The Hundred Years War

by Jonathan Sumption

This document contains extracts from the book ‘ ‘The Hundred Years War’ by Jonathan Sumption. The extracts in this document are a copy of every paragraph that contains information about the exploits of Sir James Audley and his brother Peter Audley in the Hundred Years War’

Revisions

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Extracts

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Volume 1 'Trial by Battle'

Chapter XIII 'Bergerac and Auberoche 1345 - 1346'

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'Now let us speak first of the Earl of Derby,' Froissart wrote, 'for he bore the heaviest burden and enjoyed the best adventures." Henry of Lancaster, Earl of Derby, was the ideal choice for Edward III's purpose. He was the King's cousin, and for all practical purposes (since his father was old and blind) the head of the house of Lancaster, a man who for rank and reputation exactly fulfilled the freebooter Arnaud Foucaud's requirements for a successful military commander in Gascony. But Derby was not a mere dignitary like Edmund of Kent, who had presided over the disaster of Saint-Sardos twenty years before. He was a diplomat and military strategist of conspicious intelligence. Moreover his personality was calculated to make him many friends among the Gascony nobility: flamboyant and showy, generous, fond of women and good living. The terms of Derby's contract with the King stipulated that he would spend eighteen months in the duchy. He was to enjoy viceregal powers there and the title of King's lieutenant. But his military objectives were left entirely to his discretion. He was to do 'whatever could be done' with the strength he had: 500 men-at-arms, 500 Welsh infantry and 1,000 archers who would accompany him from England, together with whatever forces could be raised in Gascony itself. His companions included a distinguished band of captains, among them the Earl of Pembroke and those reckless heroes Sir Walter Mauny and Sir James Audley.

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The Earl of Lancaster (as he had now become, on his father's death in September) remained in winter quarters at La Réole until March 1346 and most of his army was dispersed. The Gascon lords and their retainers returned to their homes until the spring. Some of the principal retinues which had come with the Earl from England went back there, including those of the Earl of Pembroke and Sir James Audley. Those who remained occupied themselves in raiding ill-defended towns and castles of the enemy. Small detachments overran the Garonne valley between La Réole and Saint Macaire and carried out attacks deep into French territory north of the river. The most spectacular case was the seizure of Angouleme by a small force commanded by the Englishman John of Norwich, which occurred at the end of 1345. Angouleme, which was quite unprepared for an attack, appears to have surrendered after the most perfunctory resistance. John did not hold it for very long. He was compelled to withdraw in February 1346 and it might be supposed that he had gained nothing except spoil. In fact, adventures of this sort hamstrung the French government's conduct of the war. They made men divert effort and money into local defence. No doubt it made sense for Toulouse to begin a great campaign of fortification in December 1345 and for Limoges not only to start rebuilding its defences but to man them day and night during the winter. In most such cases there was a direct cost to the state. The towns sought and almost always obtained the privilege of diverting the state's local tax revenues at source to pay for their work. It became difficult or impossible to recruit men to serve away from home. The tendency of provincial societies to turn in upon themselves in the face of danger was never more clearly expressed than by Gilbert of Cantobre, Bishop of Rodez, writing some eighteen months after these events, in April i 347. The fighting had by then taken a more serious turn, but it had still hardly touched his own diocese. Yet this nervous cleric proposed a scheme of local defence which treated the Rouergue as if it were an independent

republic, not a province of the French kingdom. There was to be conscription and taxation organized by local captains, district by district. There was to be a captain-general for the whole province. Elaborate arrangements were proposed for mutual assistance between neighbouring towns and districts. But the captains were on no account tota ke their men beyond the boundaries of the seneschalsy, and they were not to be obeyed if they tried to. No levies were to be paid to support any military operations outside Rouergue 'but only to pay for the defence of our homeland here in this province'. As for the taxes collected by the Crown, they were to be entirely abolished, and Philip VI invited graciously to content himself with his ordinary revenues.

Volume 2 Trial by Fire.

