

Commemorating Agincourt as part of the primary history curriculum

Mel Jones and Kerry Somers

In August 2015, the Historical Association was awarded a grant to carry out four education projects to commemorate the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Agincourt. The four projects were designed to appeal to different age groups across the curriculum. Two of the projects appealed to children in Key Stage 2. The first of these was an exhibition competition and the second was a bilingual history and French project which saw children visiting the Agincourt battlefield itself in northern France.

The *Do They Learn About Agincourt in France?* project saw children in Years 5, 6 and 7 taking part in a bilingual enquiry examining interpretations of the Battle of Agincourt. The HA commissioned the Association for Language Learning to be a part of the development of the enquiry which is published for open access on the HA website: www.history.org.uk/resources/primary_resource_8704_7.html

Schools were invited to apply to participate in the full project, which included a four-day residential trip to France and links with a French school in Auchy-lès-Hesdin. There were places available for four pupils aged 9-12 from five different schools. The HA received three applications for every place available, so choosing successful applicants was no easy task, but eventually five schools from different areas of the country were chosen to participate in a fully-funded visit to France.



Pupils from Wellow School in Romsey prepare for their visit to Agincourt by meeting a local archer.
Picture courtesy of the Southern Daily Echo, Southampton

The following account charts the experience of the project from the perspective of one successful applicant, Wellow School, from the initial historical enquiry to the visit itself. Now that they have returned from their visit, the hard work of liaising over the internet with their new French friends in class CM2 at the Ecole Primaire of Auchy to produce a new guide or monument to the battle begins...

All schools involved in the project are now communicating with their new friends in Auchy-lès-Hesdin through Moodle and email to collaborate on their project outcomes, which might be a new scripted audio-guide, a new written guide or the design of a new monument to the battle. Children have until the summer to be working with class CM2 on the

production of these and we look forward to seeing the results.

This is the teacher view but how did the children feel? The short answer is they loved it. The proof is in the diaries they produced. Above is one from Lucy.

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Agincourt trip: an account from Wellow Primary School, Hampshire

The primary curriculum for history states that we must teach an aspect of local history. This is a chance to be creative in our teaching, looking at changes or significant events that are directly relevant to our community, giving our children

ownership over their history and allowing them to own stories that they can share, to tell for generations.

We all have our favourite topics to teach but sometimes, stepping outside our comfort zone and teaching new aspects of local history can be rewarding and a rich learning opportunity where we learn alongside our pupils, breathing life into local history that is our duty to remember.

Recently, all of us at Wellow School were excited to hear that we were one of only five schools in the country chosen to take part in a trip to France to commemorate the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Agincourt. The Historical Association, with the help of Rayburn Tours, had organised a range of visits, enquiries and activities to teach the children about Henry V's famous battle.

The Battle of Agincourt is of particular relevance to Hampshire. Before leaving for the famous battle, Henry V's soldiers would have been camped in fields across the county, awaiting orders to board the hundreds of ships gathered at Southampton's port. From Southampton, Henry V and his troops, preparing for battle, left for Harfleur and onwards to victory at the battle of Agincourt. At Agincourt, Henry's greatly depleted and outnumbered army achieved the impossible, shocking the medieval world.

Delighted to be chosen, we knew we had to step away from the local topics we faithfully teach each year and embark on a new learning journey to find out exactly what this battle was about and why the history is of such relevance to us.

The Historical Association have published some free teaching materials that serve as a great starting point. See: www.history.org.uk/resources/primary_resource_8704,8705_7.html

We began by looking at the Hundred Years War, to put the battle of Agincourt in context, creating our own graphs to show the high and low points for England. The children were then able to make a direct comparison with the high and low points of the war for France.

