mittes conspiracy in Rouen showed that shortly before the battle of Verneuil it was reported that Charles VII and Philip, duke of Burgundy, 'estoient en bonne paix et accord et avoient traictie entre eulx, et que nostredicte ville de Rouen seroit bientost prise par force'.

[110] *Journal de Clément de Fauquembergue,* II, pp. 17–18. L'Isle Adam was arrested on 8 June 1421.

[111] BN, MS Fr. 23018, fol. 449*v*. Bedford's jest drew on the tradition of Judas Maccabeus, that numbers were less important than the rightness of one's cause before God, most famously expressed by Henry V before Agincourt: *Gesta Henrici Quinti,* ed. F. Taylor and J.S. Roskell (Oxford, 1975), p. 79. For the use of this genre in medieval warfare: D.A. Trotter, 'Judas Maccabeus, Charlemagne and the Oriflamme', *Medium Aevum,* LIV (1985), pp. 127–31.

[112] The exceptionally high casualty rate of the Scots comes across in all the sources. Bedford's report of the victory put it with brutal simplicity: 'Et y a demoure peu d'Escois qui ne soient mors' (Newhall, *English Conquest,* p. 320). A list of the principal casualties is provided in College of Arms, MS M9, fol. 55. Michael Brown, *The Black Douglases* (East Linton, 1998), pp. 222–23, rightly says that the army of Scotland was virtually wiped out. The reference to 'schippe wassh' is from *Chronicles of London,* ed. C. Kingsford (Oxford, 1905), p. 129; for the Lincoln school-book, N. Orme, 'The Culture of Children in Medieval England', *Past and Present,* CXLVIII (1995), p. 81.

Something unusual had happened. Scots and English had already fought in France at Baugé and Cravant, where prisoners had been taken according to the normal rules of war. Why was Verneuil different?

Burne provided a rationale from his reconstruction of the battle. The Scottish contingent was attacked from all sides; by Salisbury from the front, Bedford from the rear and the mounted archers from the flanks. It was another Cannae: 'Completely surrounded there was nothing left to them but to sell their lives dearly'.[113] Yet contemporaries offered another explanation. A number of sources noted a chivalric challenge passing between English and Scottish camps. Both Basin and the *Scotichronicon* believed that this was to be a fight to the death, with an agreement that no side would take prisoners. Basin suggested the idea originated from the Scottish commander, Archibald, Earl of Douglas.[114] In fact evidence points to its coming from the English. Again consideration of the diplomatic context is important.

In the autumn of 1423 the English speeded up arrangements for the release of the captive Scottish king, James I. They hoped for an agreement that would pre-empt Charles VII's recruiting a new army in Scotland. On 26 March 1424 a secret treaty was concluded, stipulating a seven-year truce between the two realms (commencing 1 May). Neither side would assist enemies of the other. James was freed shortly afterwards. But although the English had negotiated for withdrawal of all Scottish troops in France, no such clause appeared in the final treaty. This allowed the army of Scotland to embark before the truce came into effect. The loophole caused considerable anger among the English, caught in the derisive comment of one chronicler that the army had fled abroad out of fear of its own king.[115] Once the truce began, the army fought in France without the sanction of its sovereign. Instead, Charles VII received Douglas's personal oath of loyalty, and rewarded him with the office of lieutenant-general and the duchy of Touraine.[116]

But Douglas had made an earlier oath to the English. In May 1421 he had sworn fealty to Henry V, in the king's presence, promising on the gospels to be his retainer for life, and to serve him in France once James I was released. His political volte-face caused real outrage. As

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[113] Burne, *Agincourt War,* p. 209. Again, Burne notes in passing the declaration of no quarter (pp. 204, 209) but does not integrate it within his larger explanation of the battle's outcome.

[114] The chivalric insults passing between the two sides are noted in Berry, *Chroniques*, p. 116; *The Brut*, II, p. 497. Berry reported Bedford's mocking invitation for Douglas to drink with him, and Douglas's response, that 'he would be delighted, since he had been unable to find him in England, and had come to France to look for him'. The reference was to the Scottish raid of 1417, when Bedford was warden of the Scottish march. On no quarter: Basin, *Histoire*, I, p. 98; W. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, ed. D.E.R. Watt, 9 vols (Aberdeen, 1987–98), VIII, p. 127.

[115] *Incerti Scriptoris Chronicon Angliae de Regnis Henrici IV, Henrici V et Henrici VI*, ed. J. Giles, 4 vols in 1 (London, 1848), IV, p. 5.

