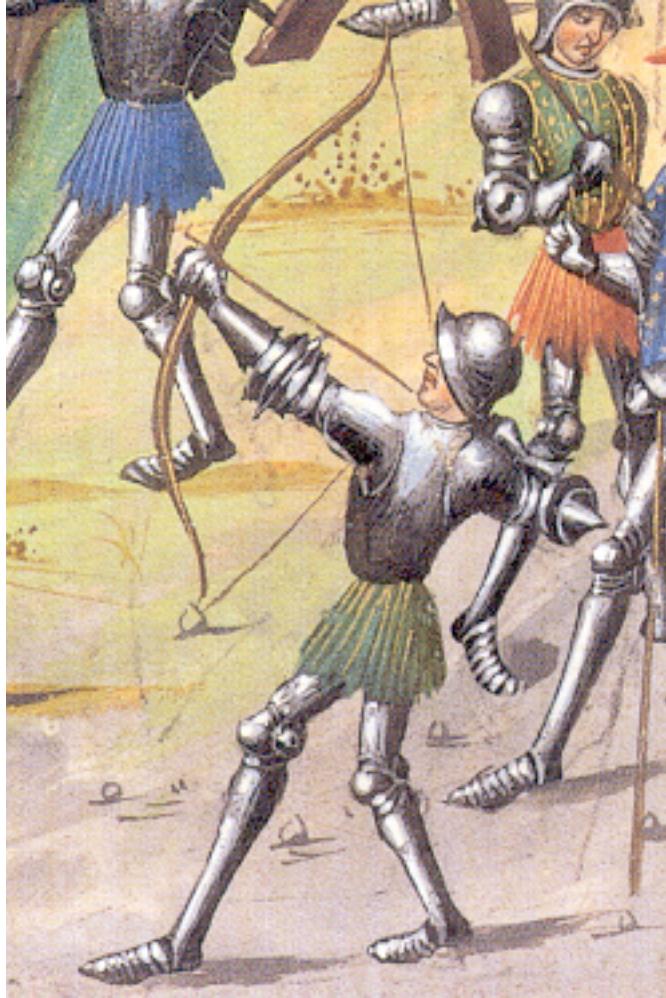


French Noble Archers

From the lists of those appearing for royal musters between about 1420 and 1570



An archer with an *arc Bourguignon* [Burgundian bow], detail of an illumination by the 'Master of the Vienna *Chroniques d'Angleterre*', from *Des fais du grant Alexandre* by Quintus Curtius Rufus, c. 1468, Burney MS 169 f. 127, British Library.

- For the general reader, read the Introduction ([pages 5-7](#)) and Summary and Conclusion ([pages 37-39](#)).

Copyright © 2011 James Prescott
Thorvald Grimsson in the SCA
2011-November-26

Comments welcome: prescotj@telusplanet.net

Table of Contents

Preface and Acknowledgements	4
Glossary of French terms	4
Introduction	5
de la Roque's "Treatise on the Ban and Arrière-Ban"	8
<i>A taste of the treatise</i>	8
<i>The 1470 muster roll within the treatise for Caux and Gisors (Louis XI)</i>	11
<i>The 1557 muster roll within the treatise for Poitou (Henry II)</i>	12
<i>Analysis of the 1470 and 1557 muster rolls</i>	14
Other muster rolls	17
<i>Muster of Dinan held in 1472 (Charles IX)</i>	17
<i>Muster of Autun held in 1474 (Louis XI)</i>	17
<i>Muster of Vannes held in 1477 (Louis XI)</i>	19
<i>Muster of Saint Malo and Dol held in 1480 (Louis XI)</i>	19
<i>Muster of Saint-Brieuc held in 1480 (partial) (Louis XI)</i>	20
<i>Muster of the Bishopric of Cornouailles held in 1481 (Louis XI)</i>	21
<i>Muster of the Bishopric of Tréguier held in 1481 (Louis XI)</i>	24
<i>Muster of Léon held in 1503 (Louis XII)</i>	25
<i>Muster of Tréguier held in 1503 (Louis XII)</i>	26
<i>Muster of the Jurisdiction of Goëlle held in 1543 (Francis II)</i>	27
<i>Muster of Sens held in 1545 (Francis I)</i>	28
<i>Muster of Saint-Renan held in 1557 (Henry II)</i>	30
<i>Muster of the Bishopric of Cornouailles held in 1562 (Charles IX)</i>	30
<i>Muster of Dinan held in 1569 (Charles IX)</i>	32
The Proportion of Noble Archers in the Muster Rolls	33
Speculative Proportions of Noble Archers	34
Required Military Service as a function of Income	35

Summary and Conclusions	37
Additional notes	40
<i>The nature of the ban and arrière-ban</i>	40
<i>Migration into and out of the nobility</i>	41
<i>The 1304 muster roll within de la Roque's treatise (Philip IV)</i>	42
<i>The Armies of the first three Valois dukes of Burgundy</i>	43
<i>Musters of Vannes in 1464, 1477, and 1481 (Louis XI)</i>	43
<i>Muster of Saint-Brieuc in 1479 (Louis XI)</i>	44
<i>Muster of Tréguier in 1480 (Louis XI)</i>	44
<i>Muster of Léon in 1481 (Louis XI)</i>	45
<i>Muster of Poitou in 1491 (Charles VIII)</i>	45
<i>Musters for specific military service</i>	45
<i>Scots Guards</i>	45
<i>Archers of the compagnies d'ordonnance and archers of the ban and arrière-ban</i>	46
<i>Franc-archers</i>	46
Works cited	47

Preface and Acknowledgements

This paper was inspired by stumbling upon de la Roque's treatise (see [page 8](#)) while looking for information to contribute to John Edgerton's article "War Archery and Social Status" ([Edgerton](#)). All translations from the French are by me. I do not claim to be an expert on old French, and there are undoubtedly mistakes in the translations.

Previous versions:

A first version of this paper was completed on 2011-June-09.

Acknowledgements:

I wish to thank Randall Moffett and Craig Robertson for helpful comments and probing questions which have led to this greatly expanded, and I trust improved, second version.

Navigation:

If you use this paper's internal links to move around, you may find it useful to have the 'Previous View' and 'Next View' buttons visible in your PDF viewer so that you can go back to where you were before clicking the link. How to make these buttons visible may vary with your viewer. Try right-clicking the PDF viewer toolbar, selecting 'More Tools', and scrolling to 'Page Navigation Toolbar'.

Glossary of French terms

<i>arrière-ban</i>	summons for military service of vassals in indirect fealty (but see page 40)
<i>ban</i>	summons for military service of vassals in direct fealty
<i>compagnie d'ordonnance</i>	a unit in the French permanent army containing a combination of troops
<i>fouage</i>	hearth tax
<i>franc-archer</i>	non-noble militia archer (see page 46)
<i>javeline</i>	javelin, in these contexts a spear not intended as a thrown weapon
<i>livre</i>	<i>livre tournois</i> , a pound of silver used as the official currency
<i>pannetier ordinaire</i>	personal servant to the French king (see page 14)
<i>réformation</i>	official inquiry into who was and was not currently noble (see page 20)
<i>roturier</i>	free peasant

Introduction

During the Middle Ages and Renaissance the French king could summon all of his vassals for military service. The summons, or muster, was called the *Ban* and *Arrière-Ban*. During the period of interest of this paper, the *ban* applied to those who were in direct fealty to the king, who could be called up to serve for any reason. The *arrière-ban* applied to those in indirect fealty to the king (i.e. those holding sub-fiefs), who could be called up to serve in more serious situations, such as a major war. See the discussion on [page 40](#) about earlier meanings of these terms.

In addition to the musters for war, the French king would at other times summon the combined *ban* and *arrière-ban*, at which everyone was required to appear and show that they were equipped for military service according to their status and income. These musters were to a regional centre, on a stated date or during a stated period. Everyone was inspected in armour and with weapons, and where relevant with their horses and retainers. Most vassals would appear in person, although some would arrange for suitably armed substitutes to appear on their behalf. Women, minor children (those under 18), men older than 60, and church personnel would generally not serve in person, and would provide substitutes. The *ban* and *arrière-ban* might also be called by regional nobles such as dukes. ([Gilles de la Roque passim](#)) ([Allmand](#) 93)

In 1557 Henry II specified that “the [military] service be strictly personal, and did not admit of substitution except of the son for the father, or of the brother for the brother” ([Roy](#) viii); but this restriction did not apply to the earlier musters of interest in this paper.

In about 1453 Bishop Thomas Basin estimated that the “nobles and fief-holders” would provide 50,000 combatants ([Contamine A](#) 169) out of an estimated population for France of about 10 million ([Contamine A](#) 171).

Originally, everyone who was summoned by the *ban* and *arrière-ban* was a noble of some kind, owing fealty and military service in return for their fief. The kind of military service that they were required to provide was “in proportion to the value and quality of their Fiefs” ([Gilles de la Roque](#) 1). At least as early as the Crusades (i.e. 1095 onwards), fiefs could be sold by poor nobles to commoners with money, who then owed the military service. Commoners might also be given fiefs as rewards, though without noble status ([Perroy](#) 33). The commoners, or their descendants, might eventually petition to be ennobled (i.e. promoted to the nobility), or they might simply be eventually acknowledged by their neighbours and immediate feudal superiors as members of the nobility without formal process ([Perroy](#) 33). See also [page 41](#).

Here is a discussion of the relationship between holding a fief and the requirements of military service.

([Contamine A](#) 95) [the source is in English]

And it was the fief which allowed its holder and his sons the leisure and necessary income to live on a level with the world of warfare, through hunting, tilting practice, jousting and especially through tournaments.... But above all authorities expected holders of fiefs or those with a certain fortune, whatever its nature, movable or landed, to keep mounts and knightly equipment in permanent readiness.

The nobility of France can be subdivided in several ways. Here is my simplified version. Those with a title of baron or higher formed the greater nobility, and were a relatively small group. The knights formed the middle nobility, with the highest knights scarcely distinguishable from the greater nobility, and with the

lowest knights blending into the lesser nobility. The remainder were the lesser nobility, sometimes called the gentry. Based on the evidence in the muster rolls, the lesser nobility can conveniently be divided into three groups. The highest group comprises those who could call themselves lord or lady of a fief, with or without the rank of squire. The middle group comprises those who possessed a fief and owed military service but had neither title nor rank. The muster roll for Autun in 1474 appears to mark people in this middle group by describing them as *noble homme* [noble man] without other indication (see [page 18](#)). The lowest group would include those who had no fief, no title, and no rank. While they were technically noble there would be no formal indication of this, they owed no fealty and military service, and they would not be listed in the muster rolls unless as substitutes. Their status was at risk. A person in this group might try to marry into a higher station, or if male might hire himself out in hopes of earning advancement. See also the discussion on [page 41](#).

As a rough indication of the relative sizes of these groups in actual military service, the French dead at the battle of Agincourt (1415) included about 100 named greater nobility, including senior knights, barons, five counts, and three dukes; over 1500 ordinary knights; and between 4000 and 5000 lesser nobility (*Gesta Henrici Quinti* quoted in [Strickland](#) 338).

Most of those listed in any muster roll, whether noble or not, would have served as rank-and-file soldiers in the army. Command was usually the prerogative of higher-ranking titled nobles. For example, the eleven main French commanders at Agincourt in 1415 were three professional soldiers (the Constable, the Marshal, and the Admiral of France, all nobles); four counts; and four dukes. Small military units from a district would usually be commanded by a senior noble from the district.

The commissioners supervising the muster in a region recorded the names and details of everyone; issued orders for people to upgrade their equipment, horses, substitutes, or retinues by the time of the next muster; noted those who were excused for legitimate reasons; and noted those who failed to show up. They had the power to confiscate for the king or other great noble the fief of anyone who did not show up equipped in a manner acceptable to the commissioners. ([Gilles de la Roque](#) *passim*, and the other muster rolls in this paper)

Some of these lists of names have survived, and we will examine them in more detail. So far I have found 21 lists with indications of nobles who go to war as archers, plus mention of two more, and have processed 16 of these lists. This is an initial look at this material, and is not an exhaustive investigation. It is based almost exclusively on documents available online. This paper does not compare the French bows, arrows, and archers with their English counterparts.

The period that interests us especially is roughly 1420 to 1570. In 1420 the Hundred Years War between France and England had been going on since 1337. The success of the English archers, especially at Agincourt in 1415, meant that the French king had a problem. The French archers, and those hired from elsewhere, such as Genoese crossbowmen, were not very effective against the English longbows, whether intrinsically or due to mishandling by their commanders. The French tried a number of solutions. In the first third of the 15th century the dukes of Burgundy greatly increased the proportion of archers in their armies ([Strickland](#) 343). In 1445 Charles VII established a permanent army with a number of *compagnies d'ordonnance* including archers (see [page 46](#)), and raised a militia of non-noble archers (see *Franc-archers* on [page 46](#)).

