The Longbow in English History

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Preface

The possession of a longbow around which cling the mysteries and the triumphs of its English predecessors presages an interest in its history and possibilities, so it is not strange when in the course of my studies at Butler University I was called upon to select a thesis subject that I found inspiration in my own bow. There is music in the twang of its bow-string; there is poetry in its lines. Every bow has its own personality; every arrow its own peculiar perversities.

The English longbow for some time was preeminently a weapon of peace; gradually the military possibilities of the bow sprang into greater prominence until the Edwards crystallized military tactics on a basis of strong infantry divisions well supported by light armed archers. While the dismounted knights remained heavily armed, the archers supported by a small body of cavalry formed an effective force to follow up a victory or a mobile group with which to strike the enemy in the rear while the major conflict was going on at the front. The French, though it was a difficult lesson to learn, finally realized that they could not put their entire confidence in a purely mounted army. This realization ended in the dismounting of the French knights and the use of the pavise.

To the English the longbow gave a greater sense of unity
and nationality through victories won by cooperation of all the classes. The services of the bowmen bred a respect for the yeoman class as well as made the English nation respected and feared. When the bow had twanged its swan song in the drama of military tactics, it returned to its older role of the companion of peace and amid various vicissitudes of popularity it continues in this rôle. The beauty of a perfectly sped shaft never fails to charm.

For the accounts of the use of the longbow in military engagements I have used the chronicles covering the period to which I have had access. Copies of the illustrations are taken mainly from Elmer and Strutt.

For the inspiration and the guidance in my graduate work I owe a debt of gratitude to the members of the History Department and especially to Dr. Haworth, who has counseled me through the preparation of this thesis.

R. M. T.
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Chapter I
The Longbow Makes Its Debut

List of Maps and Illustrations

Of all the inventions of men, scarcely any can equal, challenge higher antiquity, or more universal and long

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almost all people, and a chief instrument of victory and con-
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weapon of war; it united and concentrated the distinct powers
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primitive lure.

However, its early history is shrouded in the mists of
legend and mythology. Some of the ancients attributed the in-
volution of the bow and arrows to Apollo, some to the son of
Perseus, and others to Styxos, the son of Jupiter. Whatever
may have been its high born origin, the bow became "the one
instrument of forest and field sports common to patrician and

"Of all the inventions of men, scarcely any one can
callenge higher antiquity, or more universal and long con­
tinued use, than the bow; a weapon which has been common to
almost all people, and a chief instrument of victory and con­
quest from the remotest period. Previous to the discovery of
gunpowder, the bow was, unquestionably, the most efficacious
weapon of war; it united and concentrated the distinct powers
of the only two weapons of distant offence, that had been
discovered and made use of, namely the dart, javelin, or lance;
and the sling". (1) The bow has provided the means not only
for victory on the battle field but also for the procuring of
food and clothing. It is no wonder, then, that the bow has a
primitive lure.

However, its early history is shrouded in the mists of
legend and mythology. Some of the ancients attributed the in­
vention of the bow and arrows to Apollo, some to the son of
Perseus, and others to Scythes, the son of Jupiter. Whatever
may have been its high born origin, the bow became "the one
instrument of forest and field sports common to patrician and

A mural painting found in a cave near Accacer, Castellón, gives evidence of the use of the bow in ancient times. To the English, however, remains a touch of astonishment at the thought of such a weapon of warfare as astonishes Europe. They saw in the bow a means of history, an Egyptian bow as far as it was observed. Ancient bows were single, but the bow and arrow of an expert in the use of the bow and arrow were often thirty years old. The bow was generally used in connection with the reed arrow, and often thirty inches long. It was expertly made of such a fashion as to seem to blend in with the artist's picture. There were many skilled artists in their time, and we are taught to picture the bow and arrow in the figures of the ancient art of Spain. It was used for hunting and reviewed by the kings. The bow and arrow were placed in a basket, he dropped it bow into the basket. The arrows were sealed up as well as the other end of the arrow when the archer was away, and not in the review, but this time each soldier took the bow and made it. The bow and arrow remained a mute testimony of the number of arrows that had been shot. The bow was the King of Kings.

2. See Figure 1.
plebeian, king and esquire". (1)

A mural painting from a cave, near Abocacer, Castellan, gives evidence of the use of the bow in the Old Stone Age. (2)

To the English, however, remains the honor of winning with the stout yew bow and grey goose feather such spectacular victories as astonished Europe. Theirs were not the first longbows of history. The Egyptian bow as far as dimensions were concerned bore resemblance to the English longbow. This weapon cast a reed arrow often thirty inches long. The Persians, too, were expert in the use of the longbow, though their bows were fashioned of horn as were those of the Egyptians. So prominent a part did the longbow play in their lives that, according to Plutarch, the Persian coin was stamped with the figure of an archer. They used archers on the field of battle, although these were placed behind the protection of spearmen. It was their custom that, before going into battle, the king reviewed his troops; and as each soldier passed His Majesty, he dropped an arrow into a basket. This basket was then sealed until the end of the war when the troops again passed in review, but this time each soldier took from the basket an arrow. Those arrows which remained gave mute testimony of the number of those who had answered the call of the King of Kings.

2. See Figure 1.
Another little homely example of the fact that through the ages the bow has been intertwined within the fabric of society comes from an old Chinese proverb which tells that when a son is born, a bow and quiver are hung up at the gate. This reminds us of the more familiar Dutch custom of hanging up a red satin ball when such an event occurs.

Who introduced the long wooden bow into England is a matter of conjecture depending upon scattered and isolated information. Some have argued that the bow was introduced by the Anglo-Saxons while others have held the Normans responsible; and paradoxical though it may seem, both may be correct for while the Anglo-Saxons may have introduced the longbow, the Normans demonstrated its real military possibilities. (1) Speed believed that the Danes knew of the long wooden bow and that this knowledge probably extended to the Anglo-Saxons. To support this, some arrow-heads have been found in Norse tombs with sockets which revealed the probable diameter of the arrow shaft. The largest are nine inches long with sockets for a three-eighths inch shaft. In order to make a well balanced missile the shaft must have been of considerable length. This would tend to lengthen the bow so that the archer could draw the arrow to the head without danger of breaking the wooden bow. Du Chaillu's "Viking Age" says,

1. Eachard and Hayward held this view.
"The bow (bogi) and the arrow (or) were among the most important weapons for war. The bows discovered are generally about six feet long".\(^1\) However, Henry of Huntingdon gave the battle axe as the native Danish weapon.\(^2\) That the Anglo-Saxons possessed the longbow seems fairly certain though the extent of its use is more dubious. In 1863 three ancient galleys were found in Nydam, Sleswig, a moor near Alsen Sund which had been at one time a fjord.\(^3\) One of these has been preserved in good condition in the Kiel museum. Another was destroyed by the Prussian soldiers in 1864 to make fire-wood for cooking their coffee. On these galleys among other things were found about forty bows and over one hundred arrows which belonged to the inhabitants of Sleswig and Holssatia around 400-450 A.D. or in other words on the eve of the Anglo-Saxon invasion of England. Their bows were from five feet seven inches to six feet long and two and eight-tenths to three centimeters in diameter. However, contrary to its celebrated descendant, the English longbow, the flat side was

\(^1\) Quoted in Elmer. Archery, p.33.
\(^2\) Chronicles of Henry of Huntingdon, Book VI, p.209. "Here a single Norwegian, whose name ought to have been preserved, took post on a bridge, and hewing down more than 40 of the English with a battle-axe, his country's weapon, stayed the English army 'till the ninth hour." This was the battle of Stamford Bridge.
\(^3\) Archers' Register, 1912.
the belly and not the back. The strings seem to have been permanently attached, for the bows had no horns or notches, though the strings long since have disintegrated. The arrows were barreled and fletched with four feathers and heads of bone or iron. (1) Many who have contended that the bow of the Saxons was a short bow come to their conclusions undoubtedly from the representations of the bow in old carvings, but art which was so crude that it represented the bow-string as thick as the bow and gave an arrow the proportions of a broad sword is not an adequate source. (2) Just what part the bow and arrow played in Saxon warfare is not definitely known. The ecclesiastical chroniclers for the most part were content with calling the members of the army combatants. Polydore Virgil spoke of a number of archers placed in the right wing of Alfred's army, and one version of the well known Alfred story even related that Kind Alfred let the good woman's cakes burn when he became interested in mending his bow and arrows. (3) However, after the battle of Hastings archery assumed a new place in the history of England, although it did not come into great prominence until the wars of Edward I. The English virtually held a monopoly on the longbow not the feudal armies were inadequate. (1) The ever armed Bowman

