

The Sinews of War:

Arms and Armour from the Age of Agincourt

From 1 September 2015

Free Display

wallacecollection.org / [@WallaceMuseum](https://twitter.com/WallaceMuseum) / [#Agincourt600](https://twitter.com/WallaceMuseum)

In the autumn of 2015, the Wallace Collection will present a display of weapons and armour dating from the early 15th century to commemorate the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Agincourt. These exhibits will also include rare books from the Wallace Collection archive, exploring the ways in which this historic event has been remembered over centuries.

The Battle of Agincourt is perhaps the most famous battle in English history, but it is also the most misunderstood. It has been celebrated as a great victory for the common man over haughty aristocrats, for the heroic King Henry V over the odds, and as the culmination of Shakespeare's famous play Henry V. All of the most popular interpretations of this event resonate with the image of the plucky and vastly outnumbered English defeating their apparently insurmountable French enemies. However, sources show that Henry's campaign and subsequent battle was more complicated than the popular Agincourt myth suggests.

The misunderstanding and misconceptions of this event flow from what might be called the 'myth of Agincourt', a legendary conception of the battle which has come to be bound up with modern notions of national identity and Anglo-French rivalry. In the popular imagination Agincourt is often conceived as a fight solely between low-born English archers and aristocratic French knights. This idea has been promoted in poetry and song since at least the seventeenth century, in ballads such as 'Agincourt, or, the English Bowman's Glory' (first mentioned in 1600). Here evocative verses conjure up a mythical contest 'Where English cloth-yard arrows; killed the French like tame sparrows; slaine by our bowmen'.

Modern triumphalism has distorted our perception of the battle in fundamental ways. Understanding something of the authentic physical reality can help to bring the real historical event back into focus. One important aspect of that reality was the equipment used by those

who fought there. The display at the Wallace Collection will be a new and exciting opportunity to explore the real story of the arms and armour used by both sides.

For further press information please contact Marie Stirling on press@wallacecollection.org / 0207 563 9567

Notes to Editors

- *The Sinews of War* also coincides with the release of Curator Tobias Capwell's new book *Armour of the English Knight 1400 -1450*, which for the first time reveals the real story of the highly advanced and beautifully designed armour worn by English men-at-arms during the later phases of the Hundred Years War, especially in the Age of Henry V.

Display opening hours

Open to the public: Monday-Sunday 10 am -5pm

Events

A series of events including lectures, seminars and a study day have been organised in relation to this display. Find out more: wallacecollection.org/whatson

Social Media

Join the discussion about the exhibition online at:

[www.twitter.com](https://www.twitter.com/WallaceMuseum) @WallaceMuseum / #Aginccourt600

www.facebook.com/wallacecollection

About the Wallace Collection

The Wallace Collection is one of the most significant collections of European fine and decorative arts in the world and the greatest bequest of art ever left to the British Nation. The collection encompasses old master oil paintings from the 14th to the late 19th century including works by Titian, Velazquez, Rubens and Van Dyck, princely arms and armour, and one of the finest collections of French 18th-century art in all media.

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Selected Key Objects



Arming sword, French or English,
late 14th or early 15th century
© The Wallace Collection



St. George and the Dragon
French or German
c. 1850-60, in the style of the
15th century
© The Wallace Collection



Sword, European
Early 15th century
© The Wallace Collection



Pair of gauntlets, Italian, c. 1390
© The Wallace Collection



Two-handed sword
Possibly English
15th century
© The Wallace
Collection



Visored bascinet, probably French
Late 14th century or early 15th century
© The Wallace Collection



Barbute, Italian, late 14th century.
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