Eventually the French began to require that some of the nobles summoned by the *ban* and *arrière-ban* serve as archers. I have not yet discovered when this requirement was first imposed, nor is it clear what motivated the French to try this specific change. It was probably after 1415. To bolster the depleted French army after Agincourt, Charles VII hired an army from his Scottish allies. The Scots Guards, as they came to be called, arrived in France in 1419, and in one form or another remained part of the French army throughout our period of interest. The Scots Guards incorporated companies of Scots archers, and this might have been a model (see [page 45](#)). The kings of France might have felt the need for better-disciplined archers, and for archers who were mounted and thus able to travel more rapidly ([Strickland](#) 330). Both of these factors would have led them to look to their nobility. A set of regulations from Brittany in 1450 is the earliest found so far mentioning a requirement for archers from the nobility (see [page 36](#)). A muster roll from 1464 is the earliest found so far that includes noble archers (see [page 43](#)).



English archers at the battle of Agincourt (the illustration is not contemporary) (detail, Mansell Collection).

The last major battle of the Hundred Years War against England was in 1453, which is usually taken as the end of the war, although related minor battles against the English continued until 1475. France then became heavily involved in wars in Italy from 1494 to 1559. The isolated Battle of Guinegate against the English took place in 1513.

From 1562 France was severely disrupted by its internal Wars of Religion between Huguenots and Catholics. Also, by this time artillery was becoming more important on the battlefield than massed archers. Also, from 1587 onwards Maurice of Nassau (Prince of Orange), and William Louis (Count of Nassau-Dillenburg), were together revolutionizing the army of the Netherlands, and European warfare generally, with innovations including the long lines of infantry, equipped with firearms and firing in volleys, that would have been familiar to Napoleon ([Parker](#) 19 *et seq.*).

de la Roque's "Treatise on the *Ban* and *Arrière-Ban*"

The first source, and the one that is the most important of those that I have found, is the *Traité du Ban & Arrière-Ban* [Treatise on the *Ban* and *Arrière-Ban*], which was published as part of a larger work entitled *Traité de la noblesse, et de toutes ses différentes especes* [Treatise on the nobility, and all its different types] by Gilles André de la Roque, Lord de la Lontière, in 1734 ([Gilles de la Roque](#)). This treatise and the associated muster rolls are a separately paginated section within the larger book. The treatise is also the source of many of my basic assumptions about this topic.

The treatise has 17 chapters which are written by de la Roque, and which therefore contain his historian's perspective from 1734. Gilles de la Roque discusses at length the difference between the *ban* and the *arrière-ban*, their original meaning, and all the ways in which that original meaning altered through the years. For further discussion of the changes in meaning of these terms see [page 40](#). The treatise is accompanied by various muster rolls of the people involved in *bans* and *arrière-bans*, starting from 1214. These rolls are presumably transcribed from the manuscript originals, with potential errors both in the original clerical work and in the 1734 transcription. As we will see, it is these rolls, both from de la Roque and from other sources, which are of great interest.

A taste of the treatise

To give a flavour of de la Roque's treatise, here are some chapter subtitles with occasional key sentences. The source citation precedes each selection. As elsewhere, all translations from the French are by me.

[\(Gilles de la Roque 2\)](#)

First Chapter

[Chapter subtitle] Of the interpretation of Ban and Arrière-Ban.

...

The difference between the Ban and Arrière-Ban is, that the Ban relates to Fiefs, and the Arrière-Ban to Arrière-Fiefs; that is to say, that the Vassals of Full-fiefs, are subject to the Ban, and the Arrière-Vassals to the Arrière-Ban.

[\(Gilles de la Roque 5\)](#)

Chapter III

[Chapter subtitle] Of the time at which commenced the convocations of the Nobles in the form of Ban and of Arrière-Ban, and of the manner in which they were done anciently.

... an original Register compiled about the year 1216, after the famous Conquests of King Philippe II, called Augustus, which contains the names, surnames and qualities of the Knights carrying the Banners of the Provinces of Normandy [and 15 other provinces]; the Knights of the Chatelainships [regions centred on castles] of Melun [and 18 other chatelainships]; even those who are registered to other Lords than the King, and all those who possessed sixty livres [pounds of silver] of revenue in Fief.

[\(Gilles de la Roque 10-11\)](#)

Chapter IV

[Chapter subtitle] Of those who are obligated to carry arms to the Ban and Arrière-Ban: and whether there is a more natural requirement for Gentlemen than for others for rendering this service.

For a long time the Nobles have been serving in France in the Armies.

...

[Philippe II Augustus] convoked them [the Nobles] from this time in the form of Ban and of Arrière-Ban; because there were none other than those who occupied the Fiefs, except for those which were given by charitable donation to the Church; and thus whoever was invested of a Fief, was tacitly ennobled [promoted to the nobility] without Letters [letters patent], and by the investiture alone.

...

It is true that formerly it was not permitted to anyone either to possess or to hold Fiefs, if he was not Noble; because the Roturier [free peasant] was not able to possess any; but he paid only the taxes due to the King and to particular Lords, and was only involved in transportation, building and labour: however since the Holy wars [Crusades] and those which were undertaken in France against the English and against the Flemish, this beautiful institution of Fief made in favour of the Nobility alone was contaminated, all the Gentlemen who went on these expeditions, whether for reasons of honour or by Religious zeal or even by the threat of authority, lacking money for the expenses of their voyages were constrained to petition the Kings to permit the Roturiers and serfs to buy them [their fiefs]....

But the Kings considering that they had made a breach in their state; because the established benefits of Fiefs were fallen into the hands of persons unsuited to arms, and thus the forces of the Kingdom were diminished, and the Bans and Arrière-Bans were deprived of men capable of military activities, these Princes wanted in some manner to fix this defect, ordering the levy of the fee of the Franc-Fiefs [fiefs not requiring homage] of the Roturiers to underwrite the payment of war....

[The holder of a franc-fief did not swear fealty and did not serve personally in the army, but rather paid a tax every 20 years to enable the hiring of soldiers. Under Louis IX (1226-1270) the grandchildren of the purchaser of a franc-fief would be eligible to be ennobled (promoted to the nobility), which if granted would then require them to swear fealty and render military service instead of paying the tax.]

[\(Gilles de la Roque 13\)](#)

Chapter VI

[Chapter subtitle] Whether the Ecclesiastics are obliged to go [in person] or to send [substitutes] to the Ban and Arrière-Ban because of the Fiefs that they possess.

[\(Gilles de la Roque 21\)](#)

Chapter VII

[Chapter subtitle] That the Ecclesiastics obtained some dispensations from serving at the Ban and Arrière-Ban.

[\(Gilles de la Roque 28\)](#)

Chapter IX

[Chapter subtitle] Whether the Religious Knights of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem are exempt from the convocation of the Ban and Arrière-Ban.

[\(Gilles de la Roque 29 - 30\)](#)

Chapter X

[Chapter subtitle] Whether the Roturiers possessing Fiefs, are obliged to attend at the Ban and Arrière-Ban.

...

Some would say perhaps, that as the Fief is in its nature Noble, and given as the prize of virtue, that it cannot be possessed other than by the Nobles, nor [is] the service which is done in consequence of this possession, to be rendered except by persons of the same quality, and that it would be an undignified dilution of the excellence of the Nobility to mix the Roturiers with the Nobles.

...

Also the Decree of King Francis I of the year 1545 shows us that if the Roturiers holding Fiefs want to serve in person, they will be accepted for this, provided they were capable and experienced with weapons.

...

It is certain that our Kings have always considered the non-Nobles as people who serve usefully in the Armies, and that in the past they obliged not only those who had Fiefs to the service of the Ban and Arrière-Ban, but even those who possessed none.

...

The other Bailiffs, Provosts, and Seneschals of the Kingdom received the same orders in the years 1302, 1303, and 1304 to arm the non-Nobles for the Arrière-Ban; and King Philippe commanded in 1303 Lord de Warignies to go to Ouchy to assemble and put into arms all the Nobles and non-Nobles of whatever condition they were, from the age of 18 until the age of 60. Those who were not able to serve were obliged to send [others] for themselves, the Nobles [sending] men at arms, the non-Nobles [sending] foot soldiers, and none but the Invalids were excused.

...

Thus it is necessary to conclude that if this obligated the Roturiers who had no Fiefs, to serve the State on pressing occasions, with much greater reason those who have Fiefs must give service and be held to attend at the Ban and Arrière-Ban.

[\(Gilles de la Roque 30-31\)](#)

Chapter XI

[Chapter subtitle] Whether Noble persons, who have no Fiefs or Arrière-Fiefs, are subject to the Ban and Arrière-Ban.

...

It is thus a true maxim, that the Nobles who possess no Fiefs, are not obligated to this military service; but they can be drawn to it by imitating others.

We now move on to the transcribed muster rolls in de la Roque. Some of the rolls are in Latin, which is generally beyond me, so this investigation is limited to the rolls that are in French. There are comments on a muster roll in the treatise from 1304 for all of France on [page 42](#).

The 1470 muster roll within the treatise for Caux and Gisors (Louis XI)

The first interesting list for our purposes is the one from 1470 for Caux and Gisors, in Normandy in France, which lists the names of people and the equipment they were required to bring, in some cases including bows. It was based on people showing up physically with their equipment and retainers.

It also lists those excused, and why; as well as those who failed to show up. At the end is a declaration that those who had failed to show could have their fiefs, inheritances, and revenues seized and given to the king, although we may doubt whether this threat was widely carried out, at least not without repeated warnings.

First, the introductory description and the first entry.

[\(Gilles de la Roque 113\)](#)

Here follows the account of the muster of the Nobles and tenants of noble fiefs from the Bailiwicks of Caux and Gisors, and the form of the outfits, in which the under-mentioned mustered, and others who were found, and assembled in this muster received by us Anthoine d'Aubusson, Knight, Lord of Monteil, Counsellor and Chamberlain of the King our Sire, and his Bailiff of Caux and Commissioner of this [ban and arrière-ban], made in this location on Monday the last day of December, the year of grace 1470, and other days following.

Firstly the proclamation for the Bailiwick of Caux.

The Viscounty of Caudebec.

Jehan de Saint Maard, Lord and Viscount of Blossville, Captain of Caudebec, who at the last muster presented himself armed in complete harness; in his company Jehan and Rogerin Ditzfae, Thomas Chevalier, Jehan Benard, Colin des Chasteaulx, Laurens Barateur, Guillaume Coquatrix, all armed in brigandines, and a Page carrying his lance, these appeared in this present muster, offering to serve with the similar number of persons and thus as he was declared in the aforementioned last muster, for this 1 man at arms 7 pike men.

There are 420 combatants in the muster roll, plus 189 excused or in default, for a total of 609.

Here is the breakdown:

96 appeared as men at arms
55 appeared as archers, including one crossbow
262 appeared as polearmers, including five with javelins
3 dagger-men
4 appeared without weapon specified
43 were excused
146 were in default

There are several points of discussion.

First, the vast majority of the names in the list have no explicit designation of nobility. Comparison with the list from 1557 (see the analysis beginning on [page 14](#)) suggests that if the clerks had noted this information, almost all unmarked persons would have had explicit designations of nobility.

Second, there are 55 archers, 13% of the combatants. Of the archers, five (9%) are explicitly noble. Among all the combatants, 29 (7%) are noble. Of the entire list, 56 (9%) are noble.

Third, there is an example of a knight having an archer as his substitute, which the commissioners accept without objecting.

[\(Gilles de la Roque XXX\)](#)

For Milord Jehan d'Arde Knight were presented Potelet Gontier armed with brigandine, bow and quiver, Lyonnet Remy in similar dress of brigandine, carrying a pike, and a Dagger-man armed with [wearing] a jack, for this 1 archer, 1 pikeman, 1 dagger-man.

The 1557 muster roll within the treatise for Poitou (Henry II)

The second interesting list for our purposes is from 1557. It is a list for Poitou, in west-central France.

First, to give the flavour of this muster roll, here is the introductory description of the first section, and the first entry in that section.

[\(Gilles de la Roque 133\)](#)

This is the list of the Chevaux Legiers [a body of cavalry guarding the King], retained and received at the general muster of the Ban and Arrière-Ban of this Region of Poitou, and ancient expired legal jurisdictions of this place, commenced at Poitiers the last day of May in the year 1557, following the Letters Patent of the King on these decrees the fifteenth day of the said month.

Aymery Mannourry Squire, Lord de la Mothe, on his deathbed, Parish of Saint Martin of Fouilloux.

Of particular interest is the second section. Here is the introductory description and the first entry of this section, which has 94 names.

[\(Gilles de la Roque 136\)](#)

Here is the list of the Nobles who claim exemption from the Ban and Arrière-Ban of this Region of Poitou, including the legal jurisdictions and sub-jurisdictions of this place, who presented themselves at the convocation of the muster of the said Ban and Arrière-Ban, begun to be held at Poitiers the last day of May in the year 1557.

Charles de Varye Knight, Lord of Lisle Savary, was declared exempt, because he is Pannetier ordinaire of the King.

There are a total of 233 names in the list of exemptions, with one duplicate entry, leaving 232 names. The following snippets contain the names of the 28 excused people who are described as archers.

[\(Gilles de la Roque 137-144\)](#)

François de Plaisance, was declared to be exempt, because he is Archer of the Guard of the King under the Command of the Lord de Chammyny.