1. See Appendix No. III.
2. See figure 2.
by the laws of man made monopoly but by the laws of nature and of social order. As Sir John Smith stated the longbow remained the "gift of God to the English nation". Although the French attempted to force archery upon their people by royal orders and some archers of high degree did rise, for the most part the French did not take kindly to the bow. The French and Spanish had kept their peasantry crushed and weaponless so that the yeoman class from which the English drew their archers was lacking. Then, too, England's laws of inheritance tended to alleviate the fierce class chasms which existed in France, for according to the laws of primogenitor only the eldest son inherited the noble fief while the other sons, though of noble birth, remained commoners. This tended to form a group which could fraternize with the nobles and yet whose interests were not so divergent from the yeoman class but that they had things in common. When these classes were thrown together on the field of battle, there was a spirit of national unity and cooperation. On the other hand, the French nobility had contempt for the peasantry; they preferred to hire mercenaries and when they did take to the bow it was the crossbow which required less physical exertion. As the use of mercenary troops never gained favor among the English, the king became dependent upon the shire levies, because the feudal arrays were inadequate. The ever armed Bowman

1. Because of England's isolated position she did not need a large force of mercenaries for protection from invasion. The fyrd levies formed a substantial militia. That the English people resented any attempt of the king to hire mercenaries is seen from a provision of the Magna Carta.
formed a substantial militia, but this very fact was to give the common folk a means of controlling the acts of the govern-
ment. How effectively the bow could back the claims of the people, the Earl of Warwick never realized until he experienced it in the hands of Ket's followers after which he speedily re-
vised his former contempt for this weapon.

substantiation for Thompson's statement, "It may well be
said that the powerful government of Great Britain rests upon
a foundation of iron arrow-heads - that its greatest glory
has been achieved by the hard shooting of its archers - that
its history's most brilliant pages have been written on imper-
ishable tables with the bodkin-pointed shafts of the yeomen
who drew bows at Crecy and Agincourt, and all those fights where
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goose wing."

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tain its supremacy long unchallenged, for it is over the way
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Chapter II
The Strung Bow, The Symbol of War

The early peoples, especially the Welsh, followed the custom of using the strung bow as a symbol of war. The posterity of these people made the English longbow not just a symbol of war but a terror of war to the point that there is substantiation for Thompson's statement, "It may well be said that the powerful government of Great Britain rests upon a foundation of iron arrow-heads - that its greatest glory has been achieved by the hard shooting of its archers - that its history's most brilliant pages have been graven on imperishable tables with the bodkin-pointed shafts of the yeomen who drew bows at Crecy and Agincourt, and all those fights where the supremacy over Europe was enforced by the whistling grey goose wing". (1)

As a weapon of warfare the English longbow did not maintain its supremacy long unchallenged, for it is ever the way with military science that though an army may be vanquished for the time being by a superior weapon or a forceful tactical move there arises a new weapon or new military combination to combat the former. The dawn of the era of gunpowder was at hand at the time when the longbow was winning its most spectac-

Bayeux Tapestry

A Saxon Defending His Home (From an Eighth Century Carving)

Women Hunting in the Fourteenth Century
ular victories. All the scorn which the yeomen had for the fire-crake could not check its deadly progress. The French, unable to match the English in the development of the longbow, turned to the use of gunpowder which could be discharged with equal skill by a weakling or a strong man. The English actually attempted to cling to the bow long after its effectiveness had passed, but this does not mean that the English had always displayed this affection for the bow as a military weapon; for there was a time when more dependence was placed on the crossbowmen than on the longbowmen. In the Norman period the exchequer rolls show more entries for crossbow-bolts than for arrows. In fact the English did not assimilate the lessons in military art of the battle of Hastings and for nearly two hundred years the English put their trust in cavalry, a typical mediaeval practice.

Hastings was the first battle on English soil of great import in which the longbow played a spectacular part in military tactics. (1) When Harold learned of William's landing, he hastened southward with the northern troops who had won the Battle of Stamford Bridge. Except for a comparatively few housecarles, which he no doubt placed in the center, his forces were crudely armed levies of the fyrd equipped with swords, javelins, clubs, axes, a few bows and even agricultural implements of breaking the English ranks when earlier in the con-

1. Morris held that these were not the longbow. However, the Bayeaux Tapestry would indicate that these were longbows. See Figure 3.

ments which had been converted into weapons of defence. Harold
drew his forces up on the lonely hill above the marshy bottom
of Senlac to await the attack. Just before the Normans reached
the battlefield they halted to put on their heavy armour and
in his haste William got his armour on hind foremost. Many
of his followers, yielding to their superstition were distressed
at this ill omen but William only laughed and as he turned it
about said, "That means that my duchy will be turned into a
kingdom". The Normans formed the center with the Bretons and
men from Anjou and Maine attacking the English left and the
Flemings the English right. As the story goes the jester,
Taillefœur, determined to strike the first blow, rode before
the advancing army singing of Charlemagne and Roland and those
who died at Roncesvalles. After his spectacular but fruitless
rush "the ranks met; a cloud of arrows carried death among
them; the clang of sword-strokes followed; helmets gleamed,
and weapons clashed. But Harold had formed his whole army in
close column, making a rampart which the Normans could not pen-

erate. Duke William, therefore, commanded his troops to make
a feigned retreat. In their flight they happened unawares on
a deep trench, which was treacherously covered, into which num-
bers fell and perished". (1)

This tactical move had been suggested to William as a
means of breaking the English ranks when earlier in the con-

the Bretons who had been flung back. Only the shire levies rose to the bait while the solid front of the housecarles remained intact. It was not until William used volleys of arrows sent in vertical fire alternately with rushes of cavalry that he was able to win. The English, though there were some archers among their ranks, had no effective means of striking the enemy before they came to grips, while the Normans with their archers could break the morale of the English before the hand to hand conflict and then ride them down with the horsemen against whom the English had no cavalry. The English were in the position of a boxer who is matched against another having a new method of attack. He is capable of standing punishment and attempts to hang on until the bout is through but he has no effective way of inflicting much damage upon his adversary. The defeat of the English here proved that a purely stationary force could not stand up under the demoralizing forces of a snow-storm of arrows combined with rushes of cavalry although it is not strange in a day when the mailed horsemen in a feudalized society were coming to be looked upon as the strength of the army on the continent that this victory should have been accredited to the knights, forty rather than to the archers. The Norman conquest only hastened

1. Baker, to the contrary, stated "And for advantage of weapons, the Normans had long Bowe and arrows, which among the English at that time were not at all in use." Chronicles, p.23.

1. Works of Odoeius Vitalis, IV, pp. 73f.
to fruition the trend toward feudalism which had begun in England, so "the main features of the two-hundred years from Hastings onward were the feudal knight and the feudal castle". Yet this does not mean that their infantry disappeared; they continued to share the plunder of victory and the wholesale death in case of defeat, for the winning army had no mercy on the vanquished commoner while the members of the nobility were held for ransom rather than put to the sword.

Archers were used in some instances in such a manner as to presage their use at Falkirk, Hallidon Hill and Crecy. The Chronicle of St. Evroult in relating the battle of Bourgeroude waged by Henry I in Normandy (1124) gave this passage: "Odo Borleng said: 'The king's enemies ravage his lands in security, and have captured and are carrying off one of his lords, to whom he had entrusted the defence of the country. What are we to do?...... It will be best for part of us to dismount and engage on foot, while the other part remain in the saddle and fight on horseback. The bowmen should form the first line to annoy the enemy, and check their advance by flights of arrows which may wound their horses". In adopting this idea the English were able to kill no less than forty horses on the first onset. (1) An arrow striking the horse was nearly as effective as one striking the rider. The horse was less protected and if killed meant the checking of his

1. Works of Odericus Vitalis, IV, pp. 73f.
rider's advance. Then, too, even though the horse was not killed the barbed arrow stuck in the flesh and in the horse's effort to rid itself of the extraneous object it would rear and plunge until it had thrown its rider as neatly as any bucking broncho of the cowboy world. Once down a mediaeval knight with his unwieldy body armour was in a predicament. Thus archers could be used to weaken a cavalry attack, although archers without the support of infantry or cavalry could be routed easily by a determined cavalry move.

