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The Battle of Agincourt took place on the 25th of October of 1415 between the **English** and the **French** kingdoms, where the English claimed a decisive victory despite the fact that they were outnumbered. The battle was one of the many over the period of Hundred year's war, a war which changed drastically the physiognomy of the two kingdoms, but it also brought a revolution to the European warfare (Curry, 2002).

Despite the importance of the war itself, the battle of Agincourt is remembered until today, not only for its importance as a battle but also because the common men of England and **Wales** stood together and managed to take down the royal army of France, against all odds.



Men-at-arms fighting during the battle of Agincourt (Image: [Telegraph](#))



That victory signalled the renewal of English claim over the French throne and levitated the spirit of the English, leading them to reclaim many areas of Northern France.

## The Hundred year's war

The Hundred years' war refers to the chronical period when England and France were in conflict with each other over the succession of the French Throne. The war lasted from 1337 to 1453, with small periods of peace treaties, characterising it as one of the most notable conflicts of the middle ages, in which five generations of kings from rival dynasties fought for the throne of the largest kingdom in Western Europe (Curry, 2002).

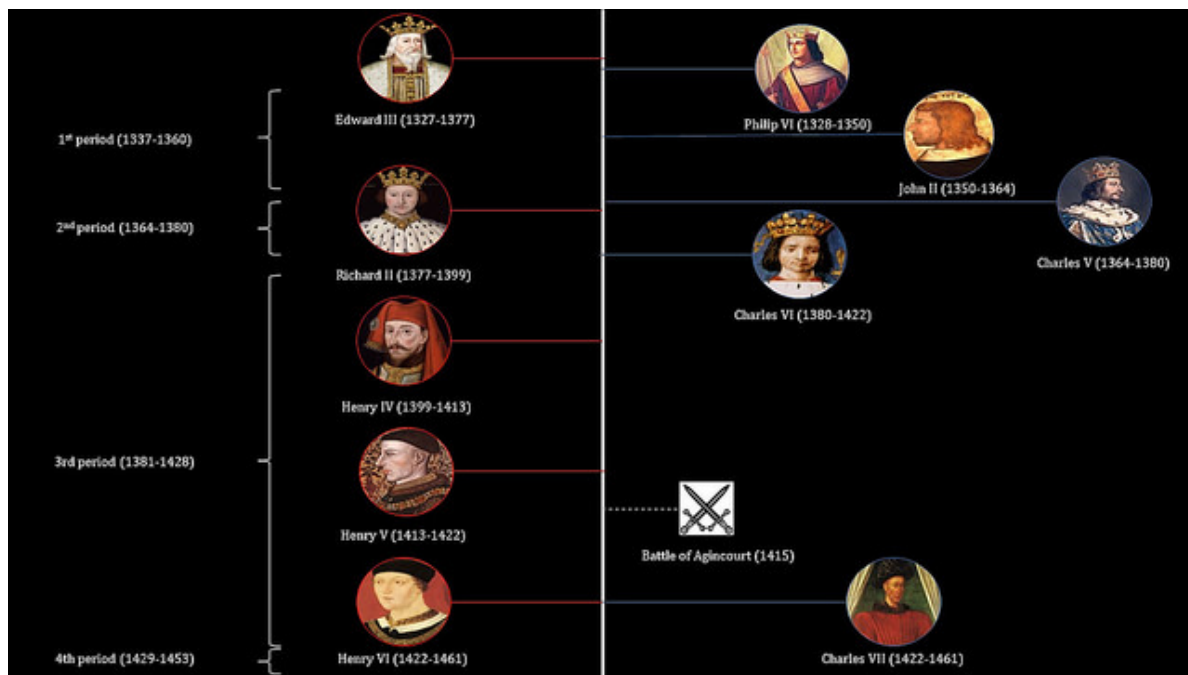
The cause of the war was the claim of the French throne, which after the death of France's King [Carol IV](#) in 1328 remained empty since he was childless and without a brother to succeed him. That opportunity gave the chance to [Philip VI](#) to take the throne as the nearest cousin of Carol IV and declare himself as King of France, while on the other side of the English channel King of England [Eduard III](#), nephew of the dead King demanded the throne, as being nearer relative to Carol IV. According to the *Grandes Chroniques de France*, the counter-arguments to his demand were first based on the Salic code, which was in force in France and was excluding the succession to women, weakening Eduard's claim and secondly to the fact that England was a vessel to France (Bennett, 1991).



Opening of the "Lex Salica" (Salic code) book (source: [tenthmedieval.wordpress.com](http://tenthmedieval.wordpress.com))

Maurois (1974) suggests that the real reason for the outbreak of the war was the refusal of Philip VI of France to Edward's III of England pledges to restore Guyenne, which was a vessel to France. Except for the territorial claim of Guyenne, the English wanted to regain dominance over the areas of Normandy, Anjou and other territories. On the other hand, the French wanted to ward off the English from Aquitania, taking back their territories. Of significant importance for both Kingdoms was the rich region of Flanders, which had developed a great trade relationship with the English. England was famous for its wool, while Flanders' economy was based on textile production.

The war is divided into four different periods, each period having a different winner until the final win of France over the English, with both countries counting, in the end, their numerous losses. The image below presents the timeline of the kings during the hundred year's war and the periods of the war they reigned.



*Kings of England and France during the four periods of the Hundred's Year War.*



## Two sides of the canal

Henry V came to the throne of England in 1413, representing according to Rothero (1981) the role of the archetype of the better kind of medieval Christian king, than any other ruler of the period. He is described by the historians of the period as a pious, athletic, chivalrous, acquisitive, ruthless and eager to gain honour on the field of battle. His reign came to a critical point for the English Kingdom as it is divided and its moral is abysmal. Henry V aimed to turn the tide and the only way of achieving the unity of the English people was a war against a traditional enemy, in French ground.

Starting a campaign against the French couldn't happen out of nowhere, he needed a causation to do so. He found its cause in the proposal of outrageous demands from his enemy, demands he knew they would never accept. In more detail, according to *Barker (2007)* king Henry demanded:

- 1) *The crown of France*
- 2) *The former Angevin Empire*
- 3) *The Duchy of Normandy*
- 4) *Half of Provence*
- 5) *The unpaid ransom of King Jean II (captured during the battle of Poitiers)*
- 6) *The hand of the French king's daughter*
- 7) *A dowry of two million French Crowns*

The French, of course, declined those demands and the negotiations officially broke down in the early months of 1415.

On the other side of the canal the situation is not better, but probably even worse. King Charles VI was the king of France since 1380, is known with the infamous title "The mad king", because of his bouts of insanity during his reign. During the battle of Agincourt, his political power was taken away by prominent nobles who were his close relatives, because of his

inability to make decisions about the kingdom (*Bennet, 1991*). Each noble was serving different interests, something that led to a friction between them. The peak of that friction was when [John the fearless](#) instigated the murder of [Luis I of Orleans](#) in 1407. The friction of interests quickly led to a civil war between the [Armagnacs](#) and the [Burgundians](#).

The difference between the two kingdoms at this point favoured the English side, with King Henry V unifying his people against a kingdom torn into pieces.



During the diplomatic negotiations, Henry was rapidly preparing for war since he knew the French would decline his extreme demands. In more detail, he had instructed the Master of the Ordnance, since 1413, to stock up with bow staves and arrows. Except for that he already had in his army siege equipment, such as battering devices and ladders, cast in London and Bristol (*Bennett, 1991*).

Aiming to take advantage of the civil war in France he attempted to achieve a military alliance with the Duke of Burgundy, offering troops and a division of Armagnacs lords' territories. The lack of trust between each side led to the break down of the negotiations.

The beginning of the campaign starts at Southampton, in the early months of 1415...



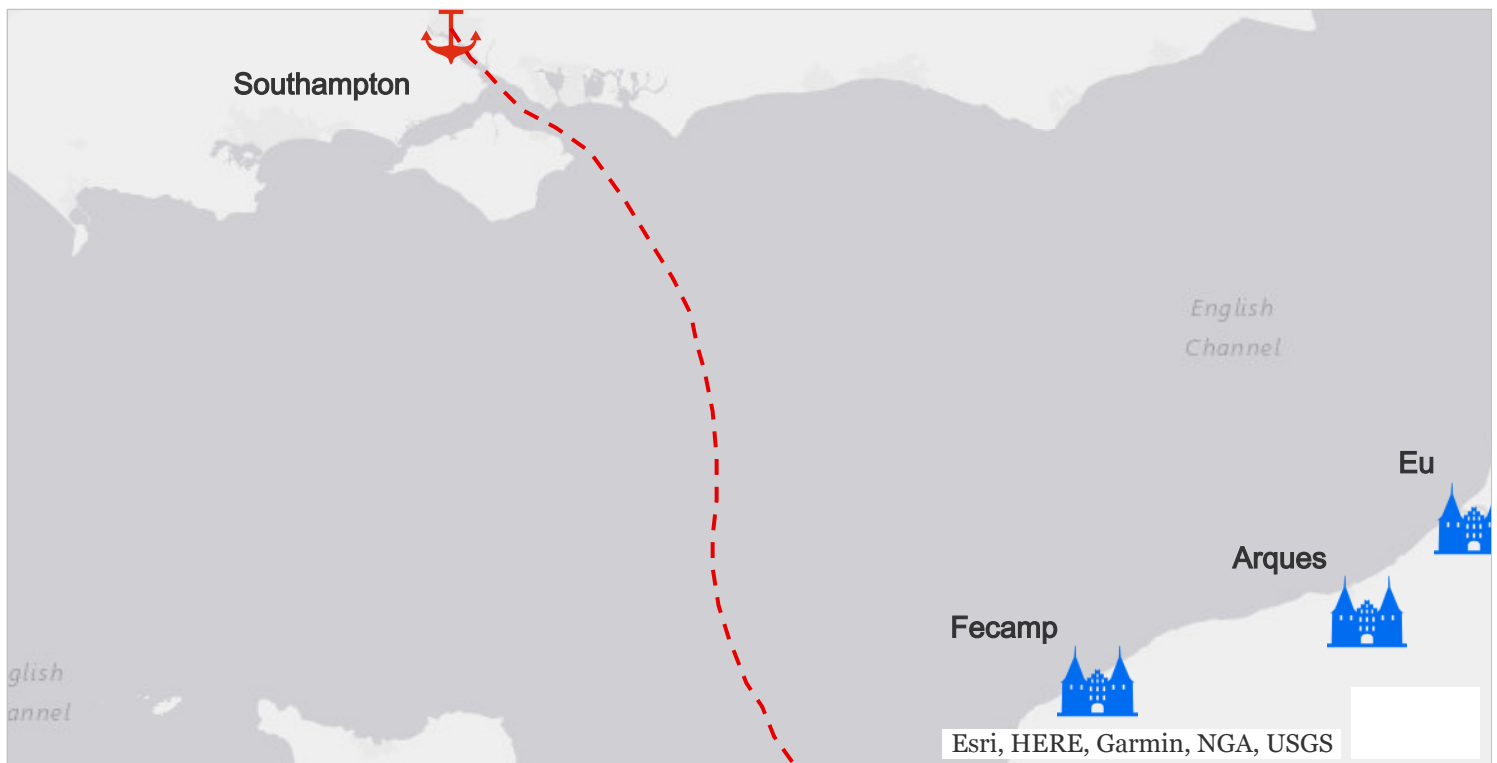
*Legend of maps visualising the English movements during the campaign of King Henry V in France*

## The campaign



### Early months of 1415

King Henry V gathers and creates his invasion fleet at Southampton along with his army.

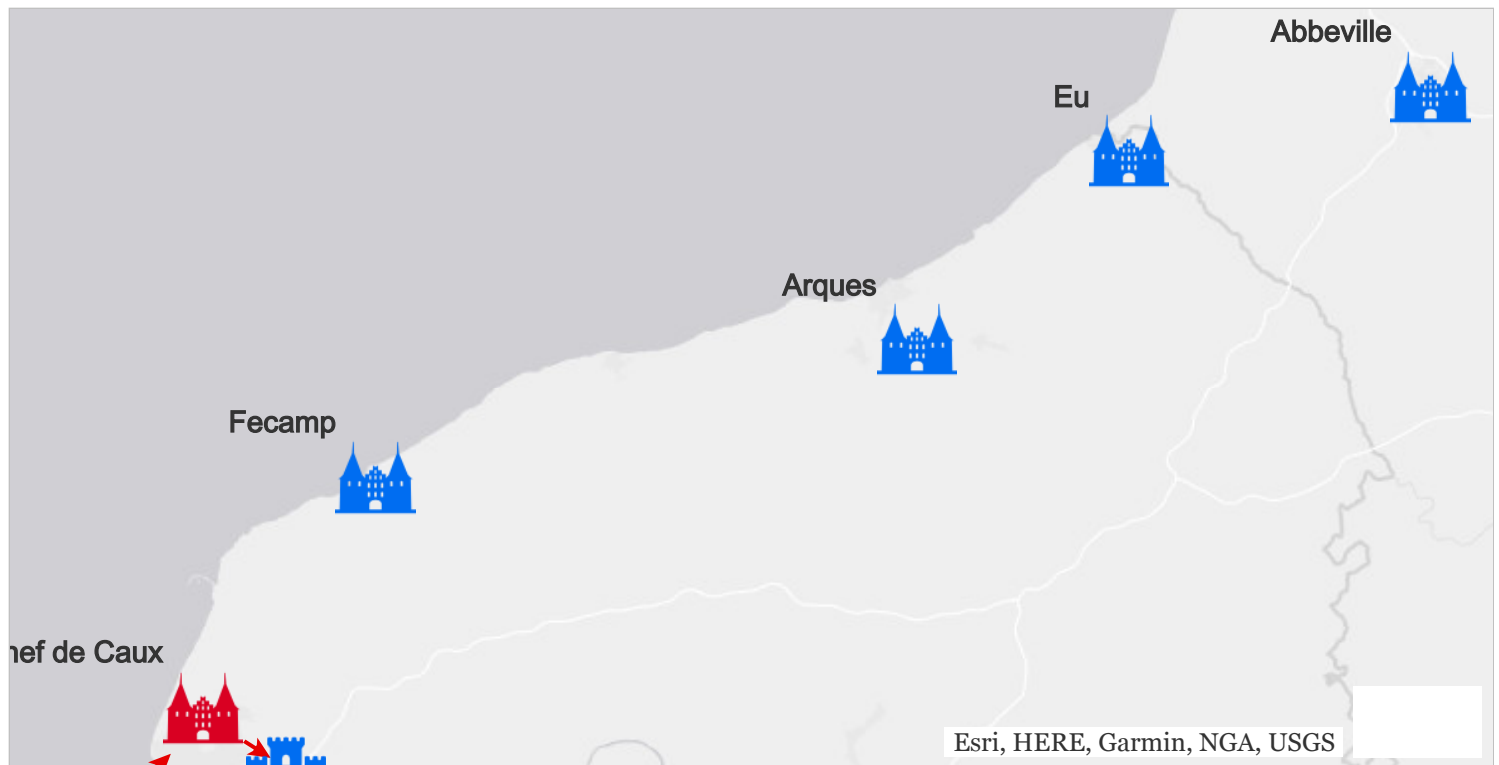


### 10th of August 1415

The fleet departs with some of the greatest ships of England, such as *Trinite Royale*, *Kathrine de la Toure*, the *Petite Trinite de la toure* and the *Rude Coq de la Toure*.

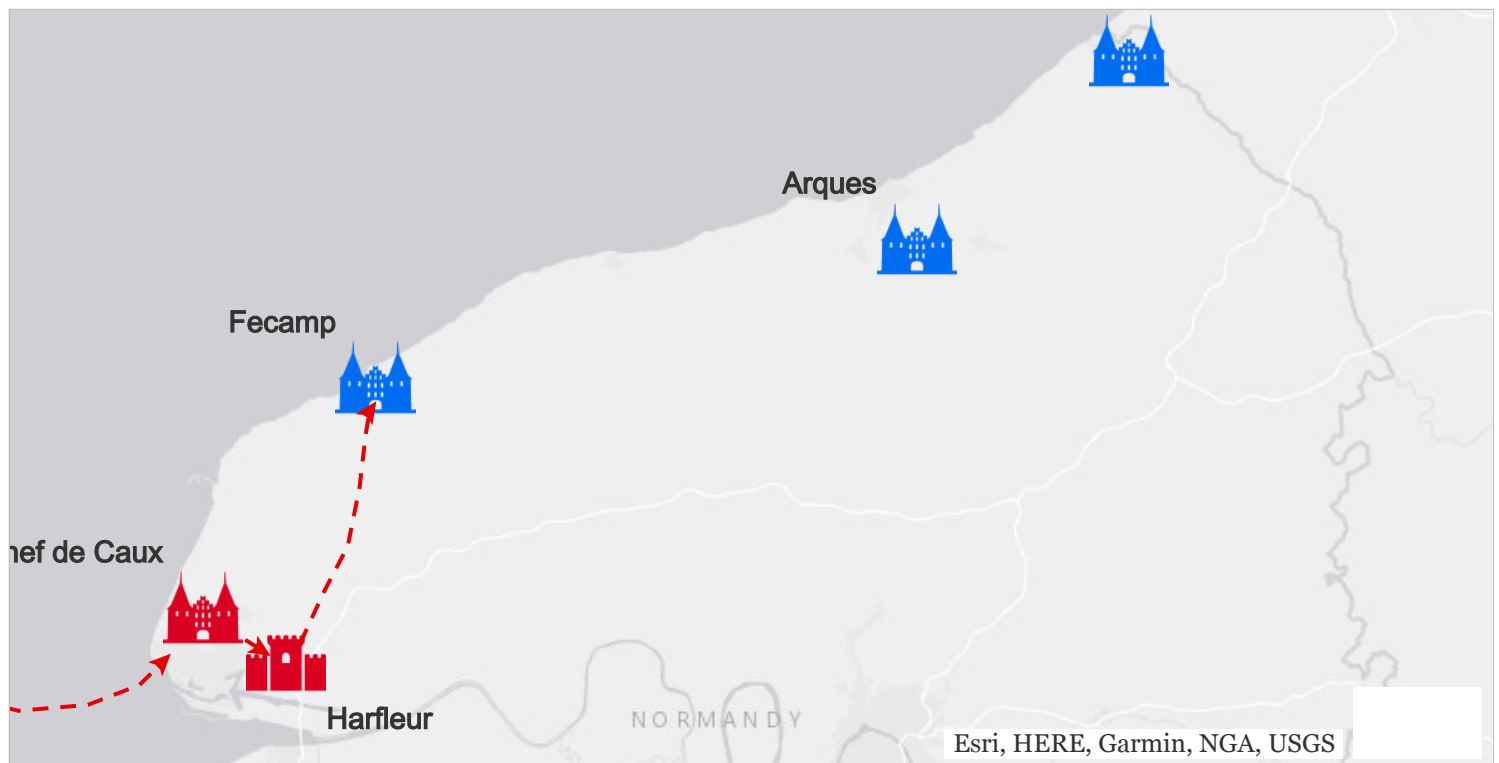
### 13th of August 1415

English army three miles West of the small town of Chef de Caux.



*18th of August 1415*

The siege of Harfleur takes place.



*8th of October 1415*

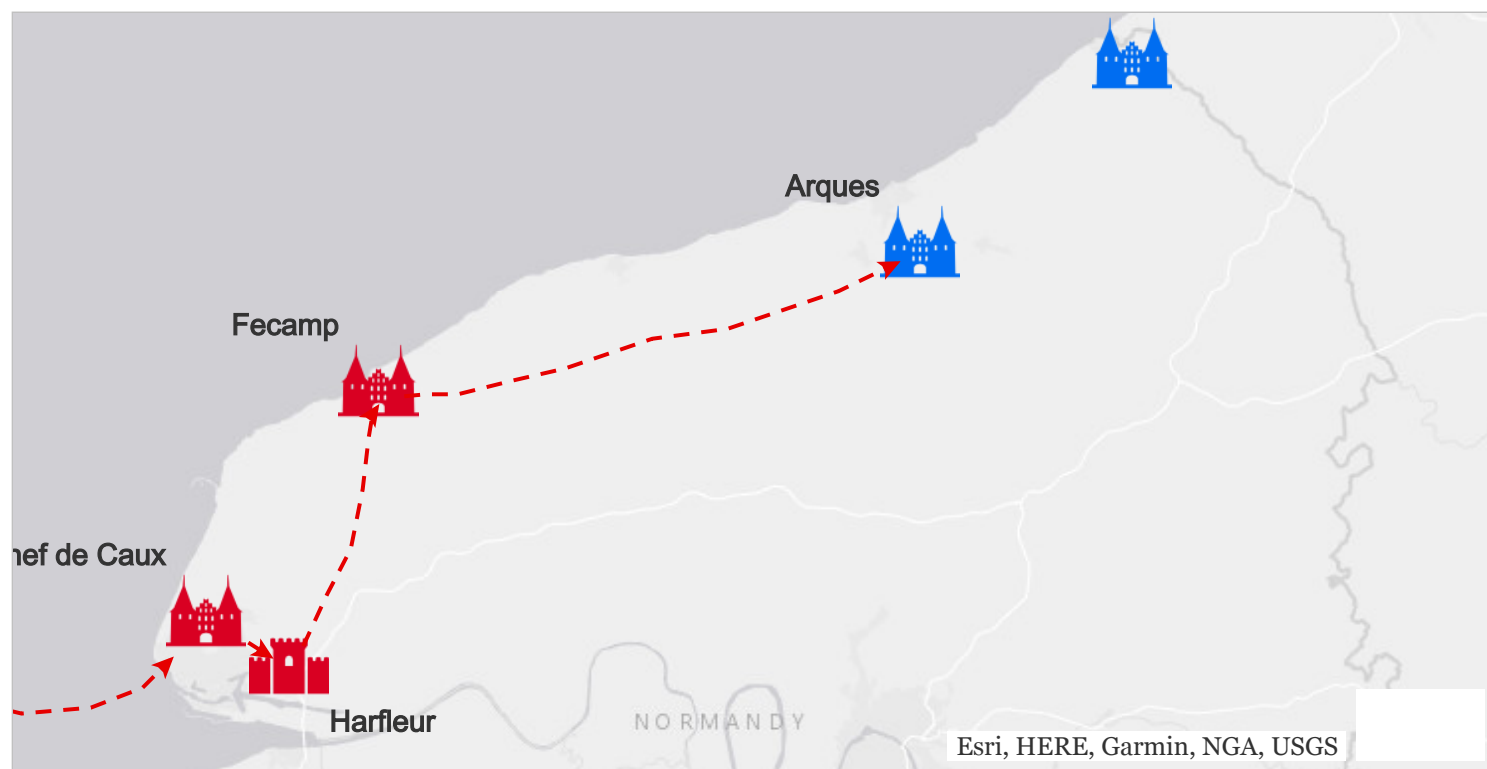
The English siege the city for almost five weeks, because of the good fortification, until they finally capture it. The army was weakened by the casualties of the war, disease and desertion leading to a huge loss of a quarter and a third of his starting army ([History.com](https://www.history.com), 2015).