Chapter IV Scotland & Languedoc 1355 - 1356

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To command the army of Gascony, the King appointed his eldest son, Edward of Woodstock, Prince of Wales. The ‘Black Prince’ (as he became known in the following century) was 24 years old in 1355, and was receiving his first independant command. It would be interesting to know more about this remarkable man, who was destined to be an even greater soldier than his father. A man who could inspire extravagant loyalty among his friends and subordinates. And who married late in life for love must have been more than the cardboard figure described by the chroniclers of his day. But his personality is almost completely concealed behind ther conventional praise. Hr was physically impressive, extravagantly generous with money and favour, self-assured impatient of difficulty or opposition. That much can be deduced from his acts. The young prince already had some experience of war. He had fought at Caen and Crécy in 1346 and endured the long seige of Calais. He commanded part of the army which defeated Geoffrey de Charny beneath the walls of Calais in January 1350, one of the squadrons which fought against the Castilians off Winchelsea later in the same year. But in all of these adventures he had been overshadowed by his father and by Henry of Lancaster, Edward’s chief of staff and principal captain. The Prince was intensley ambitious to win his own fame. According ti his own account he ‘prayed the King to let him be the first to cross the sea’. So, it was proposed to raise an expeditionary army of 800 men at arms and 1.400 mounted archers to fight under his command. More than half of these men were retaied by the prince himself. But he was also assigned as his companions some exceptionally experiences soldiers with ample resources of their own. The Earl of Suffolk, who was the head of the Prince’s council; the Earl of Oxford, who had the command of the Prince’s division at Crécy; the Earl of Warwick, Sir Reginald Cobham and Sir James Audley, all men whose military careers went back to the beginning of the war. No less than nine of the Prince’s companions were Knight’s of the Garter or were admitted to the order later.

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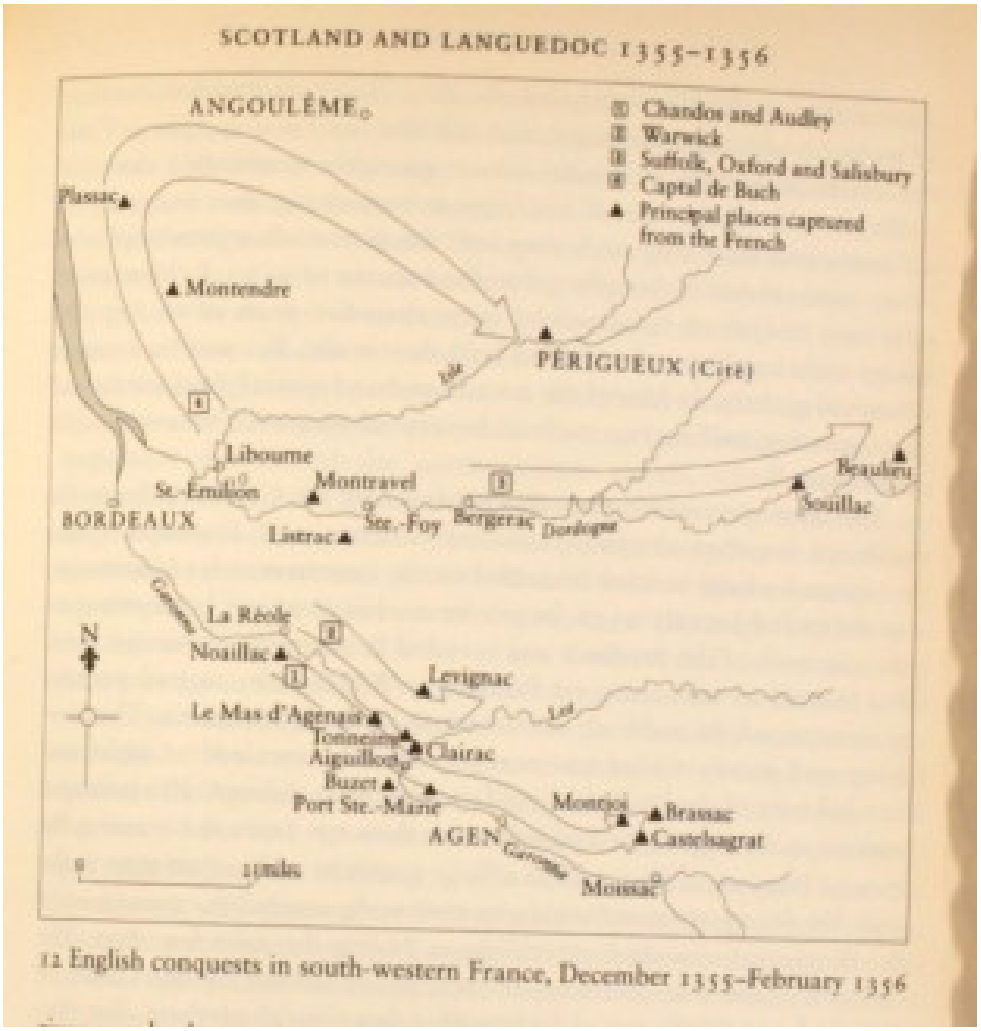
The fighting began shortly after Christmas. Montravel, the heavily garrisoned French fortress on the Dordogne near Castillon, a thorn in the side of Senschals since it had been captured in 1351, was retaken. Two columns of troops then advanced est into Agenais. The Earl of Warwick invaded the valley of the Lot, capturing Tonneins, one of the few remaining French towns of any importance in the region, and the fortified monastry and bridge at Clairac. Another detachment, about 750 strong, marched uo the Garonne under Chandos and Audley. They captured Port-Sainte- Marie in early January 1356. This important river

port had a garison of 300 men, the largest in the region after Agen itself. But its commander surrendered without a fight and delivered up all the subsidiary forts around. An outraged French government immediately accused him of treason, perhaps rightly. The English put a large permanent garison ito Port-Sainte- Marie. Then they burned up the walls of Agen, destroying the windmills around the town and burning the bridge over the Garonne. The town of Castelsagrat was stormed. The castle of Brassac fell immediately afterwards.