François and Claude de Laye, were declared to be exempt, because they are Men at arms and Archers of the Company of the Lord d'Aumalle. [this is counted as two entries]

Gabriël du Cloux, was declared to be exempt, because he is Archer of the Company of the Lord de la Fayette.

Micheau Geoffroy, Lord de Bouchaulx, was declared to be exempt, because he is Archer of the Company of the Lord de Pansac.

Pierre de Tryom Squire, Lord de la Tallonniere, was declared to be exempt, because he is in the service of Reverend the Abbé de Comery, and he is Archer in the Company of the Lord Duke de Lorraine.

Joachin Parent Squire, was declared to be exempt, because he is Archer of the French Bodyguard of the King, under the Command of the Lord de Chavigny.

François du Mestayer Squire, Lord de la Surgaudiere, was declared to be exempt, because he is Archer of the Company of Milord the Prince de la Roche-sur-Yon.

Loys de Charlanes Squire, was declared to be exempt, because he is Archer of the French Bodyguard [of the King] under the command of the Lord de Chavigny.

Christofle du Clou Squire, Lord de la Fourest, was declared to be exempt, because he is Archer of the French Bodyguard of the King, under the command of the Lord de Chavigny.

Jehan Hesse Squire, Lord de Brillac, was declared to be exempt, because he is Archer of the *Morte-paye* [Garrison] in the City and Fortress of Blaye, under the command of Gaspard de Polignac.

Jehan de la Berge Squire, Lord de Leschellette, was declared to be exempt, because he is Archer of the Company of Milord de Bonithry.

Loys de Raffy Squire, Lord de la Briandiere, was declared to be exempt, because he is by the Command of the King serving as Archer in the Company of Milord Gonnor, with whom he is in Piedmont.

Charles du Guerrie, was declared to be exempt, because he is Archer of the Company of Milord the Duke de Montmorancy.

[There is a duplicate entry for Charles du Guerrie(e), in which it is added that the Duke de Montmorancy is the Constable of France.]

François Bardet Squire, Lord de la Pruyne and de Lavend, was declared to be exempt, because he is Archer of the Company of the Lord de Saint André Marshal of France.

René Prendhomme Lord des Lignes, was declared to be exempt, because he is Archer of the Company of Milord de la Roche du Mayne.

Pierre de la Fourest called de la Forge, was declared to be exempt, because he is Archer of Milord the Marshal de Brissac.

Mathurin Matthieu Squire, Lord de la Fa, was declared to be exempt, because he is Archer of the Company of Milord the Duke de Montpencier.

Guy de Rechignevoisin Lord de la Creulle, was declared to be exempt, because he is Archer of the Company of Milord the Duke de Montpencier.

Marc de la Girardiere Squire, Lord of the said place, was declared to be exempt, because he is Archer of the Company of Milord de Burye.

Leon Chabot Squire, Lord de Chasteau and de Puy [and de] Randan, was declared to be exempt, because he is Archer of the Company of Milord the Prince de la Roche-sur-Yon.

Anthoine de Liniere, Lord de Saint Pompain, was declared to be exempt, because he is Archer in the ancient French band of the Body of the King.

Gabriël Bault Squire, was declared to be exempt, because he is Archer of the Company of Milord the Count de Villars.

Jacques Pot Squire, Lord de Piedgenet, was declared to be exempt, because he is Archer of the Company of Milord the Prince de la Roche-sur-Yon.

François de Bresles, Lord de Cors and in part of the noble place of Charreau, was declared to be exempt, because he is Archer of the Company of Milord the Prince de la Roche-sur-Yon.

Claude de Lerrisse Squire, Lord de Lascons, was declared to be exempt, because he is Archer of the Company of Milord de Jarnac.

François Chardon Squire, Lord du Sort, was declared to be exempt, because he is Archer of the Company of Milord the Count de Villards.

François de Rechigne-Voisyn, was declared to be exempt, because he is Archer of the Company of Milord the Duke d'Aumalle.

A number of the archers in this list have the rank of squire. Of the archers, 21 (75%) are explicitly marked as noble. The 28 listed archers represent about 9% of the overall list of 326.

Analysis of the 1470 and 1557 muster rolls

As noted before, the 1470 list doesn't say much about the ranks or titles of those who are not barons and above. What can we learn from the 1557 lists, and what might that suggest about the 1470 lists?

In the first section of the 1557 lists, there are 94 people total who showed up for the convocation, of whom 93 have one or more forms of explicit noble designation, whether a title (e.g. baron, count, viscount, etc.), knight, squire, lord, or equivalent. The one person without a designation, Pierre Mallo, is described as being on his deathbed.

In the second section of the 1557 lists there are 233 people total who claim exemption, of whom 224 have one or more forms of explicit noble designation. This leaves nine people who do not have an explicit noble designation. Two of these appear to represent a duplicate entry, leaving eight people out of 232.

There is an interesting problem connected with one of those, a non-archer, who does not have an explicit noble designation:

[\(Gilles de la Roque 142\)](#)

Charles Plissard, called Brizambourg, is declared to be exempt, because he is Pannetier ordinaire of the King.

The first thing that I tried to do was to determine whether *pannetier ordinaire* implied nobility. It isn't clear what a *pannetier ordinaire* of the king does. While they may have begun as honorary court bread-cutters, they clearly do much more, including in some cases carrying messages as if they were aides-de-camp. The other ten *pannetiers ordinaires* to the king in the 1557 list are all explicitly marked as noble, and they include one count, five knights, two squires, and two lords. With that kind of company, it is unlikely that the eleventh, Charles Plissard, would not also be a noble.

Further research using Google, looking for Brizambourg, found a web page with some genealogy for the family name Poussard ([Bachelier](#)). This was fascinating. There are three people called Charles Poussard on this web page. The first name on the web page we will call Charles Poussard A. Halfway down there is a

Charles Poussard who is Lord of Brizambourg, which is the place name appearing in the quotation under discussion, who we will call Charles Poussard B. He has a younger son, who we will call Charles Poussard C. Charles Poussard A and Charles Poussard B share the Lordship de Lignières. 'Plissard' and 'Poussard' are very similar, and a clerical error is possible. Poussard is about ten times as common a name as Plissard according to Google counts.

There is further supporting information available about the Poussard family ([de Lacroix](#)) ([Société des Archives Historiques](#) 384).

Then, in the 1557 list three names later than Charles Plissard:

([Gilles de la Roque](#) 142)

Charles Poussard Lord de Fors, is declared to be exempt, because he is Pannetier ordinaire of the King.

This Charles Poussard is almost certainly Charles Poussard A, because he is Lord de Fors, is *Pannetier ordinaire* to the king, and would have been about 55 or 57 at the time of the 1557 muster.

This information leads us to conclude that 'Charles Plissard' is a misspelling for 'Charles Poussard', and refers either to Charles Poussard B or Charles Poussard C. Charles Poussard B might have been about 62 at the time of the muster, and was a Knight, which would be unusual not to mention in the 1557 muster rolls. Furthermore, by 1559 the elder son, Pierre, was Knight and Lord de Brisambourg, which suggests that Charles Poussard B had probably died by the time of the muster. So we propose that 'Charles Plissard' is Charles Poussard C, the younger of the two sons of Charles Poussard B.

Similarly, it is probable that the archer François de Rechine-Voisyn is the François de Rechinevoisin listed as Lord de la Maison-neuve, married in 1521, with a son Guy, married in 1568, ([de la Thaumassière](#) 964) who is very likely the Guy de Rechinevoisin appearing in the list as Lord de la Creulle. There is also Jehan de Rechinevoisin appearing in the list as Lord de la Grande Espyne, who might be another son of François.

It is also probable that the archer Pierre de la Fourest called de la Forge is the Pierre de la Forest, Squire, Lord de la Forge who is listed as marrying Louise or Gabrielle Desmier in 1545 ([Ouvrard](#) under 'Dexmier').

We have thus seen that Internet research suggests that three people not explicitly marked as noble, that is Charles Plissard, François de Rechine-Voisyn, and Pierre de la Fourest, were probably noble. Additional research including in local archives might reveal that some of the remaining five were noble. Compare the work done by Norbert Bernard mentioned on [page 24](#). The five remaining are François de Plaisance, François de Laye, Claude de Laye, Gabriel du Cloux, and Charles du Guerrie or Guerry.

For these five, there is a Gabriel du Cloux listed as Lord de la Cour, marrying in 1548. The evidence is thin, and I have been unable to determine whether he lived in Poitou, so he is not counted as a noble ([GeneaNet](#)). The 'de' construction for a surname often, but not always, was used to indicate nobility or a claim of nobility, or at least often used to indicate that the family began as noble or claimed nobility. It can't be taken as proof that these five people were nobles, but is suggestive.

It is interesting that five of the six not definitely known to be noble are archers. Whether this indicates non-noble status but possessed of fiefs, it does suggest that they might have had fewer resources. Even if all five were definitely non-noble, this would still leave 23 archers known to be noble.

The two sections of the 1557 lists together have six people out of 326 who lack explicit noble designation. If this proportion applied to the 1470 list, and if the clerks for the 1470 list had chosen to add the designations, then of the 420 combatants in the 1470 list we would expect about eight to have had no explicit noble designation.

It should be noted that nobody in either the 1470 list or the 1557 list has an explicit designation as non-noble. If they were known to be non-noble, perhaps we might have expected a notation to that effect, as indeed we will see later in other muster rolls.

In summary, the 1470 list has about 5% archers, and the 1557 list has about 9% archers.

Other muster rolls

Muster of Dinan held in 1472 (Charles IX)

There is a transcription of a muster, *Montre des Nobles et sujets aux armes de l'Archidiaconé de Dinan en l'Évesché de Saint-Malo ... l'an mil quatre cent soixante douze*. [Muster of the nobles and those subject to arms of the archdiocese of Dinan in the bishopric of Saint-Malo 1472] ([des Salles](#)). Dinan is in eastern Brittany, in France.

This muster lists 664 persons. Here is the breakdown:

19 appeared as men at arms

227 appeared as archers, including eight crossbowmen

80 appeared as one variety or other of polearm

10 appeared with another weapon or without weapon specified

9 excused, mostly regular soldiers, including one who said he no longer had land

319 in default, including 51 men at arms, 12 archer, 2 polearm, and 254 without weapon specified

There are a number of points of discussion.

First, omitting those in default or excused, there are 336 combatants. There are three different people entitled lord of Launay. There are two parishes with the note “N’y a nuls nobles” [there are no nobles here]. While we cannot take this to mean that everyone listed in the muster roll is a noble, the wording is nevertheless interesting.

Second, there are several interesting injunctions. One polearm is ordered to upgrade to an archer. Several archers are ordered to upgrade their swords. Unlike other musters, in which threats to seize a fief seem to be in the future, this muster has a number of lands apparently seized immediately, to be held until specified conditions are met. These seizures require an upgrade of armour or weapon or horse or person, or more generally require that the person appear in accordance with their income. There are 34 seizures, the great majority of which appear to be of the immediate variety. The number of people in default is unusually high, and the number of men at arms in default or with their lands seized is also unusually high.

Third, including the crossbowmen, there are 227 (68%) archers.

Fourth, of the entire muster 149 (22%) are explicitly marked as noble. Of the archers, 33 (15%) are noble.

Muster of Autun held in 1474 (Louis XI)

There is a transcription of this muster in *État Militaire et Féodal des bailliages d'Autun, Montcenis, Bourbon-Lancy, et Semur-en-Brionnais en 1474* [Military and Feudal state of the bailiwicks of Autun, Montcenis, Bourbon-Lancy, and Semur-en-Brionnais in 1474] ([Société Éduenne](#) 75-163). Autun is in east-central France. This muster is by Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, who was in armed conflict with the

King of France at the time. This list includes full details of fiefs and revenues, somewhat similar to the muster roll from Sens (see [page 28](#)).

The muster, which covers a number of bailiwicks, provostships, and chatelainships, lists 194 persons. Here is the breakdown:

- 17 will furnish men at arms
- 29 will furnish mounted archers, all crossbowmen
- 25 will furnish mounted dagger-men
- 45 will furnish foot combatants, with the choice of polearm or firearm ([Société Éduenne](#) 84)
- 2 were excused
- 61 had revenues below the minimum and were excused
- 15 were on the side of the king of France

There are a number of points of discussion.

First, omitting those excused, exempt, or on the opposing side, there are 116 combatants.

Second, this muster roll is unusual in having regulations that specifically excused people from providing military service if they had annual revenue below 16 *écus* (close to 16 *livres*). See the regulations on [page 36](#). There is some variation in enforcement, with some people with revenues below this level furnishing combatants, and others with revenues above this level being excused.

Third, while the foot combatants have a choice of polearm or firearm, we will be conservative and assume that all are polearmers, and accordingly none will be counted as archers with firearms. All the mounted archers appear to be armed with crossbows. The archers and dagger-men have been assigned in proportion to the number of mentions of each in the muster, since otherwise it would be impossible to assign a category for people who will furnish, for example, a mounted archer and a mounted dagger-man.