Henry was expected to return home, but he decided to lead his army to Calais, where he would find his fleet and return back home. He decides to follow the tactic of Edward III, who was not capturing the cities, but he preferred to sack them



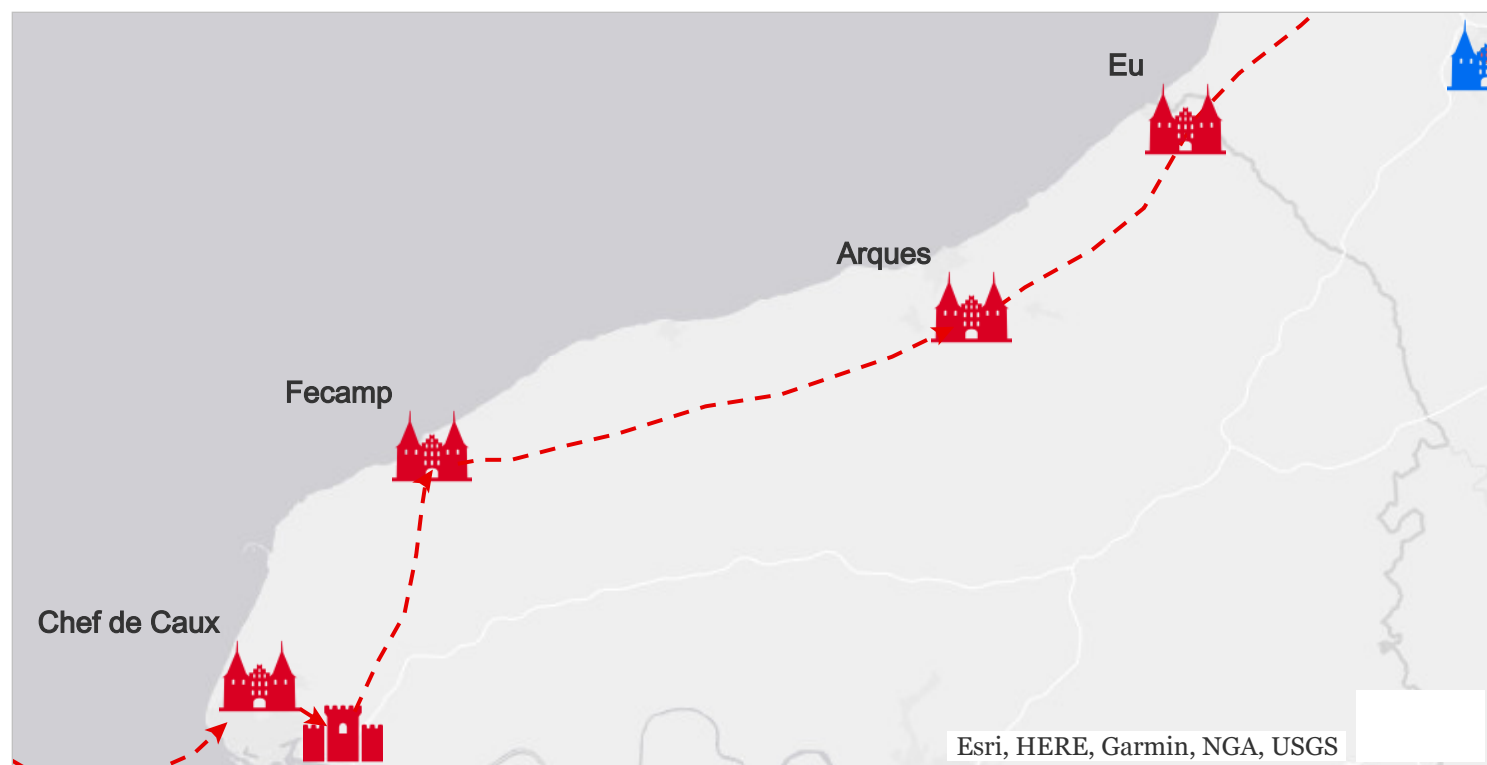
and continue to the next one. That way Henry was aiming to reduce further the morale of the French, which was already low because of the civil war. To enhance that effort, he decided to quarter his banner with the arms of France and England, signifying himself as the ruler of France.

Henry V leaves 1.200 of his men to guard the city and starts his march to Calais with 1.000 men at arms and 5.000 archers.



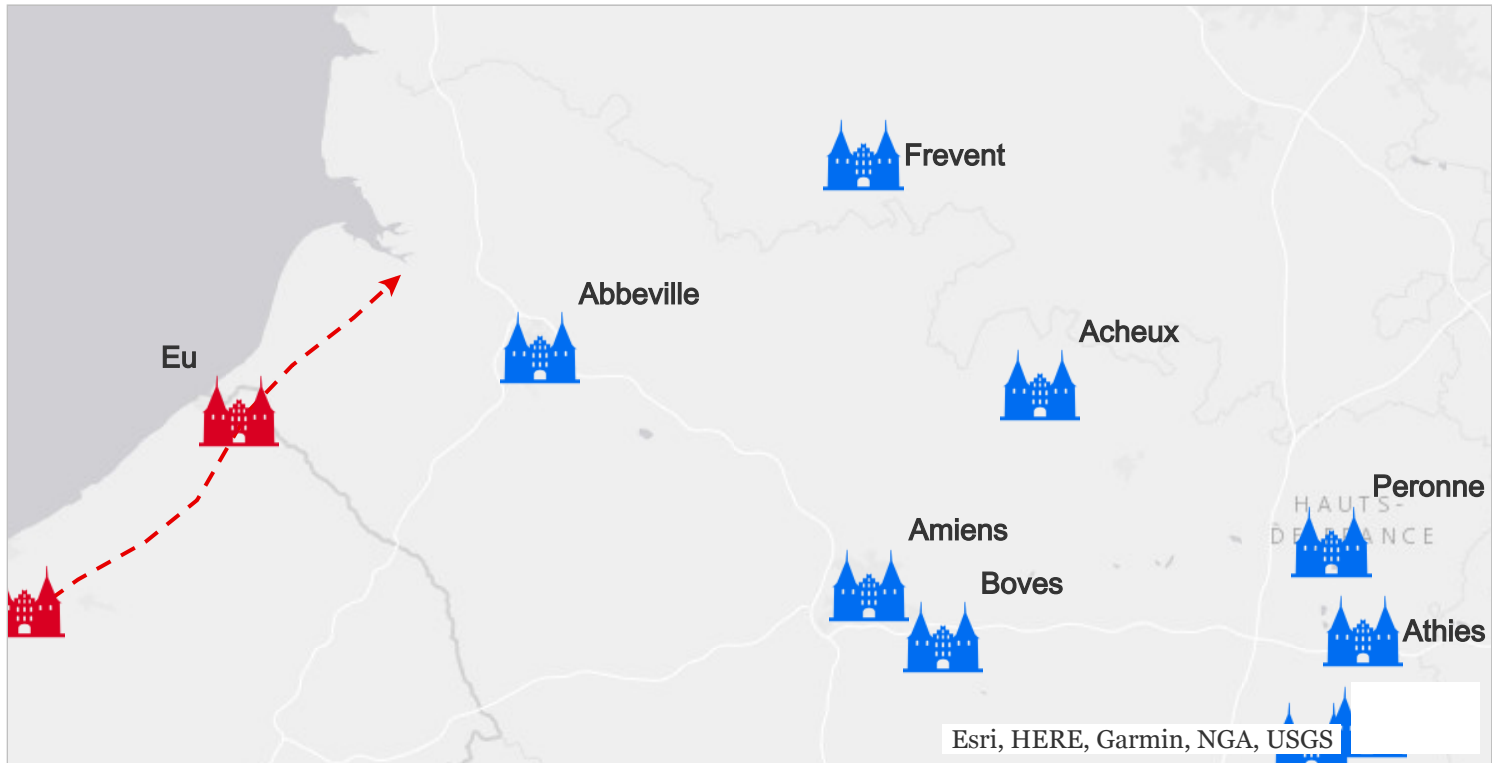
*9th of October 1415*

Marching through Fecamp.



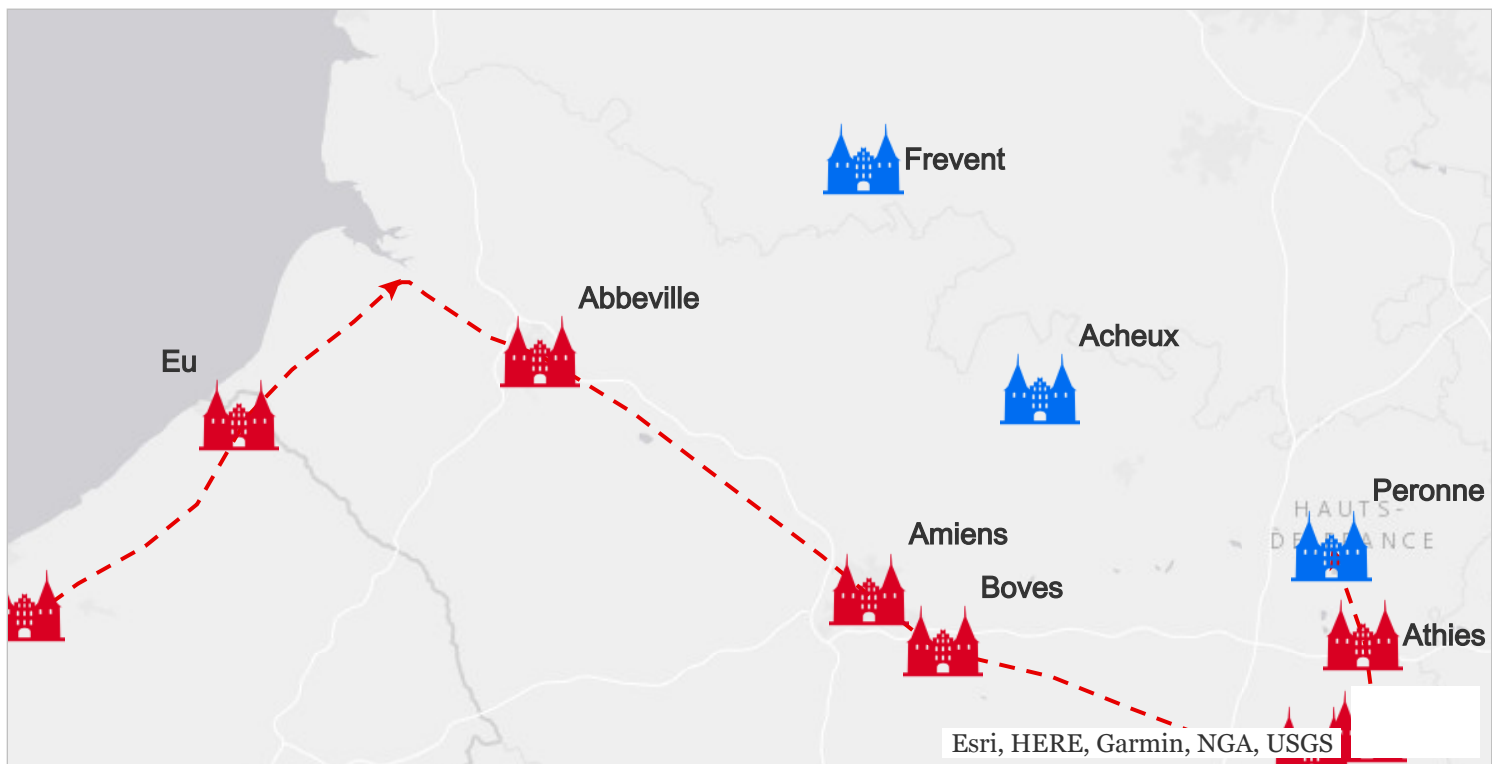
*11th of October 1415*

Passing through Arques and Eu.



*13th of October 1415*

Henry V reaches Blanchetaque but never crossed over, because the French army was waiting across the river.



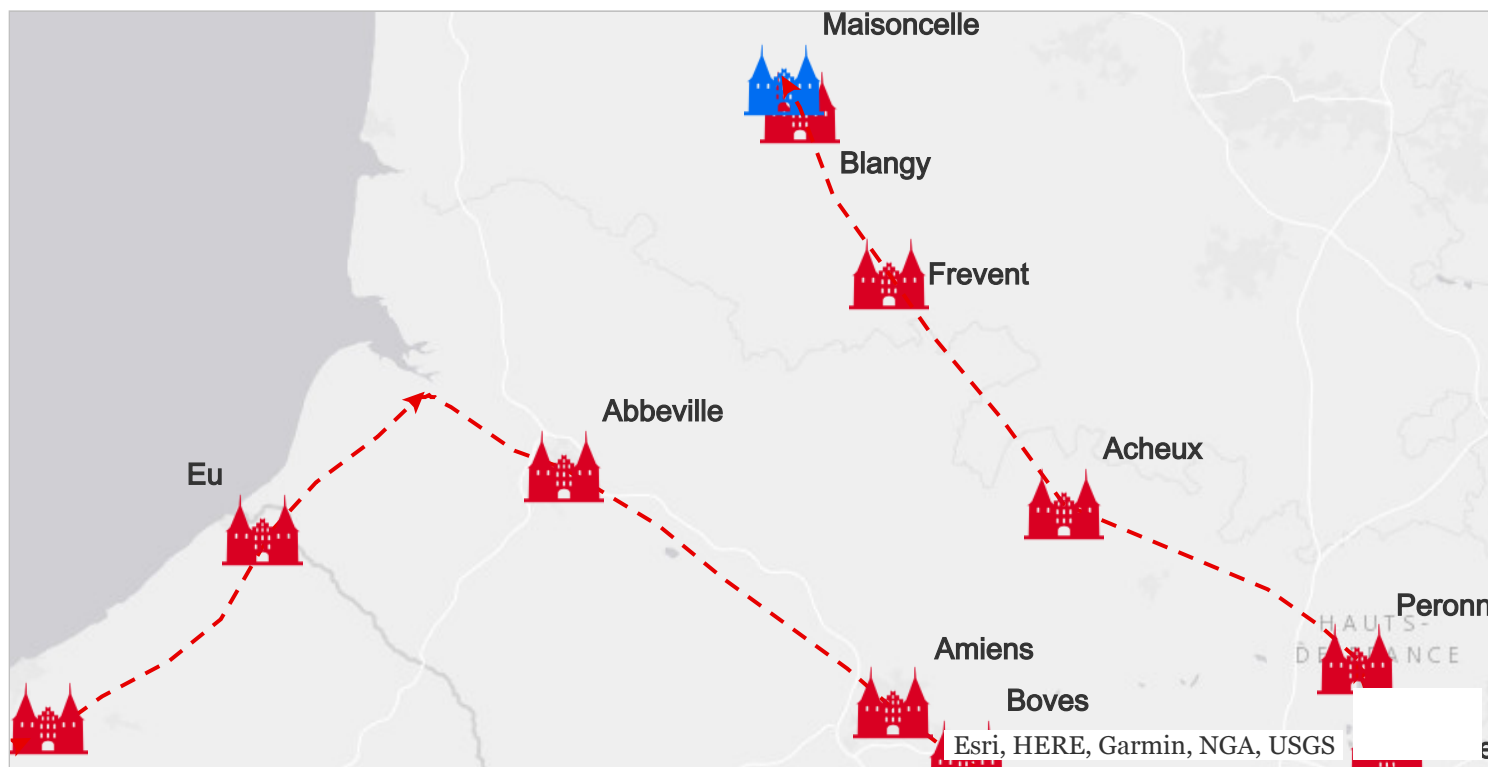
*20th of October 1415*



Passing through Peronne. There the French army waits for Henry V and blocks his way, making the battle seem inevitable. They send the Heralds to declare their intentions. Henry, knowing the abysmal condition of his army, tries to trick the French army that their morale was still high, by saying that he only wants to reach Calais and return back home.

After the Heralds left, he declares to his army to be prepared for battle.

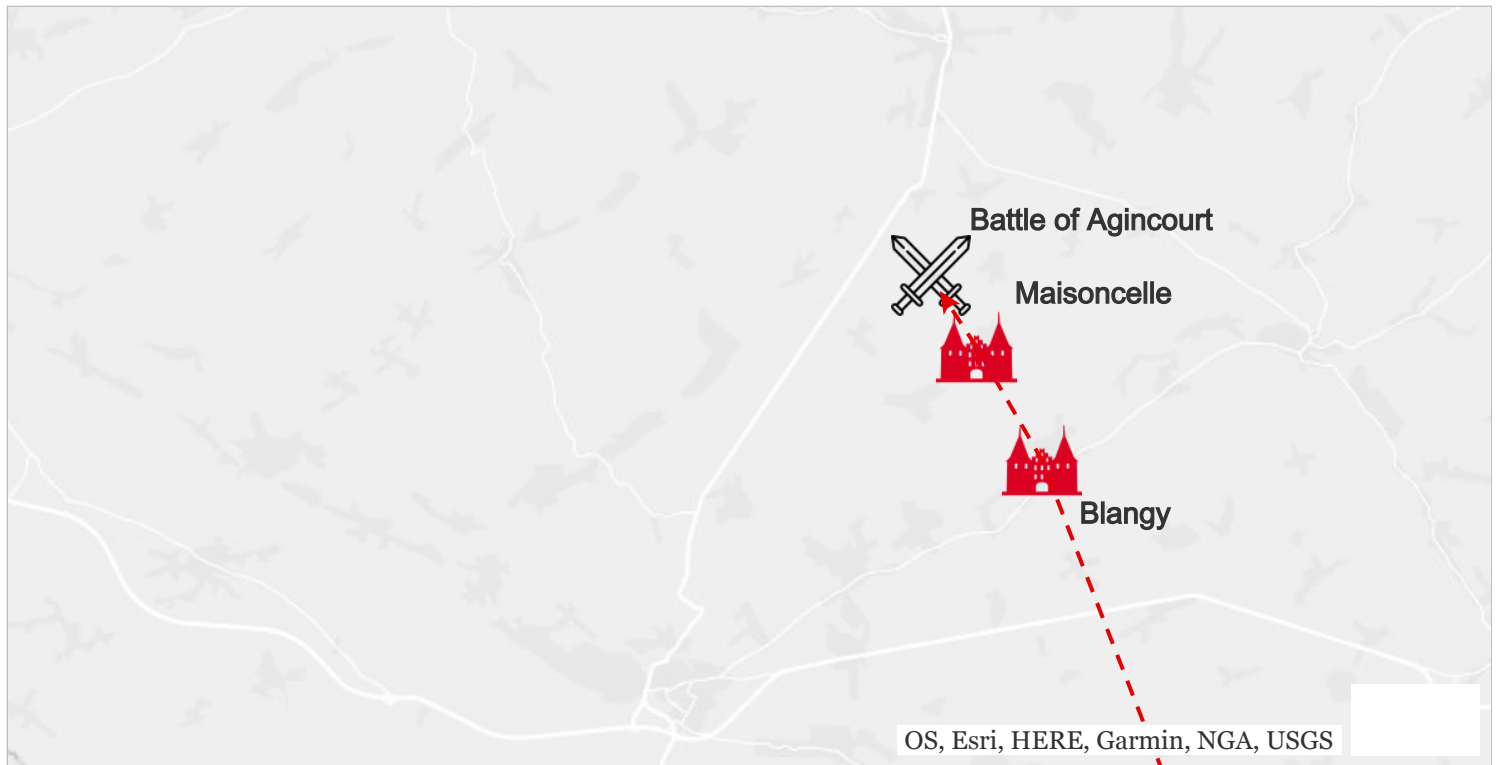
The next morning they find out that the French army has withdrawn.



### *24th of October 1415*

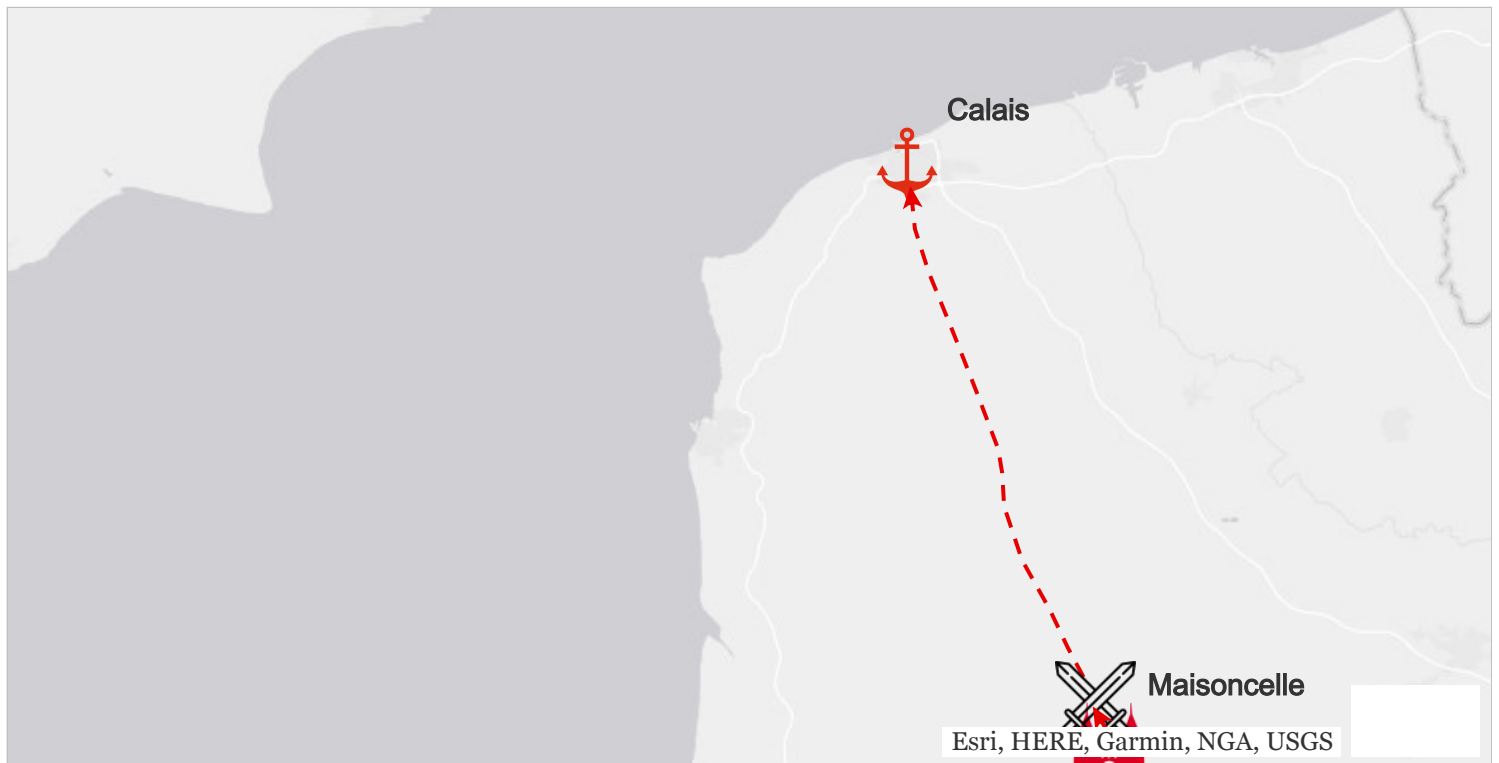
Henry's advance patrols topped the high ridge at Blangy see the massive army of French moving across the valley among them, aiming to block their approach to Calais.

That night it was decided to rest the army in the village of maisoncelles.



*25th of October 1415*

The armies prepare themselves for the inevitable battle, in the area between Agincourt and Tramecourt.



*28th of October 1415*

King Henry V and his army approach eventually Calais.