12 English conquests in south-western France, December 1355–February 1356

Chapter V Poitiers

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On 26th August 1356 the Prince's troops reached the River Cher. A large Gascon reconnaissance force commanded by the Capital de Buch crossed the river near Vierson. The men sacked the town, which had

been abandoned by its population, and wasted the whole region for twenty miles around leaving hardlt a building upright. Another detachment under Chandos and Audley made a dash for the Loire in the hope of seizing a crossing. They reached Aubigny on 28th August. North of Aubigny they ran into a troop of eighty French men-at- arms, part of Grismouton's force. There was a sharp encounter in the fields. The Frenchmen, greatly outnumbered, were driven off with heavy losses including eighteen of their men who were captured. Beyond the waterlogged flats of the Sologne, with their copses of willow and alder and islands of cultivation among the reeds, the Loire made a meandering course through the shifting channels of its vast sandy bed. For more than two centuries the inhabitants had fought with dykes and earthworks against a river which could capriciously change its course or swell in a few hours to cover vineyards and ploughed fields for miles around. The river was now their principal defender. The summer of 1356 had been very wet. The Loire was too deep and fast to be crossed and too broad to be bridged. He English failed to find a crossing.

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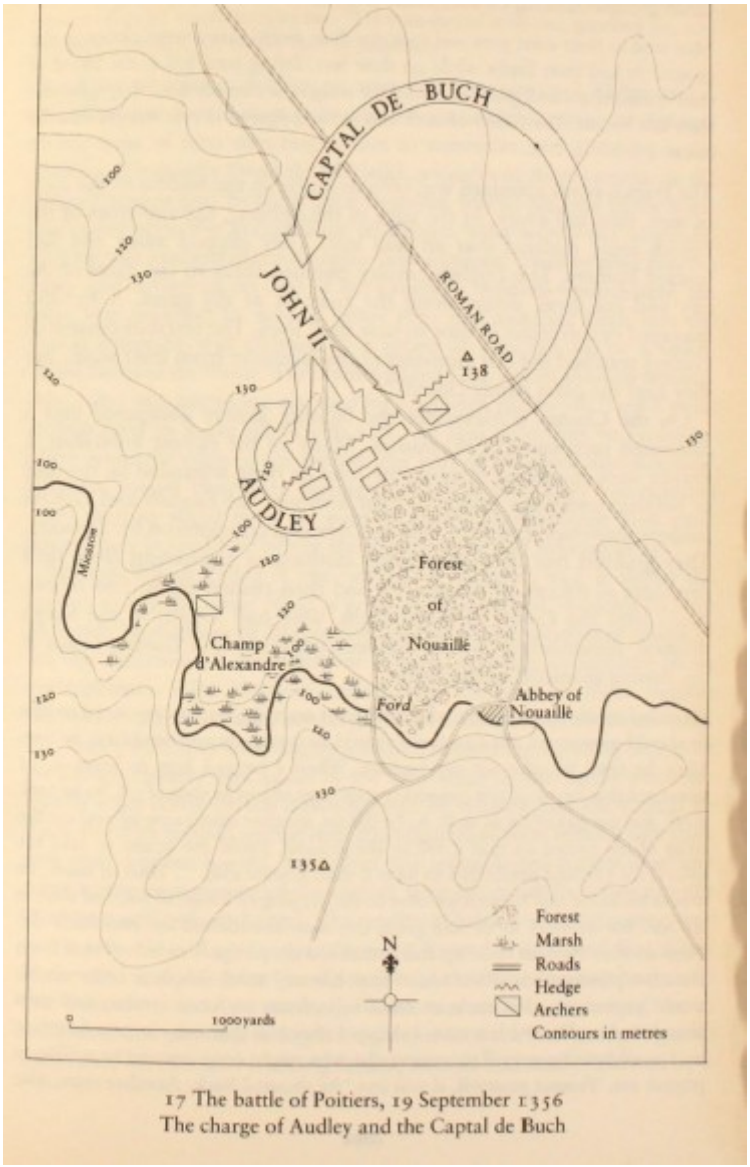
When John was informed of the repulse of the Dauphin and the flight of the Duke of Orleans, he resolved to try to save the battle with *his* own division. He ordered them to advance. A cacophony of trumpets sounded across the shallow valley which separated the two armies. The crossbowmen went first, the pavisers holding their great shields before them. The men-at-arms advanced steadily on foot behind. As they came up the hill, the archers on the right of the English line loosed volleys of
arrows at them. But they were running out of arrows by now, and John's division penetrated almost unscathed to the English positions. The King's troops included many of the most famous knights of his army. They were also fresh men, whereas the English had been fighting with only brief intermissions for some three hours. But the morale of the English was high after the repulse of the first two attacks, and although many *of* their men were wounded and out *of* action, they outnumbered what was left of their enemy by a considerable margin. When the English archers had emptied their quivers they left their positions and fell on the French with knives and swords, followed by the men-at-arms.