Archers were mentioned in the civil wars under Stephen but these played no decisive or spectacular part here. For instance the rebellious lords had a small body of Welsh bowmen on the flank at the First Battle of Lincoln, but these were completely routed by a cavalry charge led by the Earl of Albermarle and William of Ypres. After this, the battle resumed its typical mediaeval character. During this period bowmen were considered more useful in sieges or the defence of narrow passes than for open field fighting.

During the reign of Stephen all things were not peaceful along the Scottish front. David, the Scotch king, on his third invasion of England (1138) attempted to surprise the English and would have succeeded had it not been for the warning given by a squire. The English knights were dismounted, and David followed the same plan. "Then all the English replied with a shout, and the mountains and hills re-echoed,

'Amen! Amen!', at the same moment the Scots raised their country's war cry, 'Alban! Alban!' till it reached the clouds. The sounds were drowned amid the clash of arms. In the first onset the men of Lothian, to whom the king of the Scots had reluctantly granted the honour of striking the first blow, bore down on the mailed English knights with a cloud of darts and their long spears, but they found their ranks impenetrable as a wall of steel; while the archers mingled with the knights, pierced the unarmed Scots with a cloud of arrows. The whole army of English and Normans stood fast. The leader of the Lothians was struck with an arrow and the attack faltered. Prince Henry with a few followers did succeed in breaking through at one point, but their success was unsupported and in order to save themselves they cast away their insignia and, mingling with the English, escaped.

It remained, however, for Edward I to combine cavalry and foot soldiers so that the one unit supported and complemented the other, and Edward III perfected these tactics so ably used by his grandfather. From the time of Edward I more men were definitely entered upon the rolls as archers than as crossbowmen. However, Edward's army was still a feudal array; each individual brought his own weapons and armour. So it was that the common folk in the fyrd levies brought the weapon with which they were more familiar, the bow. With the increase in the number of free or yeoman class because of economic changes, they cast away their insignia and, mingling with the English, escaped.

the greater became the number bearing that weapon. Edward took advantage of this increasing number of archers to use them in ridding the enemy with arrows and then riding down their forces. His extensive campaigns against the Welsh bowmen had made him realize the advantages of a force of archers.

When Edward could make no progress against the solid front of spears of the Scotch schildron at the battle of Falkirk, he brought up his archers. The Scots had no cavalry to stop that deadly host of arrow-shafts because the horsemen which Wallace had with him fled at the first signs of conflict, and the few Scotch archers already had been routed by the English cavalry. Edward did not make the mistake which his predecessors had done in giving the credit of his victory to the knights rather than to the archers, but his son did not fully understand the military technique of his father. At Bannockburn, though he had a strong force of well armed horsemen and foot soldiers, he lost the battle to the Scots with their solid infantry and archers. (1) Even though Edward did not use his archers to the best advantage he should have dislodged the few Scotch archers so that they could not destroy the morale of his troops. (2)

The appearance of what seemed to be a large reinforcement on their flank was the last straw that broke the camel's back.

1. Fordun, Chronicle of the Scottish Nation, IV, pp.339.
2. There has been much speculation as to the position of the archers at Bannockburn. Some record that the archers were placed so far in advance of the army that the Scots rode them down. Baker put them in the second line adding that the arrows struck their own troops in the back which would not have occurred had the archers been placed on the wings.
This battle confirmed the Scots in the use of pike-men and probably defeated the attempts of their kings to foster military archery.

With the ascent of Edward III the great peak of the military success of the longbow was at hand. Forces which Edward allowed Balliol to raise in England to assist him in his civil war won the victory of Duplin Moor by shattering the ranks of the Scots with a storm of arrows from the flanks. Due to the overthrow of Balliol's party in the following year Edward blockaded Berwick and "In this bateyle wonne the archers of Ynglond a perpetual laude". (1) Victory at Hallidon Hill followed hard upon the heels of that at Berwick. Here the heavy-armed infantry and dismounted knights were divided into three divisions with flanking forces of archers supported by a small cavalry reserve. Morris says that the poachers from Sherwood were offered pardon on condition of enlisting with the king's forces on this campaign. In this battle "the panoply worn by the Earl Douglas, who led the Scots... was of remarkable temper, and that, not only his armour, but that of his men at arms had been three years in making, yet the English arrows rent it with little ado". (2) Patricius asserted that an arrow tipped with wax could penetrate any piece of armour. (3)

The English had a knack of getting into war with the Scots,

but France was a name equally capable of provoking an excess of English hostility, and soon the questions of wine, wool, and fish along with belated claims on the French throne brought England and France into the gulf of war, and English yeomen turned their eyes southward to the fields where they were to gain their claim to immortal fame in the annals of history. The first entrance of England into France resulted in sieges but little open field fighting, and the truce of Eplechin soon put an end to hostilities but the war of the Breton succession found the English and the French arrayed against each other as allies of the contending parties in Brittany. By 1345 Edward renounced the truce and landed again on the coast of Normandy with 4,000 men of arms and 10,000 archers besides Irishmen and Welshmen that followed the host afoot.\(^1\) When the King and his son set foot on the land, Edward as the story goes, stumbled and fell. His followers considered this an ill-omen but the king looked upon the incident as a sign that the land wanted him. After taking Caen and manoeuvring around Paris, he started toward his lands of Ponthieu or rather what he claimed as his lands.\(^2\) The French allowed him to reconstruct the bridge at Poyzy (Poissy) and retreat. With the English in the lead there began a race which ended at Crecy. Philip was aided in his chase by native bands

\(^1\) Froissart, Chronicles of Froissart, I, ch. Cxxi, 93.

\(^2\) Although Edward was not the descendant of Margaret of France but rather of Eleanor of Castile, Edward considered this his inheritance.
which destroyed bridges and harassed Edward on his march. For a time it looked as though the English king was caught between the sea and the lower Somme, but upon hearing of the ford below Abbeville he hastened thither. The tide was up and the French under Sir Godemar du Fay attempted to hold the passage but the "archers of England shot so wholly together, that the Frenchmen were fain to give place to the Englishmen". (1) When Edward found himself in Ponthieu he drew up his force to await the French attack. In the line-up were represented all the classes of society with each element contributing its necessary portion - a truly national array. In direct contrast the French were an assembly of heterogeneous representatives of a top-heavy nobility, each with an over-grown sense of knight-errantry and eager to do some feat of arms which would distinguish him. Though as brave as the English, they wasted this bravery because of a lack of cohesion and unity of action.

Finding themselves projected onto the field before the English through their own impetuosity, they were forced to retaliate against the English arrow shower or retire. (2) The latter idea was wholly counter to the ethics of knighthood, so they pushed on. The Genoese crossbowmen had been brought to the front by their captains. The Genoese loosed a discharge of quarrels but before they could reload their bows, the English had discharged volley upon volley of death-bearing shafts

2. Battle of Crees, 1346.
till they fell like grass upon the Senosse. In this conflict the true value of the longbow as against the crossbow may be seen clearly. The bowmen on both sides were probably of equal accuracy and ability but the weapons would compare as the muzzle loading musket to the matchlock. The crossbow would be open to fire all the time while the Senosse while not it were the heavy weapon to carry on long marches. The Senosse were charging the longbow made in another country hence they were not interested in matters of accuracy but in protecting their strings, while the English yeoman could detach their strings and thus keep them dry. Very often the English bow was string with double strings so that in case of accident to the one the other string would be ready to use. This practice has given rise to the statement that a girl who kept one admirer in reserve lost her present lover fail has "Two strings to her bow."

