

# British Journal for Military History

Volume 8, Issue 3, November 2022

---

Review of *A Soldier's Chronicle of the Hundred Years War: College of Arms Manuscript M9* by Anne Curry and Rémy Ambühl

**Simon Egan**

---

**ISSN:** 2057-0422

**Date of Publication:** 28 November 2022

**Citation:** Simon Egan, 'Review of *A Soldier's Chronicle of the Hundred Years War: College of Arms Manuscript M9* by Anne Curry and Rémy Ambühl', *British Journal for Military History*, 8.3 (2022), pp. 230-231.

[www.bjmh.org.uk](http://www.bjmh.org.uk)

---



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.



The BJMH is produced with the support of **Goldsmiths**  
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

**Anne Curry and Rémy Ambühl, *A Soldier's Chronicle of the Hundred Years War: College of Arms Manuscript M9*. Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2022. xv + 480 pp. ISBN: 978-1843846192 (hardback.). Price £95.00.**

The so-called 'Lancastrian' phase of the Hundred Years War saw England become increasingly entangled in the affairs of France and its neighbours. Within popular memory, the Battle of Agincourt in 1415 has been immortalised as one of Henry V's greatest victories. However, in reality it was the king's subsequent campaigns in Normandy, coupled with his careful management of the Burgundian alliance, that saw him break the back of French resistance and force humiliating terms upon Charles VI at Troyes in 1420. Nevertheless, within the space of a few years, England's gains had been thrown into sharp reverse. Henry V died in 1422, leaving a nine-month-old infant to inherit the dual-monarchy; Scottish manpower gave the French the muscle they needed to push the English back while the deterioration of the Anglo-Burgundian alliance eventually sealed the fate of England's continental empire. *A Soldiers' Chronicle*, drawn from College of Arms manuscript M9, offers an invaluable window into this formative period in English and French history. This book contains the original text reproduced in full, along with a modern English translation, and supported with a very detailed commentary. This previously unpublished chronicle is unique in many ways. It is the only known 'English' chronicle to have been written in French; moreover, it was written by two soldiers in English service, Peter Basset (an Englishman) and Christopher Hanson (described as a German) for their commander, Sir John Fastolf. In terms of content, the source offers a detailed account of English military operations in France from Agincourt in 1415 to the siege of Orléans in 1429. Notably, it provides a particularly detailed report on the English conquest of Maine post-1424. The edition also contains lists naming over seven hundred individuals who participated in various battles, sieges, and campaigns: over half of those listed are Scottish and French and the editors have argued that the compilers had a detailed knowledge of Franco-Scottish military affairs in this period.

The book contains several chapters which locate M9 within its historical, literary, and linguistic contexts. The introduction provides a succinct overview of the manuscript's history and notes how the text was viewed as a key source by historians during the Tudor and Stuart periods. The first two chapters reconstruct (where evidence permits) the careers of Basset and Hanson but also considers the roles of Fastolf's secretary, William Worcester, and Luket Nantron, a Parisian scribe in Fastolf's service, in compiling the manuscript. Several subsequent chapters explore the textual history

## REVIEWS

of the manuscript in detail. Chapter 4 examines the use of French in the text and pays close attention to the role of Luket Nantron in compiling the text. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 explore the afterlife of the text. As noted, M9 was used by Tudor and Stuart historians: it was an important source text for Edward Hall's *Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre and Yorke*, published in 1548. The chapters examine how M9 found its way into the College of Arms and consider how the text influenced Hall's work as well as later Tudor commentators such as Raphael Holinshed. Chapter 3 delves into how the practice of warfare is depicted in the text. The text of M9 bears close comparison with other contemporary chronicles: although grand strategy, tactics, and logistics receive passing mention, particular attention is devoted to the idea of courage, both individual and collective. In addition, the text has a strong nationalistic tone whereby the English are, unsurprisingly, portrayed in a largely positive light. Intriguingly, unlike other chronicles, M9 has little to say on the growing importance of gunpowder – in fact, the authors of the manuscript had nothing but contempt for these weapons!

Overall, this is a hugely impressive piece of textual scholarship and should attract a readership from several different audiences. On an obvious level, this edition will be essential reading to anyone interested in the Lancastrian phase of the Hundred Years War. It should also be an important source for scholars working on Franco-Scottish military links and will also appeal to students of medieval warfare more generally. On another level, this book will also be of interest to literary and textual scholars and should also be of interest to historians of emotion.

SIMON EGAN

Trinity College Dublin, Ireland

DOI: 10.25602/GOLD.bjmh.v8i3.1654

**Marc Van Alphen, Jan Hoffenaar, Alen Lemmers, and Christiaan Van Der Spek, *Military Power and the Dutch Republic: War, Trade and the Balance of Power in Europe 1648-1813*, translated by Paul Arblaster & Lee Preedy. Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2021. 549 pp. full colour + 17 Maps. ISBN: 978-9087283650 (hardback). Price €89.00.**

This book has been published in co-operation with the Netherlands Institute of Military History and was first published Dutch in 2019 as *Krijgsmacht en handelsgeest*.