

The 2014 Harlaxton Symposium was an excellent event, both academically and socially. The program, on the topic of 'Plantagenet Empire 1259-1453', encompassed a wide range of approaches to the theme, and considered it from various angles including cultural, geographical, conceptual and documentary history. The papers themselves were thought provoking and were followed up by wide ranging question and answer sessions.

The period covered by this year's symposium overlaps with my PhD research. This current work focuses on what could be considered a small part of the Plantagenet Empire, the English archers of the Hundred Years War, 1350-1417. The study is focusing on the patterns of military service and motivation that can be identified among the archers. Furthermore, the socio-economic effects of their military service will be considered, including their non-military activities. The project's aims and methodology are quite tightly focused, and it was refreshing to be in an environment which encouraged a broad consideration on the surrounding historical landscape, both geographically and chronologically. Harlaxton expanded my horizons and has left me considering the link between military force, the archers and the rise and decline of the 'empire' in Scotland, Wales, France and Ireland. The symposium's relaxed structure also gave me the opportunity to continue my own research and the opportunity to discuss work in progress with delegates.

Along with the sessions held in Harlaxton manor, there were also opportunities from excursions to nearby points of interest, notably including Tattershall Castle and Church. This not only provided a change of scenery and the chance to visit this noteworthy site, but also excellent presentations on the history of the church and castle, made all the more accessible and relevant by taking place within the choir of the church itself, albeit accompanied by the church's resident bats! The social side of the symposium must also be mentioned. As noted previously it was brilliant to be able to discuss my thesis with experts from a range of fields and backgrounds, but the symposium also enabled me to meet and become acquainted with scholars to whom I had not been able to speak with before, in an informal and friendly atmosphere.

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