## The French deterrence

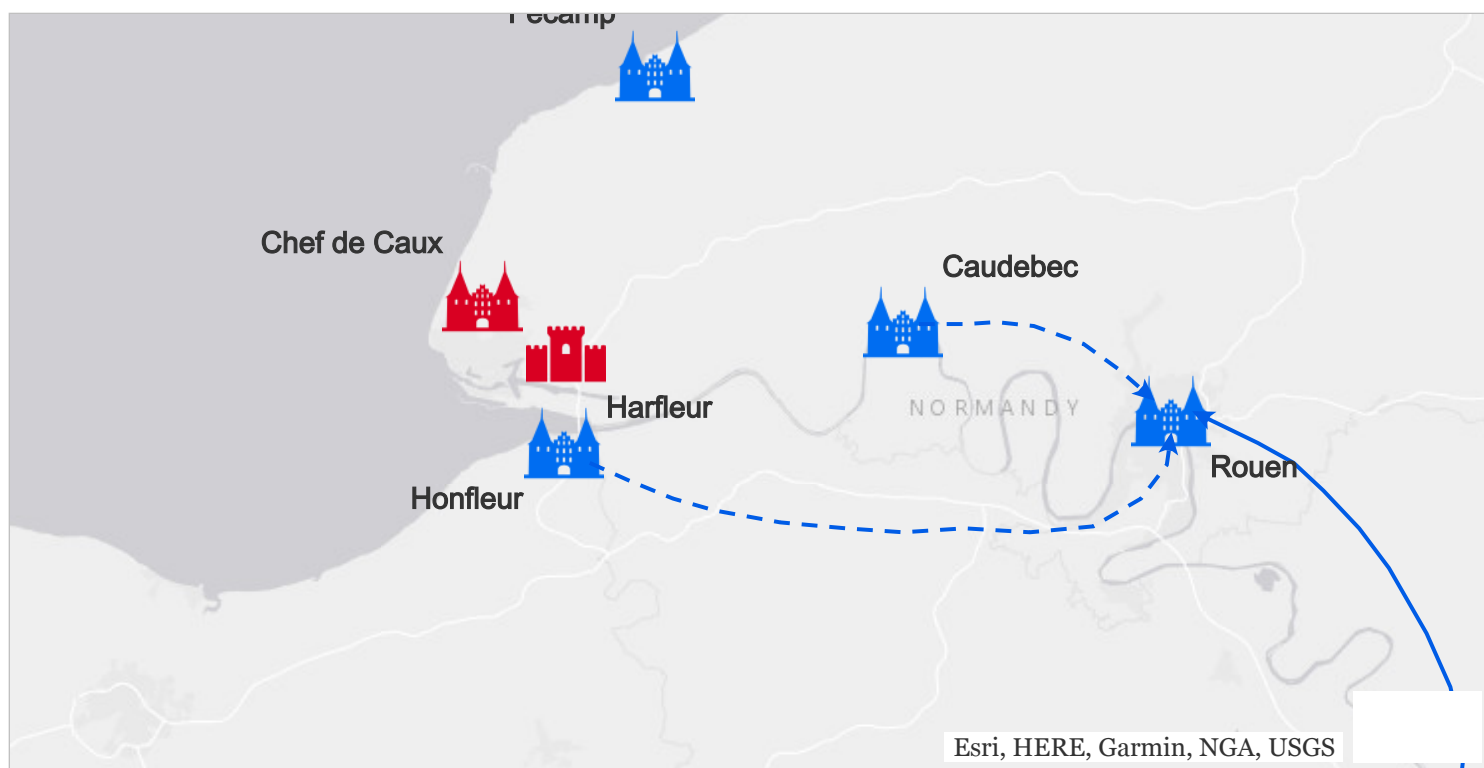


During the English movements within the French kingdom, the French didn't remain inactive, but in particular...



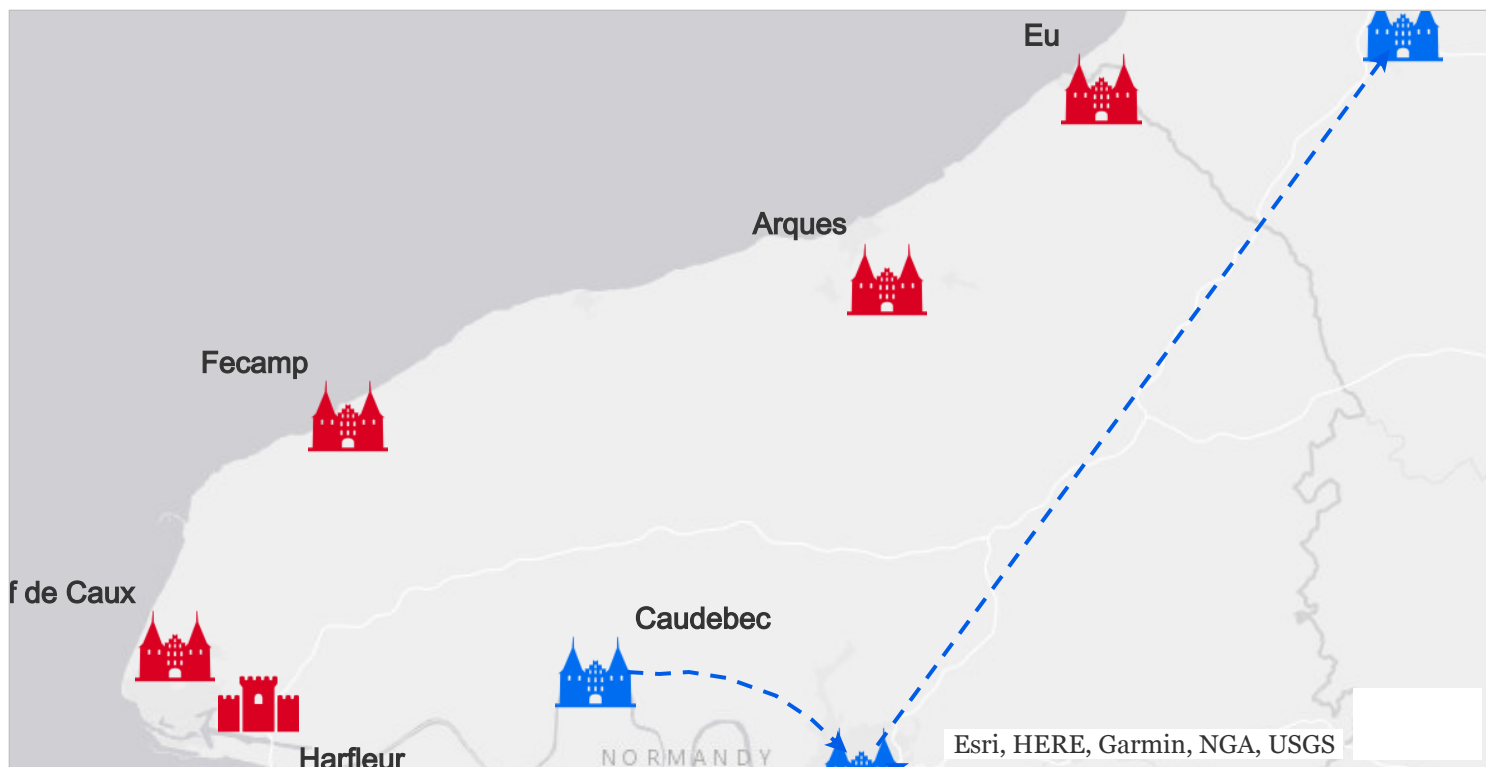
*Legend of the maps representing the French deterrence (The French cities have their colours changed to red to show that the english army had passed by)*

## French assemble their army



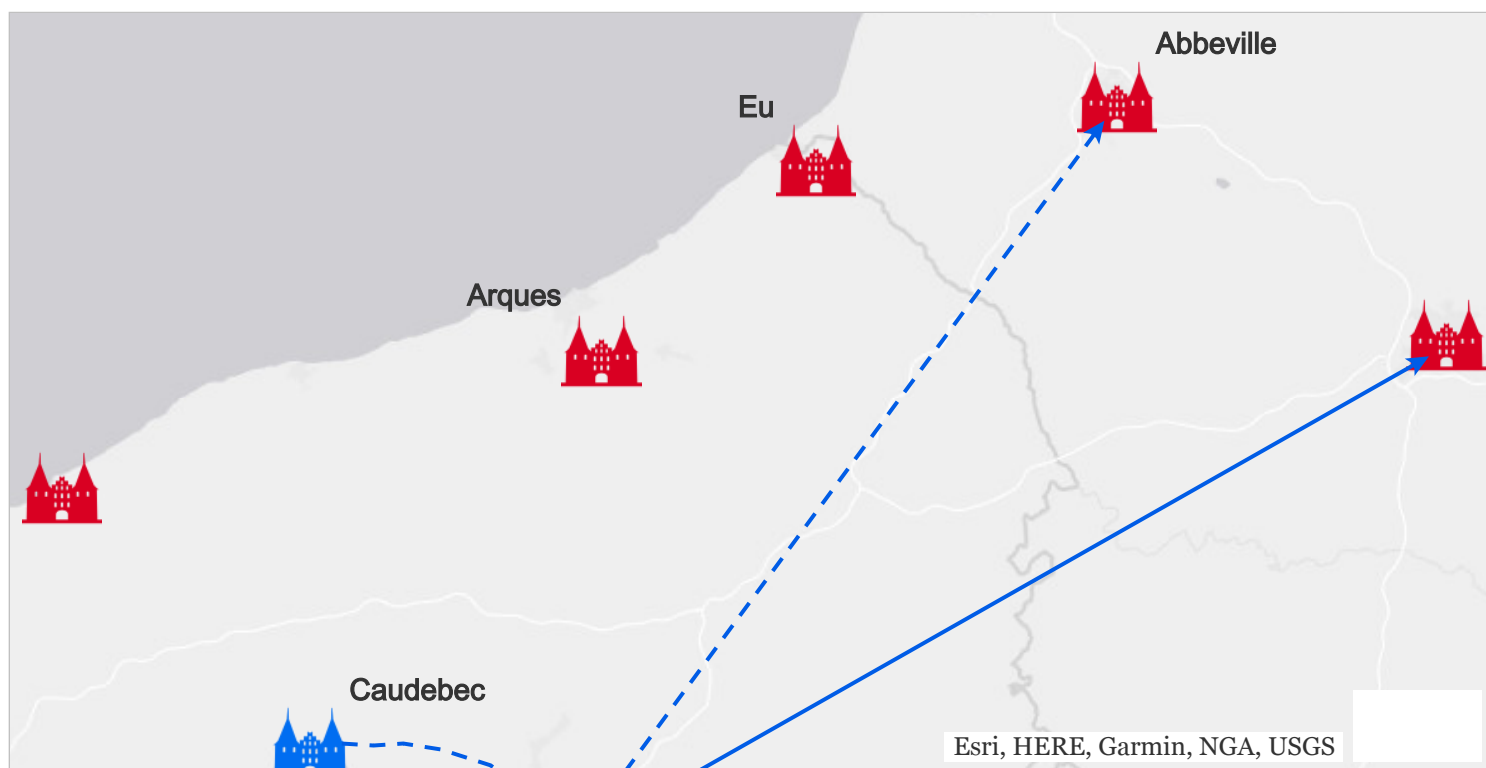
### 14th of October 1415

French king begins to assemble his army at Rouen, from the areas of Honfleur, Caudebec and Vernon. It is decided to send an advanced guard before his army. To prevent Henry from crossing the Somme, under the commands of Marshal Boucicaut and the Constable d'Albert.



*11th of October 1415*

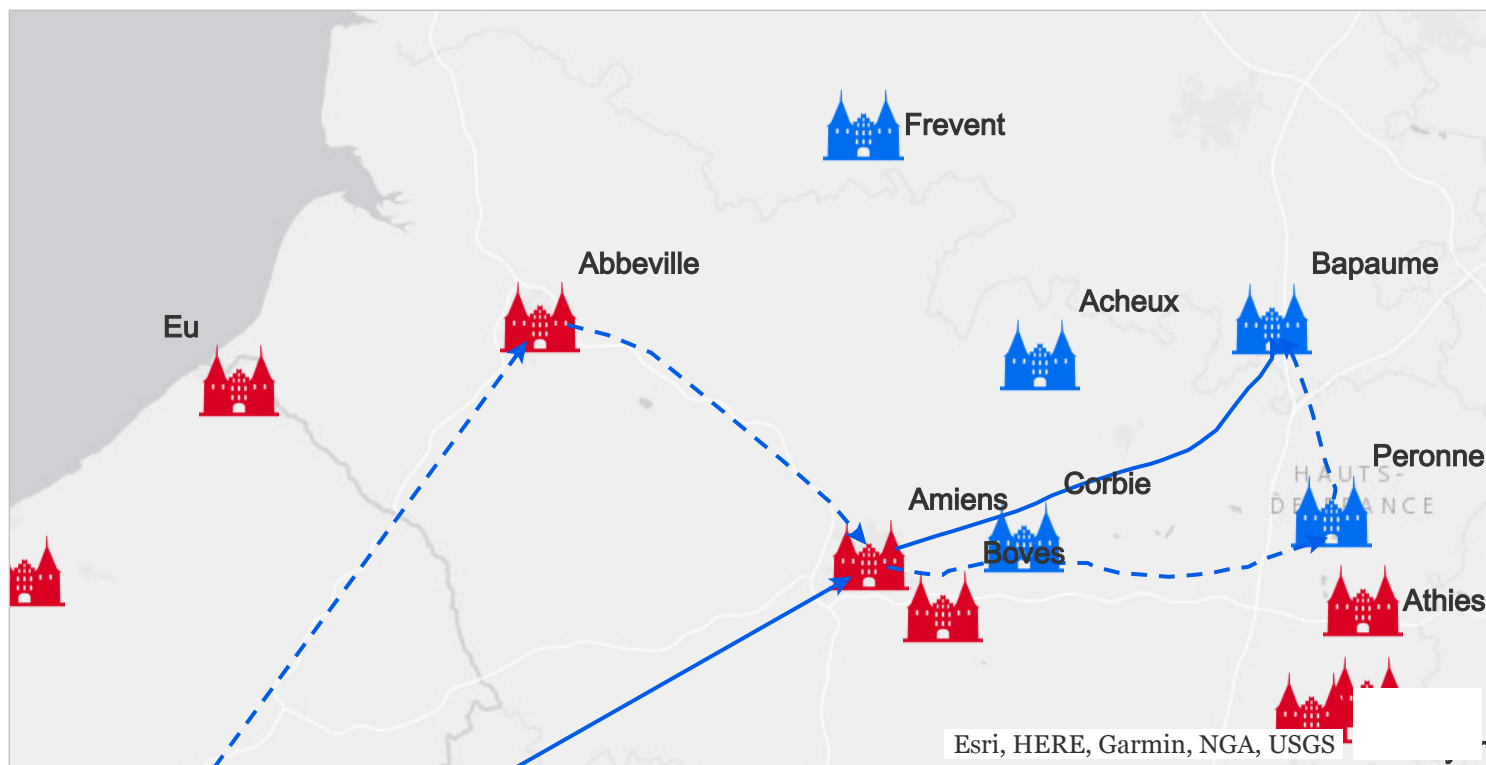
The French advanced guard reaches Abbeville.



*17th of October 1415*

The French army approaches the city Amiens under the Dukes of Orleans and Bourbon, missing the English army for a few days.

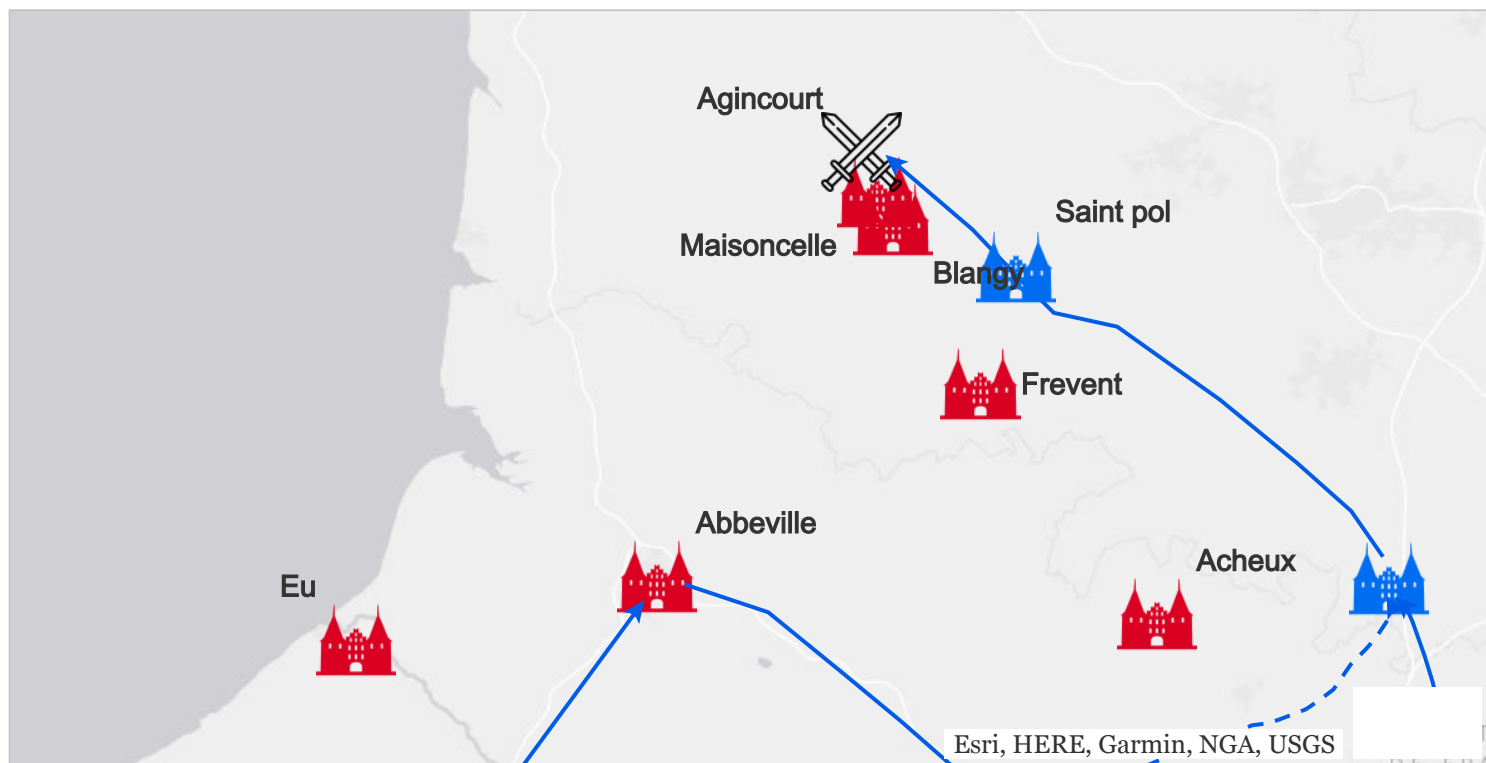




### *20th of October 1415*

The army waited for the arrival of the English army at Peronne. When they arrived and saw the French army, they started believing that the battle was inevitable, since only six miles separate the two sides. The Heralds are sent to Henry to declare to him their intentions. Henry announces to them that he is not seeking battle, but he only wants to reach Calais, warning them that if they impeded his journey it would be at their own peril.

The same night the French army withdraws, moving to Bapaume.



### *25th of October 1415*

French reach Agincourt and deploy their army to block the route of Henry towards Calais.

# The numbers behind the battle

## The two armies

Concerning the relative numbers of men, who were at the battle of Agincourt, remains a serious question. The only knowledge we have in our hands comes from chronicles of the era, with some serious differences in their estimation. It becomes obvious that each side tried to present the numbers of the battle in such a way that would benefit themselves.

The English side degrades the size of king Henry's V army and presents a great number of French in the battle, to stress the "miracle" and present Henry V as the one who managed to overcome such a huge obstacle. For example, *Vita Henrici Quinti (Life of Henry V)* by [Tito Livio Frulovisi](#) writes that the French had thirty times as many men as the 5900 English men, numbers which are considered inaccurate by many historians (*Mortimer, 2009*). The period that the battle took place justifies why the English Chronicles were exaggerating in their numbers and were focusing on the amazing nature of the victory and God's support. The English needed something to lift their morale since they were exhausted and internal rivalries were putting the crown into danger.



Copy of the *Vita Henrici Quinti*, written by Tito Livio Frulovisi

On the other hand, French and Burgundian chronicles were trying to downsize the difference between the armies, as well as apportion blame for the defeat, such as the chronicle *Historie de Charles VI* (c.1415-1422) and the *Chronique d'Enguerran de Monstrelet* (1447). Many French chronicles claim that the English side had between ten and eighteen thousand archers, and thus as many as the French, making their victory less emphatic.

Between the various numbers and estimations, professor's Anne Curry assessment of the numbers in the battle seems to be the most refined yet. Professor Curry assessed the number of men in the French companies as indicated by Burgundian chronicles and then compared them with the sizes of the companies, which were ordered to be mustered (*Curry, 2002*). She also made allowances for the addition retinues brought from individual lords. That method suggests that there were about eight or nine thousand men-at-arms. Concerning the crossbowmen, most companies had been instructed to raise half as many crossbowmen (*Mortimer, 2009*), a number which according to *Curry, 2002* were never achieved, leading to an army of 12000 men.

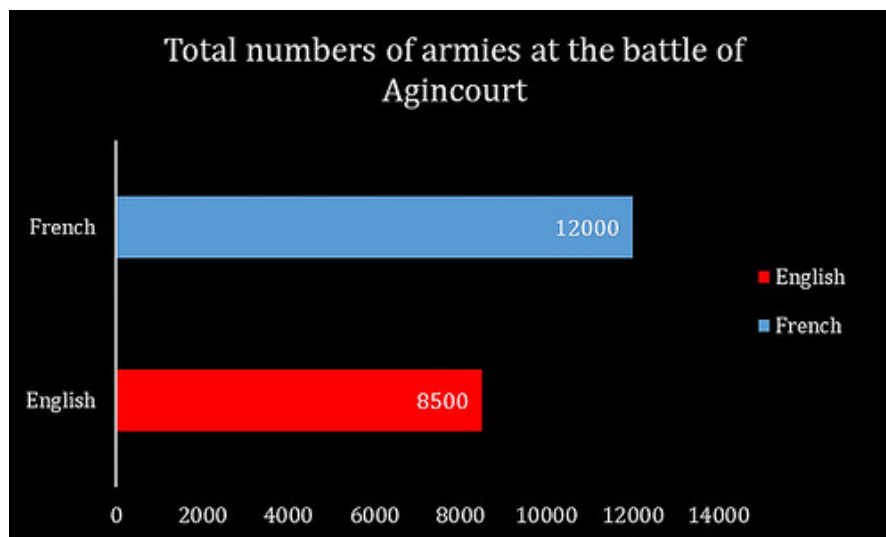
As for the English army, records of contract and pay exist, before the English army set sail for Harfleur, allowing us to be certain for their number before the campaign. Concerning the final number before the battle of Agincourt, depending on

the reinforcements sent from England to boost his attempt and the number of people who died during the siege of Harfleur and dysentery, it is calculated to be a few hundred more than 8100 (*Mortimer,2009*).



Medieval chronicler (source: *The Imaginative Conservative*)

In the current story map, the representation of the battle will be based on professor Curry's hypothesis.