Fourth, unique to this muster roll, out of the 171 people explicitly marked as noble there are 17 described as *noble homme* [noble man] without any other indication of nobility. Is this due to omission by the clerks, or is it a deliberate indication of lesser nobles with land but without title or rank? The general high level of care taken in this muster roll suggests that it might be deliberate. If so, what would be the effect on the other muster rolls in this paper if those clerks had added such indications? In a similar vein, a *réformation* for Dol for 1478 has a number of lines such as “Robin du Han noble man living in a noble manner” ([La Pérenne](#)).

Also unique to this muster roll, four persons are described as *honorable homme* [honourable man], which is a term usually applied to senior merchants and artisans, and therefore these people are presumably non-noble. If the clerks were indeed being careful, then it would be probable that the other 19 people without specific indication were also non-noble. Of those without explicit indication of nobility, four have family names that are indicated as noble elsewhere in the muster roll.

Also unique to this muster roll, there is considerable detail about the exact kind and source of feudal revenue that is registered, as well as whether the holding carries the right of justice, be it high, middle, or low. Attaching a right of justice to a holding apparently makes that holding noble as long as the two remain

attached, but apparently does not imply that the owner of the right of justice is noble ([Merlin 362-364](#)). We therefore do not use having the right of justice as an indication of nobility.

Fifth, out of the entire list of 194 persons, 171 (88%) are explicitly noble. Out of the 116 combatants, 113 (97%) are noble. 25% of the combatants are archers, and 100% of the archers are noble. Even among the group with annual revenues below about 16 *livres*, 43 out of 61 (70%) are noble.

Sixth, six knights are expected to furnish mounted archers rather than the more usual men at arms, either in their person or through substitutes. They are lord Damas d'Alonne, lord Philippe Breschart, lord de Dyoul, lord de Vitry-sur-Loire, lord Hughes de Thoisy, and lord Jacques de Clugny.

Seventh, this muster differs from others in that it is not clear how many physically showed up, if any. While there are hints of people having made actual choices between providing, for example, archers or dagger-men, none of those providing foot soldiers has yet had to choose between providing pike or firearm. All mention of equipment refers to the exact text of the duke's regulations. There are no injunctions to upgrade equipment or horses, suggesting that there was no inspection involved. There are no hints of people having chosen between serving personally or providing a substitute.

Muster of Vannes held in 1477 (Louis XI)

This muster roll ([de la Borderie](#)), which was a selection from the more general *ban* and *arrière-ban* of combatants to serve under Loys de Rohan, Lord of Guémené Guégant, lists 355 combatants. The bishopric of Vannes is in southern Brittany, France. This muster roll also appears complete in [de Laigue](#) (see [page 43](#)), and appears to have significant differences in the text for each person. I have not yet compared the two sources.

There are 21 men at arms, 168 archers including 5 crossbowmen, and 166 polearmers. The proportion of archers is 47%. Of the men at arms 15 (71%) are explicitly noble, of the archers 9 (5%) are noble, and of the polearmers 7 (4%) are noble. Of the entire list, 31 (9%) are noble.

For a few of the men at arms, the names of their retinue are given, so there is the interesting entry in which Jehan is presumably taking along his sons or brothers.

[\(de la Borderie\)](#)

Jehan du Cheffduboy, man at arms with four horses, Terrien de Cheffduboy archer, Henri de Cheffduboy dagger-man.

Muster of Saint Malo and Dol held in 1480 (Louis XI)

Similarly in St. Malo and Dol in eastern Brittany, in France, in 1480 there is a list of those who showed up ([Anonymous B](#)). Of the 58 people:

2 appeared as men at arms

16 appeared as archers

18 appeared as one variety or another of polearmers

5 appeared without weapon specified
1 was excused
16 failed to show up

There are 16 archers (44%) out of the 36 people whose weapons are identified. This muster roll is additionally interesting in that it lists the annual revenues for many of these people, and these incomes range from 2 *livres* to 300 *livres*. Of the archers, one is explicitly marked as noble. Of the others, one is noble. Comparison with a *réformation* for Dol from 1478 ([La Pérenne](#)) allows us to show that ten more are noble, and four are definitely of low estate. There are a total of five noble archers. Of the entire list, 12 (21%) are reasonable certain to be noble.

Muster of Saint-Brieuc held in 1480 (partial) (Louis XI)

There was a muster in Brittany at Saint-Brieuc in 1480, to which nobles from the region were commanded to show up ([Anonymous A](#)). These places are in northern Brittany, in France. The web page reproduces only part of the muster, for five parishes, and the web page calls them all nobles, but as mentioned elsewhere this cannot be taken as proof that all of them were noble. A summary of the results shows that of the 73 persons:

3 appeared as men at arms
30 appeared as archers, including one crossbowman
20 appeared with one variety or another of polearm
9 were excused (typically they already served in a regular military unit)
11 failed to show up

To determine who is reasonably certain to be noble in this muster we use a different method from our analysis of the other muster rolls.

The same source reproduces a list of the noble families in each parish for the *réformations* of 1426, 1427, and 1536. These *réformations* were inquiries whose purpose was to determine who was currently noble and required to provide military service, and was therefore exempt from the *fouage* [hearth tax]; and perhaps more important from the point of view of the authorities, who was not noble and providing acceptable military service, and therefore had to pay the *fouage*. For the purposes of this paper, we assume that if a family name appears as noble in one of the *réformations*, and in the muster roll for the same parish, there is a good chance that the person is noble.

Let us examine the five possibilities given two families with the same name in a parish, one family being noble and one family being non-noble.

- 1) The noble family is mentioned in 1426 or 1427, and appears in the 1480 muster and is still noble; or appears in the 1480 muster and is mentioned in 1536. This possibility would make our point.
- 2) The noble family is mentioned in 1426 or 1427, and appears in the 1480 muster but has lost their nobility. Not impossible, but unlikely. If they became non-noble by dying out or by being too poor to provide military service, why are they still called to serve in the 1480 muster?
- 3) The noble family is mentioned in 1426 or 1427, and the non-noble family appears in the 1480 muster. Possible, but surprising. The noble family would have to have been on the way down as just described, and the non-noble family on the way up, becoming wealthy enough to be required to provide military service while not yet having become noble.

4) The noble family is not yet noble but appears in the 1480 muster and is mentioned in 1536. Not impossible, but not very likely. They would have been on the way up, becoming wealthy enough to be required to provide military service in 1480 while not yet noble, and then becoming ennobled by 1536.

5) The non-noble family appears in the 1480 muster and the noble family is mentioned in 1536. Possible, but surprising. The non-noble family would have to be wealthy enough to be required to provide military service in 1480, but not enough to have been ennobled by 1536. The noble family would have to have somehow avoided military service in 1480, or to have risen quickly to nobility between 1480 and 1536.

If there is only one family in the parish, possibilities 2) and 4) are the only problematic ones.

This reasoning is not foolproof, but it does make it reasonably certain that such a person in the muster roll is a noble. The eight families who are listed in a *réformation* as noble but for a different parish are not counted as noble for this muster. This reasoning allows us to determine that of the 73 people, 50 are reasonably certain to be noble. Six more can be shown to be noble by consulting the 1479 muster for Saint-Brieuc ([de Courcy C](#)).

There are 30 (57%) archers or crossbowmen out of the 53 combatants who showed up, and 21 (70%) of these archers are reasonably certain to be noble. Of the non-archers, 18 (78%) are reasonably certain to be noble. Of the entire list, 56 (77%) are reasonably certain to be noble.

Muster of the Bishopric of Cornouailles held in 1481 (Louis XI)

The second interesting source is a modern transcription of the *Monstre de l'Euesché de Cornouailles de l'an 1481* [Muster of the Bishopric of Cornouailles in the year 1481] ([Fréminville A](#)). Cornouaille is a region at the western end of Brittany, in France.

We begin with selections from the muster to give the flavour of the document.

([Fréminville A](#))

Muster of the Bishopric of Cornouailles in the year 1481

[Introduction]

The present book is the record and report of the general muster of the men at arms, of archers and crossbowmen and other men of war, nobles and ennobled [those recently promoted to the nobility], and other tenants of fiefs and noble inheritances and armed subjects of the bishop of Cornouailles, held and made at Carhaix by the noble and powerful Lord du Pont and de Rostrenen and noble squires Bertrand de Lanros and Yvon de Tréanna Lord de Monros, and each commissioned for this, by the duke our sovereign Lord. Present [was] master Jehan Lodic procurer of Cornouailles commissioned by the duke to report and register in writing the said muster, in the making of which, made by our said Lords the commissioners, took and held the oath of the hereinafter named and each to serve well and loyally the duke our sovereign Lord against all those who can live and die. Made at Carhaix the fourteenth and fifteenth day of September, 1481.

[First section]

And first

The Lord du Pont and de Rostrenen commissioner, Bertrand de Lanros, commissioner, who is man at arms and says that he will provide in his company the archers and equipment which follows with cutlass-wielder, firstly Philibert de la Pallue, archer in brigandine, secondly Thomas Guillaume, the same [i.e. archer in brigandine].

Yvon de Tréanna, Lord de Monros, commissioner, man at arms of the organization of the duke, and in the company of the said commissioners were the officers of justice who follow;

To wit:

Master Henry de Gouarnelen, seneschal of Cornouailles, well armed in brigandine and mounted on two good horses.

Master Jehan Lodic, prosecutor of Cornouailles, well armed in brigandine, axe and sallet of mail, mounted on a good and powerful horse and two other good horses.

Master Olivier du Rest, bailiff of Cornouailles, well armed in brigandine and having an axe and mounted on two good and powerful horses.

[Second section]

Men at arms.

[45 men at arms listed, of whom three show up armed with bow, and are ordered on pain of having their fiefs seized, to show up at the next muster equipped as men at arms. One is rejected. Note that for this muster roll, the men at arms in this roll are listed in this separate section.]

...

[Third section]

Hereinafter follow the names of the nobles and tenants of fiefs and others in dress of armed men according to the order of the chatelainships of the said bishopric of Cornouailles, and the parishes of the same place, which follow thus:

And first

The Chatelainship of Quimper-Corentin.

The nobles of the parish of St. Thomas.
None [in Latin].

The nobles of the parish of Loperhet.
Jehan Botinezre, archer in brigandine.

The nobles of [the parish of] Dirinon.
Hervé le Courtois, archer in brigandine and pike.
Hervé Manfuric, for himself and his father, with two horses, archer in brigandine.
Alain le Louët, represented by his son Jehan, archer in brigandine; ordered [to bring] another archer.
Louis Huon, archer in brigandine.
Jehan Simon, archer in brigandine.
Master Jehan de Kerguern, archer in brigandine and partisan.
Guillaume le Sal, for the widow of Jehan Brannalon, archer in brigandine.
Jehan Tanguy, in short mail coat and pike.
Riou le Goazre, and brigandine and pike.
Hervé Jaffreis, archer in brigandine; ordered [to bring] a quiver.

The nobles of [the parish of] Plonevez-Porzay.
Yvon le Gentil, represented by Guillaume le Bras, archer in brigandine.

[The nobles] of [the parish of] Cleden Cap-Sizun.
Master Yves Saluden, archer in brigandine.
Geffroy Keridiern, archer in brigandine.

[The third section has a total of ten chatelainships containing 138 parishes and 587 persons.]

...

[Fourth section]

Nobles and ennobleds [those recently promoted to the nobility] defaulting and not appearing.

[42 persons, with generally no indication of how they might have been armed.]

There are 679 names in total. Here is the breakdown:

49 appeared as men at arms

440 appeared as archers, including ten with crossbows and one with a firearm

122 appeared as polearmers, including one demi-lance and 16 with javelins (i.e. spears)

25 appeared without weapon specified

43 in default

Including everyone from the first three sections of the muster, namely those who showed up, there are 636 combatants.

There are a number of points of discussion.

First, there are 429 archers, ten crossbowmen, and one person with a firearm. That is, 440 (69%) of those from the bishopric are archers or crossbowmen.

Second, a number from this document are only listed as wearing armour, and are not listed as carrying weapons. The commissioners for some musters are picky about ordering people to come with acceptable equipment, so presumably it was a clerical choice to not list weapons. If any of those without listed weapons were carrying bows or crossbows, then the proportion of archers and crossbowmen would be higher.

Third, in the third section the headings are of the form "The nobles of the parish of PLACE", strongly suggesting that the commissioners believed, or wished to pretend, that those they listed were all nobles. However, this phrasing does not prove that they were indeed all nobles. From the point of view of determining whether everyone listed is truly a noble, there is one interesting entry:

(Fréminville A)

Daniel Coat Ronan, of low estate, holder of noble land, in short mail coat.

The fact that this one person is explicitly listed as being non-noble suggests the possibility that most or all of the others were noble. In this regard there is another very interesting entry in the muster:

(Fréminville A)

Henry le Glaz, archer in brigandine. Ordered to have a page and get a noble man for himself in place of Orges Larmor by whom he was represented.

This entry implies that the substitute Orges Larmor was not a noble. The commissioners require that Henry provide a different substitute for himself, a noble next time. It is too much to assume from this

injunction that all substitutes had to be nobles, but it is still interesting that the commissioners require this upgrade. Here is another quotation from a different source that suggests that a substitute might have been required to be noble.

