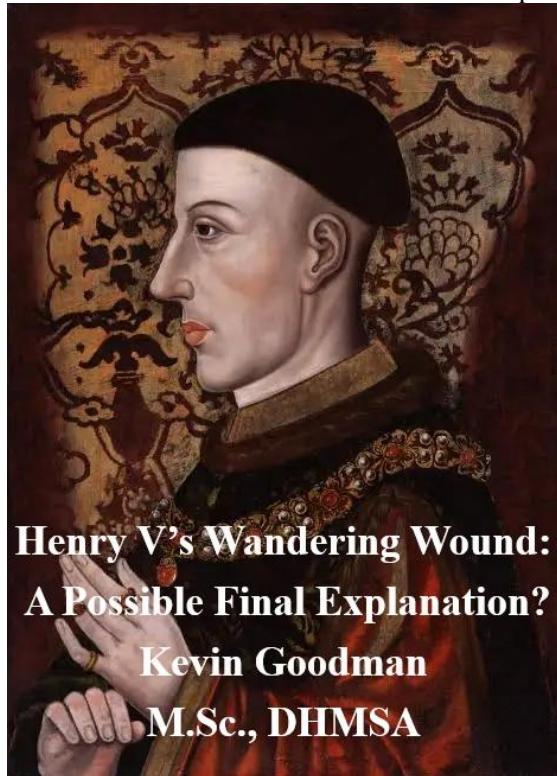


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On 21 July 1403, the forces of King Henry IV and the rebel Henry Percy clashed in battle just north of Shrewsbury. Although the royal army was victorious), Prince Hal - Henry IV's son and the future Henry V - sustained an arrow wound to the face while leading a charge. (Priestley 1979). Hal was taken to Kenilworth Castle, where Henry IV's surgeon, John Bradmore, treated the injury (Lang 2003).

Bradmore recorded the wound as follows in Latin: "*in facie iuxta nasum ex sinistra parte cum sagitta*" (p.67, Lang 1998). In the Middle English translation, the injury is described as: "...smetyn in the face be syd the nose on the lefte syd with an arrow the wyche sayd arrow entryd overwharte and after the schafte was takyn owt and the hede ther of a bod styll in the hyndyr parte of a bone of the hede after the mesur of vj ynche" (p.129, Lang 2003). Cole and Lang (2003) interpret this as: "[The arrow] struck in the face with an arrow beside the nose on the left side, which arrow entered from the side, and the said arrow, after the arrow was extracted,

remained in the back part of the bone of the head six inches deep" (p.95).

Bradmore devised a specialised instrument to extract the embedded arrowhead and successfully treated Prince Hal, who survived the procedure and later became King Henry V in 1413. A fuller discussion of Bradmore's instrument, surgical method and associated treatments can be found in my book, *Ouch! The History of Arrow Wound Treatment* (2022).

However, controversy has arisen over which side of Hal's face was wounded. This debate was prompted by the historian Ian Mortimer, who argued that Hal was struck on the right-hand side, contrary to Bradmore's account:

"Originally when writing the Fears of Henry IV in 2006 I followed Bradmore: left eye. In this I was following Prof Carole Rawcliffe, who on page 76 of Medicine and Society says the arrow entered his face on the left side of his nose. [but] looking at all the portraits of Henry V when researching 1415: Henry V's Year of Glory in 2008, I noticed that all the portraits of Henry were showing the same profile, with his left shoulder to the viewer, as if he did not want the right-hand side to appear. Also in the course of researching the book, I came across a reference to the king not wanting people to look him in the eye. Putting this together with the above point, and the fact that no portrait images on charters or documents show a scar, I figured that it was most probable that the wound was on the hidden right-hand side of the face. This squares with John Bradmore's account if the wound was on the left hand side of the face as you looked at the wounded prince. We would normally call this the right hand side...Hence I changed the description of the wound." (The Reenactor e.magazine, Issue 23, November 2010).

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Although this theory has been supported by historians such as Michael Livingstone (2015), Mortimer's reasoning is questionable. The most famous portrait of Henry V, now held by the National Portrait Gallery (above), and painted by an unknown artist in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century, was produced long after Henry's lifetime. Manuscript images of him are also generally too small to reveal reliable facial detail. Moreover, Henry's reported reluctance to have subjects look him in the eye may be better understood as consistent with his personality and behaviour, rather than as evidence for the location of a facial scar.

Although some of Henry's personal qualities and conduct have been admired both in the past and today—particularly his abilities as an administrator and military commander—he was also known for severity, coldness, humourlessness, aloofness, dominance, ruthlessness, a bad temper, vindictiveness, and inhumanity. He was intolerant of dissent and willing to punish, or even remove, those whose loyalty he suspected. Men feared his anger and avoided questioning the wisdom of his judgements or the rightness of his decisions; when his honour was impugned, he could rapidly become enraged (Dockray 2007; Mortimer 2009; Seward 1987). As Waurin recorded, “[Henry was] *much feared and dreaded by his princes, knights and captains and by people of every degree because all those who disobeyed his orders or infringed his edicts he would put to death without mercy*” (Hardy 1868, p.429).

In this context, Henry's prohibition on being looked directly in the eye is perhaps unsurprising. Likewise, an artist commissioned to paint a royal portrait - particularly of a monarch reputed to be as irascible and vindictive as Henry - would have had strong reason to produce a

flattering image that omitted visible blemishes, rather than a candid “warts and all” likeness that might invite displeasure. Henry's belief that he was God's emissary on Earth may also have reinforced his reluctance to be closely scrutinised by his subjects (Dockray 2007).

The reliability of medieval depictions of Henry must also be treated with caution. As the J. Paul Getty Museum notes of medieval portraiture:

“In contrast to modern portraiture, which strives to capture the accurate likeness of a specific person, medieval portraiture was primarily valued for its ability to express an individual's social status, religious convictions, or political position. Medieval portrait painters, rather than reproducing the precise facial features of their subjects, often identified individuals by depicting their clothing, heraldry, or other objects related to them. The goal of medieval portraiture was to present a subject not at a particular moment in time, but as the person wished to be remembered through the ages.”

As for Bradmore's own assessment of the wound's location, it is reasonable to assume that a surgeon of his skill and originality was capable of distinguishing left from right.

Further insight into the wound's position has been offered by my friend Neil Stuart Thomson, a Henry V enthusiast and authority, who has graciously permitted me to share his observations. Thomson's argument rests on the heraldic distinction between the bearer's and the viewer's left and right. Bradmore described the wound as “*in facie iuxta nasum ex sinistra parte cum sagitta*”. Since *sinistra* means “left” in Latin, the phrase indicates the bearer's proper left - that is, the left side from Hal's own perspective, which would appear on

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the viewer's right. This interpretation therefore provides further support for Bradmore's account.

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