The total numbers of the English and French armies, based on Anne Curry's hypothesis

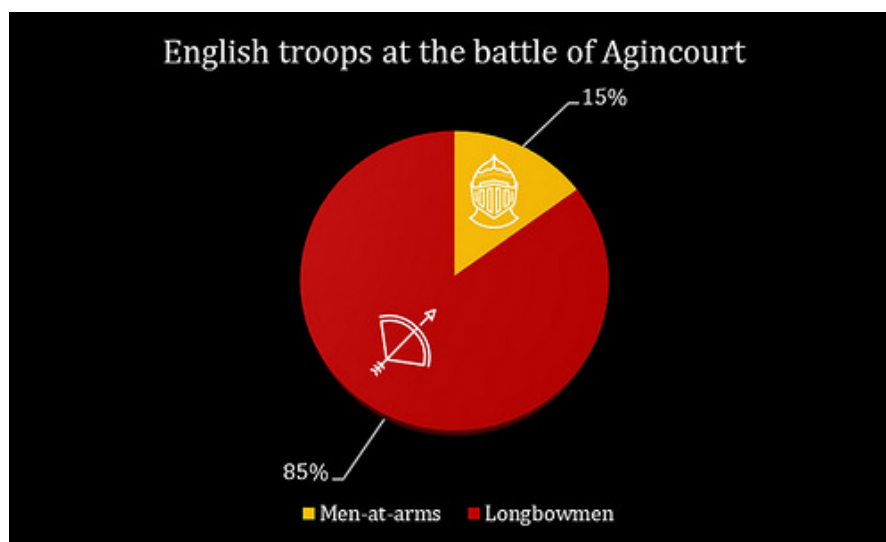
## A closer look at the troops

### English troops

King Henry V led the troops at the battle of Agincourt strictly and demanded discipline from them, a characteristic which played a crucial role in the battle. During the campaign, he was accompanied by experienced and trusted subordinates, increasing that way the expertise of his army. Henry had achieved to earn the respect of everyone whatever their age or experience- and even from his enemies (*Bennet,1994*).



Henry's army was consisted mainly of longbowmen and by a smaller margin by men-at-arms. It is speculated that 7000 longbowmen and 1500 men-at-arms were that day at Agincourt for the English side.



*Percentage of troop type for the English side, based on Anne Curry's hypothesis*

## The longbowmen

The longbowmen were specially trained archers, able to use a 'pull' power on the bow from 80lb up 150lb. In order to reach the full magnitude of the bow, the archer should be fully trained from a young age to achieve the strength and the accuracy needed. Within the English kingdom, kings were promoting that skill leading to the enhancement of the English troops with fully expertise archers (*University of Southampton, 2015b*).

The range of the longbow often reached the 400 yards (365 m), but his killing range was little more than half of that. In the case of the longbow, the killing was not the only objective since only wounding or terrifying the opposite troops would deal a sufficient damage to their morale. It worths mentioning that each longbowman was carrying four dozen arrows in his quiver, with a shooting rate of ten to twelve arrows per minute (*Bennett, 1994*).



English longbowman (source: [Realm of History](https://www.realmofhistory.com))

## Men-at-arms

Men-at-arms were troops covered from head-to-toe with plate armour, in order to be well protected by enemy hits. Some of them were of noble and knightly rank, being paid based on their rank. Despite their social status, they were all trained in arms and in horsemanship from a very young age. The social status was a factor concerning their armour. The total



weight of armour is estimated at about 60-80lb (28-35kg), making the need for an assistant mandatory to be dressed with the whole equipment (*Rothero, 1981*).



Men-at-arms during the battle of Agincourt (Source: [www.learninghistory.com](http://www.learninghistory.com))

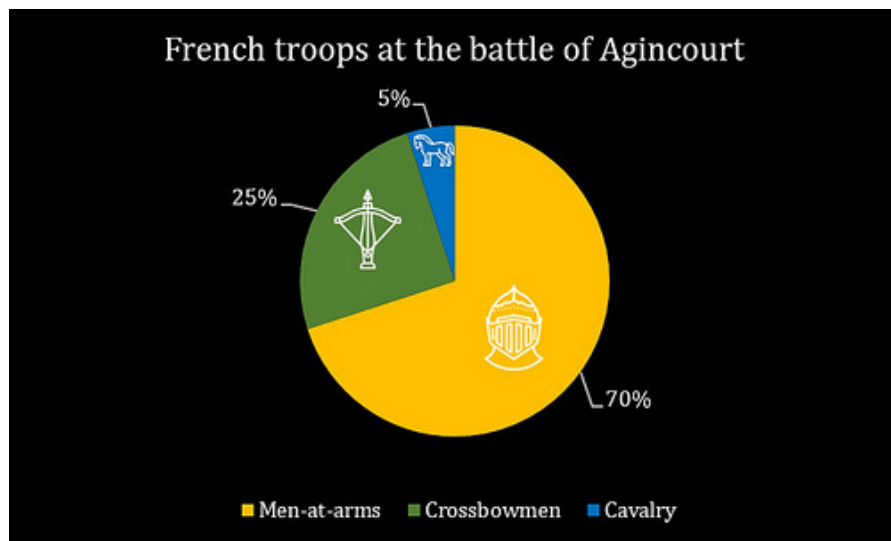
Men-at-arms of lower rank were armed with a lance, sword, mace or war hammer, with the sword being the queen of weapons-the symbol of knighthood and nobility. The sword could be either one-handed, with a length of three feet, or two-handed, with a higher length. They also had a ballock dagger, which was the last resort to wound or kill an enemy, if they managed to find a gap in the enemy's armour (*Rothero, 1981*). During the battle, the English side had only men-at-arms on foot, while the French had both on foot and mounted.

## French troops

The leadership of the French army was one of the biggest disadvantages since Charles VI was absent because of insanity. King's son was also unfit to lead the battle, because of his young age and little experience of battle tactics. The only experienced leaders in France were John, Duke of Burgundy and Charles, Duke of Orleans, who were in conflict with each other, because of the Burgundian-Armagnac civil war (Bennet, 1991). The responsibility of the leadership fell into the hands of Charles, Duke of Orleans, John, Duke of Bourbon and John, Duke of Alencon, who were asked to cooperate with the military officials of the Royal Household.

Overall, the division of the leadership of the army was a critical mistake as each Duke had his own personal plans for the battle, creating a confusion in the army.

The French side consisted of 600 mounted men-at-arms, 8500 on foot men-at-arms and 3000 crossbowmen. Since the men-at-arms were described in the previous section, they will not be described again to avoid duplication (*Curry, 2002*).



## Crossbowmen

Crossbowmen were usually more armoured than the archers, with a huge shield protecting them during the reload process. The size of the crossbow varied, with lighter versions having a smaller shooting range than the heavier ones, which could reach a radius of 400 yards. The bolts were shorter of the those used in bows but heavier. Despite the fact that they could shot on a linear trajectory, which in close range was lethal, crossbowmen used to shoot high, in order to pierce the helmet and the shoulder of the enemy's plate (*Bennet, 1991*).



Medieval crossbow (source: <https://swordsandsuch.weebly.com>)

Every quiver was equipped with a dozen bolts and the shooting ratio is restricted to two or three bolts per minute, because of the long reload time. In particular, after shooting they had to draw the string back with their own hands or use a cranequin to set the string to the butt.

## Mounted men-at-arms

The cavalry of the French army were men-at-arms mounted on large horses. They were usually equipped with a sword or a lance and were well-armoured, to be protected from enemy attacks. Usually, they were wealthy people, since they were leading a 'lance', a group of retainers who were also mounted, so they needed enough wealth to sustain the cost of several horses (*Bennett, 1991*).





Mounted men-at-arms at the battle of Agincourt (source: [www.History.com](http://www.History.com))

They were usually packed in hundreds, in tight formation and their objective on the battle was to exploit the enemy formations, creating weak points for the army to hit. The cavalry avoided to penetrate the enemy line deeply, because they didn't want to be isolated by experienced infantry, but they wanted to be able withdrew fast for further attacks. Based on their weight, speed and force they were not only aiming to kill enemies or break line but also to create terror in the enemy lines.



The day was the 24th of October. king Henry V was clearly outnumbered, with his troop suffering from dysentery and having a low morale. On the other side of the field, the French were well-fed and rested. Both armies were deployed on the field waiting for each other to do the first move. They had set up in a field between Agincourt and Tramencourt with forests on the sides, in favour of the fewer arithmetically English. Henry was informed by his scouts that the French were blocking his path to Calais, so he decided to dismount all his men and draw them up in battle position (Barker, 2007). According to Le Fevre de St Remy, a Burgundian Herald who was in the battle, the priests were busy listening to the confessions of men who were expecting to die that day, with Henry being among his men praying to god (Barker, 2007).



King Henry V praying with his men (source: [www.History.com](http://www.History.com))

None of the sides was eager to rush battle. On the one side, Henry knew he was in a tough position but he preferred to wait for the enemy's move, while on the other hand Constable d' Albert and Marshal Boucicaut were very experienced to rush into the trap of urging a battle. They knew that if Henry reached Calais and returned back to England they would retake Harfleur, proving that Henry's campaign was in vain. Other members of the council disagreed, making the battle inevitable. Still, the waiting game of the French was in their favour, cause they would receive reinforcement and the English would become more hungry, more anxious and more desperate (*Mortimer, 2009*).

As time passed darkness covered the field, with French setting up their camps preparing their food. On the other side, English were on guard for a French attack. The French were creating such a noise with their talks that could be listened by the English. When they were commanded to stand down, they started doing the same, and act which was stamped out by Henry, who asked for complete silence. This decision had two aims; to discipline his army and to make it more difficult for the enemy to carry out any surprise raids in the night (*Barker, 2007*). Thanks to Henry's wisdom a raid was halted that night as the English army was prepared before the ambush.

The night was harsh for the English soldiers, raining in torrents, making their sleep impossible and making their armour to suffer from rust, as well as making the longbowmen's arrows heavier.

## Dawn of the 25th of October...

The day is 25th of October. The rain of the previous night has left nothing but a muddy field separating the two armies. By the first lights of the dawn, the French arrayed in their companies and took up their allotted positions on the battlefield.

Henry was awake long before the dawn. He had worn his armour and was prepared for the battle. Before he sets his army's position, based on the plan he had, he gave a speech of unity to his army, aiming to raise their morale before they head to a battle, where the odds were against them. Then he prepared himself and his army for the battle, being next to them on foot, to show them that he will fight as one them, justifying his say on his speech "...*We band of brothers...*", as it was written by Shakespear.

## King Henry's V speech before the battle



King Henry's speech based on the film "Henry V" from the actor Kenneth Branagh.





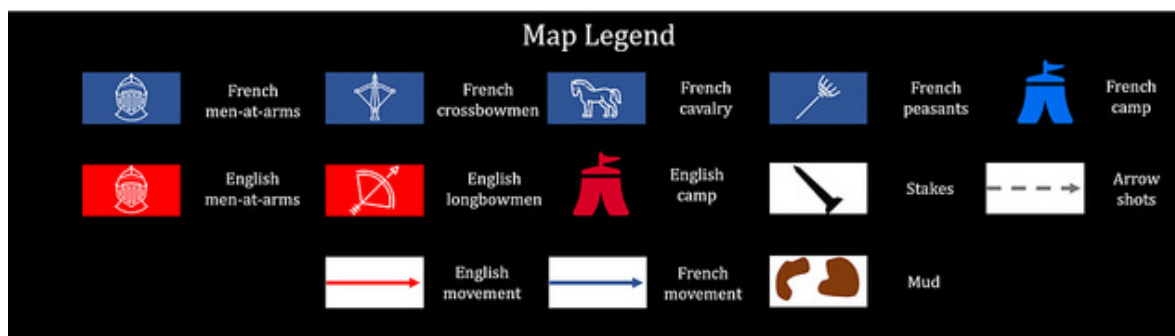
Henry V - Band of Brothers Speech - HQ 480p - Kenneth Branagh  
1989 Film

Video: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=680NIRI3v2I](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=680NIRI3v2I)

*Story map user hint: If you want you can scroll down while the video is playing to read the final words of King Henry's speech (2:17/2:55)*

*"We few, we happy few, we band of brothers  
For he today that sheds his blood with me  
Shall be my brother, be he ne'er so vile  
This day shall gentle his condition  
And gentlemen in England now-a-bed  
Shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here  
And hold their manhood cheap while any speaks  
That fought with us upon St. Crispin's Day"*

*King Henry V speech, based on Shakespeare play*



Legend of maps referring to the battle of Agincourt

The narration of the battle was based on the books of *Rothero(1981)*, *Barker(2007)* and *Bennett(1994)*.

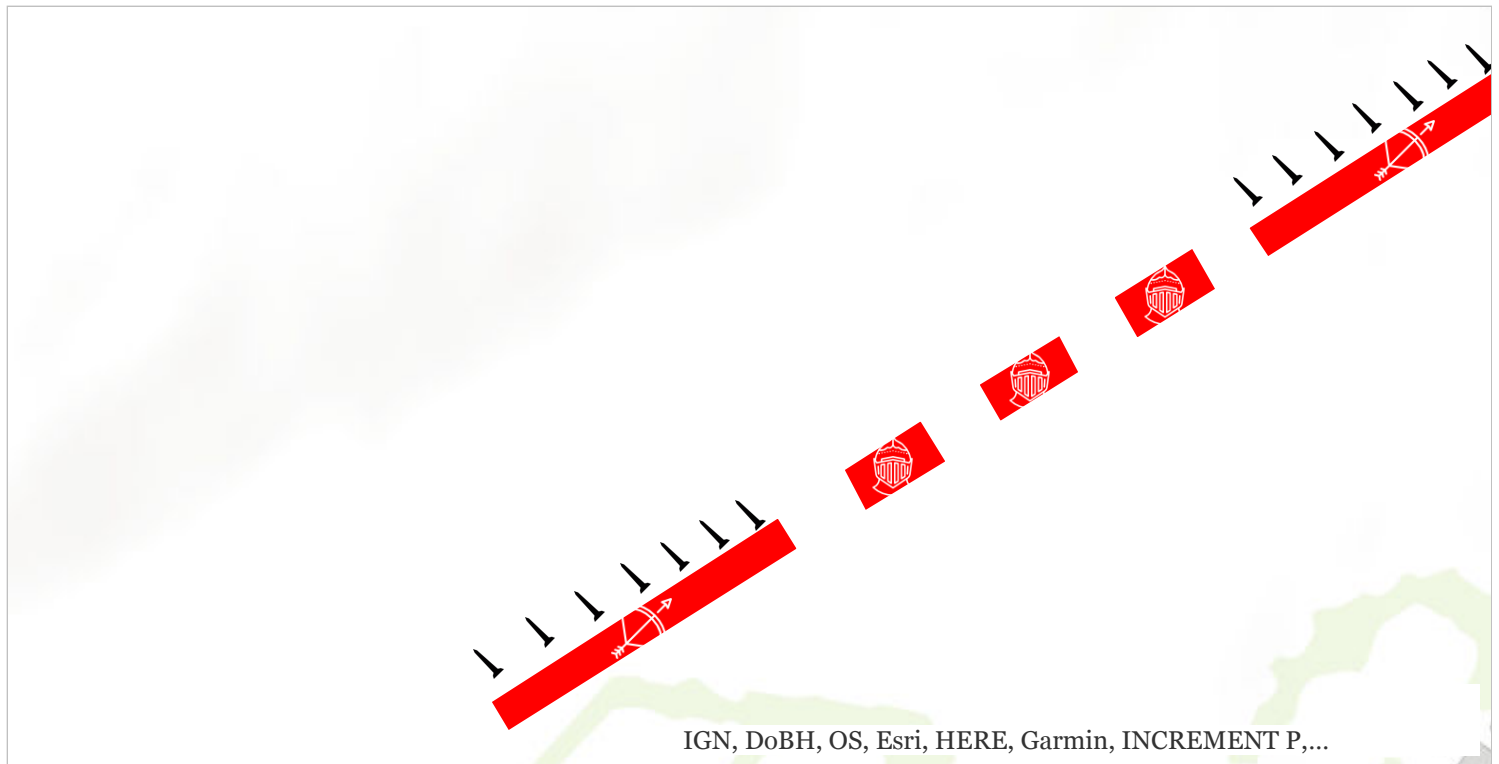
*Story map user hint: Apart from the story map, you are recommended to see some very informative documentaries concerning the battle of Agincourt.*

1) [Agincourt's Dark Secrets](#)

## 2) *The Battle of Agincourt, A Hundreds Year War*

### 3) *Weapons that Made Britain - The longbow*

# Battle of Agincourt

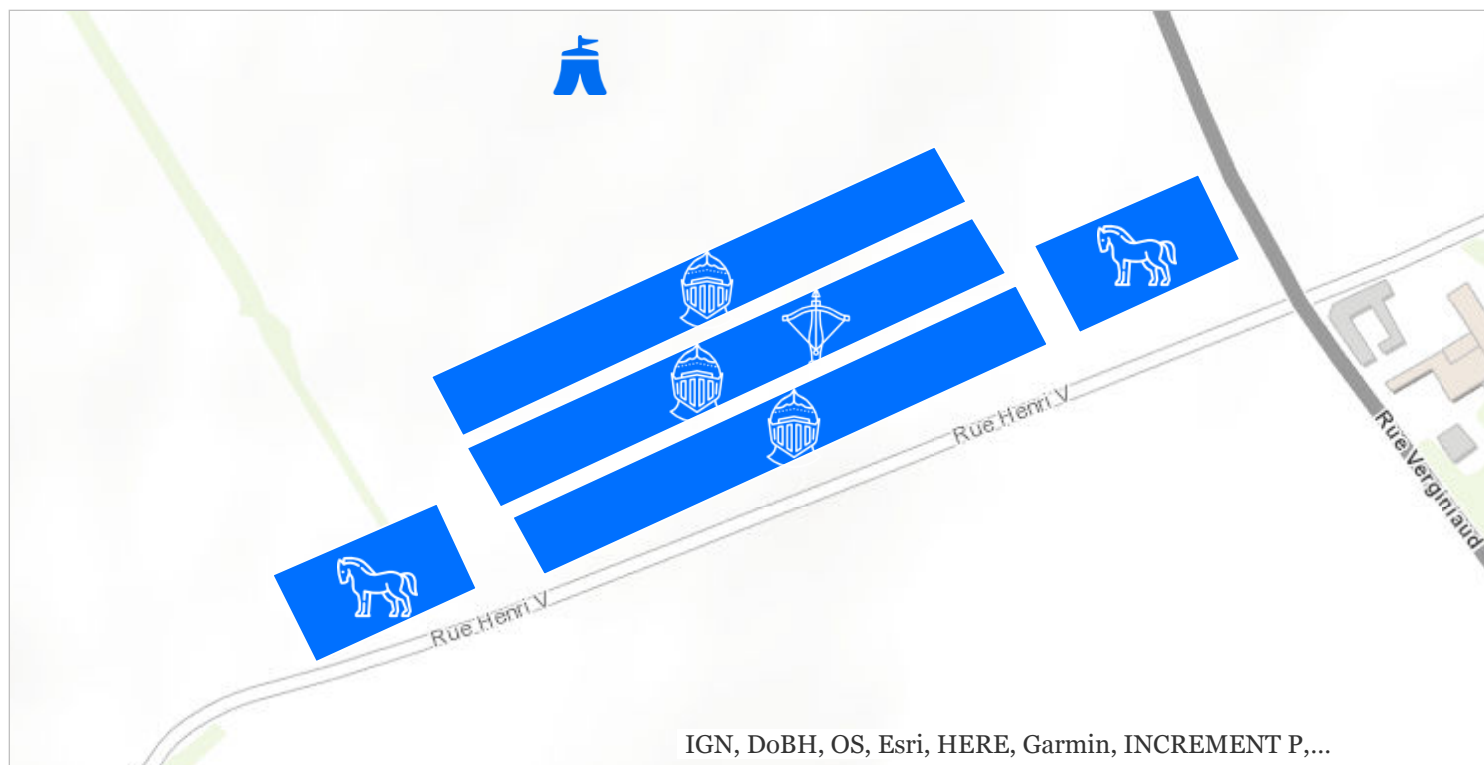


## English deployment

Henry decided to position his men-at-arms on the centre of his formation, while he deployed the longbowmen in the flanks. The longbowmen were ordered to set stakes in front of them, in order to be well protected from cavalry attacks.

The middle line of men-at-arms was divided into three blocks. The king, with a number of Dukes, Earls and Lords were in the centre block.

Before the battle, Henry gave a speech to inspire his army, referring to his right to the French throne and reminding them that they are not only fighting for their families, but also for the honour of the crown of the king of England.



### French deployment

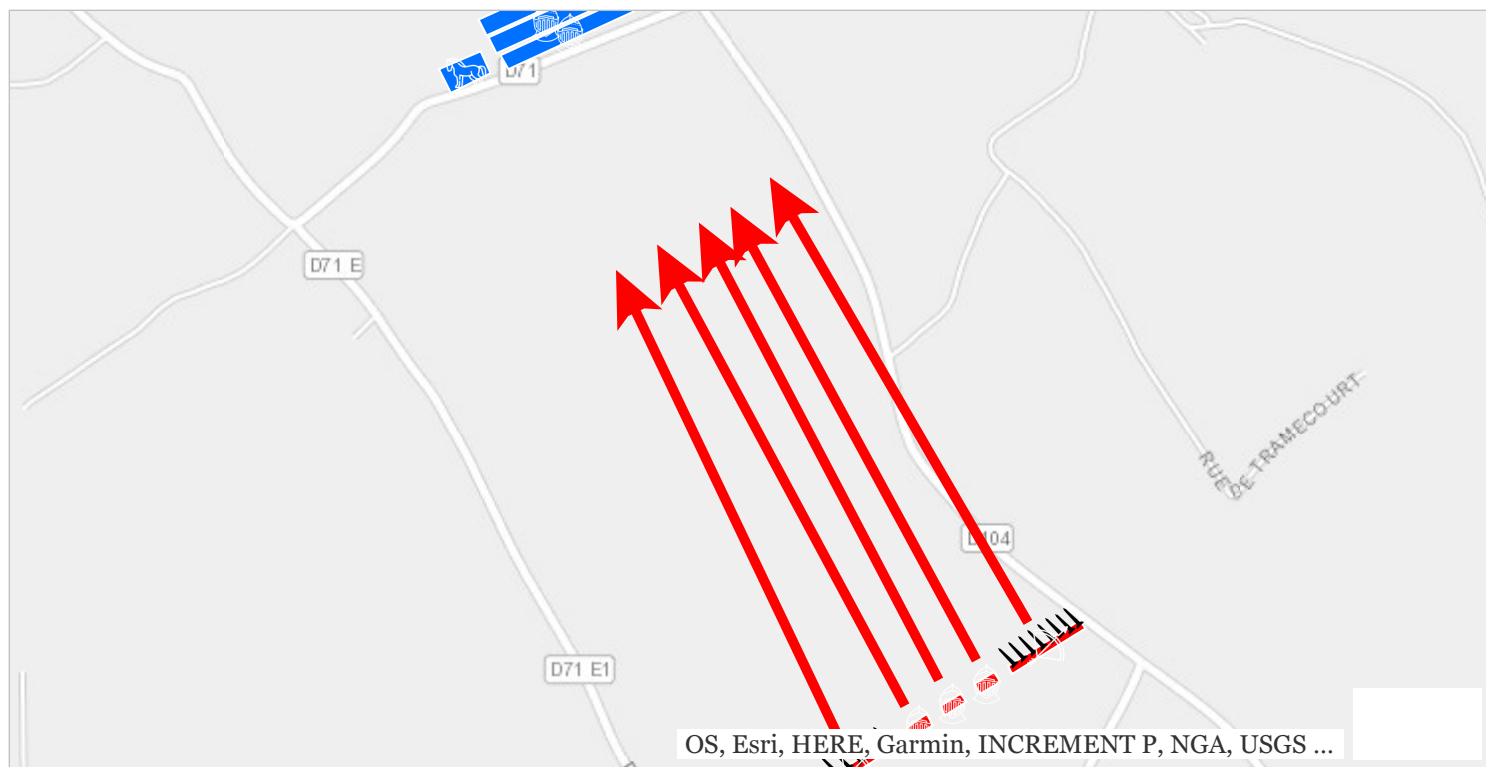
On the other side of the field, between Agincourt and Tramencourt the French army was waiting for the English.