([de Laigue](#) xi)

All the owners of noble fiefs took part [in the arrière-ban]; so much so, that the widows and the minor children themselves appeared at the inspections and found themselves required to furnish a noble man in their place.

Fifth, of the 440 archers, 21 (5%) are explicitly listed as noble. The transcriber, Norbert Bernard, has done further detailed research, and has identified an additional 69 archers as being definitely noble. If we include Bernard's research, then 90 (20%) of the archers are known to be noble. Of the other combatants, 33 (17%) are marked as noble, and Bernard identifies a further 18 (9%) as noble. Of those who were in default, 21 (49%) are marked as noble. Of the entire list, 162 (24%) are known to be noble.

I would love to be able to do that kind of additional detailed research for the other muster rolls, but lack both the time and the direct access to local archives. Even doing a bit of research using the Internet takes quite a long time per name.

Muster of the Bishopric of Tréguier held in 1481 (Louis XI)

There is a transcription of an earlier muster roll, also for Tréguier, in France, namely *Montres De L'évêché De Tréguier Tenue En L'an M Cccc Lxxxvi* [Muster of the Bishopric of Tréguier held in the year 1481] ([de Courcy A](#)).

Unlike the 1503 muster roll, this one is divided into just two categories, men at arms and archers. The 1481 muster in Cornouailles is arranged similarly. There is uncertainty about whether all of those designated as archers had bows and quivers. It is possible that some with that designation had polearms, and if so the proportion of archers will be too high. The list of required equipment for this muster (see the table on [page 35](#)) allows a choice between bow and polearm for people with a lower income.

There are 1165 people in total. Here is the breakdown:

81 appeared as men at arms

1084 appeared as archers, of whom 34 have crossbows, and three have firearms

There are a number of points of discussion.

First, of those identified as men at arms, 21 (26%) are noted as excused or as failing to show up. Of those identified as archers, 40 (4%) are noted as excused or as failing to show up.

Second, of the 1165 persons, 1084 (93%) are designated as archers, although as noted above not all would necessarily have had a bow. Unlike the 1503 muster for Tréguier, very few bows are mentioned explicitly, so we can't make an estimate of the proportions of bows to polearms, although crossbows and firearms do seem to be mentioned explicitly.

Third, the muster roll begins with the text of the requirements for what a noble must provide at the muster, either in person or by hiring a substitute, according to their income. Below 100 or 140 *livres* of rent they could choose bow or polearm. From 100 or 140 *livres* up to 200 *livres* they were required to choose a bow. Above 200 *livres* they were obliged to provide a man at arms. See [page 35](#) for further details.

Fourth, one part of the introductory text implies that everyone mentioned is noble (see the following quotation), although other evidence in this muster roll and in the 1503 muster roll appears to suggest that not everyone would necessarily be noble despite the opening text.

[\(de Courcy A 1\)](#)

And first let it be noted that all the nobles of the country and Duchy of Brittany must hold themselves in a state [of military readiness] according to their power [income].

Fifth, of the men at arms, 37 (46%) are explicitly marked as noble. Of the archers, 86 (8%) are noble, plus 29 (3%) are ennobled (i.e. recently promoted to the nobility), for a total of 115 (11%). Of the 29 who are ennobled, five are noted as being ennobled sailors. Of the entire list, 152 (13%) are noble.

Sixth, unlike the 1503 muster a generation later, the number of people required to upgrade their gear is low, only 30 out of 1165 (3%). The number of those who failed to show up is also low.

Seventh, among those ordered to upgrade, six archers are ordered to upgrade their substitute, and four of these are explicitly ordered to upgrade to a noble. While this is interesting, it cannot be taken to prove that others serving either in person or through a substitute were noble. One upgrade is ordered because the substitute is noted as being a “bad person”.

Eighth, there are some interesting notes in this muster roll, about people who are sick, leprous, disabled, old, or having a broken leg. There is an implication that they are all excused from serving, but the text is not clear. At least one priest, one student, and one blind man provide substitutes, so presumably these conditions were not valid excuses for not providing military service. Three of the men at arms had originally mustered as archers, and were ordered to upgrade to men at arms; and one of these listed as a man at arms appears to have been permitted to muster as an archer.

Ninth, among those mentioned, 14 have some indication of poverty. It is not clear whether they were excused as a result, as they are in some other muster rolls, or whether they would instead be penalized. Of those in poverty, two are poor, one musters “on foot”, six are said to have “sold everything”, and five are described as *prodigues* [wastrels]. One of those wastrels nevertheless managed to supply an archer with two horses as his substitute, which is curious.

Muster of Léon held in 1503 (Louis XII)

There is a transcription of a muster, *Monstres généralles des nobles annoblis et tenants fief noble d'en l'esvesché de Leon ... l'an mil cinq cent trois* [General musters of the nobles, ennobled, and tenants of noble fiefs within the bishopric of Leon ... the year 1503] ([Anonymous C](#)). Léon is in western Brittany, in France.

This muster, including a supplement, lists 736 persons. Here is the breakdown:

29 appeared as men at arms
135 appeared as archers, including two crossbowmen
141 appeared as one variety or other of polearmers, including 56 javelineers
352 appeared without weapon specified
16 excused
63 in default

There are a number of points of discussion.

First, omitting those in default or excused, there are 657 combatants. This muster roll is the only one listing a significant number of javelineers (the javelins were spears not thrown weapons). There are many combatants without any weapon specified, though a number have their armour listed.

Second, there are several interesting injunctions. One person is too young, and is ordered to provide a different man. One person is represented by his son, and is ordered either to serve himself, or to have someone else who is *plus saige* [wiser] than his son. Eight substitutes, presumably non-noble, are ordered to be upgraded to nobles.

Third, including the crossbowmen, there are 135 (21%) archers. If some of those without weapon specified were also archers, that number would be higher.

Fourth, of the entire muster 100 (14%) are explicitly marked as noble. Two persons are noted as tenants of noble fiefs, and thus perhaps non-noble. Of the archers, 19 (14%) are noble.

Muster of Tréguier held in 1503 (Louis XII)

There is a modern transcription of the *Montre de Tréguier en 1503* [Muster of Tréguier in 1503] ([d'Acigné](#)). Tréguier is a town in northern Brittany, in France. There are ambiguities in this list; and variations in wording presumably arising from using several clerks, or from clerks becoming tired. The equipment for a number of people is listed simply as *etca* [et cetera]. From context it appears to be intended to have the same meaning as *idem* [same as the preceding], but it is not possible in all cases to assign appropriate text with any confidence.

The categories below include those who appeared at the muster as indicated, plus those ordered to appear at the next muster so equipped. The men at arms category includes those listed as men at arms, those equipped with a lance, and those who show up with two or more armed attendants, usually archers in this muster roll. A muster roll from the same town dated 1481 indicates that nobles with rents of 200 *livres* per annum are required to provide a man at arms plus one archer, and those with rents of 300 *livres* are required to provide a second archer ([de Courcy A](#)). Because of the ambiguities in this list we choose not to assume that nobles accompanied by only one archer are men at arms, but we do assume when not indicated otherwise that nobles accompanied by two archers are men at arms. Due to omitting those with only one archer, the number of men at arms might be understated.

The archer category includes those listed as archers plus those who have bows or crossbows. Of the 118 peoples who are neither men at arms nor archers, there are many with no equipment listed. It is likely that some of these are archers. For example, two people who are not indicated to be archers are ordered to show up at the next muster with quivers. These two are included as archers. There are a total of 869 names.

Here is the breakdown:

66 appeared as men at arms

560 appeared as archers, of whom 48 have a crossbow and one has a firearm, and 14 are ordered to have either bow or crossbow; 189 of the archers have a javelin

118 appeared as other combatants, including 17 with polearm and 11 with javelin

43 were excused

82 failed to show up

There are a number of points of discussion.

First, of the 744 who were showed up ready to serve, 560 (75%) are archers.

Second, of those excused temporarily, three are ordered to show up at the next muster as men at arms, and ten as archers. Six are excused because they are off at war, five because they are poor, one because he is sick, and one because he is a student outside the country.

Third, of the men at arms, 55 (83%) are explicitly marked as noble. Of the archers, 75 (13%) are noble. Of the other combatants, 14 (15%) are noble. Of those who were excused, 16 (53%) are noble, and of those who failed to show up, 7 (9%) are noble. Of the entire list, 173 (20%) are noble.

Fourth, compared to some of the other muster rolls, many of the people appear with no equipment or with inadequate equipment. At least 63% of the people are ordered to improve their gear or retinue.

Fifth, the muster roll includes near the beginning a phrase in four variations that probably indicates that some of those required to serve in arms due to holding noble fiefs might not themselves be noble.

[\(d'Acigné\)](#)

Here follow the declarations of the nobles and ennobled [those recently promoted to the nobility] of the parish of Plouhan and others subject to arms

Those “others subject to arms” are presumably not noble. Similar phrases in other muster rolls are also vague about whether they refer to nobles, to non-nobles, or to a mixture of the two.

Muster of the Jurisdiction of Goëlle held in 1543 (Francis II)

There is a transcription of another muster made by de Courcy, *Montre du Ressort de Goëlle tenue en l'an M.D Xliiii* [Muster of the Jurisdiction of Goëlle held in the year 1543] ([de Courcy B](#)). Goëlle is a county in northern Brittany, in France.

There are a total of 320 names. Here is the breakdown:

10 appeared as possible men at arms

158 appeared as archers, of whom 72 are listed as mounted, and the remainder are unspecified

26 appeared as other combatants without weapon specified, of whom two are listed as mounted, 22 are listed as on foot, and two are unspecified

12 excused

114 failed to show up

There are a number of points of discussion.

First, of the 194 persons who show up, 158 (81%) are designated as archers. Not a single bow or crossbow or quiver is mentioned explicitly.

Second, of the possible men at arms, six (60%) are explicitly marked as noble. Of the archers, 104 (66%) are noble. Of the other combatants, four (15%) are noble. Of those who failed to show up, 25 (22%) are noble. Of those who are excused because they muster elsewhere, ten (83%) are noble. Of the total number of 320 persons, 149 (47%) are noble.

Third, there are 14 combatants who are required to offer military service because they “hold noble fiefs”. One might assume that this implied that they were non-noble, except for the fact that two of them, Michel Le Bras and Julien Daniel, are also explicitly marked as noble. This category is therefore ambiguous.

Fourth, many of those listed in this muster roll are allowed to send substitutes, or to appear in a lesser state of readiness than the regulations would require, due to illness or poverty. Of the ten possible men at arms, only two show up equipped as men at arms. Five are permitted to muster as archers due to lack of means; one is permitted to muster with a firearm due to lack of means; and two show up as archers and are ordered to appear at the next muster as men at arms, but they object, claiming lack of means. There is a high absentee rate for this muster. Presumably times were tough in Goëlle in 1543.

Fifth, one person shows up who isn't required to muster. A whole paragraph explains that he is normally excused because he has the duty of defending an island. He is explicitly marked as a noble, and might have been a man at arms. He is not included in the above numbers.

Muster of Sens held in 1545 (Francis I)

There is a transcription of several musters in *Le ban et l'arrière ban du bailliage de Sens au XVI^e siècle* [The *ban* and the *arrière-ban* of the bailiwick of Sens in the 16th century] ([Roy 22-120](#)). Sens is in east-central France, not far from Paris.

This muster is one of the most detailed of all the muster rolls. For each person there is their title, a description of the fiefs they hold, whether they hold the fiefs jointly with other people, the exact annual revenue from those fiefs, the value of the tax imposed, and discussions about whether they are exempt from paying the tax due to military service elsewhere or other reason, or are in default. The transcriber has merged several musters from 1545 to 1552, and as a result there might be overlaps and gaps in the coverage.

To give the flavour of this muster roll, here are the first few entries. The value of a *sol* appearing in these entries is a twentieth of a *livre*.

([Roy 22-23](#))

The said muster held in the town of Sens the 15th day of July in the year 1545.

The lord of Fleurigny.

Milord Francois Le Clerc, knight, baron de la Forest le Roy and de Givry, lord of Fleurigny, Bailiff and captain of Sens, is lord of the said Feurigny.

The revenue of the fiefs of the said knight located in this bailiwick are worth per year 1900 livres

The said lord held the muster in person and is charged with the conduct of the troops of the said ban and arrière-ban, declaring he wishes to give personal [military] service as much for the fiefs that he holds in this bailiwick as for others. For which [he] was accepted.

The lords of Sergines who are:

Tristand de Hemery

Pierre Tasche on behalf of damsel Magdaleine de Hemery, his wife, and

Guillaume du Molin, guardian of the children of the late Loys de Hemery.

All the aforesaid lords sharing the said Sergines, each one for their portions which are worth together in revenue per year 200 livres

Taxed 47 livres.

Jaques de Nansot, squire, present, said that he was lord for half of the said Sergines, and stated that he was of the ordnance of the company of milord the duke of Guyse, and because of that he had not been informed promptly, nor of the partition by which he said the said half came to him, he was given a delay of a week to inform [the commission].

And as for the other lords, because it appeared the said Tristand de Hemery is sick in bed, and the said Tasche is incapable of bearing arms, [they] were declared exempt from personal [military] service, and presented for themselves Jaques Tasche, squire, son of the said Pierre Tasche, in the state of harquebusier which was accepted and [he] made the oath.