At the high point of the fighting, the Captal de Buch took sixty men-at-arms and 100 mounted archers from the English reserve and led them in a broad sweep round the side of the battlefield by the north until he reached the rising ground behind the French army where they had encamped for the night. Then, raising the standard of St. George to show which side he was on, he charged down on the French rear. When the Prince saw the Captal begin his charge, he had the horses brought forward from the rear. Every man-at-arms who could be taken out *of* the line was remounted and sent forward under the command one *of* the most impetuous commanders on the English side, Sir James Audley. It was one of the rare occasions on *which* cavalry decided a great battle. John Il's troops were unmounted on open ground, and quite unprepared to be attacked by horsemen from two sides at once. Many of them were scattered by the first impact. The rest were driven down the slope towards a field by the river known as the Champ d'Alexandre. Here they were met by a hail of arrows from the archers of the Earl of Warwick's division, who were still holding the marshes *of* the river. The arrows broke up what remained of the French formations and split them into small groups fighting on every side at once.



17 The battle of Poitiers, 19 September 1356
The charge of Audley and the Captal de Buch

Men trod in their own guts and spat out their reeth; many were cloven to the ground or lost their linbs while on their feet. Dying men fell in the blood of their companions and groaned under the weight of corpses until they gave out their last breath. The blood of serfs and princes flowed in one stream into the river.

The French royal standard was seen to waver in the middle of the mass of men, then fall away. At the edge og the fighting, the survivors of the French army realised that all was lost. They slipped away and fled towards Poitiers. The English cavalry pursued them to the gates of the city and cut them down along the road or t the gates. A handfull managed to surrender in time to save their lives. The terrified citizens of Poitiers watched the last moments of the massacre from their walls. But they kept the gates firmly closed

On the Champ d'Alexandre the fighting slowly dissipated into a disjointed succession of skirmishes. Many of the richest noblemen in France were stumbling towards the road or lying wounded on the fields or helpless under the weight of their armour. The English and Gascon soldiers scattered across the field in a frenzied competition for ransoms. They grabbed bits of plate armour, clothing or equipment from their prisoners as tokens of posessions, and then rushed off to find others. Years later the Count of Dammartin, who had fought in the King's division, remembered how he had been captured by a Gascon squire in the closing moments of the battle.

He called on me to surrender, and I did so at once . I gave him my word so that he should protect me. He said that I should be quite safe and need have no fear. Then he tried to take off my bacinet. When I begged him to leave it, he answered that he could not properly protect me unless he took it off. So he took it off, and my gauntlets as well. As he did so, another man came up and cut the strap of my sword so that it fell to the ground. I told the squire to take the sword, for I should prefer him to have ir tan anyone else… Then he made me mout his horse and handed me over to the keeping of a man of his, and thus he left me. But as soon as he had gone, this man abandoned me and made off. Then another Gascon came up and demanded my pledge. I answered that I was already a prisoner, but all, he same I gave him my word, simply in order that he would protect me. He took an escutcheon from my coat armour and then abandoned me like the last man. I shouted after him that since he was deserting me I would pledge myself to anyone else who might come up and be willing to protect me. 'Protect yourself, if you can,' he shouted back Another man, who belonged to Sir John Blaunkminster then appeared and demanded my pledge. I answered that I had already been captured by two people, but I gave him my word so that he would protect me. This Man stayed with me, guarded me, and eventually brought me to the Earl of Salisbury[77]

The Kng of France fought on with his youngest son Philip ad a dwindling band of bodyguards and friends until he was overwhelmed by the mass of men shouting at him to surrender and grabbing at his clothing. Eventually Denis de Morbeke, a knight of Artois in the Prince's retinue and by birth John's subject, forced his way to the front and called upon the French King to submit. John would not surrender until he was assured that his captor was a knight. Then e gave him his word and delivered up one of his gauntlets. Almost immediately, the king was grabbed by several other men and dragged back into the crowd where he was claimed by a group of Gascons led by a squire called Bernard de Troys. 'He's mine! Mine! The voices shouted at once. John, who was becoming alarmed for his safety, protested. 'I am a great enough lord to make all of you rich', he said accordig to Froissart. Then, from the edge of the crowd, The Earl of Warwick and Reginald Cobham forced their way through on horseback. They commanded every man to stand back on pain of death. Dismounted from their horses, they bowed low before the French King and led him away.