1. Hanseard, op. cit. Introd. VII. 2. Newtari in his essay suggested that effect of the rain on the ground was as important as on the strings for the crossbows were placed against the ground to balance them as the archer round up the windlass.
till they fell like snow upon the Genoese. In this conflict
the true value of the longbow as against the crossbow may be
seen clearly. The bowmen on both sides were probably of equal
accuracy and ability but the weapons would compare as the muzzle
loading musket to the breech loading repeater. The crossbowmen
would be open to fire all the time it took to crank up his wind-
llass while at best it was an awkward heavy weapon to carry on
long marches. The rapidity of loading and discharging the long-
bow made it more effective in breaking up the cavalry charge
than the crossbow although if hit squarely with a crossbow
bolt the unfortunate individual usually was no longer interest-
ed in matters of this world. Again, as illustrated in this
engagement, the crossbowmen had no adequate way of protecting
their strings against atmospheric conditions, while the Eng-
lish yeomen could detach their strings and thus keep them dry.
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that in case of accident to the one the other string would be
ready to use and this practice has given rise to the statement
that a girl who keeps one admirer in reserve lest her present
lover fail has "Two strings to her bow". (1) In this particular
instance the quarrels (bolts) fell short because the crossbow
strings had been relaxed by the rain. (2)

1. Heneard, op. cit. Introd. VII.
2. Muratori in his essay suggested that effect of the rain on
the ground was as important as on the strings for the cross-
bows were placed against the ground to balance them as the
archer wound up the windlass.
The Flodden Bow Found in a
Cottage Near the
Historic Battle-
Field of Flodden

No longbow dating as far back as the Hundred Years War has been found. However, the target-bow of today is essentially the longbow of Medieval England although it differs from its prototype as much as a draft animal differs from a racehorse. (1) The bow was approximately the height of the archer, in the yew the Nature has provided the bowmen with an ideal bow-wood. "Yew is the combination of what really amounts to two different woods in one piece that gives the yew bow its admirable qualities." (2) Despite the fact that the English boasted of their bows of Shakespearean times, the English yew was not as desirable as that of the cassele or Italian yew. Because yew is a high altitude wood the growth has been slow and gives a greater power of cast. The Flodden bow found near the battle field of Flodden, though used over a hundred and fifty years later than Crecy, may be taken as a fair example of the construction of the longbow carried in the campaigns of the Hundred Years War. This bow was a roughly made self-yew bow that probably drew between eighty and ninety pounds. (3) It was with such roughly made bows as this that the English archers at Crecy forced the Genoese crossbowmen to flee under the steady rain of arrows to which the Genoese had no adequate reply.

The impatient knight-hood in their anger and haste rode down the Genoese and charged the English, who were drawn up in

1. Lambert, Modern Archery, p.35.
2. Ibid., p.54.
3. A self-yew bow is one constructed from a single yew.
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1. Lambert, Modern Archery, p.35.
2. Ibid. p.54.
3. A self-yew bow is one constructed from a single stave.
three divisions of dismounted soldiery with the archers posted on the wings of each division so that as the French approached they were caught in their own crossfire. \(^{(1)}\) The French seemed to have persisted in charging the men at arms rather than the archers - just why is not certain unless it was that it was difficult to make the horses face the arrows or that there was a feeling of contempt for fighting those not of noble birth. If the latter was a reason, the French were soon disillusioned for the arrow knew not race or class; it struck rich and poor alike and many a knight or noble fell under its sting or found himself the captive of a husky yeoman who would make himself comparatively rich by the ransom money of his prisoner.

In the conflict the blind king of Bohemia made one last futile though magnificent gesture to knight-hood and honor, and though he died, two of his squires lived to tell of the episode to Froissart. Twilight waned into night and under its kind cloak the King of France rode to safety, but the morning revealed the overwhelming victory of the English. "Thus by God's favour and the irresistible force of the English archers - who in a manner did only fight- was King Edward put into full and peaceable possession of a perfect victory! \(^{(2)}\)

1. For a discussion on the placement of the archers at Crécy see Lloyd, "The 'Horse' of Archers at Crécy"; Morris, "Archers at Crécy"; and George, "Archers at Crécy", English Historical Review, X, 338-41; 427-36; XII, 733-8.

From now on archers played a part in nearly every battle, although their presence by no means insured such victories as Crecy. Often the army was defeated though archers were present, so they formed no sure talisman.

In the meantime the Scots, who were allies of the French, thought now that the cat was away it was time for the mice to play so they made an incursion into England but were defeated at Nevill's Cross, where "the archers began to shoot on both parties, but the shot of the Scots endured but a short space, but the archers of England shot so fiercely so that when the battles approached, there was hard battle", which resulted in the capture of the Scottish king.(1)

Although for a time after the fall of Calais there was nominal truce, raiding continued rampant. In 1356 the campaign of the Black Prince who had won his laurels at Crecy eclipsed other activities. He started northward from Guienne but upon learning of the descent of King John with an enormous force he began a race southward, the end of which was the battle of Poitiers. Just how this conflict occurred seems to be a matter of dispute even among the best interpreters of the sources. Some feel that the Prince was forced to fight here because the French had interposed themselves between his line of march and Bordeaux, but though this might have been reason enough, Edward seems to have taken up his position comparatively early in the

day so he probably considered this a good position to receive the attack of a force of superior numbers. It is uncertain whether or not the English tried to retreat across the river under cover of the night, after attempted negotiations had failed. However the facts may be, "the archers did their company that day great advantage; for they shot so thick that the Frenchmen wist not on what side to take heed, and little and little the Englishmen won ground on them." (1) The English were drawn up in three divisions with archers thrown out along the road which was bordered by hedges and thickets thus forming a position from which the archers could not be dislodged by the cavalry charge. The French then resorted to the attack with dismounted men-at-arms. (2) By a strategic detour Edward sent a small force of cavalry and archers to attack the French rear—a move which clinched the English victory. The real French king was taken captive despite the fact that he had employed many decoys to wear the same coat of arms as his to add to his protection. (3) In this battle the glory of Prince Edward was to have played a poor hand well.

During this same period siege tactics were used extensively—

2. It took the French a long time to learn this lesson. Even as late as the battle of Herrings and the skirmish at Beauvais in 1430 the French insisted on meeting the archers with a cavalry move.
3. Stowe related an interesting anecdote in connection with this victory as a novel way of explaining the change in style of English hair dress. After the capture of John, the English allowed their hair to grow and shaved their beards.
ly. The English especially under Lord Derby won many sieges. These tactics were more or less alike so to describe one gives an adequate idea of the methods. Very often the ditches were filled with underbrush, etc., so that the soldiery under cover of the fire of the archers could approach the walls to undermine them. Very often these arrow shafts were fitted with a small vial of lime which, bursting as it struck, scattered the blinding lime. Another means used to reach the city or castle walls in these siege tactics was a tall tower-like machine mounted on wheels and covered on top with ox hide. This covering protected the archers and men within from the enemies' stones and blinding lime.

Before the Black Prince left France to return to his native land and to death, he made a brilliant campaign into Spain as the champion of Pedro whom Henry of Trastamare had ejected from the kingdom. The English assisting Pedro won through their combination of men-at-arms and archers at the battle of Navarretta. "The Rex of Spayn fled, for he myte not susteyne the tempest of arwoes." Even though, according to Froissart, the King of Castile previous to the battle stated, "Thank God, I have enow of men to assist me." In the

1. The use of archers in sieges had long been recognized before their effectiveness had been recognized in open field fighting.
4. The French had sent reinforcements.
first place, there are already in our army 7,000 men at arms, each mounted on a good courser, and so well covered with armour that they fear not the arrows of the archer". (1)

From this period on both countries were so occupied with their own internal strife that the war lapsed into raiding and pillage by free companies. (2)

By the time of the Armagnac-Burgundian conflicts in France, the French had acquired some skilled archers especially in those regions of France coming in closest contact with English methods (Picardy & Gascony) but the use of the crossbow still persisted in its popularity with the continental armies.

In this period the two countries had muddled through the regencies of child kings and France continued to rock with restlessness under her demented ruler, while England once again was governed by a king who felt that to subdue France was one of his commissions in life. Setting out for Calais with a large force, Henry V landed first at Harfleur which he besieged and overcame. The English king offered to settle the quarrel by duel with the Prince, a method of settlement upon which Edward III and Philip had attempted to agree in the previous century.

When the French asked where they could meet, Henry replied that he was marching straight to Calais but for some reason he

2. Even though the kings were anxious for peace, the archers and soldiers of fortune desired that hostilities continue because of the personal profit to the individual.

was left to his own devices for sometime before the French accomplished their slow mobilization and started to follow him. Unable to cross the Somme at Blanche-taque he followed the river to Amiens and started northward toward Calais but the French managed to get between the English and their destination. A general feeling of despair settled upon the English, but Henry did not seem to share this despair, for when his chaplain wished for 10,000 more archers Henry rebuked him with these words which Shakespeare puts into his mouth:

"If we are marked to die, we are enow
To do our country lose; and if to live,
The fewer men, the greater share of honour.
God's will! I pray thee, wish not one man more.
By Jove, I am not covetous for gold,
Nor care I who doth feed upon my cost;
It yearens me not if men my garments wear;
Such outward things dwell not in my desires:
But if it be a sin to covet honours,
I am the most offending soul alive
No, faith, my coz, wish not a man from England:
God's peace! I would not love so great an honour
As one man more, methinks, would share from me:
For the best hope I have. O, do not wish one more!"  