Julien de Tornebeuf, lord of the fief of Charmoy located in the vicinity of Sergines, which is worth in revenue per year 6 livres

Taxed 30 sols.

Bastien de Villiers, lord of Fontenilles located in the vicinity of Sergines, worth in revenue per year 105 sols

Taxed 25 sols.

Considering the condition of the said coat [of armour] and age of the said de Villiers [he] was exempt from personal [military] service and was accepted for payment, and the said de Villiers paid and put into the hands of the lord of Vertilly selected and commissioned for the receipt of the funds of the said ban and arrière ban the said sum of twenty five sols. P. de Vielchastel.

The merged muster for Sens lists 448 persons. Here is the breakdown:

26 appeared as men at arms

39 appeared as archers, including 11 with firearms

2 appeared as polearmers, or without weapon specified

10 appeared without weapon specified

270 were taxed in lieu of military service

93 were exempt from mustering and from tax, usually because they were serving elsewhere

8 were in default and had their fiefs seized, or abandoned those fiefs

There are a number of points of discussion.

First, omitting those taxed, excused, or in default, there are 77 combatants. This is an unusually low proportion.

Second, there are a large number of people, including knights and squires, who appear to have been able to avoid personal military service by paying the tax. There are also a dozen or so people who managed some combination of paying tax, being partially exempt, and providing a substitute for military service. There are also comments that because the total number of combatants raised by the *ban* and *arrière-ban* was not sufficient, additional regular soldiers were hired ([Roy](#) 95 98).

Third, including those with firearms, there are 39 (51%) archers.

Fourth, of the entire muster 344 (77%) are explicitly marked as noble. Of the archers, 30 (77%) are noble.

Fifth, there are a number of lordships held by two or more people. At least five of those who are exempt appear to be Scots serving in the Scots Guards. A Master Philipppes de Courtenay, an ecclesiastic, is amusingly described as a “*Noble et scientifique personne*” [Noble and knowledgeable person] ([Roy](#) 31).

Muster of Saint-Renan held in 1557 (Henry II)

There is a transcription of a muster, *Rolle des nobles subgectz aux bans et aryere ban de lesveche de Leon esleuz a tenir garnyson en la ville de Saint-Renan ... mil V^e LVII*. [Roll of the nobles subject to the *bans* and *arrière-ban* of the bishopric of Leon chosen to be held at the garrison in the town of Saint-Renan ... 1557] ([de la Rogerie](#)). Saint-Renan is in western Brittany, in France, and is part of the bishopric of Léon featured in the preceding muster.

This muster lists 33 men at arms and 281 archers for a total of 314. All the men at arms are explicitly noble. Despite the text in the title [Roll of the nobles subject to the *bans* and *arrière-ban*...], not all of those listed as archers are explicitly noble. 77 of the archers are explicitly noble, and 16 of the archers are described as tenants of noble fiefs and thus are possibly non-noble. This leaves 188 archers with an ambiguous noble status. Of the entire list, 110 (35%) are noble.

Muster of the Bishopric of Cornouailles held in 1562 (Charles IX)

There is a transcription of a muster for Cornouailles in 1562, *Monstre générale de l'Euesché de Cornouailles, faicte à Quimper les 15^e et 16^e du mois de may 1562* [General muster of the Bishopric of Cornouailles, made at Quimper the 15th and 16th of the month of May 1562] ([Fréminville B](#)). Cornouaille is a region at the western end of Brittany, in France.

This muster was to be *en robe* [unarmoured] presumably due to the Edict of Saint Germain from January of that year which forbade weapons for any one of any religion, except for nobles who could continue to have the dagger and sword that they would “ordinarily carry” ([Stegmann](#) 11). Since those appearing for this muster could not wear their required equipment, they instead declared how they would serve if summoned

for military service. The muster was explicitly for the *arrière-ban* only. Why it did not include the *ban* is not clear. Otherwise, the general pattern is similar to the 1481 muster for Cornouailles, with subheadings such as “The nobles of the parishes of Nulliac and Saint-Caradec”.

A summary of the results shows that of the 618 persons:

14 declare they will appear as men at arms
84 declare they will appear as mounted harquebusiers (i.e. with firearm)
14 declare they will appear as archers, not listed as mounted
39 declare they will appear as pikemen
79 appear without weapon specified
107 appear as “under the edict”, without weapon specified
281 were in default, presumably because they failed to show up

There are a number of points of discussion.

First, the meaning of the phrase *sous l'edict* [under the edict] is unclear. We conjecture that those “under the edict” were Protestants forbidden to serve, and so excused, though I have not found an edict with such a restriction. The text of the Edict of Saint-Germain, forbidding weapons, applied to “all our said subjects, of whatever Religion, state, quality and condition” ([Stegmann 11](#)), Catholic and Protestant alike. Were things interpreted differently in Brittany, or did another edict apply? Those “under the edict” without weapon specified are not counted as combatants.

Second, most of those in default had presumably simply failed to show up, but seven are declared to be in default despite having excuses that sound reasonable.

Third, for this muster roll the numbers given above include nine mounted harquebusiers, one archer, one pikeman, and six unspecified, who appear but are exempt from serving due to offices they hold, or who are otherwise excused. Some of those without weapon specified are listed as deceased.

Fourth, rather unexpectedly, three of the archers are required to provide twenty archers each, and two of the harquebusiers are required to provide twenty mounted harquebusiers each. It is not clear why this requirement is made, though presumably these were wealthier nobles. The additional archers and harquebusiers would presumably be non-noble. In this muster roll the trend away from archery towards firearms is clear. If any of those without weapon specified were archers or harquebusiers, the proportion of missile troops would be higher.

Fifth, of the men at arms 12 (86%) are explicitly marked as noble. Of the harquebusiers and archers combined, 87 are marked as noble plus one is shown to be noble by Norbert Bernard making 88 (90%). Of the pikemen, 22 are marked as noble plus two are shown to be noble by Norbert Bernard making 24 (62%). Of the unspecified, 56 (70%) are marked as noble. Of those under the edict, 59 are marked as noble plus two are shown to be noble by Norbert Bernard making 61 (57%). Of those in default, 74 (26%) are marked as noble. Of the entire list, 313 (51%) are known to be noble.

Muster of Dinan held in 1569 (Charles IX)

There is a transcription of a muster, *Ban & Arriere-ban de l'Evesché de Saint Malo en l'Archidiaconé de Dinan 1569* [Ban and Arrière-ban of the Bishopric of Saint Malo in the Archdiocese of Dinan 1569] ([Morice](#)). Dinan is in eastern Brittany, in France. This muster roll seems to be a summons to actual military service, and is perhaps a selected subset of the potential muster.

This muster is in three parts and lists 79 persons. Here is the breakdown:

- 5 appeared as men at arms
- 30 appeared as mounted harquebusiers (i.e. with firearm)
- 5 appeared as archers, who are not listed as mounted
- 39 appeared as foot combatants without weapons specified

This muster roll has an unusually high proportion of explicit indications of nobility. Of the archers four (80%) are explicitly noble; and of the mounted harquebusiers 29 (97%) are noble. Of the entire list, 77 (97%) are marked as noble.

The Proportion of Noble Archers in the Muster Rolls

I have processed 16 muster rolls with archers who are not simply part of retinues. The table shows the proportion of archers out of those who show up, omitting those excused or in default; the proportion of archers known to be noble; and the percentage of all combatants therefore known to be noble archers.

Muster, sorted by date	Combatants	Archers	% Archers	Archers known to be noble	% Archers known to be noble	% Combatants known to be noble archers
Caux and Gisors 1470	420	55	13%	5	9%	1%
Dinan 1472	336	227	68%	33	15%	10%
Autun 1474	116	29	25%	29	100%	25%
Vannes 1477	355	168	47%	9	5%	3%
Saint Malo 1480	38	16	42%	5	31%	13%
Saint-Brieuc 1480	53	30	57%	21	70%	40%
Cornouailles 1481	636	440	69%	90	20%	14%
Tréguier 1481	1165	1084	93%	115	11%	10%
Léon 1503	657	135	21%	19	14%	3%
Tréguier 1503	744	560	75%	75	13%	10%
Goëlle 1543	194	158	81%	104	66%	54%
Sens 1545	77	39	51%	30	77%	39%
Poitou 1557	326	28	9%	23	82%	7%
Saint-Renan 1557	314	281	89%	77	27%	25%
Cornouailles 1562	230	98	43%	88	90%	38%
Dinan 1569	79	35	44%	33	94%	42%
Mean			52%		45%	21%
Median			49%		29%	14%
Variance			7%		13%	3%
TOTAL	5740	3383	59%	756	22%	13%

Note: The Caux and Gisors 1470, Autun 1474, Sens 1545, and Poitou 1557 muster rolls are from France outside Brittany. The other muster rolls are from Brittany.

Note: If we graph the percentage of combatants known to be noble archers versus year there is a linear trend upward, but a linear model explains only 30% of the variance.

Speculative Proportions of Noble Archers

This is a recalculation of the preceding table, incorporating two speculative assumptions. In most of the muster rolls there are combatants whose weapons were not specified. The first speculative assumption is that they are divided among archers and non-archers in the same proportion as seen among those whose weapons are known in that same muster roll. The second speculative assumption is that at least 90% of the archers summoned by the *ban* and *arrière-ban* were noble. The overall conclusion of this paper is independent of this speculative calculation.

Muster, sorted by date	Combatants	Archers	% Archers	Archers known to be noble	% Archers known to be noble	% Combatants known to be noble archers
Caux and Gisors 1470	420	56	13%	50	89%	12%
Dinan 1472	336	234	70%	211	90%	63%
Autun 1474	116	51	44%	46	90%	40%
Vannes 1477	355	168	47%	151	90%	43%
Saint Malo 1480	38	18	47%	16	89%	42%
Saint-Brieuc 1480	53	30	57%	27	90%	51%
Cornouailles 1481	636	458	72%	412	90%	65%
Tréguier 1481	1165	1084	93%	976	90%	84%
Léon 1503	657	291	44%	262	90%	40%
Tréguier 1503	744	647	87%	582	90%	78%
Goëlle 1543	194	182	94%	164	90%	85%
Sens 1545	77	45	58%	40	89%	52%
Poitou 1557	326	28	9%	25	89%	8%
Saint-Renan 1557	314	281	89%	253	90%	81%
Cornouailles 1562	230	139	43%	125	90%	38%
Dinan 1569	79	64	81%	58	91%	73%
Mean			59%		90%	53%
Median			58%		90%	51%
Variance			7%		0%	6%
TOTAL	5740	3776	66%	3398	90%	59%

Required Military Service as a function of Income

The muster roll for Tréguier in 1481 includes regulations for what a noble was required to supply by way of military service, based on their annual income in *livres* of rent ([de Courcy A 1-2](#)). A *livre* is a pound of silver. Note that there are four gaps and one overlapping bracket (100 to 140 *livres*) in the original document, and hence in this table.

Livres of rent	Military role	Weapons	Retainers
under 60	archer or polearm	bow or polearm	none
60 to 80	archer or polearm	bow or polearm	none
100 to 140	archer or polearm	bow or polearm	page
100 to 200	archer	bow	archer or polearm
200 to 300	man at arms	lance	archer or polearm
300 to 400	man at arms	lance	archer plus polearm
400 to 500	man at arms	lance	two archers plus polearm
1000 to 1200	man at arms	lance	man at arms plus two archers plus polearm
1500 to 2000	man at arms	lance	two men at arms plus three archers
3000 and up	man at arms	lance	men at arms plus archers plus polearmers according to their income

Note: The quality of armour that the people were required to wear increased with each bracket, and is not listed in this table. The polearm mentioned in this muster roll is a *guisarme*, which is similar to a halberd. Other muster rolls mention different polearms.

Note: Those in the lowest bracket, under 60 *livres*, were asked to have a horse if they could afford it; and those in all other brackets, 60 *livres* and up, were required to have one or more horses of increasing quality. The horses are not listed in this table.

Note: Retainers who were men at arms would, in turn, have had their own retinues of archers, polearmers, and pages. Whether retainers would also have been noble, and if so in what proportion, is not known.

Note: One or more pages or other non-combatants were required in all brackets from 100 *livres* up, but they are listed only when they first appear, for the 100 to 140 *livres* bracket.

In 1450 Duke Pierre II of Brittany issued the following regulations.

([de Laigue xi](#))

Below 60 livres of rent, in brigandine or in cloth jacket of the new design without sleeves but with scales or mail on the arms, with the means of serving with a bow or with a guisarme [polearm].

Between 60 and 140 livres, as an archer in brigandine or as a guisarmer, with a dagger-man (that is 2 horses).

Between 140 and 200 livres, equipped as a man at arms..., with a dagger-man and a page (that is 3 horses).

Between 200 and 300 livres, equipped as a man at arms, with an archer or guisarmer in brigandine, a dagger-man and a page (that is 4 horses).

Between 300 and 400 livres, always equipped as a man at arms with two archers, a dagger-man and a page (that is 5 horses).