Matteo Villani called it the 'incredible victory' and it suited the English to say the same ' God is great and wonderful', Edward III later declared; 'he disposes of all things according to his inscrutable design' [79] Yet the outcome of the battle of Poitiers was not in military terms extraordinary. The longbow, which was the key to most English victories of the fourteenth centuary, played a comparatively minor part. The Prince's archers were highly effective against the opening charge of the French cavalry and again in the final stages of the battle when the French were being driven down the hill by Audley and the Capital de Buch. But they proved a great deal less effective against men on foot than they were against horses. Moreover, the battle

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lasted longer than any other major engagement of the period, with the result that they ran out of arrows well before the end. The traditional thing in this situation was to run forward and pu;; arrows from the wounded and dead. But the lie of the land and the strict line discipline of the Prince's army had made that difficult to do. As a result, the battle was really a prolonged test of endurance and physical strength fought out between men grappling with each other on foot and wielding lances,swords and axes, followed by a tremendous cavalry charge whe it became clear that the last divisions at John II's disposal had failed to penetrate the English Lines. Why were the French defeated? The main reason was that they were attacking a strong defesive position without any local superiority of numbers. Their army was larger than the Prince's but no more than about a third of it was ever engaged at any one time. But it was also true that inspite of the outstanding courage and discipline of the French soldiers, they were outfought by a more skilful and experienced enemy. To some extent this was because French me-at arms were not used to fighting on foot. The English, by comparison, had been doing it for four decades as the lord of Douglas had pointed out. However the most striking contrast between the two armies was at the level of command. Manoevering large bodies of men-at-arms who had never trained together was one of the perennial problems of the medieval battlefield. Orders were generally transmitted to section commanders bt trumpet, occasionally by messanger, and thence by shouting. Signals could be complex,and hard to hear inside a visored helmet. Yet the Prince and his adjutants had shown a remarkable ability to control the movements of their men in the midst of the fighting, far superior to anything that the King of France's staff had been able to achieve. The French divisional commanders had been given their orders before the battle, and they carried them out with grim persistance regardless of what was happening elsewhere. By comparison, the Prince had been able to improvise plans in the heat of the action and to communicate them quickly to those who had to act on them in the line.

When it was all over the trumpets sounded to recall the dispersed English soldiers to their standards. Men turned to dressing their wounds, to finding food and drink and to securing their prisoners. A roll call was taken. Search parties were sent out across the fields to find those who were missing. About fourty men-at-arms of the Prince's army were found dead, and an undisclosed number of indantry and archers. Wounded friends were pulled out from beneath the crush of corpses. Sir James Audley, who had led the final charge, was found lying half dead on the ground covered in blood. The Prince was dining with the King of France when Audley was brought into the camp stretched out upon a shield. He left the meal and went at once to comfort his friend, kissing his bloodstained lips and looking about for some soft bedding. John asked what arms Sir James bore upon his shield and, when he was told, remarked that he had seen their owner stand out for his strength and endurance even among so many courageous men. Then he turned to the fate of his own men. Allthough they had been defeated John knew that they had preserved their honour. ' At least we were not taken like criminals or runaways hiding in corners,' he said but like proud soldiers fighting in a just cause, captured on the field by the judgement of Mars, when rich men were buying their lives, cowards fleeing intimely away and the bravest soldiers heroically laying down their lives'. The King of France might perhaps have avoided battle altogether, as his father had done three times and Clermont had urged him to do on this ocassion. But Clermont's advice was politically quire unrealistic as the Kimg's other councillors had secognised. If John regretted anything, he did not admit it: 'Although the outcome of battles is ever uncertain' he wrote three months afterwards ' yet I have donr nothing which I would not as gladly do again in the same situation'