The children welcomed a visit from local archer Alan Green, of Beaulieu Bowmen. The children were able to handle replica artefacts from the period including bows, crossbows, arrows and authentic costume. This visit helped the children to raise questions about the famous battle, some creating their own hypothesis to explain why the English were able to defeat the mighty French. The children were fascinated by the gruesome Southampton history, relishing the story of the Southampton Plot, learning how one of the men accused of plotting against the king was hung, drawn and quartered in front of the Bargate, which still

25th February 2016

Graph showing the strengths and weaknesses of the English during the Hundred Year War



During the hundred year war, The England Army showed lots of strength. The English Army got off to a great start and then it went down again. I think the highest point of the war for England was when they defeated the dauphin's army at Verneuil. The lowest point was 1429, when Joan of Arc joined the french army to help get there land back. Frances high points and low points are, highest when it was 1375 when the English controlled a bit of France. there lowest point is when 1431 Joan of arke got killed.

25th February 2016

How likely was a win for the English at Agincourt?

Most of the English were archers. This means it is quick to fire.		Free This is the reason why the English are most likely to win as they could fire 10 arrows per minute that's 50,000 arrows per minutes.
This is good as they could fire lots of arrows quickly!	All archers were quick accurate and strong	The arrows were made to pierce armour.
King Henry V was determined to win. He was ruthless and well organised.	King Henry V was an experienced soldier. He knew what he was	Archers were quick but did not have armour
The English started to starve!	English were far from help and French were at home.	
The archers got dismory and lots died.	This is bad as the archers were in a bad state making it hard to win!	

A sample of Year 5's work on the Hundred Years War using the HA's Remembering Agincourt enquiry

stands in the city centre today.

The children next used historical sources to create a Diamond 9 to order and discuss the reasons that they felt the English were more likely to win and compared it with another they had created to suggest why the French were more likely to succeed. The children were very animated during discussion and we followed the session by designating the children to a side where they argued why they would be the winners and why the opposite side would fail.

With the anniversary of Shakespeare's death looming, in Literacy we were looking at some of the Bard's works. This was a great opportunity to look at the play *Henry V* and make comparisons with the real history. The children particularly enjoyed analysing and then creating their own speech for Henry V, to encourage the soldiers into battle. These will soon be on display at Tudor House to commemorate the life of Shakespeare. If you heard the passion with which the children read their speeches, I can guarantee that you, like me, would willingly follow them into battle!

The children really enjoyed learning the history of Agincourt, the historical accuracy of Shakespeare's interpretation and the opportunity for some of our children to visit



Wellow School on the battlefield.

History come alive: pupils and archers on the battlefield at Agincourt.



the real battlefield was a distinct bonus. We are now looking ahead to the final phase of the project in producing our battlefield guides.

The children were excited to visit the local primary school at Auchylès-Hesdin in France, where they practised their spoken French, introducing themselves to their new friends.

The children were able, along with their French peers, to visit the Medieval Centre at Agincourt. Here, they worked with history experts, to learn more about the famous battle. Two archers, dressed as if they were directly off the battlefield, used a family tree to explain why King Henry felt that he should be the true ruler of France. Henry V himself then asked the children for their advice on what he should get his men to do!

Using their prior learning, the children were determined to lead the army straight to Agincourt. But it was not that simple! A plan was needed! With our men so outnumbered, the children needed to think of a strategy. How could they organise their men to give themselves the best opportunity for success? Heads together, the children carefully decided how to organise their men before being led into the 'battle room.'

Using coloured cones as a key, each group of children lay out their army

exactly how they had decided to organise them and almost at once, the Agincourt archers were able to demonstrate to the children where the flaws were in each plan. The children loved this hands-on, very visual activity and it really got them thinking, not just about the strengths and weaknesses of each army, but also about the natural features and limitations of the actual battlefield.

The museum itself was very interesting and after a tour, the children were able to try their hand at archery. They also made their own shields, learning about which colours they were able to use. They could not place two coloured objects on top of each other in their designs. This 'rule' was to help to ensure that heraldic designs used on the shield could be easily distinguished at a distance.

