

The figures.

Shrewsbury 1403

1. Henry, Prince of Wales (later King Henry Vth)

Although only 16 years of age at the time of the battle Prince Henry took an active and commanding role on the day.

The Prince wears a contemporary armour mostly of plate, but with additional areas of mail such as the aventail suspended from his helmet and the mail skirt covering the groin. This mail could be in the form of a full mail shirt or fixed to a padded 'arming doublet worn beneath the plate. Over his armour he wears a surcoat featuring his coat of arms of the Fleur de Lys (France Modern) quartered with the Three lions (leopards) of England, his position of first son to the king is shown by the white 'label' displayed over the Royal Arms.

He is armed with sword and dagger and also carries a 'Poll Axe', a weapon featuring either an axe or hammer type head a spike and a spear head, this weapon was designed to break through and penetrate plate armour. Although shown with a shield these were becoming increasingly defunct on the battlefield as plate armour improved.

The prince is shown with a bascinet helmet with the visor lifted, thus enabling an enemy archer to hit him in the face with an arrow, an obviously severe wound which supposedly penetrated 5 inches into his head. Nevertheless, once the arrow shaft was removed the Prince stayed on the field and in command of his 'battle' of the Royal army. After the battle the royal surgeon treated the Prince's wound by probing it and cleaning it with wine until the tool he had ordered was completed. It was a screw type device which was inserted into the wound until it reached the head of the arrow which was still embedded in Prince Henry's face. The tool was manipulated until the screw could grasp the arrow head and pull it out. The wound was then packed with dressings and honey. The wound must have left a serious scar which is possibly why the common portraits of Henry as King show him from his left profile.

2. Sir Henry Percy, known as 'Hotspur'

The son of the Earl of Northumberland and one of the senior commanders of the rebel army and a leading military commander of his day. He had loyally served Henry IVth until a dispute arose over monies owed the Percy family by the king and the ransom of Scots captives taken by the Percys and demanded by the king. This resentment caused the Percy family to rebel and support the claims of the Earl of March to the throne.

Hotspur had to some extent been the military mentor to the young Prince Henry who had campaigned with him in Wales.

Hotspur is shown in similar armour to Prince Henry, predominantly plate armour with mail additions. He too wears a heraldic surcoat over his armour displaying the Percy coat of arms with a red 'label' indicating that he is the eldest son of the Earl.

His sword is slung from a decorative belt and his dagger from a heraldic girdle. He carries his shield which has already been struck by arrows. Hostspur also is shown with his visor raised, possibly the shout commands or even for better breathing and was killed by an arrow in the face that possibly penetrated his mouth.

After the battle Hotspur's body was crushed between two stones and put on display in the centre of Shrewsbury to ensure that it was obvious he was dead. His body was then quartered and it was not until sometime later that his remains were returned to his widow for burial.

3. Cheshire Archer

This illustration shows one of the elite archers recruited in Cheshire who served in the rebel army and caused initial chaos amongst the bowmen of the royal army. A man using his skill with the bow to enrich himself, a retained man, almost a professional soldier.

These men were recruited for their skill with the bow and had formed a part of the royal bodyguard of Richard II, they were paid more highly than their counterparts.

This archer wears a woollen green and white livery coat that was a feature of the archers of Cheshire. Under the coat he wears a thigh length padded body armour, called a gambeson or jack, canvas stuffed with tow, rags or wool it was an effective armour against heavy blows. Over his jack he could also wear a mail shirt. His head is protected by a bascinet from which hangs a mail aventail covering his throat and upper chest. This standard of armour does indicate his elite status. He also wears knee length leather boots with spurs indicating his additional status as a mounted archer.

This man carries a functional sword with the small iron 'buckler' shield and a decent dagger or knife hangs from his belt. His main weapon, the tool of his trade is the War Bow, it was not known as the Longbow in this period. A self wood Yew bow, at least his own height and with a draw weight of over 100 pounds. A weapon requiring not only physical strength, but also years of training. In the right hands capable of a range exceeding 200 yards and at close range capable of penetrating the best armour. He is shown shooting a 'broadhead' arrow, not the armour piercing 'bodkin' but still deadly against horses or lightly armoured men. The Bowman would have been capable of shooting at least 12 aimed shots a minute. The battle of Shrewsbury was the first occasion when English Bowman faced English Bowman and the effectiveness of the Cheshire archers caused the royal archers to initially flee. The significance of the bow in this battle is considerable and its effectiveness is shown by the fact that Prince Henry was severely wounded by an arrow and Hotspur, the rebel leader together with the Earl of Douglas were both killed by arrows.

4. Coats of Arms

At this time most knights and nobles displayed their heraldic coats of arms on their surcoats and shields. Their heraldry displayed them to friend and foe alike.

This sheet gives the two coats of arms of the leaders at the battle of Shrewsbury.

- a) The Royal arms of Henry IV, France modern, 3 fleur de lys Or (gold) on a field azure (blue) quartered with the 3 lions (leopards) or (gold) on a field gules (red).**

The arms had recently been changed to France Modern from France ancient which featured multiple fleur de lys.

There is no 'labelling' on this shield since it is the arms of the king.

- b) The arms of Sir Henry (Hotspur) Percy, eldest son of the 1st Earl of Northumberland.**

Hotspur's arms are also quartered and feature a lion rampant azure On a field or quartered with 3 fish argent (silver) on a field gules.

The label or mark of cadency indicating Hotspur being the first son is shown by the red bar over the arms.