The army was deployed in three divisions; the van-guard, centre-guard and the rear-guard. On the flanks were the cavalry ready to stampede the enemy army.

The first division consisted only from men-at-arms and it was the biggest of the two others. The majority of the nobles was there, as they wanted to take Henry's head.

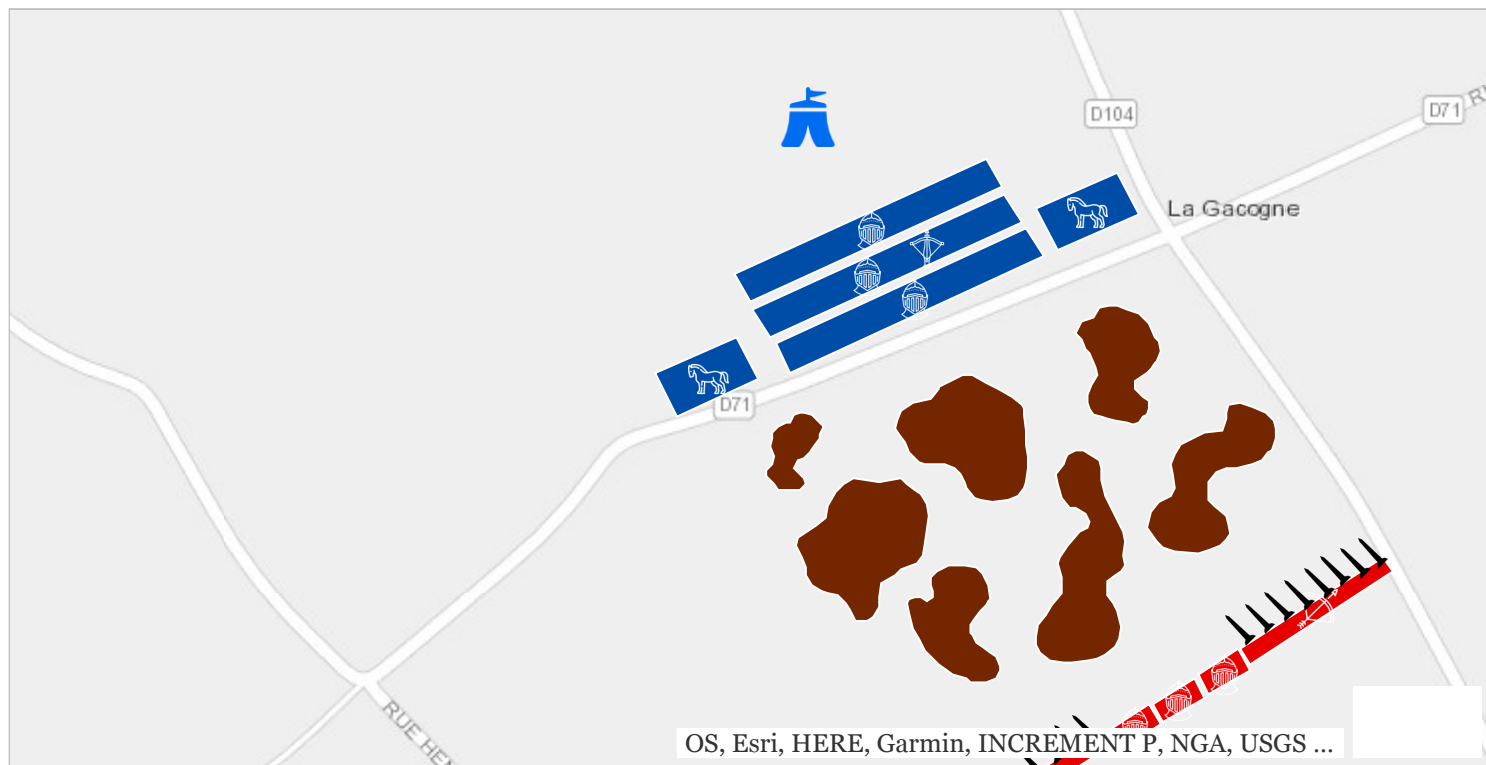
The second division consisted from men-at-arms and crossbowmen. The crossbowmen were ineffective in the battle of Agincourt, as they were bundled out from their proper position by their social superiors. According to chronicler *Des Ursins* the crossbowmen didn't lose an arrow on the whole encounter.

The third division was made up by men-at-arms and non-combatants.



### The first move...

Time was passing... None of the sides was eager to make the first move until finally, Henry orders his men to move forward. One thousand yards are separating them. The English army moves slowly, keeping a good order, with frequent breaths of air. Henry didn't want his army to be exhaustive before the battle.



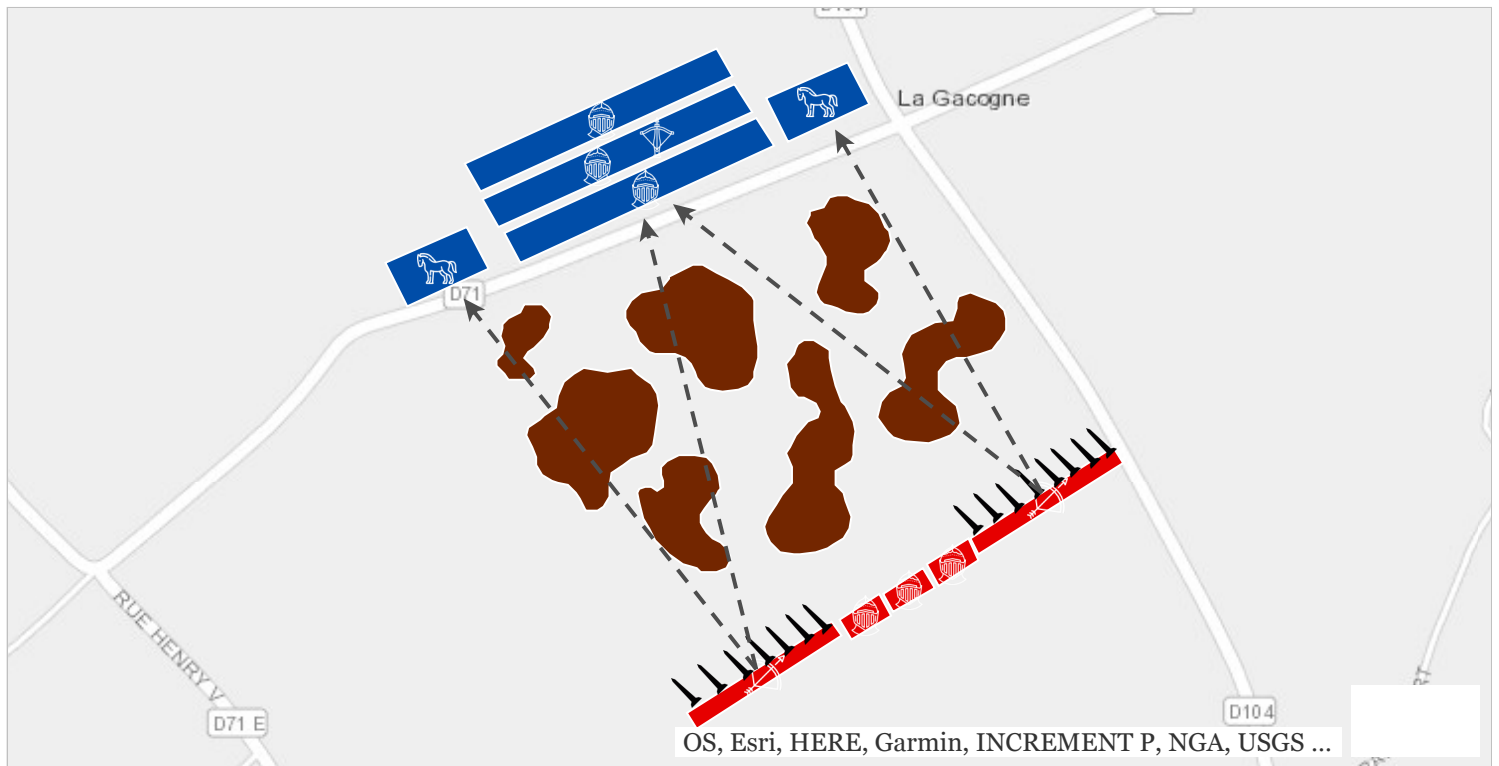
### Relocation...

Henry and his army are now only three hundred yards away from the French. Now they are separated only by a muddy field.

He orders the longbowmen to set the stakes again. According to Waurin:



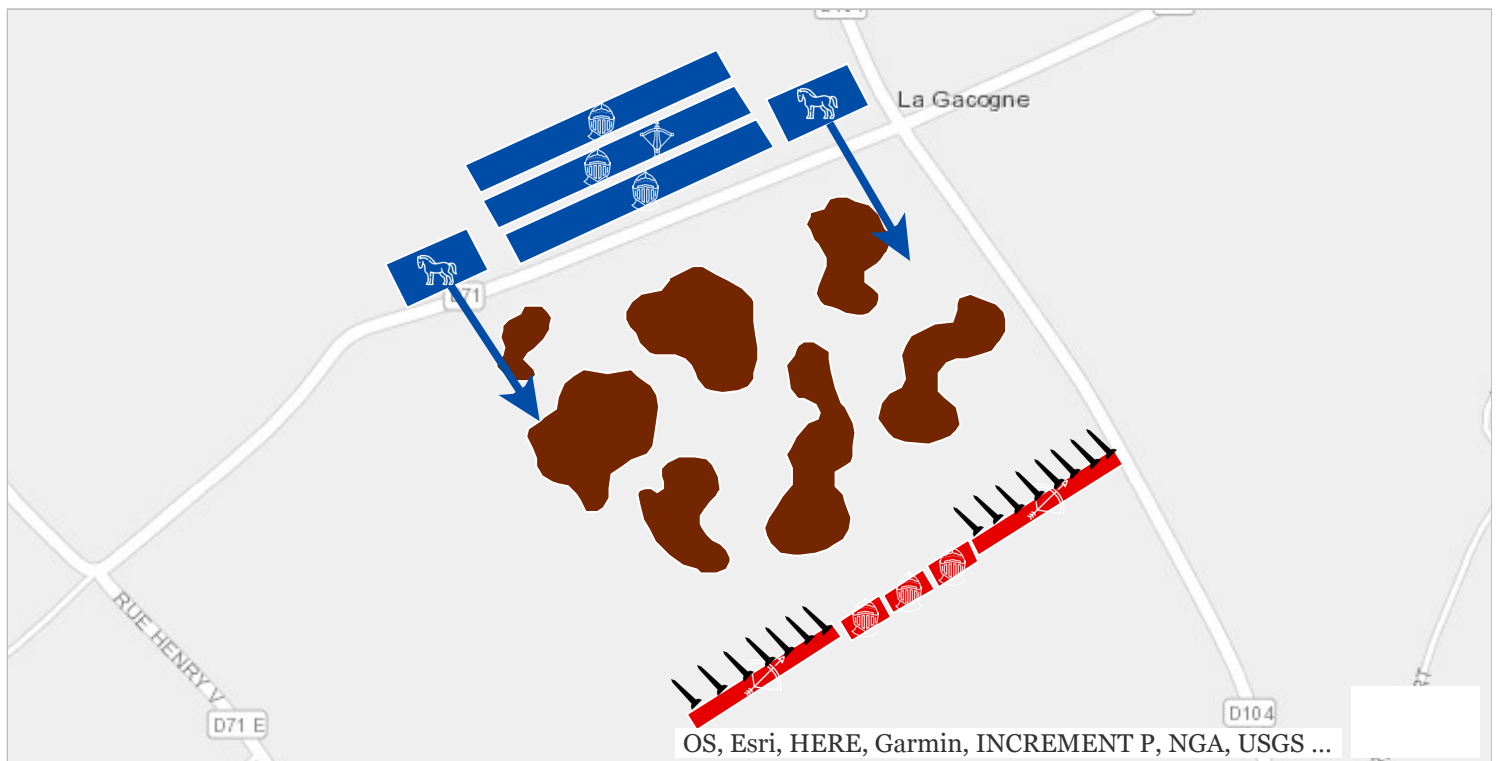
*"They were making a hedge in front of them with which they fortified themselves"*



### The first attack...

The first attack belongs to the English. Henry orders his longbowmen to start shooting. The French army wasn't prepared for an attack from that range, something that found them unprepared.

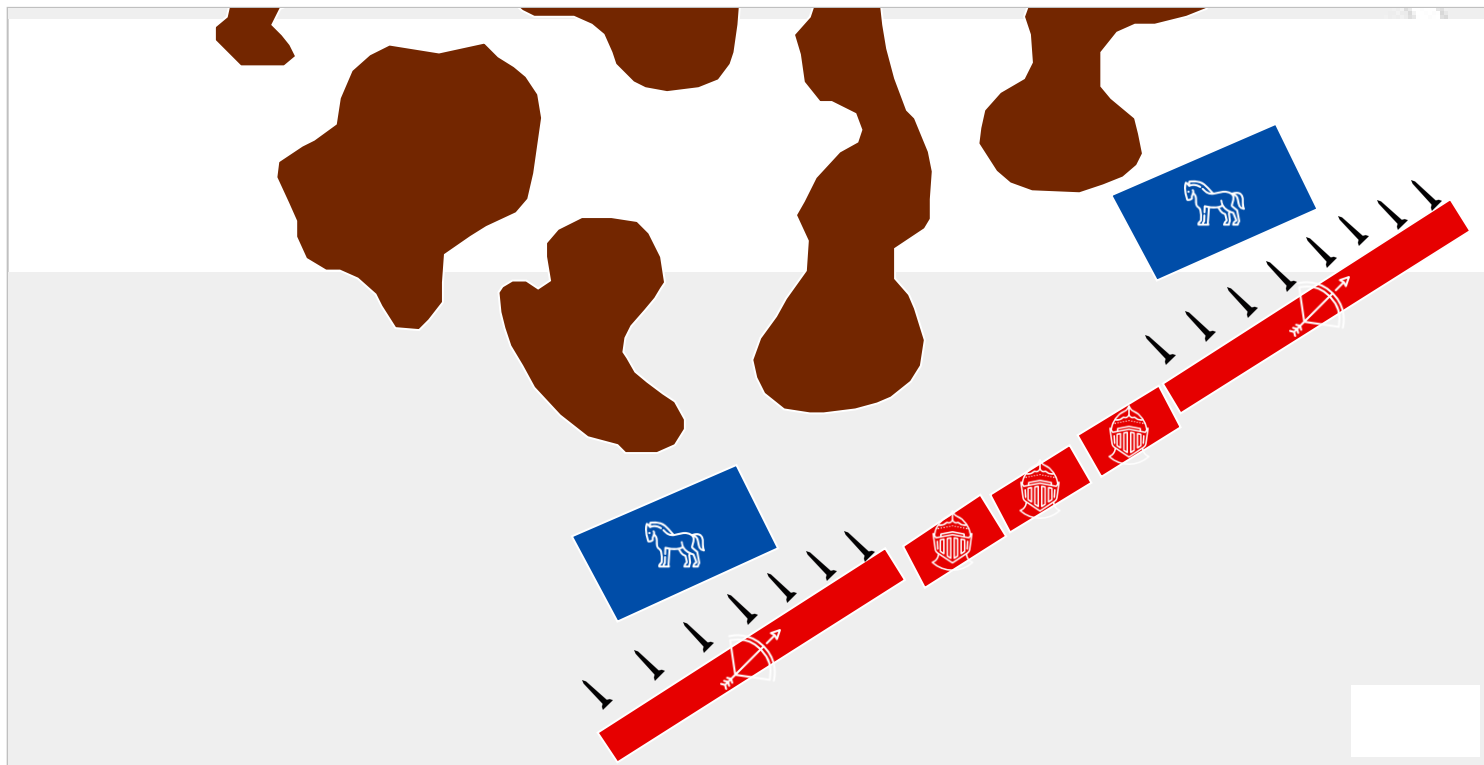
The army is confused as the arrows manage to kill or scare the men-at-arms and the horses.



### The French reaction...

French leaders order the horses from the flanks to attack the longbowmen. That was really difficult to happen in Agincourt as a big portion of the flanks was within the forests, on the sides of the field.

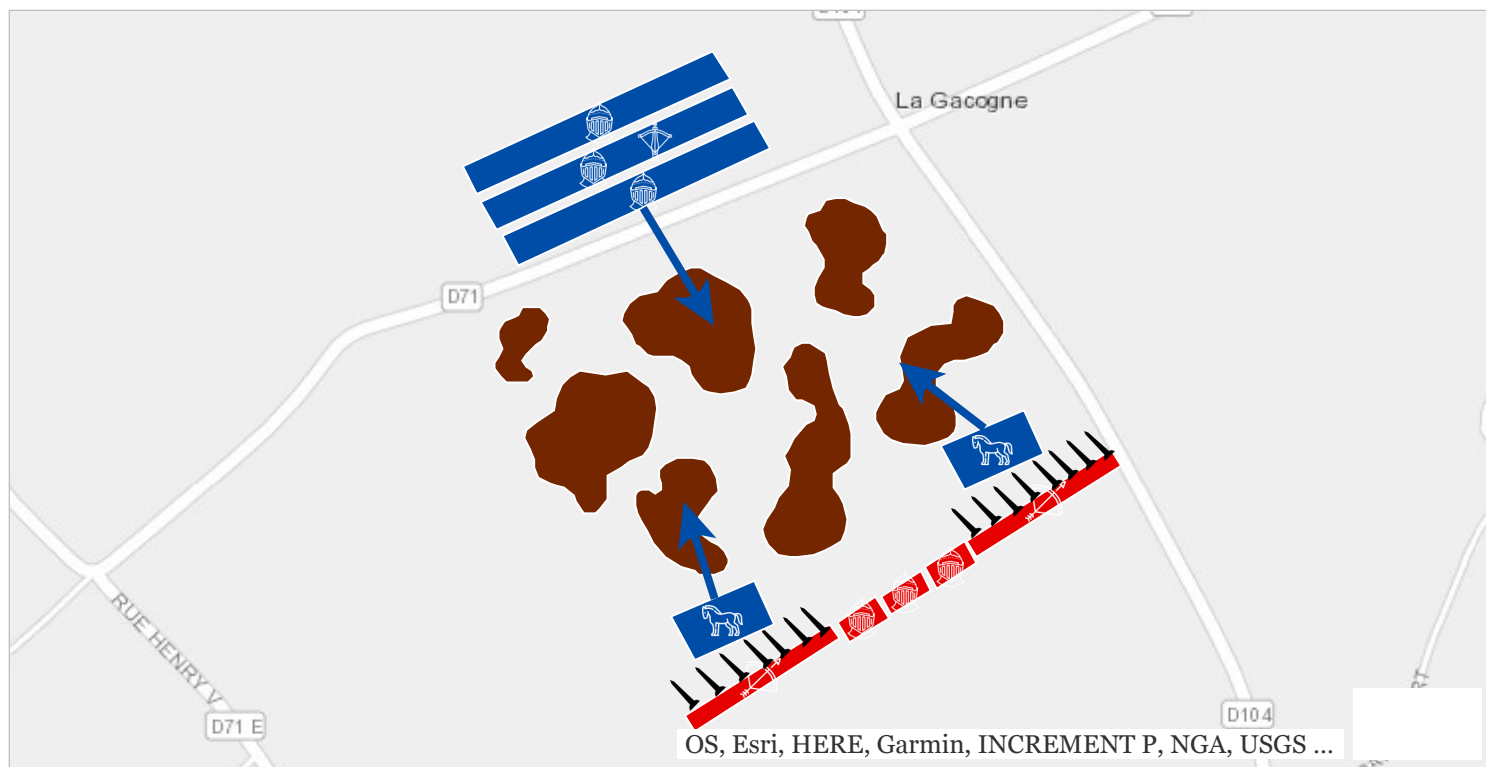
The cavalry was unable to reach the speed they wanted as the muddiness of the field made it impossible. The cavalry is now an easy target for English arrows.



The first impact...

When the cavalry managed to reach the English army, they had an unpleasant surprise. They had realised until moments before the impact that the longbowmen had set the stakes.

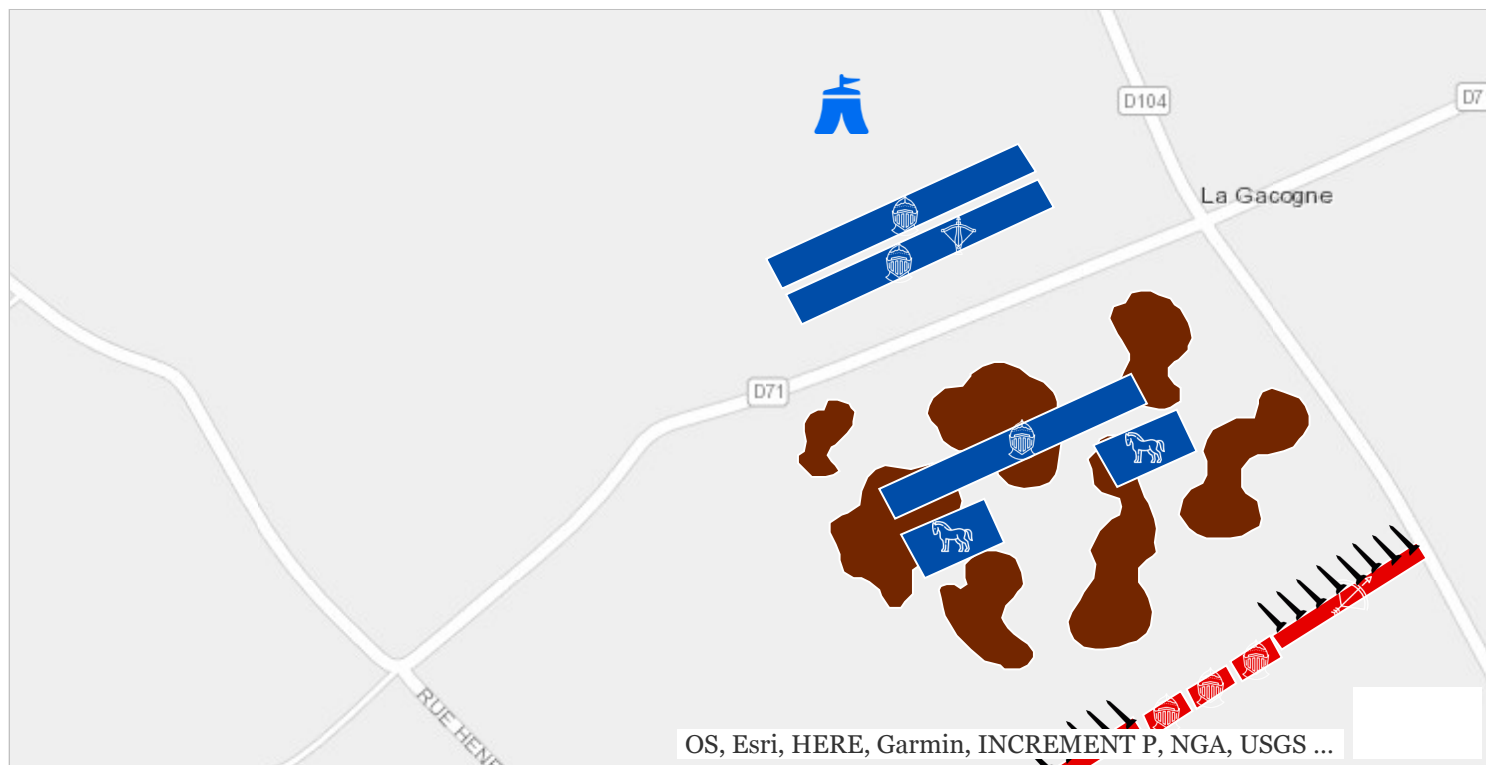
The result was horrendous. Horse and their riders were getting struck at the stakes, with fatal results. Even in the case they didn't die, they were an easy prey for the English.