The English soon ran into the French at Agincourt. In this conflict the English archers were in the front of the main

Plan of the Battle of Agincourt

From a Plate in Parante's Histoire des Ducs de Bourgogne

- French Army
- English Army

Ours archiers shotte ful hartyly,
And made Frenchmen fast to blade;
There armes wente ful good speed,
Ours enemies therewith down gon falle,
Thorough brezplate, habirion, and bessemet yede,
Slayn there were x thousand on a rowe alle
Not ye right well that thus it was
Gloria tibi trinitas."

3. p. 216.
body as well as mixed with the men at arms on the wings. (1)

They were "for the most part without any armour, and in jackets, with their hose loose and hatchets or swords hanging to their girdles; some indeed were barefooted and without hate". (1)

Monstrelet said that the French stooped to prevent the arrows from hitting them on the visors of their helmets. The battle of Agincourt though regularly named as the third of the great trio of English bowmen's victories in France was not won by the archers as bowmen but primarily as axmen in the hand to hand conflict. The French army according to Baker was approximately six times as large as the English with 4,000 archers and 1,500 crossbowmen but these were not used advantageously. (2)

An attack on Henry's baggage train though causing some panic momentarily proved a failure. A poem by John Lydgate reprinted in the Chronicle of London from the Harleian Manuscripts commemorates the archers at Agincourt. (3)

"They triumpyd up full meryly
The grete bataille togyder yede;
Oure archiers shotte full hertyly,
And made Frenshmen fast to blede;
There arwes wente full good sped,
Oure enemies therewith down gon falle,
Thorough bresplate, habirion, and bassonet yede,
Slayn there were xj thousand on a rowe alle
Wot ye right well that thus it was
Gloria tibi trinitas."

3. P. 216.
The English continued to use the longbow even though they had taken up the use of cannon. Under Henry V, the English won success after success, the accounts of which read very much like those of the previous century with the exception of the added use of the cannon.

With the advent of the infant Henry VI and the nationalist spirit of France, the English, without a strong military genius at their helm, lost their stronghold in France, one by one and once again became occupied with their insular affairs. The English soon were in deadly strife with the followers of the Red Rose pitted against those of the White Rose. These conflicts often opening with a cannonade and then a discharge of arrows, were stubbornly contested. At Towton the Yorkists won by a conspiracy of the elements together with the arrows of their bowmen. Snow was driving into the faces of the Lancastrians so that they could not see that the Yorkists had stepped back out of bowrange until they had expended their supply of arrows. The Yorkists then advanced and discharged not only their own supply of shafts but those which had fallen short of their mark.

At the Battle of Barnet the Lancastrian archers inadvertently caused disaster when they discharged their arrows at the Oxford men who were helping them after mistaking their crest as it glinted and shimmered in the sun for the emblem of King Edward.

1. The Chronicles of the White Rose.
With the battle of Bosworth and the ascension of Henry VII the wars of the Roses closed. From now on, especially from the time of Henry VIII, "the decision of battles now belonged to pike, bill and musket. The infantry and light troops, who had hitherto been left to arm themselves as best they could, began to be dressed in some kind of uniform, with weapons and armour selected with some care, and used in definite proportions". (1) "In this period the bowmen wore a hat and gorget of banded mail and a hauberk of overlapping scales of leather covered by a brigandine of leather. (2) The only plate defence was (is) a corselet. (3) It may seem rather strange to those living in a day when the central government equips the army with standard material that the archers, even in their hey-day, were left to equip themselves with whatever weapons and armour they could procure. However, though these archers were paid, there still remained that feudal principle that the individual and not the central government was responsible for the equipment of the soldiery. Besides the bow and cloth-yard shafts, suspended from the waist, the archer had with him as has been intimated, an axe or mallet. (4)

The English attempted to prolong the use of the bow long after it was logically obsolete (5) and strange though it may seem

2. The Tabard period of Armour.
3. Ashdown, Arms and Armour, p. 258.
4. The usual allotment of shafts was twenty-four to an archer. This gave rise to the saying that the English archer had twenty-four Scots under his belt.
the victory of Flodden, the last time the English used the bow in a major conflict,\(^{(1)}\) was as great as any of its previous victories. The noise then made the mountains ring.

Henry Jenkins was about twelve years old at the time of the conflict and who had been sent to Northalerton with a load of arrows commemorated this great battle in the poem of "Flodden Field",\(^{(2)}\)

"Then might you see on every side, ye disappeared as mysterious The ways all filled with men of war, so being; The prodigy Here silken streamers waving wide, well known but these seas There polish'd helms glistening afar. The right hand wing with all his route, some of the ancient The lusty Lord Dacres did lead, a that looksley, (or Robin Hood) With him the bows of Kendall stout arrow into a willow reed With milk coats and crosses red. The sounding bows were soon up bent, is entirely within the bow Some did their arrows sharp up take; Some did their Alberts bent, Robin Hood could accomplish this Some rusty hills did ruffling shake. And claim I cite this spic My Lancashire most lively wights,

"Ford And chosen mates of Cheshire strong, uh, or rather

1. According to Elmer the last two appearances of bow in warfare in the British Isles were in Scotland; once in 1644 when the Royalists used it against the Covenanters and again in a clan war of 1688.
From sounding bow your feathered flights,
Let fiercely fly your foes among.

The noise then made the mountains ring,
And Stanley, stout they all did cry,
Out went anon the grey goose wing,
And 'mongst the Scots did flickering fly.

Of all the myriad of bows throughout the length and breadth of Mediaeval England all except five have disappeared as mysteriously as their great forebearers came into being.\(^1\)

The prodigies of skill attributed to bowmen are well known but these feats can be verified only in the light of the possibilities of the modern bow which breathes the very romance of the ancient bow. For instance, the story goes that Locksley, or Robin Hood as he was better known, drove an arrow into a willow reed at five score yards and that he nocked (split) an arrow already in the target. The former feat is entirely within the bounds of possibilities for this is done frequently today but it was a mistake to claim that Robin Hood could accomplish this feat with every shot. As to the second claim I cite this episode:

"Ford once thought he had met with his match, or rather more than his match, at archery. It was at a meeting on the Royal Ground. He had just shot his end - the distance being

1. Of these five one is the Flodden Bow; another, Little John's Bow, now at Cannon's Hall; and three are bows from the ship of Mary Rose which sank in 1545. Two of these are in the tower.
100 yards — and made a central gold. 'I'll nock that arrow of yours,' remarked a stranger airily, stepping forward to shoot in his turn. He shot and kept his promise, his very first arrow splitting Mr. Ford's last from nock to pile. 'Do you often do that sort of thing?' asked Mr. Ford, as soon as he had recovered from his astonishment. 'Oh, yes, frequently,' was the reply given in a tone of jaunty self-satisfaction indicative of the consciousness of power. 'However,' said Mr. Ford in telling the story, 'as he never hit the target again all day, I concluded it was an accident, and was relieved accordingly.'

Apropos of the power of the older methods the correspondent of the London Daily Mirror suggested that the modern archer as found wanting in the outer circle of the crossbow was as the result of the increasing length of the bow. As to the distance of a bow-shot there is vast disagreement in accounts. Llewellyan of Nannan was reported to have shot at a man eight hundred yards away from the Carnarvon Castle but only the height could have given his bow the possibility of so long a range which seems incredible in the light of modern archery. Carew, a Cornish archer of the early sixteen hundreds is said to have sent a cloth-yard shaft four hundred eighty yards while Dr. Crouch (1925) made an unofficial record of three hundred and six yards and an official record of two hundred and ninety three yards. By turning the archer into a human crossbow, Curtis was able to reach three hundred yards. 1

1. Ford held all score records until Douglas of Los Angeles broke his score in 1929. Lambert, Modern Archery, p. 23.
and forty-one yards at this tournament. Dr. Pope made an imitation of one of the surviving mediaeval bows. With this he cast a thirty-six inch arrow in flight shot, two hundred and fifty-six yards and a twenty-eight inch arrow two hundred and twenty-five yards.

An arrow from a powerful war bow cast an arrow of deep penetration. Giralduus mentioned that an arrow had pierced an oaken door full four fingers while in another instance an arrow had penetrated a rider and killed the horse.