The highlight of the trip was standing on the battlefield, gazing at the landscape and visualising the battle. The children could use their learning to determine exactly where the English army would have stood. The children also had the opportunity to look at a number of memorials dedicated to the Agincourt battle and began to decipher the intention of each memorial. Why would France wish to remember a battle that they had lost to the English? The children liked the memorial best that stood to remember all the men

Agincourt

3 March 2016

When I got to the Hippotel, I was really excited to meet new friends and learn about the Battle of Agincourt. As soon as I got to my room all I wanted to do was sleep in my luxurious looking bed! We went down stairs for dinner; I was really hungry and ate lots of food. When the main course came out it smelt delicious, and the pudding was lovely – it smelt as good as the main. The ice-breaker activities were really good and I made a lot of friends. They were really nice people. I liked the balloon game and the competition.

4 March 2016

Visiting the French school was next on our list. We met all the French children in a class and did a speed-dating activity. This was where we asked lots of questions in French – finding out their names and what their hobbies were. The French children had written a poem which we read together. It was really fun doing the Agincourt poem.

We travelled to the Azincourt Museum. There, we went round to a room where we left our bags. After that we sat on the floor and listened to two Agincourt archers and King Henry (I thought he was a bit bossy! He called lots of people cowards, because they wanted to go all the way back to England.) We split up into groups of girls and boys. First the girls did the archery, while the boys had a tour of the museum. I thought that the archery was really hard but fun and it was nice in the sun. Then we switched over and the tour was great and I learned so much about the battle – the lady giving it to us was really nice. We were all tired by then, but we were still excited, so we carried on. The shield making was great! I loved learning

about the colours and what they could and couldn't go with. Then we had a group picture and got back on the coach.

5 March 2016

When we got to Boulogne we went to the market, we got out our money and started to look around for things to buy (I bought a big bag of chocolates to eat on the coach) then we walked back up the hill, which was really hard to walk up. We went to this really awesome museum where we had a challenge to find out what some artefacts were – I didn't get any of them right! But the main thing was that it was really fun. After that we did a search and find, I felt like I was finding everything at first but then I had trouble finding two of them! We went for a really amazing hike and saw the town from up high (I took lots of pictures from up there) then we got told to get into our school groups and went shopping. In the sweet shop I bought some edible money. Then we went into a souvenir shop, after that we went back into the museum and had a look at the creepy basement. Our teacher kept on scaring me! Finally, we all got back together and travelled back to the hotel. When we arrived at the hotel some of us decided to take a trip to Le Touquet where we ate ice cream and visited the shops. In the evening we really enjoyed putting King Henry V on trial. I voted that he was guilty of killing his prisoners. After that we had to run back to the coach in the pouring rain before collapsing in bed.

6 March 2016

I felt mixed emotions about leaving as we had an amazing time but I was looking forward to seeing my family and telling them all about Agincourt.

Yours sincerely,
Lucy

who had died during the battle. On the memorial was a picture of a soldier that resembled neither the French nor English but rather a combination of both. The children then had the challenge to create their own memorial for the battle.

Using role-play, the children finished their learning experience by putting Henry V on trial. After all, he had killed his prisoners during the battle which was totally against the knight's code of honour! Lots of 'characters' appeared as witnesses and the jury

had a difficult decision to make! It seems so wrong to murder your defenceless prisoners! However, when you realise that Henry felt surrounded, French coming from in front while ransacking the baggage train from behind, you could argue that he had no choice. After all, as one child pointed out, he stopped killing them when he realised the danger was not there!

The trip was rounded off with a visit to Boulogne-sur-Mer the following day to look at the medieval old town and do some sight-seeing.

The French trip was an inspirational experience for our children and they learned so much about the battle. However, even without the trip, it was a fabulous topic to explore through the bilingual enquiry. The children were fully engaged with the content and it made an exciting and new learning experience which teachers and children were able to discover together.

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