### Retreat of the cavalry...

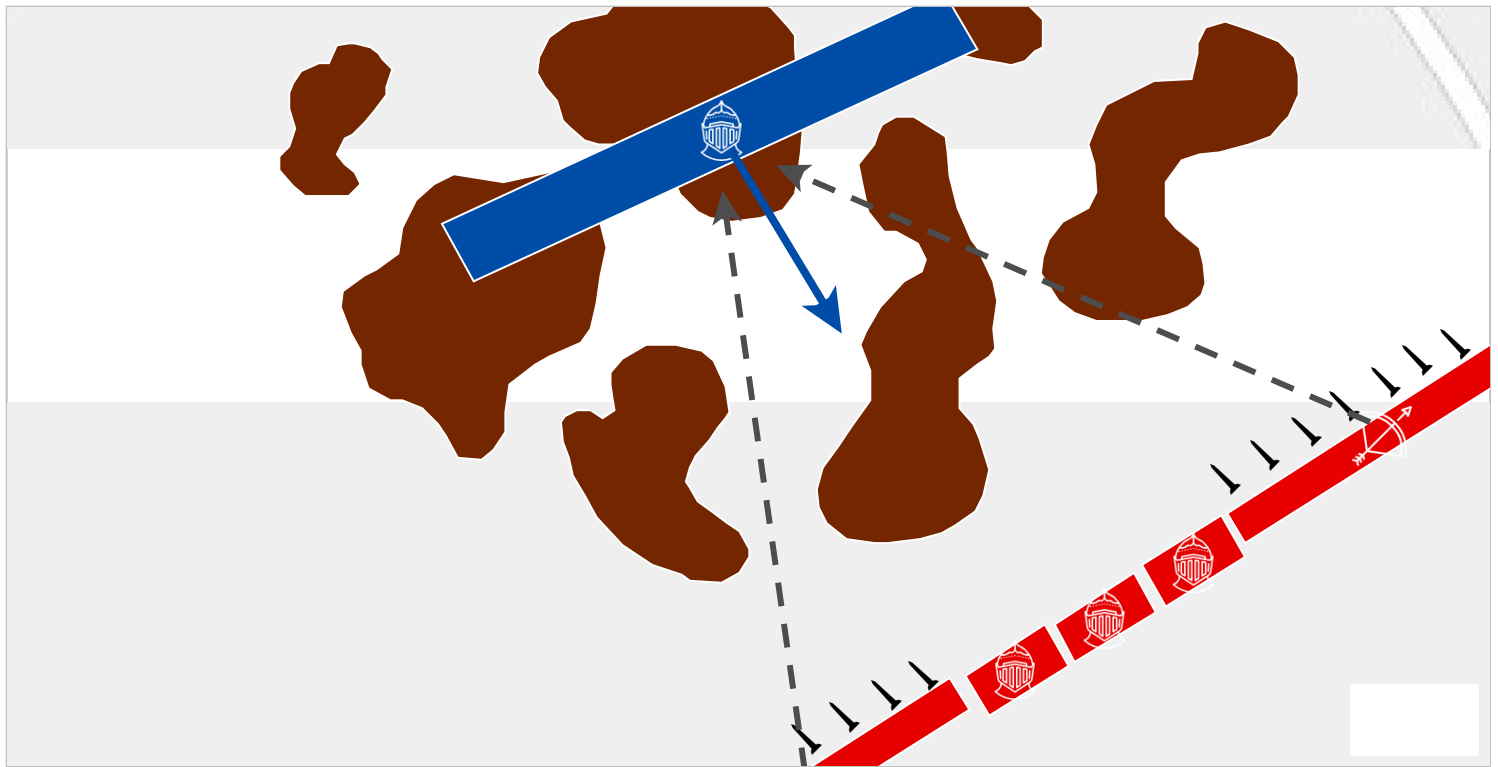
The cavalry start retreating as they are unable to do anything else. The English continue to shoot their bows, driving the horses crazy. The horses are driven in a rampage.

On the other side the French, seeing their failure to flank, order the first division to march.



### Confusion in the battlefield...

As the first division of the men-at-arms marches towards the English, they are getting stampeded by the enraged cavalry. That led into a total disarray of the division, producing a "ripple effect", leading to men-at-arms falling to each other. That happened many times, until finally the cavalry managed to leave.

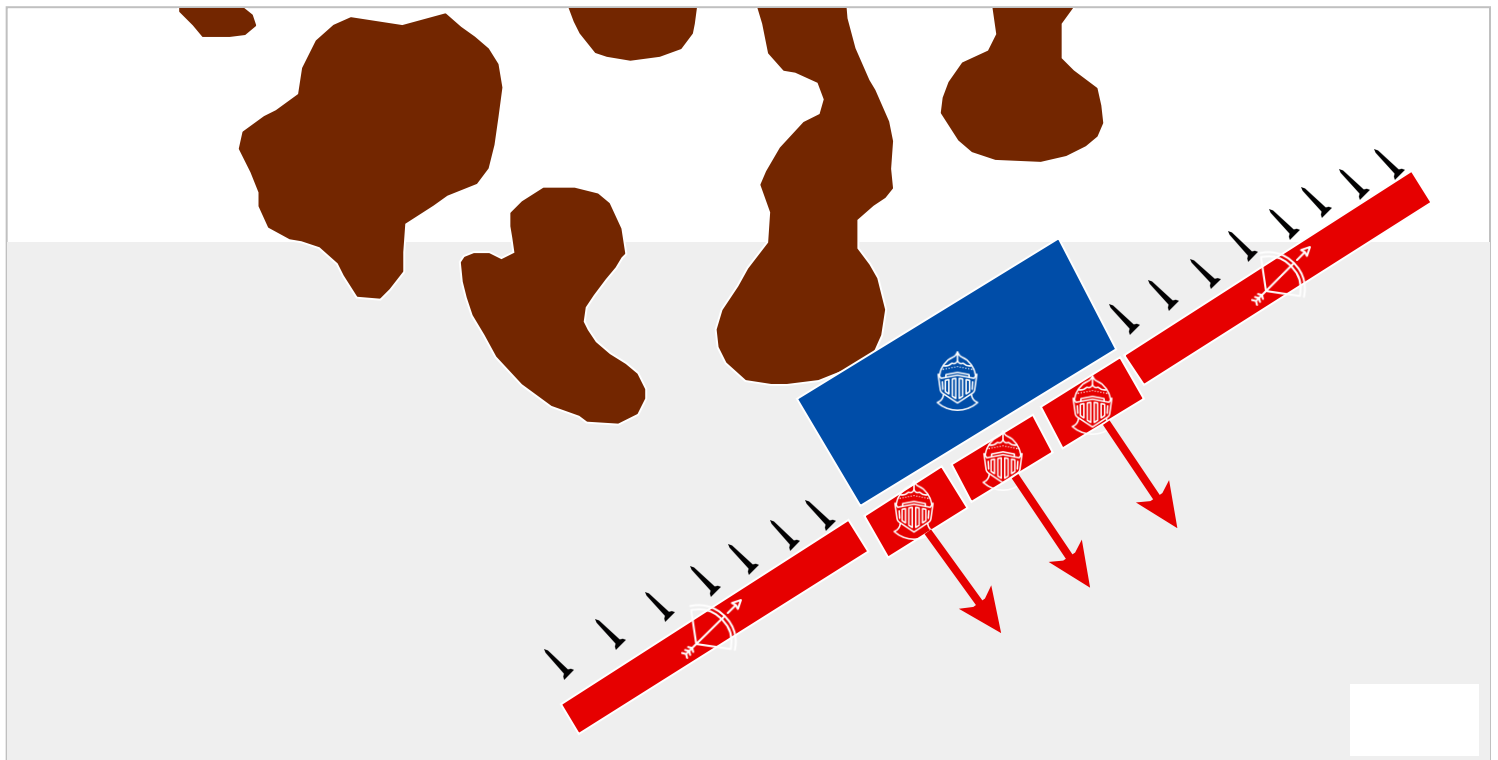


Pushing forward...

Trying to regroup the first division continues its march towards the English men-at-arms. The mud makes their march slow, making them again as the cavalry an easy prey for the English longbowmen.

The arrow storm forces every French to keep his head down for fear that their eye slits in the helmet would be penetrated by the arrows. Apart from that, they have to deal also with the low, winter sun, which was on the back of the English.

Eventually, they manage to reach the English lines.



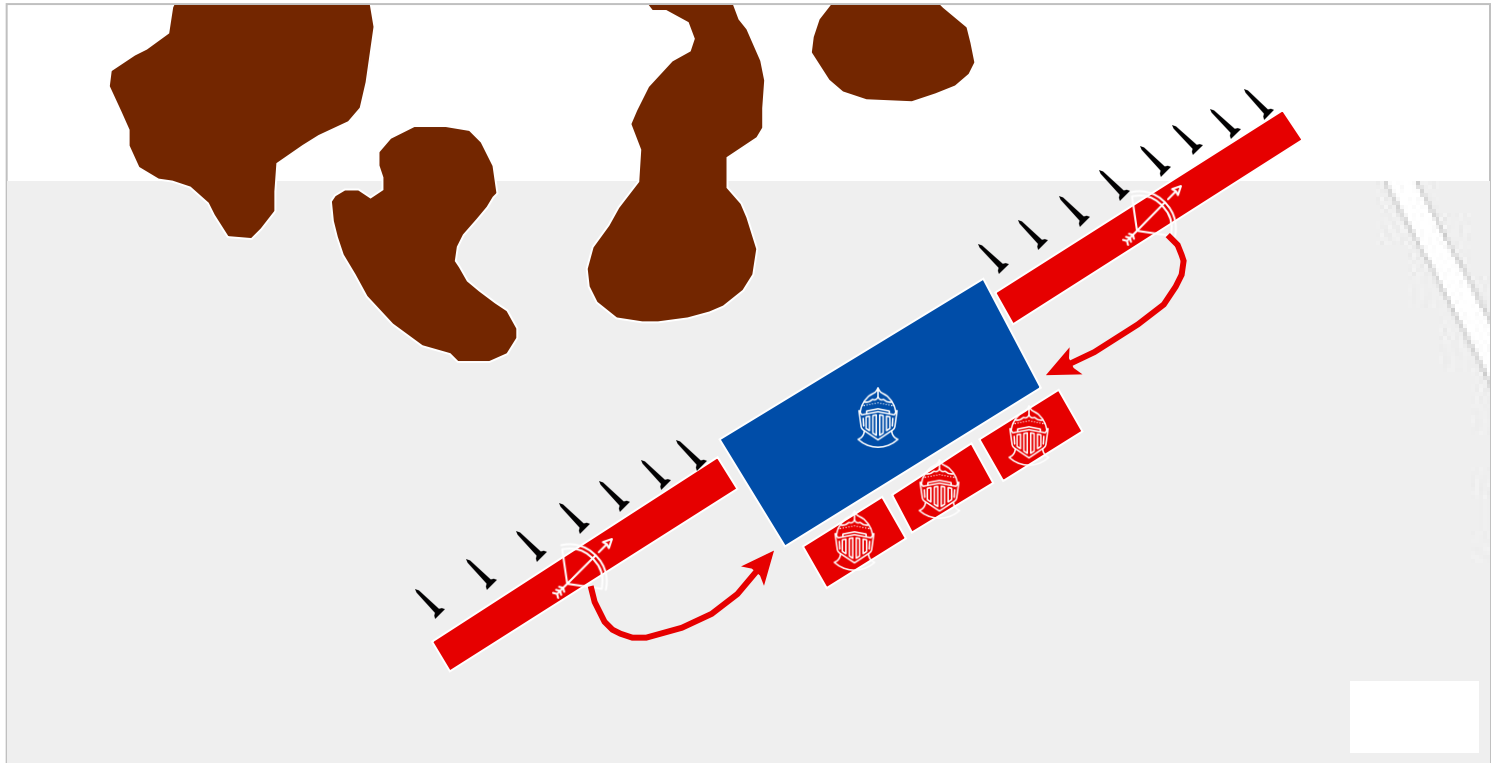
The first impact...



The French manage to reach the English line, after having lost already a huge number of nobles in the muddy field on their way to the enemy lines. They start pushing each other to fit in the gap between the stakes.

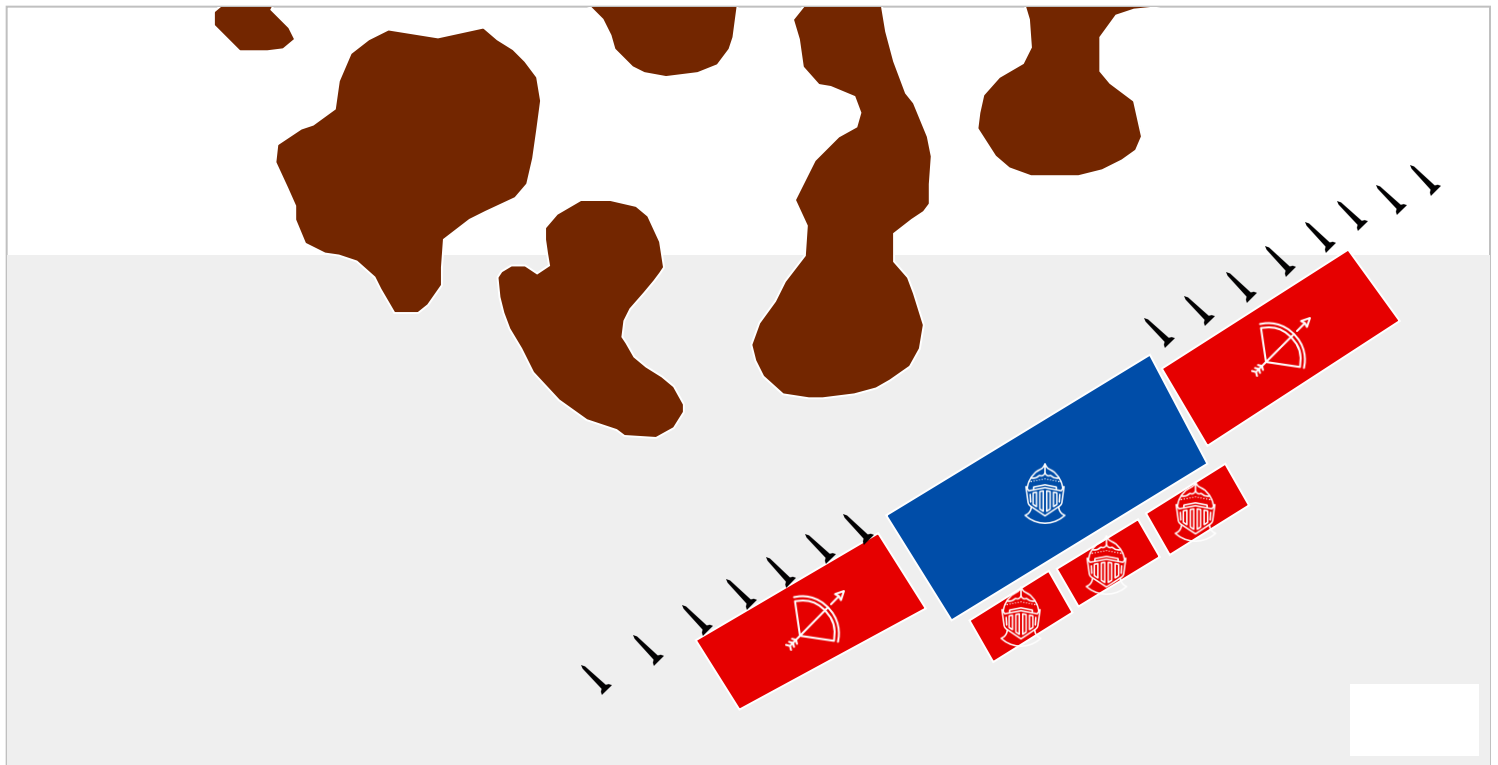
The majority of the nobles aims for Henry, as they want to take his head, proving their worth on the battlefield. That never happened, as they are exhausted from the march, they have lost already many men from the longbowmen and they are so overcrowded that they are not able to use their swords properly, in order to inflict damage to the enemy.

Despite those, they are still large in numbers and they manage to push the English front line back.



The longbowmen strike again...

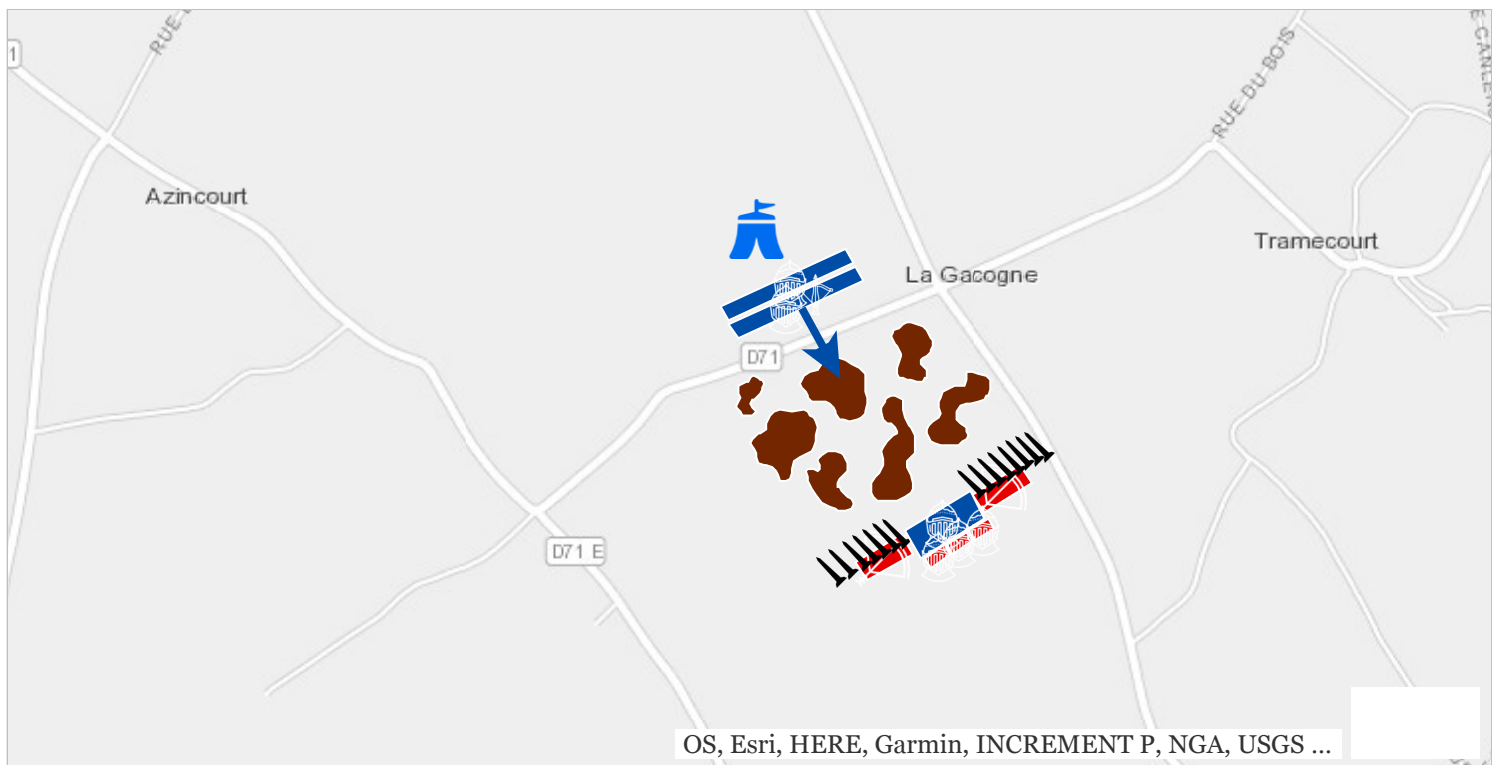
The longbowmen were not only useful for distance damage. Seeing their main line falling back the longbowmen throw down their bows and reposition themselves to attack the French in close combat.



### Surrounding the enemy...

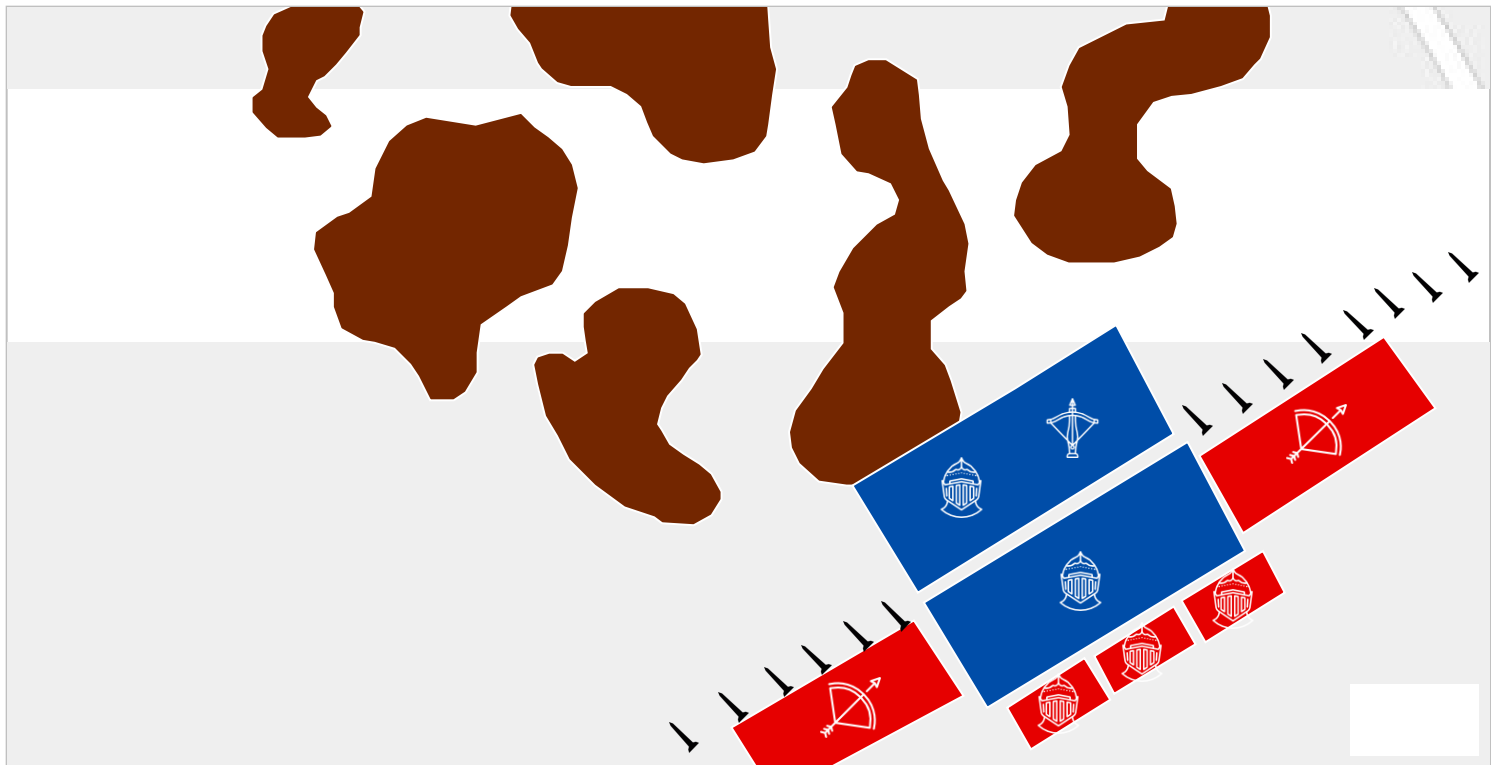
The longbowmen were equipped with swords, axes and heavy mallets, which were using before to hammer the stakes.