[116] On this see Brown, *Black Douglases*, pp. 220–22.

one English commentator put it, by appearing in the French army outside Verneuil, Douglas had shown himself a perjurer, for he was bound by his earlier oath.[117] This would justify the English treating him as a traitor rather than an opponent under normal rules of war, for the breaking of a solemn oath of allegiance allowed the harshest reprisal.

It appears Bedford saw Douglas and his army as rebels and decided on different rules of war, preventing the taking of prisoners. This is shown in a pardon to one Scot, Eustace Hart, who came into English service after Verneuil.[118] An English captain, William Chamberlain, had wished to make Hart his prisoner at the end of the battle, but was prohibited under the rules of engagement. He told Hart that the only way round this was for him to swear an oath of loyalty to Henry VI, come into English allegiance and fight on their side. This Hart duly did. The detail of the testimony followed the procedure for issuing a *bullette d'allegiance*, the certificate marking the submission of an oath-breaker, an act of amnesty. Hart was taken before a senior English captain (Lord Scales), swore to uphold the treaty of Troyes and was formally received as liegeman and subject of Henry VI. Chamberlain testified that he had subsequently served the English loyally and well.

This explains Bedford's repeated emphasis on the falsehood of the Scottish commander. He had chosen a high-risk strategy. The English would seek vengeance for Baugé from a moral high ground, aiming to punish oath-breakers. This was designed to motivate the army powerfully; they would kill the Scots or perish in the attempt.

VII. 'Worship' and the Unity of the Army

Having examined the ritual, we can test its working in battle. The crisis point occurred when the Lombard cavalry rode through the English line, routed the baggage guard and plundered the treasure. Understandably, the army was in disarray. At this vital moment Bedford appealed to his troops: 'he commaunded the oost embatailed not forto breke ne remove theyr aray for wynnyng or kepyng worldly goodis, but only to wynne worship in the right of Englonde that day'.[119] The soldiers

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[117] The accusation of perjury is from the Latin Brut in *English Historical Literature in the Fifteenth Century,* ed. C. Kingsford (Oxford, 1913), pp. 330–31. The oath to Henry V is recorded in T. Rymer, *Foedera, Conventiones, Litterae et Cuiuscunque Generis Acta Publica*, 20 vols (London, 1704–35), x, pp. 123–25.

[118] Le Cacheux, *Actes,* II, pp. 143–45. For the stress on Scottish falsehood see *Journal de Clément de Fauquembergue,* II, p. 141, and the *Parisian Journal*, p. 198, when the regent said 'they had broken their word so often that no-one could ever trust them'. The spontaneous cry of vengeance for Baugé arose during the last stage of the battle: *The Brut,* II, p. 565.

[119] *Boke of Noblesse,* p. 32. It would have been impossible to relay this address in the chaos immediately following the cavalry charge. Bedford must have made it after the army regrouped, when he could have come before the host. It would then have been heard by the chief lords and men-at-arms around him, and passed on to their own retinues. I owe this point to Matthew Strickland.

were restless, wondering whether to break formation and try to protect their possessions. In his exhortation, Bedford made clear that 'worship', an honourable reputation, was worth far more than worldly riches. It inspired his men. Speeches before battle were an accepted part of the ritual of engagement, though often recorded in a formulaic manner, telling us more about the expectation of the audience than what was actually said.[120] But this was a spontaneous act, occurring during battle itself, and seems to be a genuine recollection. Its source was probably Sir John Fastolf, Bedford's master of household, who would have been close by him. Fastolf, created knight banneret before the battle, went on to capture one of the principal French aristocrats, the duke of Alençon.[121] His account is set out in the *Boke of Noblesse*, and is confirmed by other evidence. Extracts from one of Bedford's household accounts show him compensating those who lost money at Verneuil from his own coffers.[122] The regent saw this as a debt of honour to men who had responded to his call. They had advanced with him on the French, abandoning their goods in the process.

Faced with a terrifying situation, the English fought as one. It was an instinctive reaction. But the rewards given out after the battle told of a remarkable sense of unity forged within the army. The scale of patronage was exceptional. Almost everyone who fought at the battle seems to have received a grant of lands, whatever their rank or social standing. This development was unprecedented in medieval warfare, and hearkened back to a Roman concept, that 'the whole army earned as much glory as its commander'.[123] To do this the English regime distributed estates confiscated from the French, and made provision for future conquests also to be handed out. Grants were often made in bulk, with archers receiving lands worth just over £2 a year (20 *livres tournois*), men-at-arms over £6 a year (60 *livres tournois*). In a preamble it was stated that these donations were to reward the entire army for

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[120] On battle rhetoric in general, see J.R.E. Blaise, 'Rhetoric and Morale: a Study of Battle Orations from the Central Middle Ages', *Journal of Medieval History*, xv (1989), pp. 201–26, and 'The Courage of the Normans: a Comparative Study of Battle Rhetoric', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, xxxv (1991), pp. 1–26.