"Apropos of the power of the old English longbow, Doctor Pope was curious to find out just how safe these old ironclad dreadnoughts of knights were in the good old days. He, like most of us, thought them quite comfy and secure unless the archer's shaft, by good shooting or good luck, found some chink or crevice in the armour. So did the British museum authorities, evidently, for they cheerfully lent him a suit of Damascus mail in first-class condition. Doctor Pope made an exact replica of the bodkin pointed cloth-yard arrows used at Crecy and Agincourt, took his trusty yew bow, and went over to see about it. He was engaged in padding a wooden box with folds of burlap to place inside the armour to give it stability, when to him came one of the museum attendants.

"'Why, Doctor,' said he, 'if you want to shoot an arrow at that, I'll put it on for you.'

"But the doctor, having already all the practice he could attend to, said him nay, retired to the other side of the room, **s**s**s**

1. The archer has two bows, one for war and a lighter one for the chase.
and loosed his shaft. There was a clash and a shower of sparks. The arrow was found to have penetrated the breast, pierced the burlap folds and the wooden box, and bulged out the back. The museum attendant turned a pale green and turned away from there.

Undoubtedly this name is a nickname as the well known sobriquet, Strongbow, was given to the Earl of Pembroke or "Haco" to Ovid. Robin, according to Teutonic derivation is the name for elves or spirits of mischief. Along in the late fifteenth century and the first part of the sixteenth century the ancient stories of Robin Hood and his merry band were remodeled and subdivided and it became the vogue to have Robin Hood preside as Lord of May with Miriam as Lady of May at the May game festival. Dodd includes in his Ballads of Archery this delightful excerpt:

"Mark the top knots on each bow,  
That so gayly deck'd do shew,  
Like little May-poles in a row,  
Marian mark, Marian Mark!  
Like little May-poles in a row,  
Marian mark, my Love!"  

1. Elmer, op cit., p40.
3. p. 28. Very often the archer in his contests used the colored ribbon which his fair lady gave him to hold his bow string when the bow was unstrung. Just as the knights wore in their lady. Some of the young men decked their bows in various colors of paints.
Chapter III

The Longbow in Peace.

British bowmen were effective in war because their weapons were their constant companion in peace. "The next thing that arrests us in this perambulation through the past", says Elmer, "is not of warfare at all. It is a single figure, one that is as much a part of archery as Santa Claus is of Christmas; Robin Hood." (1) Undoubtedly this name is a nickname as the well known sobriquet, Strongbow, was given to the Earl of Pembroke or "Naso" to Ovid. Robin, according to Teutonic derivation is the name for elves or spirits of mischief. Along in the late fifteenth century and the first part of the sixteenth century the ancient stories of Robin Hood and his merry band were remodeled and subdivided and it became the vogue to have Robin Hood preside as Lord of May with Miriam as Lady of May at the May game festival. (2) Dodd includes in his Ballads of Archery this delightful excerpt:

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1. Elmer, op cit., p. 160.
3. p. 26. Very often the archer in his contests used the colored ribbon which his fair lady gave him to hold his bow string when the bow was unstrung, just as the knights wore in their tournaments some token of their Lady. Some of the young men decked their bows in various colors of paint.

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So popular did these May games become that Latimer relates that when he came to preach he found that the church was locked because it was Robin Hood's day.

The most ancient Toxophilite societies seem to have originated in the games of the people. Fritz Stephens in the twelfth century relates that the young men of London spent the summer holidays in the fields "leaping, shooting with the bow, wrestling, casting the stone, playing with the ball, and fighting with their shields". (1)

In 1536 the Society of St. George, the first to be established by royal patent in England, was founded for the pastime to practice shooting, with the peculiar proviso in the charter, "In case any person should be wounded or slain in these sports, with an arrow shot by one or other of the archers, he that shot was not to be sued or molested if he had, immediately before the discharge of the weapon, cried out, 'fast', the signal usually given upon such an occasion". (2) This reminds us of the familiar golf term "fore".

As early as 1769 these different societies held intersociety meets but at this time their hearts seemed to be more in their stomachs than their archery if the records of the meets are a basis for judgment because their records relate the dinner menu, but give little of the scores the archers made. In fact, a bow meet seemed an excellent excuse for a good meal.

1. Strutt, op. cit., Intro., xxxv
2. In the time of Henry VIII.
3. Quoted from Stowe by Strutt, p. 57.
A few of these societies which flourished at different times with their picturesque, suggestive names are the John of Gaunt Bowmen, Robin Hood Bowmen, Neville's Cross Archers, Bowmen of Chevy Chase, Yeoman Archers, and the Royal British Bowmen. Whenever a society was patronized by a member of the royal family it was entitled to prefix its name with the word "Royal". By the time of Henry VII the bow as weapon of warfare was waning but he patronized archery as a pastime and method of exercise. In an old poem written in praise of the Princess Elizabeth who afterwards became his queen, the following is said of Henry VII:

"See where he shooteth at the butts,
And with hym are lorde three;
He weareth a gowne of velvette blacke,
And it is coted above the knee." (1)

Upon the day of his coronation (October 30) he, according to Bacon, "as if the crown upon his head had put perils into his thoughts" founded the organization of the Yeomen of His Guard to protect his royal personage. Arthur, his son, was quite expert with the bow, and it became the custom to call the captain of the Bowmen of London, with whom the Prince shot, by the honorary name of "Prince Arthur", the other archers being styled his knights. Another son, Henry, who became Henry VIII, carried on the royal interest in archery. His body-guard,

made up of two archers to each man-at-arms was known as the "Retinew of Speres". To every layman with an estate of £1,000 or more fell the duty of furnishing thirty longbows, thirty sheaves of arrows, and thirty steel caps. In 1548 the uniform of the English archers consisted of blue cloth guarded with red, and hose of blue with a red stripe, or with the hose on the right leg red and on the left leg blue. They were also provided a sallet and brigandine by way of defensive armour, and two stakes and a dagger besides their bow and arrows.

Henry VIII not only patronized archery but also practiced this noble sport for in the Privy Purse Expenses of Henry VIII are found such entries as:

1. Quoted by Hare, op. cit., p. 55.
Duke of Shoreditch and this title quickly supplanted the earlier title of Prince Arthur by which the Captain of the London Archers had been called after the King's brother.

During the reign of Henry VIII the first real book on archery by the English was written by Ascham, whose book so pleased His Majesty, to whom the book had been dedicated, that Henry gave him a pension and appointed him reader to Prince Edward and Princess Elizabeth. To him probably they owed their skill and interest in the bow.

John Taylor, a waterman by vocation and wine duty collector at the Tower of London, who seems to have been the guard of Queen Elizabeth, wrote:

"Within these few yeeres, I to mind doe call
The Yeoman of the Guard were archers all.
A hundred at a time I oft have seen,
With bowes and arrowes ride before the Queen
Their bowes in hand, their quivers on their shoulders,
Was a most stately shew to the beholders." (1)

James I includes archery as a fitting exercise for a Prince, for he writes to his son Henry,"......... but the exercises I would have you use, although but moderately, not making a craft of them, are running, leaping, wrestling, fencing, dancing and playing at the caitch, or tennis, archerie, pall-malle and such like other fair and pleasant field-games". (2) But archery has a place for all people

1. "Prayer of the Grey Goose Wing." There is a manuscript in the Vatican of two emissaries which the Pope sent to England before the Spanish Armada which tells that the bow is the weapon in which the English take the greatest delight.
2. Strutt, op. cit., Intro. xxxi.
whether they be rich or poor, patrician or plebeian, as Shott-
erel and D'Urfey have stated it so aptly "....... 

"..... Let Princes therefore shoot for exercise,
Soldiers to enlarge their magnanimities,
Let Nobles shoot, 'cause 'tis a pastime fit,
Let Scholars shoot to clearify their wit,
Let Citizens shoot to purge corrupted blood,
Let Yeoman shoot for the King's and Nation's good,
Let all the Nation's Archers prove, and then
We without Lanthorns may find virtuous men."(1)

Charles II, the last of the English monarchs who active-
ly patronized the bow until the ascension of George IV, whiled
away the time during his exile with archery. He shot with the
guild of St. Sebastian at Burges to whom he presented a mace,
which it still has.