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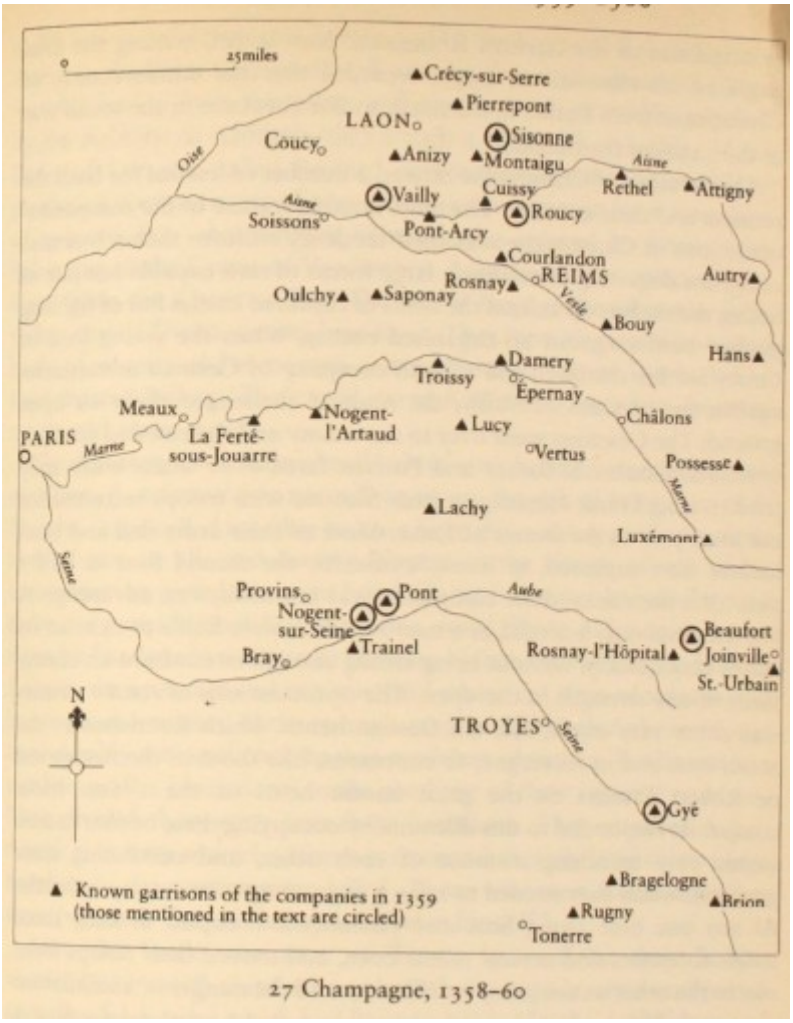
At almost exactly the same time a more miscellaneous group of adventurers was entering Champagne by the south. The leading light here was another Hainaulter, Eustache d'Aubricourt. Eustache's family had been closely connected with England for many years. His elder brother had participated in the siege of Calais and become one of the founding members of the Order of the Garter. He himself had served with the Prince of Wales in Gascony and fought at Poitiers. Aubricourt was new to Champagne, but he joined forces with two partners, the Englishmen Peter Audley and a German called Albrecht, both of whom had been in the region for some time. Albrecht was probably the same person as Albert Sterz, a brutal professional commander who later became famous as a soldier of fortune in Italy and died on the scaffold in Perugia in 1366. At this time he was the captain of Blanche of Navarre's castle at Gye-sur-Seine, some miles upstream of Troyes. Peter Audley was probably the younger brother of the great Sir James, who had fought with the Prince at Poitiers. According to Froissart he was the captain of the occupied fortress of Beaufort at Montmorency on the eastern march of Champagne. These three men combined their forces early in 1359 to produce an army of about 1,000 men.[3]



27 Champagne, 1358–60

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This short, highly effective campaign cleared all the larger enemy garrison from the valleys of the Aisne and the Marne. Aubricourt was taken to Troyes where, like Hennequin, he narrowly escape being lynched. He was held a prisoner for several weeks while he found his ransom. Scot returned to Picardy whence he had come. Dury left the region, no doubt also to Picardy. Albrecht returned to Gye. Hennequin is never heard of again in Champagne although he reappeared some years later in Brittany. Peter Audley had withdrawn from his partnership with Aubricourt shortly before the battle of Bray, taking 6o,ooo *moutons* a his share of profits. He tried to continue on his own. Some weeks afterwards he and his band scaled the walls of Chalons-sur-Marne by night and briefly occupied part of the town before being expelled by the garrison, a famous but wholly unprofitable adventure and the last notable exploit of hi career. Audley banked his takings with the merchants of Mechelen and Sluys, and died in his bed at Beaufort early in 1360. The garrison of Pont- ur-Seine survived for a few month longer until, in the spring of 1360, its captain Jean de Segur went to Troyes to

negotiate the surrender of the place. The Bishop of Troyes gave him a safe-conduct, but as soon as the news of his presence spread, a furious mob gathered outside the Bishop's palace baying for his. blood '. 'Kill him! Kill him!', they shouted. Eventually, they forced their way m and dragged him away to be butchered in the street. The only notable survivor of the campaign was Brocard de Fenetrange, who quarrelled with his employers as so many of his kind did, and for much the samme reasons. The Lieutenant were unable to raise the money to pay his fee. As a result he occupied several castles and embarked on his own campaign of plundering which lasted until his account were finally settled at the beginning of the following year.