[121] K.B. McFarlane, 'The Investment of Sir John Fastolf's Profits of War', in *England in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1981), pp. 178–79.

[122] Those who lost cash or goods from the plundering of the baggage train were personally repaid by the regent. Notes from one of his now lost household accounts (1 October 1427 – 30 September 1428) show a section of expenses entitled 'de restitution d'argent perdu a la bataille de Verneuil': Public Record Office, 31/8/135 (11).

[123] The translation is from the Penguin Classics edition of Julius Caesar's *Conquest of Gaul* (London, 1981), pp. 48–49. The importance of Roman martial conduct within Bedford's circle is brought out well in J. Hughes, 'Stephen Scrope and the Circle of Sir John Fastolf: Moral and Intellectual Outlooks', in *Ideals and Practice of Medieval Knighthood*, iv (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 109–46. The wholesale grant of lands to those present at Verneuil is referred to in a later petition of the soldier John Mathew: he complained he was not remunerated after the battle, despite the fact that 'ceulx qui furent a la dicte bataille de Verneuil aient eu dons de terres' (AN, Collection Dom Lenoir, 22, fol. 155).

its valour.[124] Eligibility was based on criteria of courage. The recipient had first to prove his attendance on the day of battle, and then provide witnesses to his subsequent conduct. John Alderner was a man-at-arms in the company of William Oldhall. A number of his fellows swore he had given his oath before the engagement, and was then wounded in the mêlée.[125] Their testimony showed soldiers were required to renew their oaths of allegiance, and that fighting bravely demonstrated one's good faith.

Everyone in the army, whether foot-soldier or magnate, was keen to have his participation put on record, as a sign of valour and good repute. In a legal case before the Paris *parlement* the defendant, John Huyton, established he was a man-at-arms of good character simply by stating he had fought at the battle of Verneuil.[126] To be counted a participant was itself a testimonial to courage. This held true for the dead as well as the living. As his soldiers gathered at Ivry, Bedford prepared a cemetery, a burial ground that was properly consecrated. It was a telling gesture. If they were victorious, all their dead comrades would be given a Christian burial.[127] This mark of respect would apply throughout the army, not just to those of high rank.

This theme was carried through in the victory celebration. The decisive nature of the success was recognized in carefully stage-managed processions by the regent and his army, first through Rouen, and then Paris, where one contemporary remarked significantly that more honour was done than at a Roman triumph.[128] And remembering Charles VII's hoped-for coronation, Bedford dispatched heralds to Reims to publicize the terrible casualties suffered by the French.[129] Yet the thanksgiving was generally marked by restraint. The English were mindful of their own losses and wished the achievement of their fallen comrades to be commemorated with dignity.[130]

As with any great battle, Verneuil quickly developed its own mythology, expressed in prophecy, poetry and the idea of God's judgement on a

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[124] For an example of the bulk grants to archers, see AN, Collection Dom Lenoir, 21, fol. 265. The general context is set out in R. Massey, 'The Lancastrian Land Settlement in Normandy and northern France, 1417–1450', PhD thesis (University of Liverpool, 1987), pp. 84–88. The reward for valour is made clear in the preamble of the grant to those who fought, which stated 'pro eorum bonu gestu et strenuitate in bello de Vernelle in Perche, tam nobilis, dominis, milites et plebes': J. Stevenson, *Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Wars of the English in France during the Reign of Henry VI*, 2 vols in 3, Rolls Series (1861–64), II, ii, pp. 550–51.

[125] ADSM, 2E, 1/171, fol. 126*v.*

[126] *English Suits before the Parlement of Paris*, p. 135.

[127] *Fragments de la Geste des Nobles François* in *Chronique de la Pucelle*, p. 197.

[128] *Parisian Journal*, p. 201. For the magnificent gift presented to Bedford on his entry to the city: G. Thompson, *Paris and its People under English Rule: The Anglo-Burgundian Regime, 1420–1436* (Oxford, 1991), p. 243.

