

# Henry V

Terry Sutton

Dover's population turned out in strength one day nearly 600 years ago to pay respects to their warrior king who in all his glory had made regular visits to their town and port. The small population lined the narrow lanes from the harbour to watch a procession bringing home the embalmed body of the brave and skilful Henry V who had died from dysentery in France in August 1422 at the age of 33. He had reigned from 1413.



*King Henry V*

The dead Plantagenet king's body was carried on a carriage drawn by four magnificent horses while above the coffin was a life-like effigy of Henry. As the coffin was carried ashore, not far from the present "tidy ruin" of Old St James Church, representatives of the Cinque Ports carried a silk canopy, just as they had done at Henry's coronation.

Henry V had died at Vincennes near Paris on the last day of August in 1422, surrounded by his nobles and military officers. His embalmed body was carried through France, resting at major towns, to Calais where the Cinque Ports fleet waited to transport it to Dover. At Dover the funeral procession, headed by rows of priests and guarded by 500 men-at-arms in black armour, passed St James Church, over Warden Down to Crabble Hill, from there to Canterbury and hence the king's last resting place in Westminster Abbey.

So different from the time when he sailed to France, with 6,500 cavalry and 24,000 foot

soldiers, for the successful six weeks siege and capture of Harfleur in 1415. But his army was so reduced by dysentery and casualties that Henry decided to return to Calais and then home.

But a large French army blocked his way-at a place called Agincourt. Here in October 1415 was fought one of the most decisive battles in European history. Henry's troops were outnumbered six

to one but their longbow archers in three hours managed to slaughter much of the French nobility. It is believed as many as 6,000 Frenchmen died while fewer than 400 English soldiers lost their lives.

After the battle the English troops, as was normal in those days, swooped on the fallen French and their treasure wagons to take as much booty as they could carry. Weighed down with their booty the starving English soldiers reached Calais (where the Governor refused them entry to the town for fear they would eat all its provisions) they then crossed the Strait to Dover. Here there were amazing scenes, with the starving archers and other soldiers willing to exchange items of their stolen booty for crusts of bread.

King Henry crossed the Channel to Dover a fortnight later and received a hero's welcome. Dover people dashed into the sea to carry their victorious king ashore on their shoulders. With him he brought a host of French nobles (taken as prisoners of war) who would be held until ransoms had been paid.

Henry V was back at Dover in August 1417 when he embarked for France with an army of 35,000. He campaigned in France for the next three years but meanwhile did not neglect his base at Dover. Before sailing he directed the Prior of St Martin's to supervise the strengthening of the town's defences.

In 1420 the war with France was concluded with a treaty of "perpetual peace" leading to the kings of France and England entering Paris together with much pomp. Part of the Treaty of Troyes peace deal was that Henry should marry Katherine of Valois, which he did. The royal couple landed at Dover on the day after Candlemas in 1421 where, it is recorded, Katherine was welcomed by the people as though she was an angel!

But there was more trouble ahead. Henry heard, with anger, there had been a revolt against English rule in Normandy and that the rebels had killed the Duke of Clarence, whom he had installed as Governor. So Henry returned to Dover, this time assembling at the port an army of 16,000 recruited by him and another 10,000 raised by the barons. This army included 24,000 archers. [Editor; In Henry V published 1889,

Rev A J Church gives it as 4,000 men at arms and 24,000 archers.]

They sailed from Dover on June 10th and 11th 1421 in a fleet of 500 ships provided mostly by the Cinque Ports. They landed at Calais from where a strong force quickly marched, some to Paris and others, headed by the king, to attack the French in Picardy. By the end of 1421 the English were masters of northern France.

Henry established himself in Paris and called on his queen to join him. She sailed from Dover and the couple set up their Court at the Louvre. The French, under the Dauphin, were not finished. They were joined, as allies, by a strong Scottish force in the south of France, ready to challenge Henry.

Henry prepared for another fight but then he was struck down by the dysentery that killed him. Strangely, his wife Katherine, then at Rouen, did not know of her bold husband's death until his funeral procession arrived there on its slow journey to Calais and from there to Dover.

## COWGATE CEMETERY Jeremy Cope

I think we have Cowgate Cemetery in as good a condition as I can remember, so much so that we have only one working session a month instead of the normal two from January to March. It's a real tribute to our volunteers including Peter Simpson, a welcome addition to our group. Although we only worked one Saturday in January at Cowgate we worked the Thursday at the Dover Big Local's Co-Innovation Centre (old Co-op building in Stembrook). Our job was to clear vegetation and rubbish surrounding the rear of the building – a good contribution to a voluntary group working to benefit Dover.

I have had a meeting with Melanie Wrigley of White Cliffs Countryside Partnership and Roger Wragg of Dover District Council. We discussed the future maintenance of the cemetery including correct schedule for our grass mowing and pruning of trees and shrubs by DDC. One of the principle aims is to encourage wildlife, another to allow the public full access to gravestones.

Anyone interested in joining us my contact details are;  
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