All together they manage to kill, wound or even imprison the enemy nobles leading to the creation of a huge pile of dead in the battlefield, creating a massacre.



### Second division marches...

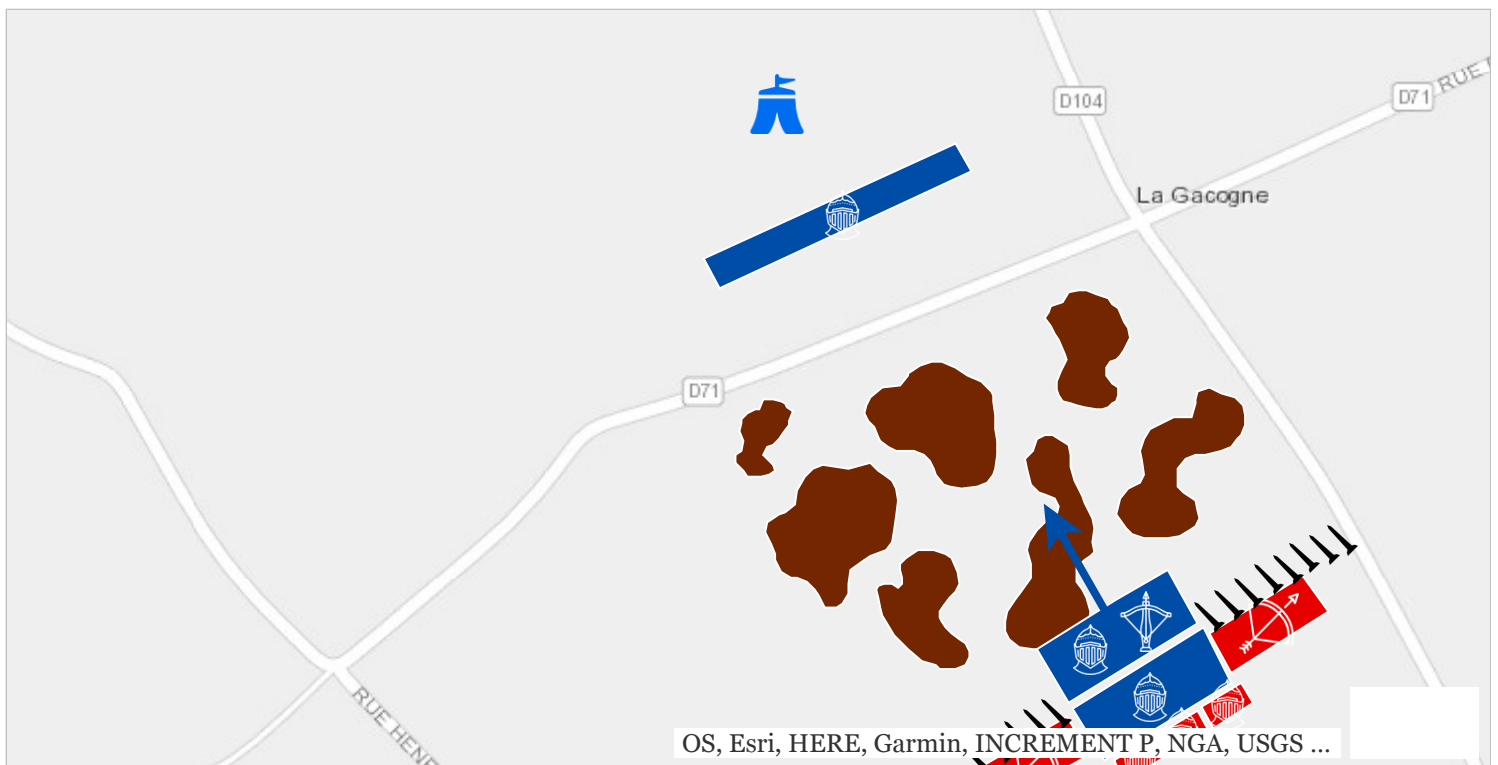
Seeing their first division being slaughtered on the other side of the battlefield, the second division starts its march towards there.



The tide doesn't turn back...

The addition of the second division to the first one doesn't seem to have a particular impact, as they create a suffocating situation making it even harder to attack properly on the English.

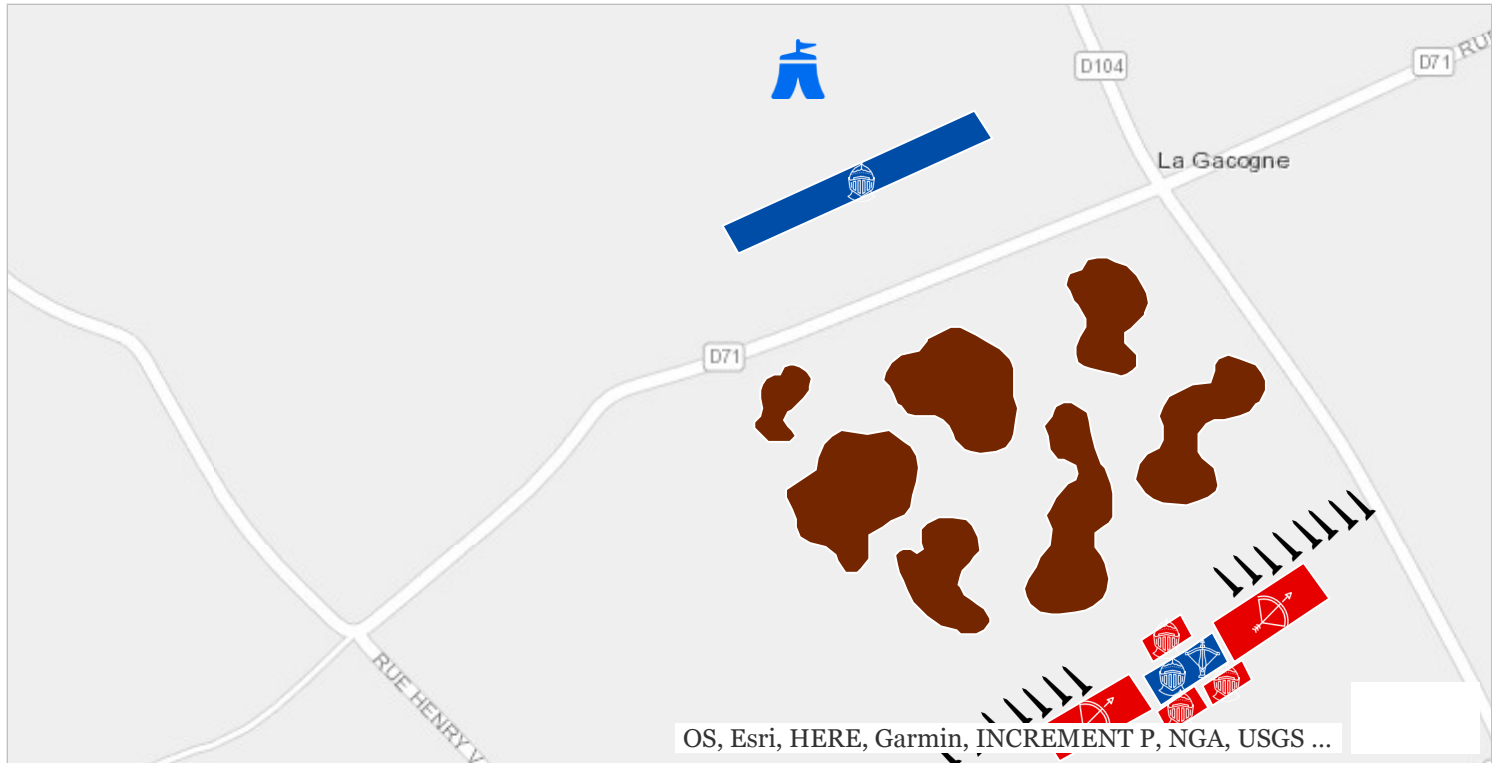
The English have already killed, wounded or imprisoned the majority of the nobles from the first division, making the French feel unorganized.



French retreat...

Seeing that they unable to push forward the French decide to retreat, in order to save their lives.

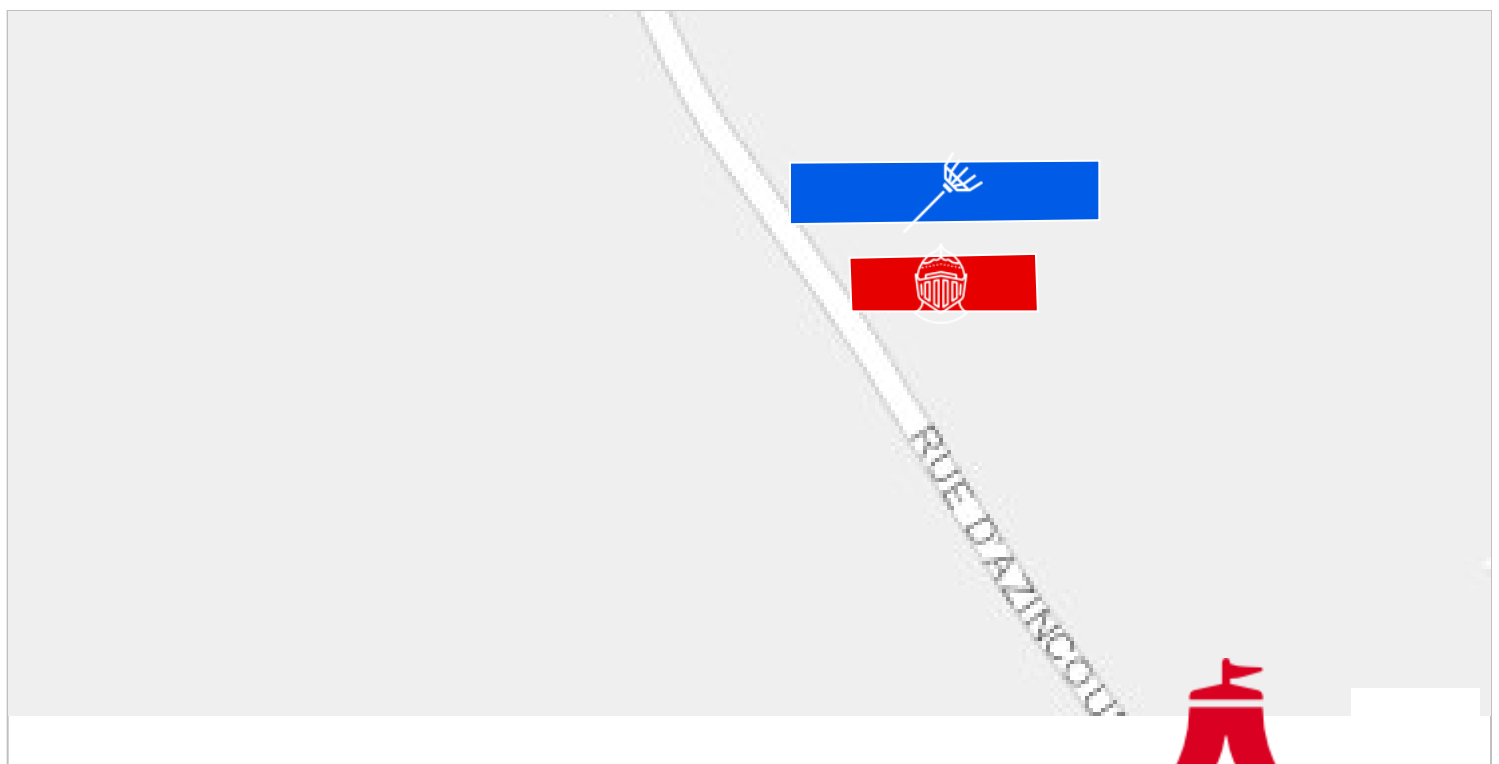
Many nobles decide to give themselves up, something dangerous to do in the middle of battlefield. Duke of Alencon is one of the many cases, who gave up during the fight but was struck down by a battle-crazed Englishman.



### Prisoners in "their" battle...

The battle seems to be over. Henry has imprisoned a very large number of French nobles, while the third division doesn't seem eager to make a move.

Meanwhile...

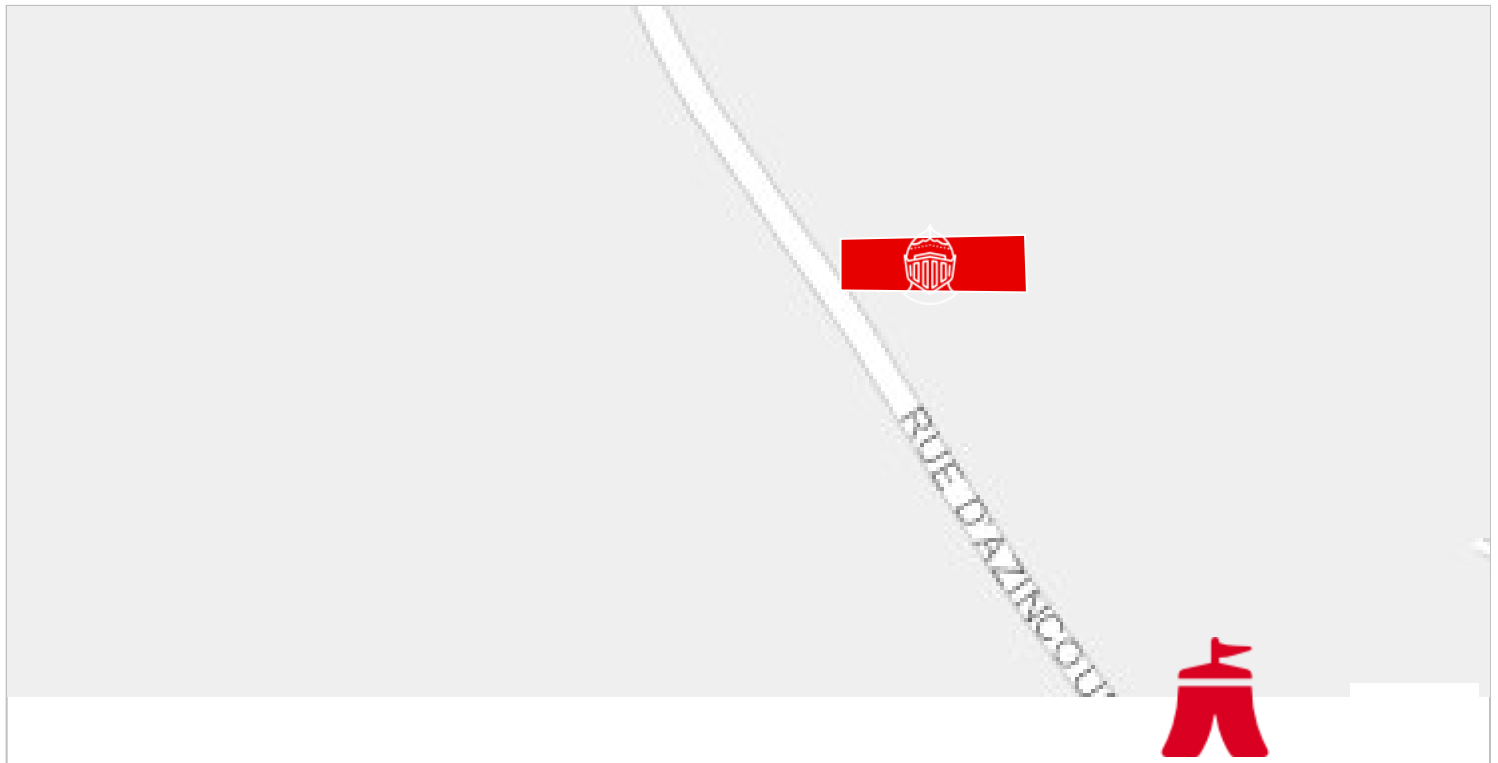


### Attack on the English camp...



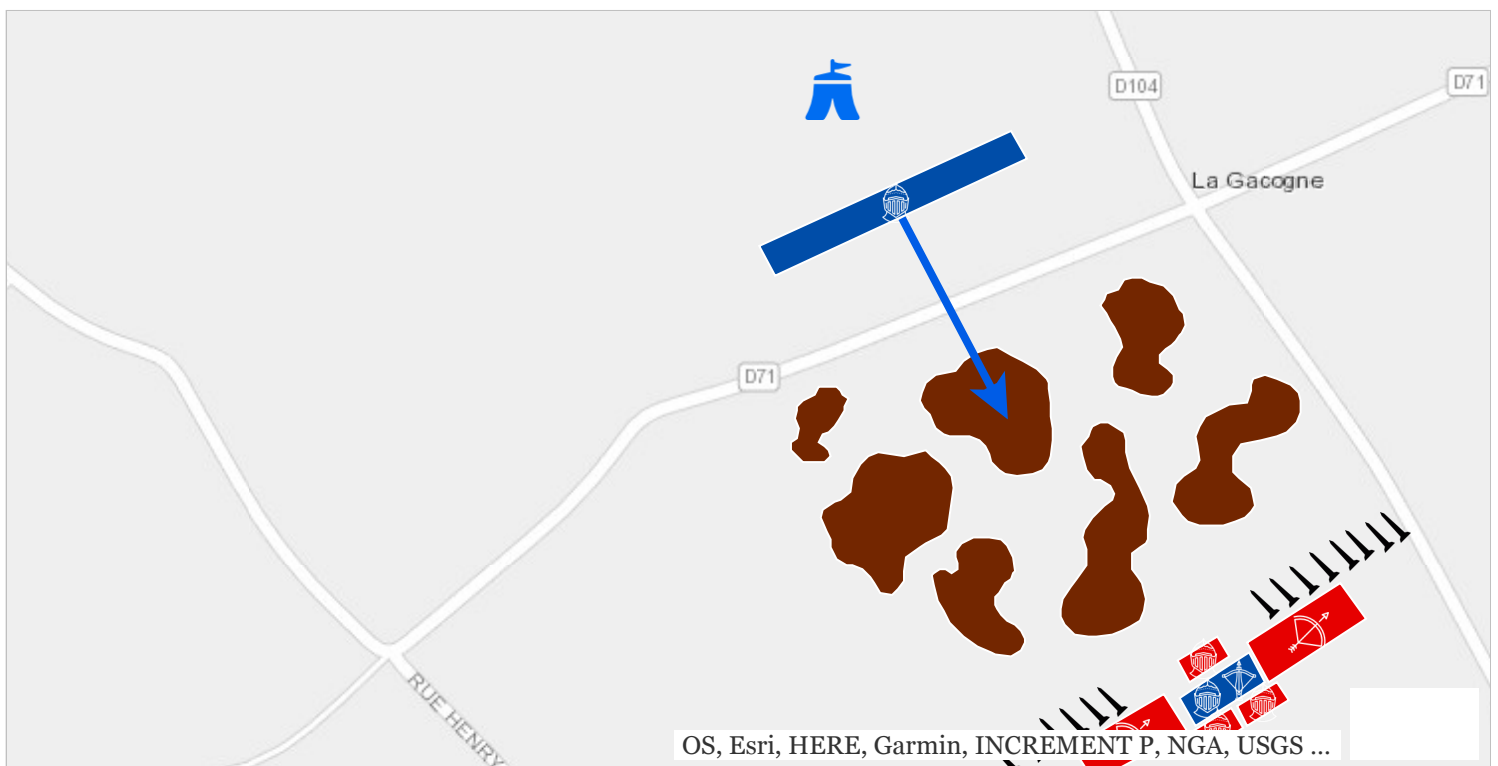
Isembart d' Agincourt, the local lord, with the help of some French nobles and six hundred peasants raid the English camp.

They managed to loot the camp but a group of English men-at-arms encounters them. The group had seen their movement during the battle and were ordered by Henry to protect their camp.



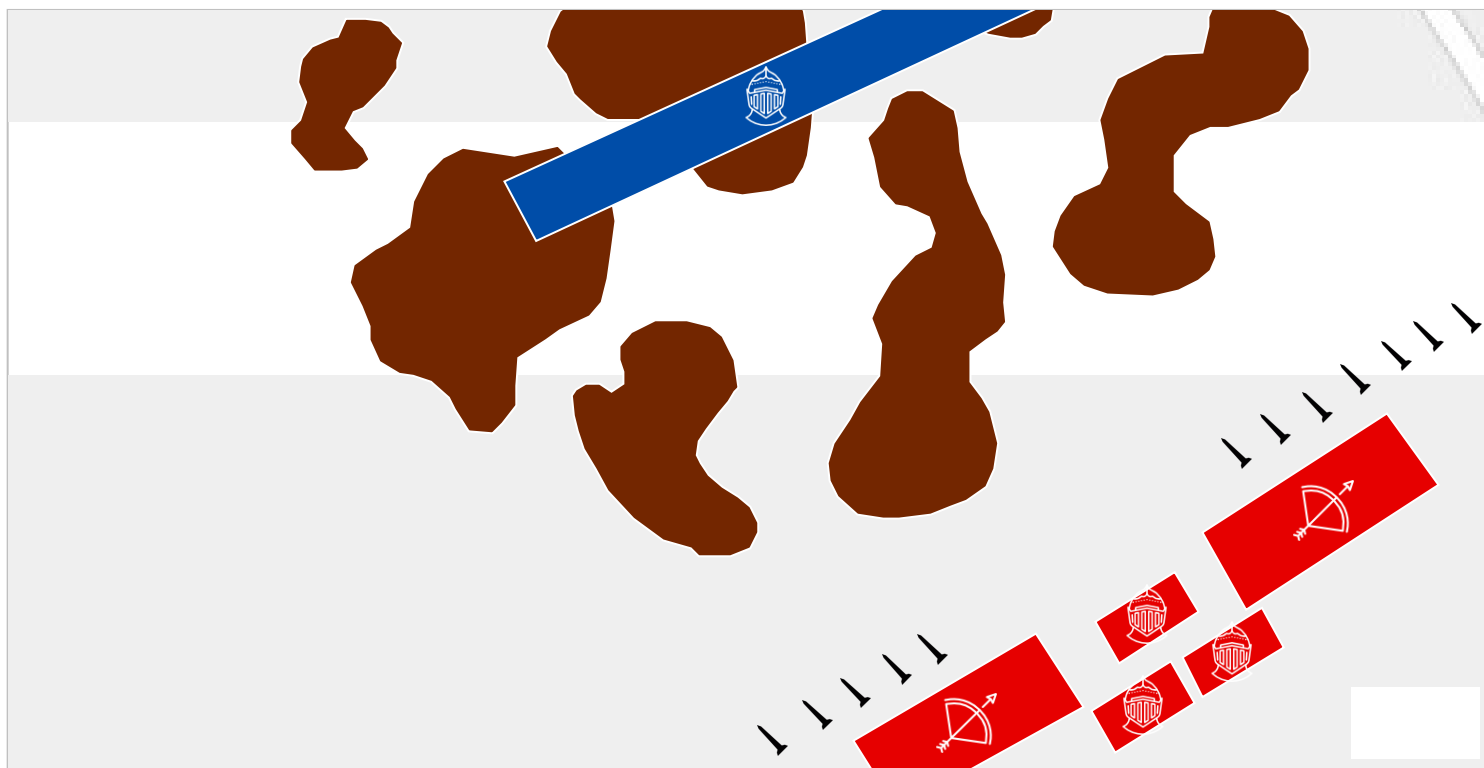
Repealing the raid...