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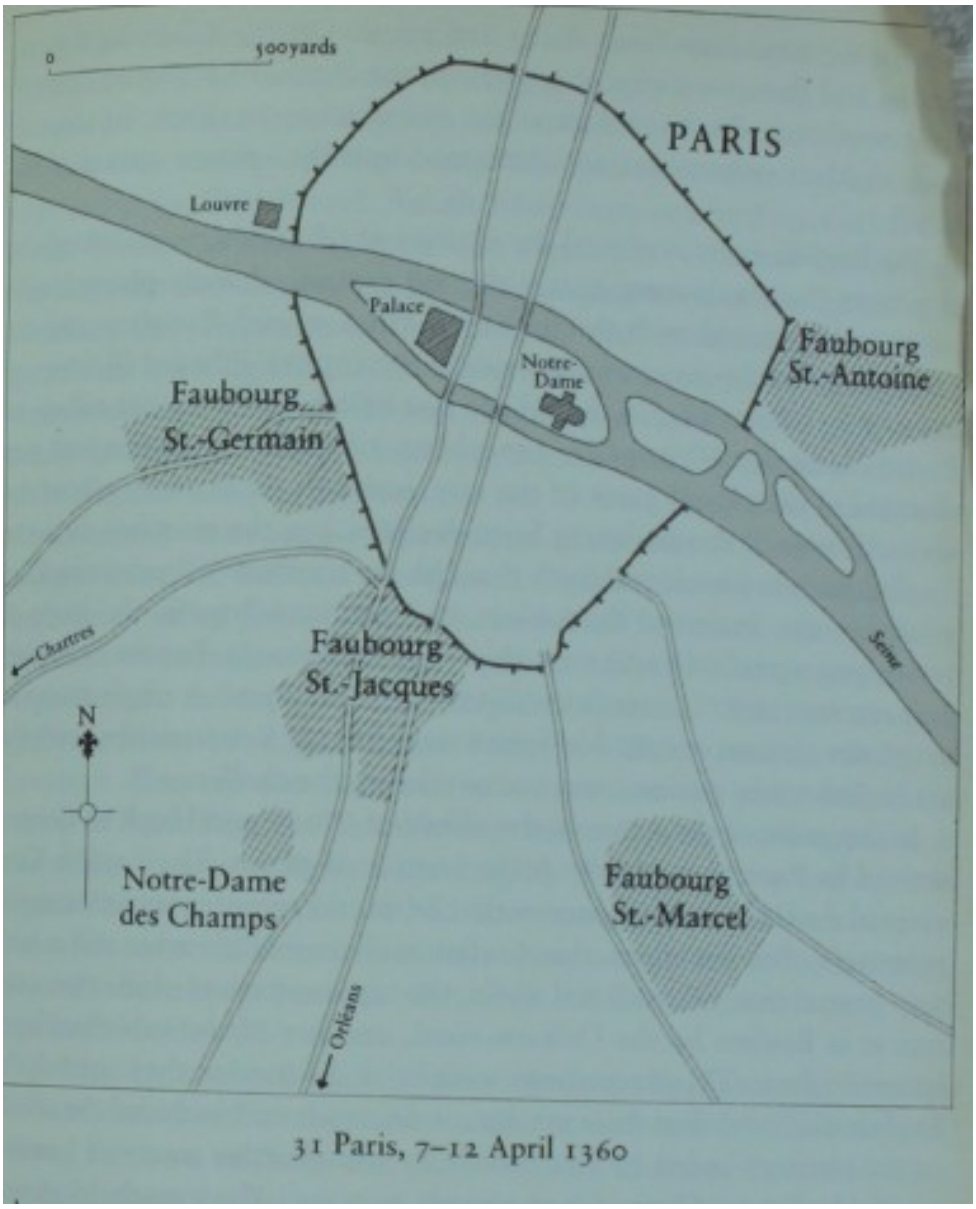
On 7 April 1360, after a brief pause to celebrate Easter, the King of England and the greater part of his army moved up the Orléans road towards the walls of Paris. As the army cut off the city from the south, the English garrisons operating on the other side of the Seine closed in from the north. One of them, at la Ferté-sous-Jouarre on the Marne, was taken over by one of Edward's captains, James Audley. Robert Scot brought his bands down from Picardy and briefly occupied the island-fortress of I'Isle Adam on the Oise.