To George IV archery not only owes its revival, but
also many of its regulations. He set the shooting distance
at 100, 80 and 60 yards from the target instead of the former
120, 90, 60 and 30 yards. He also designated the value of the
target rings reading from the bull's eye outward at nine,
seven, five, three and one points. These became known as the
Prince's Lengths and the Prince's Reckoning respectively, and
were accepted universally except by the Scottish bowmen and
the Woodmen of Arden.(2)

1. Archerie Revived, quoted by Hare, op. cit. p.186.
2. Elmer, op. cit., p. 73.
1. Dodd, Ballads of Archery, p 72.
As Prince Regent he was patron of the Royal Kentish Bowmen, a society which flourished from 1786-1802. Dodd has contributed many delightful ballads written and presented for the entertainment of this society.

"A bowman's life's the life to court,
There's nothing can charm so dearly
As roving, butting all in sport,
To the sound of the bugle cheerfully.
When morning smiles on hill and dale,
Away he wends,
His bow he bends:
His shafts will seldom fail;
Full thirteen score,
And something more,
To steadily hold their flight."

Or, take his ballad "Fairy Queen":

We'll nerve each arm with ancient pow'r
To bend the toughest yew;
And consecrate that happy hour,
When Kent's first arrow flew.

Be it mine alone,
From my airy throne,
To chant the Victor's high renown
To hey ho, nonny no,
Merry be and bonny O,
Hail to the Kentish bow." (1)

1. Dodd, Ballads of Archery, p 72.
By a strange coincidence Victoria became actively interested in archery while at a resort near Hastings, the place where the bow first won its laurels as a weapon of offensive warfare. Here both she and her mother became the patronesses of St. Leonard's Archers, which later took the title of the Queen's St. Leonard's Archers. In 1844 Victoria became a member of the Guild of St. Sebastian at Bruges and in 1893 presented a prize upon the completion of her fiftieth year of membership. Although her son and grandson have not pursued the noble sport, they have lent their patronage to the Royal Toxophilite Society.

The bow served the English people well in peace and in war so that "it may, with truth, be said to have been the toy of their infancy, the pride of their manhood, and the boast of their old age". (1)

1. Roberts, op. cit. p. 16.
Summary.

The English Longbow left its imprint upon every phase of English life; social, economic, political and military. Although much credit has been given to the invention and use of gunpowder as a factor in the disintegration of feudalized society, the English longbow in reality had started the disintegration which the use of gunpowder only hastened to a culmination. The Mediaeval knight was no longer safe and snug beneath his shining coat of armour for the swiftly sped grey-goose wing found its mark beneath the stoutest coat of armour. The yeoman, finding that they could no longer hold their own against armoured knights, felt a sense of equality which the nobility of England was forced to recognize because their victories became more and more dependent upon the services of the English yeomen. Their rights could no longer be so easily trampled upon, and they assumed an ever increasing amount of political power. The longbow not only affected the political and social conditions of England but also those of France; for to overcome the successes of the English with their longbows, the French were driven to subordinate fierce feudal rivalries in a concentrated national unity of action.

The English longbow changed Mediaeval military tactics from dependence upon mounted knights to dependence upon infantry. In order to meet the tactics of the English, the French
were forced to dismount their knights, for the English bowmen supported by infantry could check the most determined cavalry charge. The archers, who were lightly armoured, formed a mobile group to follow up a victory or to strike the enemy in the rear.

Until the use of gunpowder the crossbow was the chief distance weapon with which the longbow had to compete. Although the crossbow had superior range, the longbow outclassed it in its rapidity of fire. The longbow was the machine gun of that day. The crossbowmen were targets for the longbowmen all the time that they were cranking up their windlasses. The longbow was also less burdensome to carry. The fact that the strings of the longbow could be protected from atmospheric conditions gave it advantage of projectile distance in damp or sultry weather over the crossbow, whose strings could not be thus protected.

The longbow ended as it began, a weapon of peace. The longbowmen were successful in war because it was their companion in peace; but their preeminence in war lasted only as long as they had superior commanders, and only as long as the enemy had no effective means of meeting these.
I. Statutes regulating archery

Beginning with the reign of Edward I.

Edward I

1274—An archer is bound to stay with the army only till he has shot away his arrows.

1275— Merchants trading with countries from which bowstaves were imported must bring into England four bowstaves with ten of merchaundise imported and ten bowstaves with each ten of Holmsey or Tyre wine. All bowstaves six feet six inches in length should be free from duties. Shooting-targets were to be set up in suitable places.

1284—Archers attending the king in his Welsh wars were to come equipped with a bow, three arrows and a terpolis (stake).

Edward II

13th Cent. — Every person not having a greater annual revenue in land than 100 d. was obliged to have a bow and arrows and other offensive and defensive arms. If he dwelt within the royal forests he should have rounded arrow-heads; otherwise he would use sharp arrows.

Edward III

1345—The possession of a bow was made compulsory in England. Every citizen should have bows where the inhabitants must practice archery on all feast days.
I. Statutes Regulating Archery

Beginning with the Reign of Edward I.

in the 6th year of Edward's IV's reign.

Edward I -

1274- An archer is bound to stay with the army only until he has shot away his arrows.

1275- Merchants trading with countries from which bow staves were imported must bring into England four bowstaves for every ton of merchandise imported and ten bowstaves with each tun of Malmsey or Tyre wine. All bowstaves six feet six inches in length should be free from duties. Shooting butts were to be set up in suitable places.

1284- Archers attending the king in his Welsh wars were to come equipped with a bow, three arrows and a terpolus (stake).

Henry IV -

1406- Every person not having a greater annual revenue in land than 100 d. was obliged to have a bow and arrows and other offensive and defensive arms. If he dwelt within the royal forests he should have rounded arrow-heads; otherwise he would use sharp arrows.

Edward III -

1349- The possession of a bow was made compulsory in England. Every township should have butts where the inhabitants must practice shooting on all feast days.
under the penalty of ½d. This statute was repeated in the 12th year of Richard II's reign and again in the 5th year of Edward's IV's reign.

1369 - This statute, like the foregoing, forced the inhabitants (of London) to spend their leisure time on holidays in using the bow and arrow as a means of recreation. It forbid the practice of "throwing of stones, wood, iron, handball... or such other like vain plays, which no profit in them."

Richard II -

1382 - The sheriffs were to provide bows and arrows.
1389 - Servants were compelled to practice archery on Sunday and holidays.

Henry VII -

1392 - The King's servants must practice archery.

Henry VIII -

1406 - Arrow-heads must be made better and bear the maker's name. Masters must equip their apprentices with bows. Ecclesiastical justices of the two

Henry V -

1416 - Sheriffs of Kent and elsewhere must provide feathers. Two of these feathers on each arrow must be white and two brown or grey, so that the archer can tell how to nock the arrow. To prevent

1418 - Sheriffs in fourteen counties were to provide 40,000 feathers.

1446 - A penalty of £10 inflicted for keeping a crossbow in the house.

1. The use of the crossbow was solemnly condemned by the Lateran Council of 1139.
Edward IV -

1465- Pattens are not to be made of any aspe that is fit for arrows.

1473- Bowstaves must be imported with merchandise.

1478- The statute of 1349 was renewed.

1483- The price of the best bows was set at 3s. 4d.

Richard III -

1483- Bowstaves must be imported with every butt of wine.

Henry VII -

1504- Good bowstaves admitted to country duty free.

1504- The use of the crossbow is forbidden by law to Englishmen. (1)

Henry VIII -

1512- Every one under the age of sixty must practice shooting. The fathers were to instruct their sons in the art of the bow from the time they were seven years old. Masters must equip their apprentices with bows. Ecclesiastics, justices of the two benches or assize and barons of the exchequer were exempt from this regulation.

1543- No person twenty-four years old or more might shoot at a mark less than 220 yards distant. To prevent too much consumption of foreign yew each bowyer must make four bows to each yew bow and sell these at a lower price.

1546- A penalty of £10 inflicted for keeping a crossbow in the house.

1. The use of the crossbow was solemnly condemned by the Lateran Council of 1139.
Mary -

1557 - The Statute of Winton (1275) repealed and then re-enacted.

Elizabeth -

1566 - The price of a common or Livery bow or one of English yew set at 2 s. The bow of foreign yew was to bring 6 s. 8 d. (Previously a Spanish bow had brought eight and ten pounds.)