The English manage in the end to drive away the peasants.



A desperate effort...

The third division finally makes a move. They attempt to counter-attack the English at all costs.



The moment nobility died...

Henry seeing the third division approaching him and knowing that there were more than enough heavily armed Frenchmen imprisoned, orders to kill them, with the fear of being surrounded. He spared the life only to Duke of Orleans Bourbon, because they were prominent to be spared.

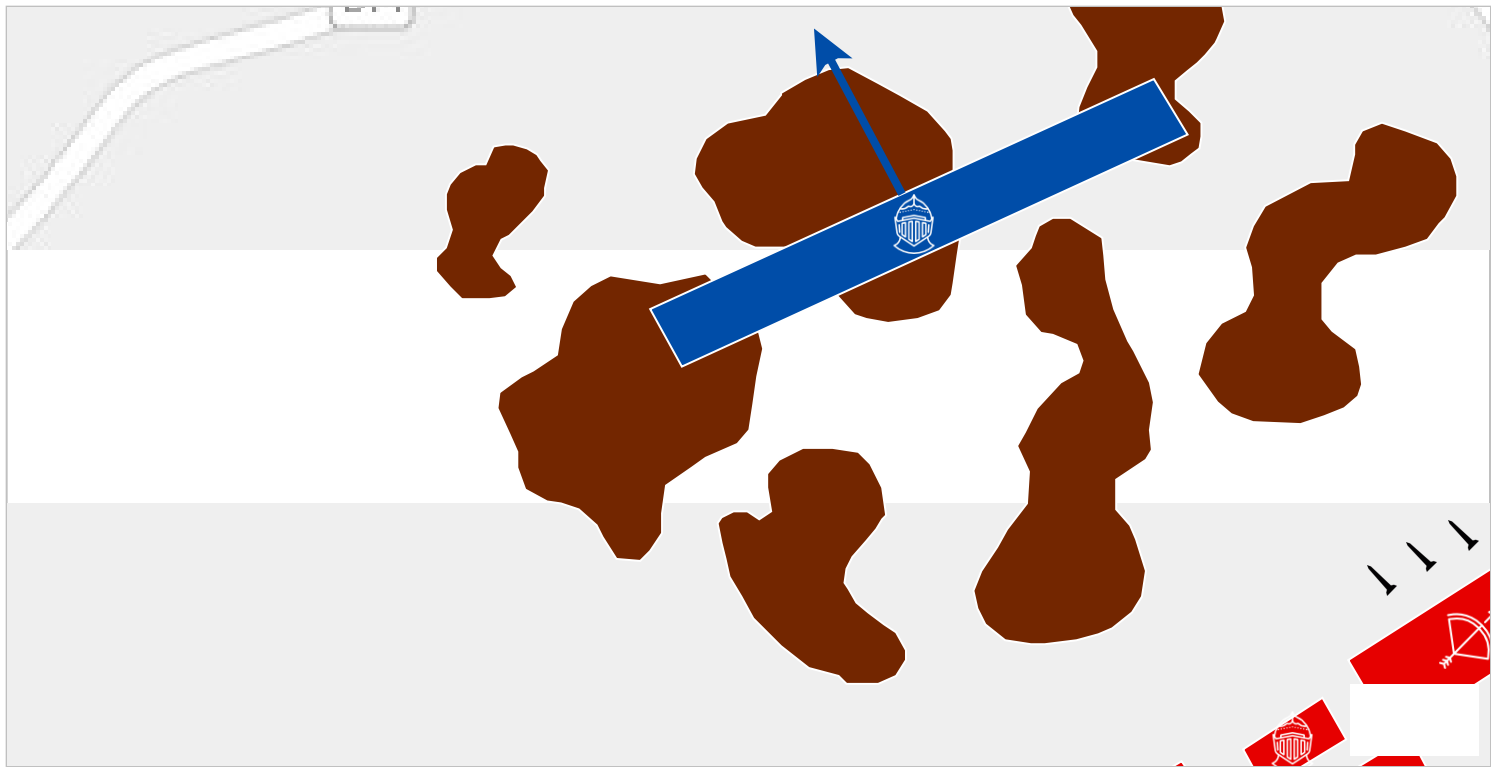
That move was characterised as of tactical necessity, since his army wasn't in line and he was in danger of being outnumbered from behind. Despite that, his act was against the laws of nobility.

The men who died were noblemen and gentlemen and were killed with cold-blooded ways. According to St. Remy:

*"They were cut in pieces, heads and faces"*

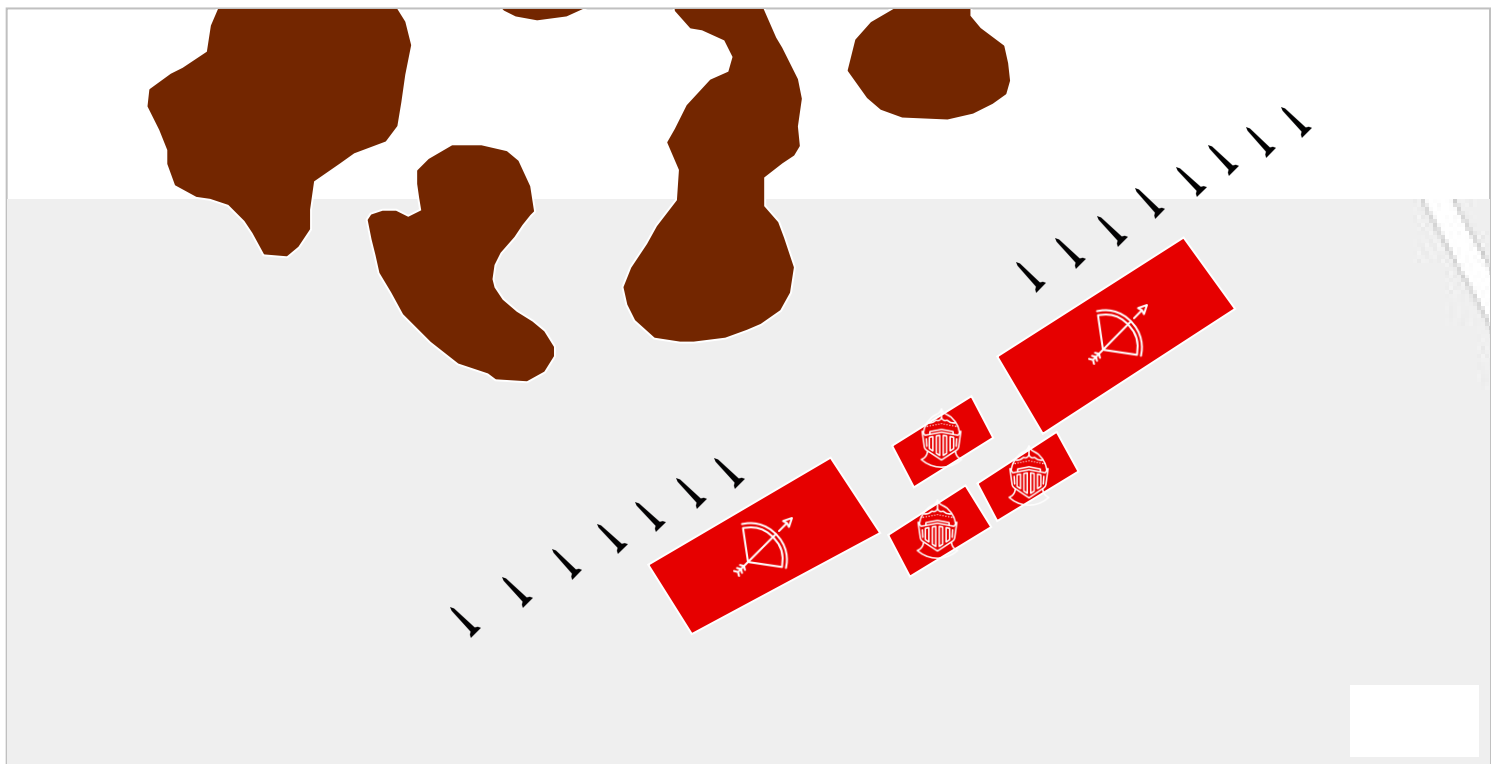
Those were the only places where armoured knights were vulnerable. The ones that resisted were stabbed through the eye-slit of the helmet.

(source: [The University of Southampton](https://www.southampton.ac.uk/research/medieval-studies/medieval-studies-research-centre))



The view of the massacre...

The third division watching the massacre of their noblemen in front of their eyes decides to stop the march and start retreating.



Against all odds...

King Henry V and his men manage to achieve something that a few hours later seemed like a suicide. They prove that a small, well organised, properly trained and unified power can surpass a huge army with no true leader. The road to Calais now seems closer than ever...



King Henry V and his army had already written their names with golden letters into the books of history. They achieved a heroic victory over a more powerful enemy, finding their way home, with very few men dead in battle in comparison with the French. After the French retreated Henry was free to reach Calais. He started with his army and the very few prisoners, who escaped from the massacre a few moments ago. The road to Calais lasted for three days until they finally reached the city. On the 16th of November, they reached Dover, while a week later he was greeted at London with a lavish pageant.

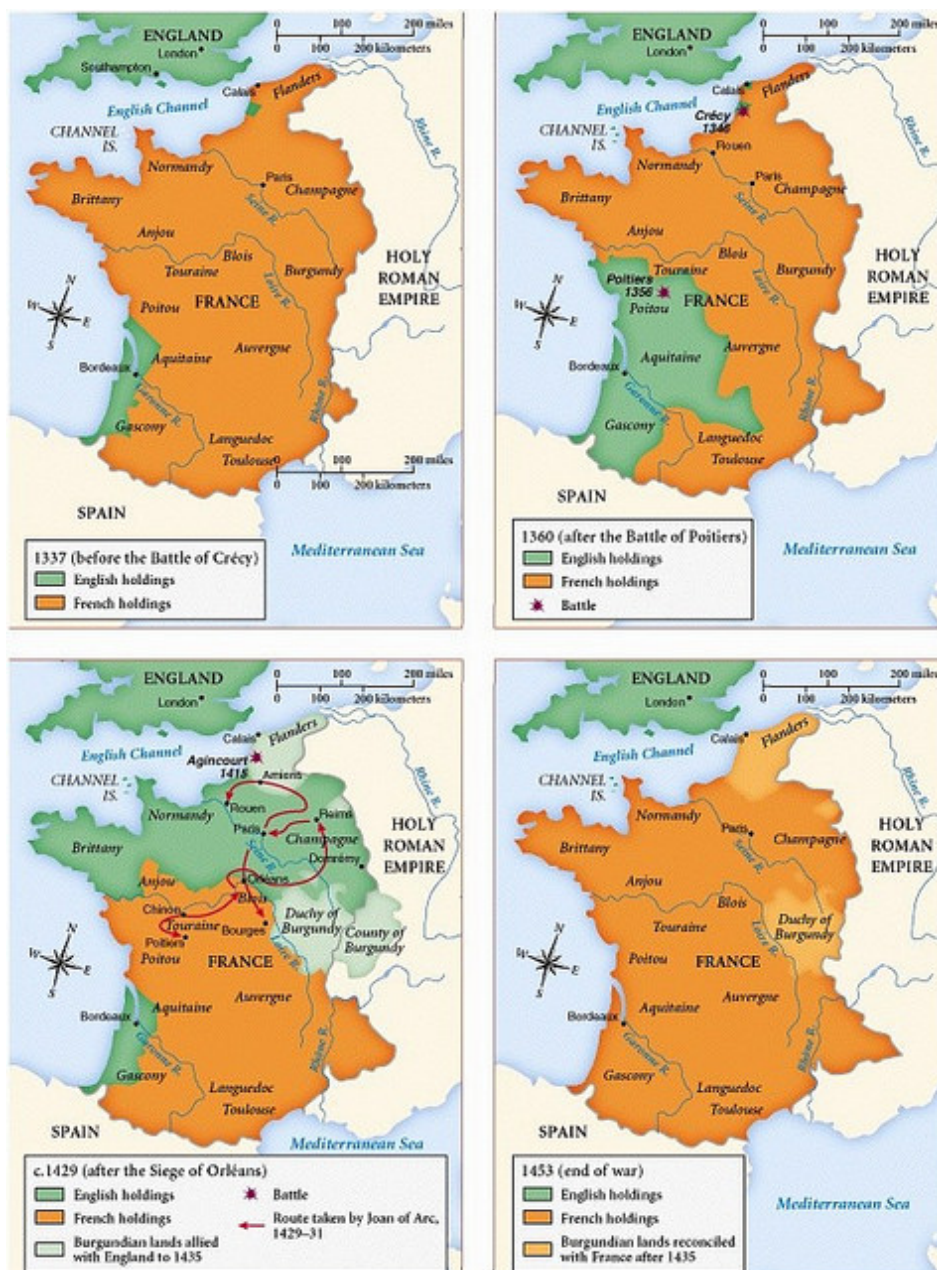
The loss to the English was a huge blow for the French, as their reputation as a superpower is seriously damaged. Apart from that, it exposed Charles VI's inability to lead the French and it suggested to everyone that justice lay with the English concerning the rivalry for the French throne. The loss resulted also to the "decapitation" of Charles' VI military and economic structure, as according to a French historian Françoise Autrand during the battle of Agincourt one-third of king's 1400 political supporters died or were imprisoned (*Rothero, 1981*). That led to Charles VI's weakening of power within the French kingdom.

The years after Agincourt were a constant supremacy of the English over the French. Henry never managed to hold the dual monarchy, as death from dysentery got him first in 1422, but instead, it was his son to hold it. Until then Henry had achieved great things, leading to the increase of the English supremacy (*Cornwall, 2015*). He forced Charles to sign the Treaty of Troyes, retaking Normandy, including Caen and Rouen, expanding the boundaries of the kingdom until Paris. The alliance he signed with the Duchy of Burgundy expanded the borders of the kingdom to the whole South of France. He also married Charles' daughter Catherine of Valois, ensuring that his sons would be the heir to the French Throne (*Barker, 2007*).

Apart from external politics, Henry emphasized also on the internal. He achieved to unify the English and help them get over the internal disruptions, which existed before his reign, aiming to create the English nation. Unfortunately, his efforts fell apart some years after his death, as the English were led to the War of Roses in 1455.

The English supremacy lasted until 1429 when [Jean d' Arc](#) firstly appeared at the siege of Orleans and signalled the French revival, which later resulted to the definitive win of the French in the Hundred years war.





Changes of English and French boundaries over the Hundred Years War (source: [historymapswikispaces.com](http://historymapswikispaces.com))

## Henry's Intelligence or lack of French leadership?

The victory of the English against the French was an unexpected outcome, taking into consideration the difference of numbers, morale, condition and the types of troops between the two armies. The victory was interpreted differently by the two sides, with the English speaking about a "miracle" and how the unity of the small English army managed to defeat the by far more numerous French army. On the other side, the French tried to decrease the meaning of the battle.

The reason for the English victory lies partially between Henry's V tactical intelligence and the absence of French leadership, while apart from those, natural causes played a significant role in the final outcome.

After extensive literature research, the causes that led to Henry's pivotal victory are presented below.

### French soldiers' armour weight

The French soldiers were properly geared, in order to be well protected from the enemy attacks, but that came with a drawback. According to studies on medieval armours it is calculated that they weighed around 50 kgs, a significant extra weight for the soldiers (*Rothero, 1981*). That amount of weight played a significant role in the battle because it was difficult for them to march the battlefield and fight hand-to-hand with the considerably less armoured English soldiers.

The University of Leeds conducted an experiment, by dressing a volunteer in medieval armour and forcing him to run on a treadmill, to study his physical performance. The results proved that the soldiers were well protected but they were breathless when the actual battle took place, decreasing significantly their performance. ([Link](#) to the experiment)



Medieval armour set (source: [mindhosttumblr.host](http://mindhosttumblr.host))

## The muddy battlefield

For two weeks it was raining heavily in the area around Agincourt. This led to the muddiness of the field which was separating the two armies. Henry made the first move in the battle, but he wasn't eager to send his army straight to the enemy. When his army repositioned, unrestrained French started the attack. The muddiness of the field slowed the march of the French army leaving them exposed to the English arrows (*Petersen & Fraser, 2015*). The weight of their armour made the march even harder, leaving them even more vulnerable.

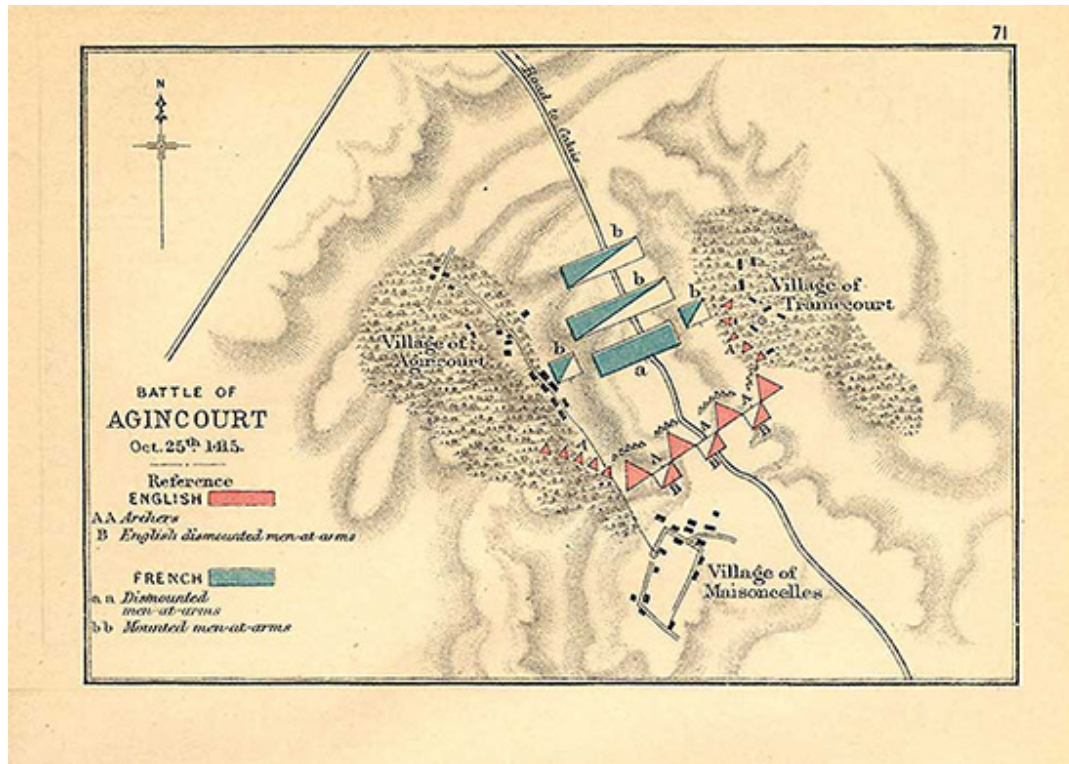


Battlefield of Agincourt, (source: [www.Hiveminer.com](http://www.Hiveminer.com))



## A huge army in a narrow battlefield

As it was mentioned earlier, on the sides of the battlefield there were dense forests, making the actual battlespace limited. That worked as a drawback for the French since they had deployed a huge army. The limited space made the French set a suffocated formation, increasing the kill ratio of the English archers, as they had a higher chance to hit an enemy.



Medieval map of Agincourt battle (Presence of forests is clear on the sides of the battlefield)  
 (source: [history.boisestate.edu](http://history.boisestate.edu))

Apart from that, the suffocating situation combined with the mud and the heavy armour made it really difficult for the French soldiers to be effective when they finally reached the English side. According to *Barker (2005)* when the French men-at-arms approached the English, they could barely use their weapons, as they were exhausted, the mud on their armour had made their move to be slowed and they couldn't use their weapons effectively as they were so overcrowded that they didn't have the space to use them.

## Lack of French authority and complacency

According to *Bennet (1991)* the absence of French leadership was a crucial factor in their defeat. A huge army controlled by many different commanders with different or even no battle tactics was expected to make mistakes during the battle, mistakes that would lead to their final defeat.

Except for the lack of a leader the French were feeling sure for their win over the English as they knew about their morale, condition and numbers. That was proved to be a false prediction for them, as the English under one commander who managed to unify them and give them the morale they needed. According to *Barker (2005)* and *Bennett (1991)*, the night before the battle the French broke their ranks and started looking for quarters in Agincourt and Tramencourt, showing that they were not afraid of an English ambush during the night. The French nobles were so sure about their victory that they wanted to be on the first line of the battle to kill Henry and prove their worth, proving that they didn't have a clear mind. An example like that is written Burgundian chroniclers Jean Waurin and Jean le Fevre. According to them, a band of 17 knights made a vow before the battle to kill Henry, a vow which was never fulfilled. (*Ewan Andrews, 2015*)

## Expertise of English army and the role of Longbowmen

When Edward III came to the English throne he introduced a new method of "indenture" army recruitment, different from that of feudalism, which the method of deploying until then. Henry V was based on that system to raise his army. According to that, the king had to deal with contractors, who were usually vassals, great lords, knights and esquires, by offering them money in exchange for their services. Each one of those had his own army, whose names were written in documented lists during their deployment, in order to have a better control of the army.

Soldiers were connected to their masters with links of lordship, making their command more effective. They were divided within their block into three categories; vanguard, centre and rearguard, which defined the way they marched and fought. The soldiers were well trained and disciplined, while their numbers allowed an organisational advantage. The longbowmen were expertise, because of their years of training. Their contribution to the victory was huge, as they could shoot a large number of arrows in a short time and from a great distance. That in combination with the mud of the battlefield, which made the march of the French army slowed, allowed them to inflict sufficient damage to the French army.

It worths mentioning that Henry the V, in order to pay for his army, borrowed 10000 marks (approx. 3 million pounds in today's money) from the City of London, the Lord Mayor and several wealthy merchants and families, while as a guarantee he gave to them jewels from his crown (*Sawer, 2015*).



*The sceptre Henry V gave as gratitude to the city of London for their support*  
(<http://www.medievalhistories.com>)

## **The initiation of the battle from the English**

During the morning of the 25th, both armies were waiting for each other to initiate the battle. The decision of Henry to move forward his army and reposition themselves. The time they had was pivotal to re-arrange their defences and allowed the archers to re-set their stakes protecting them from cavalry attacks. Having set his defences, Henry V gave the command to the Longbowmen to start shooting with their arrows. The French army wasn't prepared for an attack from that range, creating a confusion to the compact mass men-at-arms. The slow reaction time was in favour of the English longbowmen, as they managed to kill a great number of French until they finally started marching.





*English archers having set the stakes in front of them to protect them from cavalry attacks (source: [www.Quora.com](http://www.Quora.com))*

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This story was created by Ioannis-Rafail Chatzis, GIS student at the Master's program of the University of Edinburgh, using the story map Cascade app.