31 Paris, 7–12 April 1360

Inside the capital, morale was high, but conditions were difficult. Severe shortage and the continuing devaluation of the coinage drove up prices in the city's markets to unheard of levels. The price of grain more than doubled. Wine cost so much that men would not share it with their closest friend . Fish almost disappeared from the shops. What food there was had to serve for a vastly increased population. The first great tide of refugees had arrived in the southern suburbs as the Beauce and the Île de France emptied out before the advancing English army. On Easter Sunday the inhabitants of ten country parishes shared the Carmelite church of Notre-Dame des Champs outside the gates, each parish taking a side chapel in which to receive the sacrament from their own priest. On the following day, as smoke and flames covered the horizon, the

Parisians began to destroy their southern suburbs to deprive the enemy of cover. Their inhabitants took up their possessions and crammed into the narrow street of the city.[68]

Chapter X Unfinished Business 1360-1364

Page 455 to 456

After the conclusion of the treaty of Bretigny, Edward III left the Earl of Warwick in France to see to its observance. Warwick was the first of many Englishmen to learn how difficult it was to enforce the King's will on his subject in France. In May 1360 he negotiated the voluntary departure of the ten major garrisons of the Île de France and Beauvaisis in return for the global sum of 24,000 florins. A substantial part of thid was paid. But only the four smallest garriaons left on time. John Fotheringhay refused to abandon Pont-Sainte-Maxence on the Oise in spite of the condiscation of his assets in England and Brittany. The officers of the Capital de Buch declined to leave Clermont-en-Beauvais although he was to have half of the promised 24,000 florins. At Ferté-sous Jouarre on the Marne, James Audley's captain, an Englishman called Thomas Bagworth, refused to recognise Warwick's authority. He embarked on a series of fresh distructions around Meaux, until the communities of the region agreed to buy him off for more. The garrisons of these places, ad three other fortresses of the Beauvaisis, clubbed together to extract an extra 17,000 old *écus* from the French government before they would go away[3.]

Volume III Divided Houses

Chapter II Return to Arms 1369

Pages 29-30

This event caused panic in Angoulême and an abrupt change of direction as the Prince's officers stripped resources from every other front to defend the northern march of Pictou. Sir James Audley, another close friend of the Prince, was appointed as his lieutenant in the province. The Poitevin barons were brought back from Quercy and placed under his command. By the beginning of June a second army was being formed from the troops of the Earls of Cambridge and Pembroke. With some additional companies raised in Poitou itself. Sir John Chandos was withdrawn from the southern front to join them.

Audley's army was the first to see action. He established his headquarters at Poitiers and the struck east in about the middle of June into the valley of the River Creuse, which marked the limit of the province. Audley's first target was the town of Le Blanc, an enclace of Pictou on the right bank of the Creuse which was under seige by the French. The place was temporily relieved (it fell a few months later. Then, turnng north Audley attacked Le Soudun, now an insignificant hamlet, which was then the site of an important castle guarding the left bank f the river eight miles upstream of La Roche-Posay. This place appears to have been carried by assault and garisoned against the French. Turning back on his tracks Audley launched a punative raid against the territory of Guy de Chauvigny, one of the few prominent noblemen of Pictou to have defected to Charles V. Guy's castle at La Bosse was taken by storm on the day after Audley's arrival. Audley hanged sixteen of

the Breton company which Guy had left to guard the place and put in a garison of his own. Many years later the Cheshire knights serving in Audley's army would recall this incident as one of great feats of arms of their careers.

The Earl of Cambridge's army entered the Vendée at about the end of June 1369. The region, lying between the Sèvre Niortaise and the Bay of Borgneuf, had never been fully absorbed ny the Prince's admiistration. The French had hung on to some important lordships there which they contended were not included in the territorial settlement of Brétigny. The most significant of these enclaves was the great fortress of La Roche-sur-Yon which was the centre of the road system of the region and the key to the defence of Pitou against any invasion force approaching from Nantes. The place belonged to no less a person than the Duke of Anjou and was defended by one of his retainers, Jean Belon. He commanded the largest French Garison of the region. When in about the second week of July, Cambridge brought up his seige against the walls, Belon faced a dilema common to many garison comanders of the late middle ages. Reluctant to face an assault which would put his life at the mercy of the enemy, yet seeing no relief in prospect, he entered into negotiations with the English Earls. In the middle of July he agreed to surrender La Roche- sur- Yon in one month unless he was relieved beforehand. If no relief came he was to be paid 6,000 francs for the stores in the castle and allowed to leave freely with his men. Cambridge for his part summoned reinforcements to help him fight off any attempt to relieve the place. Audley brought his own army across from Poitiers to join him. Their combined strength must have amounted to more than 2,000 men.