During Elizabeth's reign fifty bowmen were placed on board each first rate man-of-war. Provisions were made that "Captaines and officers should be skillful of that most noble weapon and see that their soldiers, according to their draught and strength, have good bows, well notched, well strynged, every stryngle whipped in their nooche and in the myddee rubbed with wax; bracer and shutyngge glove; some spare stryngges, trym'd as afore-said; every man one shefe of arrows, with a case of leather defensible, against the rayne; and in the same four and twentie arrows, whereof eight of them should be lighter than the residue, to gall or astoyne the enemye with the hail shot of light arrows, before they shall come within the danger of the arquebuss-shot. Let every man have a brigandine, or a little coat of plate, a skull, a husky, a maule of leade, 5 foote in lengthe, and a fusee, the same hanging by his girdle, with a hook
Parliament (1573) upon making a return of the number of yew bowestaves imported, found that there were some ten thousand and that these came chiefly to well across from Emden, Dordrecht, Sonderburg, Hamburg, Denmark; factor wax and Cologne. 1600 they were protected only by a James I - for while by the end of the century they had adopted 1606- Provisions are to be made to repair the shooting in the fields near London. (1410-1430) the archers were equipped. 1618- "It is our will that after the end of divine service, our good people be not disturbed, letted or left an erected, from any lawful recreation such as archery for men, at his right, leaping, vaulting, or any other such harmless recreations."

Charles I - The Tabard Period (1430-1500) the bowmen wore a ha. 1628- The act of 1606 is continued, herk of over-lapping scale. 1629- A commission is formed to enforce archery. The only plate. 1633- The act provides for the combination of the bow and the pike.

Charles II - The rise of the Half-Armour Period the bow was fast and a dagger. (1)

II. Progress in Protective Armour for the Archer. (1)

The bowmen progressed from a poorly armoured infantry to well accoutred groups as their importance as a military factor was realized. In 1220 they were protected only by a chapelle-de-fer while by the end of the century they had adopted the conical heume and a hauberk of banded mail.

In the Surcoatless Period (1410-1430) the archers were equipped with a pot-de-fer on the head, a coif-de-maille or camail; a brigandine or jaque of pourpointerie; on the left arm was a bracer, the legs and arms in cloth stockings and sleeves; in his girdle an axe, sword or scimitar; a quiver at his right hip and bow slung at his back. The quivers in this period were like an elongated bag. (3)

During the Tabard Period (1430-1500) the bowmen wore "a hat and gorget of banded mail and a hauberk of over-lapping scales of leather covered by a brigandine of leather. The only plate defence is a corselet. The quiver is slung at the back and a sword in front."

By the time of the Half-Armour Period the bow was fast declining as a weapon of war, yet it persisted in the ranks of the English army. A statute in the reign of Elizabeth pro-

2. Roy, MS. 20, dl.
vided that each archer should have besides their bows and twenty-four arrows, a bracer, shooting glove, a brigandine or little coat of plate, a skull or huskyn, a mawe of lead and a dagger.

A small piece of horn, fibre of mother of pearl inlaid just above the handle to keep the arrow from wearing on the bow. In reality its greatest service is to assist in telling the upper limb from the inner.

Bank: The convex surface of the bow when it is drawn.
Body: The concave part of the bow.
Handle: The middle or hand grip.
Horn: Pieces of horn placed at the ends of better bows to hold the strings.
Lims: The upper and lower halves of the bow.
Nocks: Notches at each end of the limbs to hold the bow-string.
True-Center: The exact middle as measured from the two extremities.

The Arrow

Cock-feather: The off color vans placed on the left.
Nock: A notch in the end of the shaft to carry the bow-string.
Pile: The point or head of the arrow.
Shaft: The long unfeathered part of the arrow. The shaft may be cylinder, cheeted (heavy at the nock and tapering toward the pile), tcb-tailed (heavy at the pile and tapering to the nock) and barrelled
III. Parts of the Bow and Arrow.

The Bow -

Arrow Plate: A small piece of horn, fibre of mother of pearl inlaid just above the handle to keep the arrow from wearing on the bow. In reality its greatest service is to assist in telling the upper limb from the lower.

Back: The convex surface of the bow when it is drawn.

Body: The concave part of the bow.

Handle: The middle or hand grip.

Horn: Pieces of horn placed at the ends of better bows to hold the string.

Limb: The upper and lower halves of the bow.

Nock: Notches at each end of the limbs to hold the bow-string.

True-Center: The exact middle as measured from the two extremities.

The Arrow -

Cock-feather: The off color vane placed on the left.

Nock: A notch in the end of the shaft to carry the bow-string.

Pile: The point or head of the arrow.

Shaft: The long unfeathered part of the arrow. The shaft may be cylindrical, cheested (heavy at the nock and tapering toward the pile), bob-tailed (heavy at the pile and tapering to the nock) and barrelled.
(small at both ends and large in the center). Vane: The feathers.

In considering archers we usually think of their use on land, but bows were used on ships. The battle of Sluys, fought at the beginning of the Hundred Years' War, is a good example of their effectiveness on the sea. Then the conflict was imminent, Froissart relates the story thus: "Ah, quoth the king, 'I have long desired to fight with the Frenchmen, and now shall I fight with some of them by the Grace of God and Saint George; for truly they have done me so many displeasures, that I shall be avenged, as I may.' Then the king set all his ships in order, the greatest before, well furnished with archers, and over between the two ships of archers he had one ship with men of arms; and then he made another battle to its aloft, with archers to comfort over them that were most weary, if need were, and there were a great number of courtiers, ladies, knights' wives and other damsel that were going to see the queen of Sancy: these ladies the king caused to be well kept with 300 men of arms and 500 archers. The arrows of the English archers so terrrified the French that many of them leaped into the sea. Then the courtiers did not venture to report the defeat to Philip, the tale fell to the Buroon who cried, "Cowardly, dastardly Englishman." "How so?" asked Philip. "Because they did not dare leap into the sea, as our brave men have done," rejoined the Buroon.

1. Froissart, op. cit., vol. 1, ch. L, p. 61
IV. Archers on the Sea.

In considering archers we usually think of their use on land, but bowmen were used on ships. The battle of Sluys, fought at the beginning of the Hundred Years' War, is a good example of their effectiveness on the sea. When the conflict was imminent, Froissart relates the story thus: "'Ah!', quoth the king, 'I have long desired to fight with the Frenchmen, and now shall I fight with some of them by the Grace of God and Saint George; for truly they have done me so many displeasures, that I shall be revenged, an I may.' Then the king set all his ships in order, the greatest before, well furnished with archers, and ever between the two ships of archers he had one ship with men of arms; and then he made another battle to lie aloof, with archers to comfort ever them that were most weary, if need were, and there were a great number of countesses, ladies, knights' wives and other damsels that were going to see the queen of Gaunt: these ladies the king caused to be well kept with 300 men of arms and 500 archers."(1) The arrows of the English archers so tormented the French that many of them leaped into the sea. When the courtiers did not venture to report the defeat to Philip, the task fell to the Buffoon who cried, "Cowardly, dastardly Englishmen." "How so?" asked Philip. "Because they did not dare leap into the sea, as our brave men have done," rejoined the Buffoon.

Archers were especially effective in covering the approach of a ship to lay siege to a sea port or to land troops. The huge rocks cast onto the decks from an enemy’s vessel formed the greatest annoyance to English archers.

The French King dismissed all his forces in 1444 except five hundred of the best appointed lances and 4,000 archers. These were to be put under fifteen captains, 100 lances to each captain and a proportionate number of archers. (1) (If there were to be fifteen captains with 100 lances each, the number of lances must have been 1,500 rather than 500.) Every man-at-arms had attached to him, two archers on horseback dressed in brigantiacs, greaves, and sollars; representing these, they had strong leather jackets and hauberquers. The French mounted their archers to insure quickness of troop movement but dismounted them for combat. Furthermore, a company of Free Archers was formed. Each parish sent its best archer to be enlisted as the king’s special soldier and in return he was exempted from tax. These bodies of men made the King of France less dependent upon feudatories.

2. Ibid., II, 108.
V. Beginning of a French Standing Army.

The French king dismissed all his forces in 1444 except five hundred of the best appointed lances and 4,000 archers. These were to be put under fifteen captains, 100 lances to each captain and a proportionate number of archers. (1) (If there were to be fifteen captains with 100 lances each, the number of lances must have been 1500 rather than 500). Every man-at-arms had attached to him, two archers on horse back dressed in brigandines, greaves, and sollets; or, wanting these, they had strong leather jackets and haubergerose. (2) The French mounted their archers to insure quickness of troop movement but dismounted them for combat. Furthermore, a company of Free Archers was formed. Each parish sent its best archer to be enlisted as the king's special soldier and in return he was exempted from tax. These bodies of men made the King of France less dependent upon feudatories.

2. Ibid, II, 186.
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