And following this pattern add an archer for every hundred livres of revenue.

This appears to be de Laigue's wording. The original as transcribed by Norbert Bernard has similar information, but with some interesting differences. It specifies nobles, though as mentioned elsewhere such a statement need not be taken at face value. A person may choose a bow only if they know how to fire arrows. Any person worth less than 140 *livres* may choose to muster as a man at arms. In the 300 to 400 bracket, one of the archers can be a guisarmer. There is also a 400 to 500 bracket, with the person equipped as a man at arms with a retinue of three archers, or two archers and a guisarmer, plus a dagger-man and a page. ([Bernard](#))

In 1473 Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, required:

([Société Éduenne 83](#))

For a revenue of 200 *écus*, a man at arms with three horses; For a revenue of 40 *écus*, an *homme de trait* [a crossbowman or archer] or dagger-man with a single horse; For a revenue of 16 *écus*, a foot man.

An *écu* was very close in value to a *livre*. These requirements were applied in the muster for Autun in 1474 (see [page 17](#)). This source also gives the most detailed specification that we have seen of the exact armour required.

Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of this paper is to investigate whether, and to what extent, French nobles used the bow as their primary military weapon. This is not about a noble using a bow for hunting, nor about a noble picking up a bow during battle to shoot at a particularly annoying enemy soldier. This is about French nobles going to war with the bow as their required weapon.

First, we have direct evidence from the French regulations governing the musters of the *ban* and *arrière-ban*. For example, there are the requirements for a noble in 1481, based upon annual income in *livres* (i.e. pounds of silver). A noble with an income of under 100 or 140 *livres* was required to serve as an archer or polearmner, presumably their choice. A noble with an income between 100 or 140 and 200 *livres* was required to serve as an archer. A noble with an income of 200 *livres* and above was required to serve as a man at arms. And so on. See the table on [page 35](#).

The archer in the 1481 muster ranked below the man at arms and above the polearmner. As a further indication of relative rank, in 1545 a man at arms would be paid twenty *livres* per month, an archer ten *livres*, someone with a firearm eight *livres*, and a polearmner just over six *livres* ([Roy 19](#)). In 1468 a specific unit of pay supported one man at arms, two mounted archers, two mounted dagger-men provided their horses were good enough, three archers on foot, or four polearmners on foot ([Société Éduenne 77](#)).

Second, many of those appearing in the muster rolls are listed as archers, or are listed as having a bow or crossbow or firearm as their weapon.

Third, we find statements in many of the muster rolls stating that all those listed therein were noble. We need not accept such statements at face value since there was clearly a constant tension between the ideal and the reality (see [page 41](#)). The ideal was that all French nobles owed military service, and that only nobles could give fealty and military service. The reality was that some non-nobles owned fiefs that required fealty and military service. Some nobles supplied substitutes, noble or non-noble, instead of appearing in person. In a few cases a substitute is ordered to be upgraded to a noble. There were also fiefs owned by non-nobles which did not require fealty or military service.

We find many entries in the muster rolls in which the person is explicitly indicated as being noble, whether by title or rank (e.g. peer, knight, dame, squire, cadet, etc.); by being lord or lady of some place; by being father, son, or brother of someone indicated as being noble; by holding an office that carried nobility with it; by being *pannetier ordinaire* of the king; or by being ennobled (i.e. recently made a noble). Those not explicitly indicated as being noble in the muster roll itself can sometimes be shown to be noble through additional research using other sources.

The muster rolls are extremely inconsistent about marking nobility. We have the muster for Poitou in 1557, for which 98% of those listed can be shown to be noble, and the muster for Autan in 1474, for which 97% of those required to provide combatants were noble. We also have two muster rolls for which only 9% of those listed are explicitly marked as noble.

Of the 7527 names in the 16 muster rolls, 2377 are either explicitly marked as noble or have been shown by additional research to be noble; 5111 are not marked; and 39 are marked as possibly non-noble. Of these

39, five are listed as of low estate and are definitely non-noble; four are listed as *honorable* [a title implying merchant or artisan] and are probably non-noble; and 30 are listed as “holders of noble fiefs” and are possibly non-noble. We say ‘possibly non-noble’, because we find that two “holders of noble fiefs” in the muster of Goëlle in 1543 are also marked as being noble.

Combining these three points, we find that many of those appearing in the muster rolls are listed as archers, or have bow or crossbow or firearm as their weapon; plus are either explicitly indicated as being noble, or can be shown to have been noble using other sources. Not surprisingly, there is no indication that any of the greater nobility went to war as archers. All the examples that I’ve seen so far are from the lesser nobility, plus a very small number of knights.



French archers directed by Joan of Arc, attack on Paris 1429 (Vigiles de Charles VII, Bibliothèque Nationale).

Before our period of interest archers seem to have been mostly part of retinues (see [page 42](#) and [page 43](#)), they were not summoned directly by the *ban* and *arrière-ban*, and they are unlikely to have been noble. There were also many non-noble French archers who served throughout our period of interest as militia, as regular soldiers, in retinues, in garrisons, and as members of town archery guilds; and this paper does not concern itself with them.

We have processed 16 muster rolls, from 1470 to 1569, mentioning archers who are not simply part of retinues or garrisons or regular military units. In these muster rolls, the median percentage of archers is 49%.

Of those archers, the median percentage known for certain to be noble is 29%. The median percentage of combatants known to be noble archers is 14%. See the table on [page 33](#).

If we consider only those who are known for certain to be nobles, the median proportion of noble archers summoned by the *ban* and *arrière-ban* according to these muster rolls is 14%. If we assume that everyone listed was a noble, the median proportion of noble archers according to these muster rolls would be 49%. The true value is likely to lie somewhere in between those two percentages.

If we combine all 16 muster rolls rather than treating them as separate samples, then the percentage of combatants who were archers would be 59% and the percentage of combatants known to be noble archers would be 13%. See the last row in the table on [page 33](#).

We need to be cautious about all of these percentages, as most of these muster rolls are from Brittany, which was semiautonomous for most of our period of interest. Brittany may not have been representative of France as a whole. The proportion of archers in the 12 muster rolls from Brittany is substantially higher than in the four muster rolls from elsewhere in France. See the table on [page 33](#). If there were more muster rolls available from outside Brittany, we could arrive at a better general estimate for the whole of France.

As an additional speculative step, we recalculated the numbers incorporating two assumptions. In most of the muster rolls there are combatants whose weapons were not specified, and if they are assumed to be divided among archers and non-archers in the same proportion as seen among those whose weapons are known, the median percentage of archers would rise to 58%. The other two median percentages don't change much. If we additionally assume that at least 90% of the archers were noble, a bold but not impossible assumption, then the median percentage of combatants known to be noble archers would rise to 51%. See the table on [page 34](#). This additional speculative step is not used in forming our conclusion.

Conclusion:

Between approximately 1450 and 1570 many French nobles were expected and required to serve as archers. The proportion of the total number of combatants summoned for military service who were noble archers seems to have been somewhere between about 10% and 50%, at least as evidenced by the available muster rolls for the *ban* and the *arrière-ban* during those years.

The muster rolls that we have found show clearly that many French nobles were expected and required to serve as archers. The myth that no noble ever went to war as an archer is exploded, and furthermore in one of the supposedly less archer-friendly kingdoms, France.

Additional notes

The nature of the ban and arrière-ban

Contamine suggests that before the period being considered in this paper the *ban* was for all vassals of the king, direct or indirect, and that the *arrière-ban* was for all able-bodied persons.

([Contamine A 87](#)) [the source is in English]

On the one hand, the monarchy tried to obtain the service of all fief-holders, whether they were direct vassals of the crown or not. That was the purpose of the king's *ban*. On the other hand, at least from 1302 and the defeat at Courtrai, the crown claimed to summon through the *arrière-ban* all those who were fit to bear arms, regardless of their position, whether they were subjects of the king, lay lords or the church.

There is support for this view in de la Roque. See for example the quotations from de la Roque ([Gilles de la Roque 29-30](#) on [page 10](#) above), and the assorted somewhat ambiguous decrees of the early 1300s ([Gilles de la Roque 95 et seq.](#)). Similarly, Roy believes that initially the *arrière-ban* referred to a communal militia, and only later to indirect fiefs ([Roy i-ii](#)). Here is a supporting quotation from de la Roque:

([Gilles de la Roque 7](#))

[King Philippe IV (1285-1314) ordered] ... that the Nobles who have 40 livres or more in revenue, and the non-Nobles who have 300 livres in moveable goods or the value of 500 livres in moveable goods plus inheritances, must [show up] to serve at the Ban and Arrière-Ban.

It is difficult to accept that this more inclusive meaning, even if it did apply during the early 1300s, also applied when the word *arrière-ban* was first used. At least as early as 1320 the terms *fief* and *arrière-fief* ([Gilles de la Roque 79](#) in his main treatise) and the Latin equivalents *feodis* and *retrofeodis* from at least as early as 1248 ([Guérard 146](#)), appear clearly to mean fiefs held directly and indirectly. The parallel between *arrière-fief* and *arrière-ban* is persuasive that the original meaning of *arrière-ban* applied to those in indirect fealty. See also the following quotation from de la Roque which is repeated from page 8 above, along with a fragment of an ordinance of Louis X from 1315, and de la Roque's comment on that ordinance:

([Gilles de la Roque 2](#))

The difference between the Ban and Arrière-Ban is, that the Ban relates to Fiefs, and the Arrière-Ban to Arrière-Fiefs; that is to say, that the Vassals of Full-fiefs, are subject to the Ban, and the Arrière-Vassals to the Arrière-Ban.

([Gilles de la Roque 5](#))

The tenants of Fiefs must serve the King in the Arrière-ban, when the enemies have entered in multitudes into the Kingdom....

This order was instituted for the security and the defence of the State; because by this means on the occasions of foreign wars one could promptly and without troubling the public tranquility, assemble a troop of Lords of Fiefs and of Arrière-fiefs, well armed and equipped, to resist the efforts and invasions of enemies.

Contamine suggests that the usage of *arrière-ban* changed twice more, in about 1350 and again in about 1410. The French military was reorganized a number of times during these years.

([Contamine A](#) 156-157) [the source is in English]

After 1356, and above all from the reign of Charles V, the *arrière-ban* appears to have been entirely neglected for two reasons: first because fiscal interest no longer existed from the moment when other types of taxation (especially the hearth-taxes -- *fouages* -- and *tailles*) were imposed, bringing in a more regular and certain income; and secondly, because the government, for military and political reasons, no longer concerned itself with using the common people on a massive scale.

...

If from 1409-1410 we meet once again summonses to the *arrière-ban*, they were above all intended to give convocations an especially solemn form. And this was surely because a civil war was raging and it was necessary to do everything to rally and convince hesitant nobles who might otherwise have sought to abstain from fighting or to join the opposite party.

...

... Charles VII first of all re-established, under the name of *ban* and *arrière-ban*, the service of all tenants-in-chief who, from the first years of the reign of Louis XI, were even provided with their own permanent officers.

Some of the muster rolls that we have been examining list only relatively senior nobles. For example, the 1304 roll (see [page 42](#)) asks that a certain count provide 40 men at arms and 500 foot soldiers. It would be hard to reconcile precise numerical requirements of this kind with a summons of all those fit to bear arms. The first line for the 1304 roll mentions *ban* and *arrière-ban*, though it is possible that these words are de la Roque's, not part of the original text, and that the 1304 roll might list only those subject to the *ban*.

By the time of the muster rolls for Dinan in 1472 and Cornouailles in 1481, we find entire parishes listed as having only one person, or even no one at all, an occurrence which would be hard to reconcile with a summons of all those fit to bear arms. Similarly, the high proportion of people who show up who can be shown to be noble in some of the lists, especially the 97% for the muster roll for Autun in 1474 and the 98% for the muster roll for Poitou in 1557, is also inconsistent with a more inclusive summons.

It is not the purpose of this paper to investigate in depth the changes in the meaning of *ban* and *arrière-ban* over time. In any case, regardless of the origin and evolution of the terms, clearly the muster rolls featured in this study use the narrow meaning.

Migration into and out of the nobility

It was evident after working with these muster rolls and related material that there must have been a considerable turnover of families becoming noble, or losing their nobility. For example, in our examination of the muster of Saint-Brieuc in 1480 (see [page 20](#)), out of the 50 families listed as noble in the *réformations* of 1426, 1427, and 1536, only 18 families are listed in both the early and late *réformations*. During the intervening 110 years, the other 32 families either moved into or out of these parishes, or became noble, or lost their nobility, or indeed died out entirely due to war, disease, or lack of heirs. The necessity for these *réformations*, formal inquiries into who was and was not currently noble, speaks to this migration in status and location.

In a *réformation* from Lignol in 1427 there is a marginal note regarding Allain Le Massel illustrating some of the verbal evidence given. The source, de Laigue, has much else that is interesting touching this question.

[\(de Laigue 313\)](#)

Note that some [within the parish] say that he is noble and others that he is *partable* [non-noble].