[129] Varin, *Archives Législatives*, V, p. 616.

[130] Basin, *Histoire*, I, p. 96.

right cause.[131] But these elements derived from the epic quality of the engagement itself. For the French it was a tragic defeat, still recalled as *la mauvaise journée* over 20 years later. In the short term they lost confidence in seeking battle.[132] Yet memorials paid tribute to the heroism of those slain, men who had fought bravely in the service of their king. The terrible casualties suffered by the army led to a particular form of commemoration, both pious and chivalric, brought out in the chapel of the Allemand family at Laval-Saint-Etienne in the Dauphiné. Four of the family fought at Verneuil and never returned. Their loss was recalled in a fresco of the Virgin Mary, who in a remarkable image shelters under her cloak all 120 knights from the Dauphiné who perished in the battle. Their sacrifice was remembered in a special mass for the dead, and in the decoration of the fresco with the *fleur de lys,* the symbol of the Valois dynasty.[133]

For the English the battle was a lodestar, a victory against the odds, that gave them incredible self-belief. It guaranteed the security of the land settlement, the policy of providing social and economic incentive to those prepared to recognize and support the treaty of Troyes. It also paved the way for a major military push south to the Loire, and established the authority of the English regime. Above all its effect was psychological. For Waurin it was the best fought of any battle he had experienced, including Agincourt.[134] Those who took part gained an abiding sense of destiny. Their shared experience was later recalled by Sir John Fastolf, writing on the future shape of war strategy. He reminded his audience that, however desperate the situation, they should never lose faith in battle for a rightful cause, for by trusting in 'the adventure that God shulde like to send', all might be recovered.[135] This was the real story of Verneuil.

Reconstruction of this extraordinary event has demonstrated that Burne worked from a flawed methodology. His reliance on inherent

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[131] For prophecy inspired by Verneuil see V.J. Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1971), pp. 76–79. The repeated references to God's judgement on a rightful cause masked the fear felt during the engagement: Lefèvre-Pontalis, 'La guerre des partisans', pp. 507–08.

[132] The reference comes from a later petition to Charles VII, printed in *Archives Historiques du Poitou,* XXIX (1898), p. 302. The loss of confidence was noted in *Chronique d'Arthur de Richemont, Connétable de France (1393–1458), par Guillaume Gruel,* ed. A. Le Vavasour (Paris, 1890), p. 37.

[133] P. Deschamps, 'Un monument au morts du quinzième siècle: La Vierge au manteau de l'église de Laval en Dauphiné', *Bulletin Monumental,* CXVIII (1960), pp. 123–31. For other memorials to those killed at Verneuil, at Saint-Antoine in the Viennois and the church of the Dominicans at Grenoble: P. Paravay, *De la Chrétienté Romaine à la Réforme en Dauphiné,* 2 vols (Rome, 1993), I, pp. 584–85.

[134] Waurin, III, p. 73: 'I saw the assembly at Azincourt, where there were many more princes and troops, and also that at Cravant, which was a very fine affair, but certainly that at Verneuil was of all the most formidable and the best fought'. On the effect of the battle, see C.T. Allmand, *Lancastrian Normandy, 1415–1450: the History of a Medieval Occupation* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 28–30.

[135] Stevenson, *Letters and Papers,* II, ii, p. 578. This important document is discussed in M.G.A. Vale, 'Sir John Fastolf's "Report" of 1435', *Nottingham Medieval Studies,* XVII (1973), pp. 78–84.

military probability, an influential but misleading fiction, created an account of battle and campaign at odds with the full range of source material. Failure to grasp the significance of chivalry in medieval warfare separated him from its participants. It is time for his approach to be discarded. Tactical factors need to be put in a broader context. Verbruggen put it well: 'the essential element in each battle lies in the attitude of the soldiers during the fighting. The way they handle their weapons, the manner in which they react in the face of danger and behave in a battle for life – that is what counts.'[136]

Verneuil can be described as a battle of two halves. A devastating and entirely unexpected cavalry charge cut down the English ranks and created shock and confusion. What followed was not tactically predictable. In the midst of terror the preordained battle plan was thrown away. The English recovered in the ensuing mêlée through sheer courage. This turnaround rested on an intangible factor, how men suddenly find inspiration in combat. Yet it led to victory. A stronger emphasis on chivalric ritual, the most powerful way of communicating to medieval soldiers, enhances our understanding of the battles in which they fought.

Acknowledgements

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[136] Verbruggen, *Art of Warfare,* p. 18.