There were forces both encouraging and resisting migration across the boundary between common and noble status. Wealth and military service were major factors. When a roturier bought a fief, the king had an interest in continuing to receive the military service previously associated with that fief, and as discussed earlier there was in France an ideological reciprocity between military service and nobility. If the peasant or the peasant's descendants behaved nobly for long enough, they might eventually petition to be admitted to the nobility; or they might hope to be accepted by the nobles around them without formal process ([Perroy 33](#)). When a noble family sold its last fief due to poverty, or had its last fief seized due to failure to provide acceptable military service, or simply died out, occurrences frequently hinted at in the muster rolls, that family would eventually become no longer noble.

The process could be subtle.

[\(Contamine B 115\)](#)

... at each generation thousands of non-nobles ... managed to slip themselves into the nobility, even if the nobles of birth or lineage ... did not quickly forget ... the common origins of these ennobleds ... for several generations. In other words, the recognition of nobility, at the end of the Middle Ages, was a process as much social as legal, as much insidious or unofficial as official. ... to get oneself entitled *noble homme* [noble man] in legal documents, in a more or less stealthy manner, to replace one's family name (Jean Gautier) with the name of the fief (Jean Gautier, lord de La Faye, then Jean, lord de La Faye).

There is a good discussion of this fluidity in Perroy, with many details, for the county of Forez in west-central France. He estimates the average duration of a noble family to be three to six generations ([Perroy 31](#)).

Here is a paragraph from de Laurière mentioning some of the forces working in both directions.

[\(de Laurière v\)](#)

Monsieur de Laurière remarked in his Preface, that formerly in France, the Fiefs communicated their Nobility to the Roturiers who possessed them, and who made their home there: so that when the Fiefs possessed by these non-Nobles, having passed from father to son, and from the son to his children, they were shared in the noble manner. The Kings did not approve of these usurpations of Nobility; and to distinguish the Nobles from the Roturiers who were possessors of Fiefs, they ordered from time to time, that they [the Roturiers] pay a certain payment, to interrupt the process of acquiring the right to Nobility.

The 1304 muster roll within de la Roque's treatise (Philip IV)

As a sample of an earlier list there is the 1304 muster roll for the whole of France. To give a taste of it, here is the introduction and the first entry. There are no noble archers listed in this muster roll. This roll does not list annual rent (income) for each person, though an earlier one from 1296 does.

[\(Gilles de la Roque 98\)](#)

Roll of the Lords who appeared for the Ban and Arrière-Ban convoked in the year 1304 for the war in Flanders.

The Prelates are included first

And following is written those who came.

Toulouse

The Count de Foix, the Count de Comminges, the Count d'Armagnac each 400 men at arms, including in this number those that they had to bring, each with servants or Sergeants.

The Armies of the first three Valois dukes of Burgundy

There are a number of extracts from muster rolls, and summaries of muster rolls, included in *Les Armées des Trois Premiers Ducs de Bourgogne de la Maison de Valois* [The Armies of the first three dukes of Burgundy of the House of Valois] ([de la Chauvelays](#)). The period covered is from 1361 to 1467.

A quick scan of this work does not find any nobles listed as archers, and indeed most archers listed are part of retinues and are not named. There is one named archer, Belin de Pierre-Juix ([de la Chauvelays](#) 49), one named crossbowman, Guillaume Gras with a troop of 15 crossbowmen under him ([de la Chauvelays](#) 92), two more named crossbowmen, Jacquemin de Saône and Blasin de Nove ([de la Chauvelays](#) 100), and a squire, Jean de Portsins, in charge of a company of 46 crossbowmen ([de la Chauvelays](#) 104). In a record from 1387 a group of 30 archers are listed by name, none with any explicit indication of noble rank ([de la Chauvelays](#) 113). We can assume that few if any of these archers were noble.

Musters of Vannes in 1464, 1477, and 1481 (Louis XI)

These three muster rolls appear in [de Laigue](#). This source also has *réformations* and enquiries into who was exempt from the *fouage* [hearth tax]. It might be possible to identify additional nobles by careful comparison of all the related material. I have not processed this material. If there is a third version of this paper I could process them, perhaps merging the three muster rolls in the way that Roy merged the muster rolls for Sens 1545. We do not use the numbers from these muster rolls.

Most of the entries in these three muster rolls list the annual rent for the person.

The 1464 muster roll has 532 names, with 19 (4%) explicitly marked as noble. There are 42 men at arms; 176 polearmers; 48 archers; and 153 with either a lesser weapon or no weapon. There are also 48 excused for various reasons, and 65 in default.

Of interest in the 1464 muster roll is that polearms appear to rank higher than bows, which differs from any of the other muster rolls. Six people are required to replace their bows with polearms. One person is required to replace their plate armour with a brigandine, an apparent downgrade which one might assume was because the plate armour was in poor condition.

The 1477 muster roll has 721 names, with 35 (5%) explicitly marked as noble. There are 27 men at arms; 193 archers including eight crossbowmen; 212 polearmers; and 64 with either a lesser weapon or no weapon. There are also 32 excused for various reasons, and 193 in default.

Of interest in the 1477 muster roll four persons are explicitly listed as *partable* [a kind of non-noble]. One person is ordered to have “a better noble man for himself”. One person shows up with a javelin and is ordered to have a bow and quiver “because he is an archer”. One person has a demi-lance. One substitute is too old, and the fief-holder is ordered to show up in person. In one parish in which there are 16 people, one is explicitly marked as ennobled with no others marked in any way, which invites one to infer that the other 15 might all be noble.

The 1477 muster roll is also treated by [de la Borderie](#) (see [page 19](#)), which lists fewer combatants and has significantly different text for each person. I have not compared these two sources.

The 1481 muster roll has 814 names, with 50 (6%) explicitly marked as noble. There are 39 men at arms; 240 archers including four crossbowmen; 171 polearmers; and 222 with either a lesser weapon or no weapon. There are also 49 excused for various reasons, and 93 in default.

Of interest in the 1481 muster roll a few archers also carry polearms. Unusually, there is one archer, Jehan le Gal, who carries both bow and lance. Two persons are explicitly listed as *partable* [a kind of non-noble], and there is one substitute who is not accepted by the commissioners “because the said [Jehan] Malletaille is *partable*” ([de Laigue](#) 294).

Muster of Saint-Brieuc in 1479 (Louis XI)

This muster roll ([de Courcy C](#)) has 1742 names, and only 70 (4%) are explicitly noble. Also, there are weapons specified for only 93 (5%) of the names. It is one year earlier than the muster roll for Saint-Brieuc in 1480 (see [page 20](#)). We do not use the numbers from this muster roll.

Of interest is that among those with weapons specified, the proportion of archers is 26%; and that six persons are explicitly listed as of low estate (i.e. non-noble).

Muster of Tréguier in 1480 (Louis XI)

This muster roll ([Anonymous D](#)) has 1168 combatants, and only 69 (6%) are explicitly noble. We do not use the numbers from this muster roll.

The opening text of this muster, “The general musters of the nobles, ennobled, tenants of noble fiefs, others subject to arms...” ([Fréminville A](#)), is interesting, with the last two phrases both implying the inclusion of non-nobles in the muster. The phrase *ban* and *arrière-ban* does not appear. It is also possible that this muster includes a number of townspeople.

There are 57 men at arms, one of whom is permitted to muster as an archer; 752 archers including 40 crossbowmen, five with firearms; 219 polearmers; and 36 unspecified as to weapon. Of those who appear, 71% are archers. There are also 49 excused for various reasons, and 55 in default. Of the men at arms 17 (30%) are explicitly noble, of the archers 31 (4%) are noble, and of the polearmers 2 (1%) are noble.

Also of interest is that 14 polearmers are ordered to upgrade to bow. Contrast this with the 6 archers from the muster in Vannes in 1464 only 16 years earlier (see [page 43](#)) who are ordered to upgrade in the opposite direction. Curiously, one person with a firearm is ordered to add a quiver.

Muster of Léon in 1481 (Louis XI)

There is a web page mentioning a muster roll in Léon in 1481 transcribed by H. de Parcevaux in “Bulletin de la Société d’Archéologie du Finistère”, 2004. I have not found an online copy of this muster roll. The web page indicates that there are 34 men at arms, 122 archers, 127 polearmers, 15 excused, and 25 in default ([Lucas](#)). If we could find this muster roll it would give us another sample from outside Brittany.

Muster of Poitou in 1491 (Charles VIII)

There are several references online to noble archers who were listed in a muster roll in Poitou in 1491. For example, the following four persons are explicitly nobles who served as archers. Regnault Ervet, Lord of Beauvoir (Chassériaux). Laurent d’Angely, Squire, Lord de la Voûte ([Ouvrard](#) under ‘Angely’). Gilles Mainnart, Squire (de Mesnard-Maynard). Antoine de Ceris, Squire, Lord of Ceris ([Ouvrard](#) under ‘Ceris’). A transcription of this muster roll has not yet been found. If we could find this muster roll it would give us another sample from outside Brittany.

Musters for specific military service

There are a number of musters on the Tudchentil web site which appear to list people called up for specific military service, rather than for the *ban* and *arrière-ban*. The numbers of each type of combatant are often multiples of 10, or one less than a multiple of 10; the lists often drop many of the names of the archers; and the lists have very few indications of noble status. It is not clear whether these are temporary wartime assignments of those subject to military service, or are in effect listings of regular soldiers. We do not use the numbers from these rolls.

Scots Guards

The Scots Guards, “composed of the flower of Scottish families” ([Forbes-Leith](#) v), formed a senior part of the army of the French king from 1419 until 1830, although by 1666 the majority of the unit were French rather than Scots. Many of the Scots Guards were archers.

([Forbes-Leith](#) 129-130) [the source is in English]

The Scots Men-at-arms took precedence of the whole *Gendarmerie* as they did at first when the fifteen ancient ordnance companies were founded in 1445, and with so much the more justice, as for some time they formed part of the bodyguard of Charles VII [1422-1461] and Louis XII [1498-1515].

...

Marshal de Montluc, in his “Commentaries,” [circa 1576] says that he served his first campaign as archer in the company of men-at-arms commanded by Marshal de Foix, and that many of the nobility served as archers. We see, moreover, by

several ancient muster rolls, that among the archers serving with the men-at-arms there were many of gentle blood, and by a decree issued in 1575, Henry III. ordered that all the archers should be of noble family.

...

[The archers] were, even from their commencement, on a footing with the companies of men-at-arms, though called the company of the Archers of the Guard.

...

It would be unsafe to conclude that the archers [of the Scots Guard] were in any way inferior to the men-at-arms....

Archers of the *compagnies d'ordonnance* and archers of the *ban* and *arrière-ban*

The French permanent army had been formed by Charles VII in 1445 with a number of *compagnies d'ordonnance* which contained *lances*, each of which had one man-at-arms, one or more dagger-men, and two or more archers. Initially the archers were simply missile troops with horses. "By the time of King Charles VIII's invasion of Italy [1494], the 'archers' had apparently evolved into armoured lancers" (Wikipedia under '*Compagnie d'ordonnance*'). They had become hybrid light cavalry who besides bow, crossbow, or firearm also carried a demi-lance for taking part in cavalry charges ([de Kéralio](#) 181-182).

The musters of Vannes in 1477 and Cornouailles in 1481 each list one combatant with a demi-lance, but no missile weapons. The muster of Vannes in 1481 lists one archer with a lance. These three combatants might have been light cavalry. The muster of Caux and Gisors in 1470 has five combatants with a javelin, the muster of Cornouailles in 1481 has 16 combatants with a javelin, and the muster roll of Léon in 1503 has 56 combatants with a javelin. None of the 77 are listed with missile weapons. These javelins are spears, not thrown weapons, so were these combatants also light cavalry, able to take part in cavalry charges? If so, the muster of Tréguier in 1503 would be interesting as it lists 182 mounted archers with javelins, one-third of the archers. Were these combatants hybrid light cavalry, similar to the archers in the *compagnies d'ordonnance*?

Franc-archers

The archers listed in these muster rolls are not to be confused with the militia *franc-archers*. The *franc-archers* were not nobles. In 1445, in an attempt to augment the *ban* and *arrière-ban* system and the new *compagnies d'ordonnance*, Charles VII required each parish in France to choose one of their best men, presumably usually a peasant, and to train and equip that man as an archer with bow and arrows. In exchange for their services, these archers were then exempt from almost all taxes, hence the name *franc-archer*. These forces did not prove to be a military success.

([Chérin](#) as quoted in [Louis de la Roque](#))

Their descendants [of the franc-archers], as a result and consequence of the privileges attributed to the profession of arms, claimed to be nobles and formed the *archery nobility*.

Of interest in this quotation is the assumption by the descendants of the *franc-archers* of a bidirectional relationship between providing military service and being a noble.

Works cited

For general background information such as dates during the Hundred Years War and lists of the kings of France, I have had frequent occasion to consult Wikipedia and other online sources in both English and French. These sources are not listed. Similarly, my various French dictionaries are not listed.

Allmand, Christopher Thomas

The hundred years war: England and France at war, c.1300 - c.1450. Revised Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2001.

Online facsimile: Google Books. Web page not dated. Web page visited 2011-November-22.

Online facsimile: <http://books.google.ca/books?id=Igb2Q2WKYQcC>

Anonymous A.

Montre de Saint-Brieuc de 1480. 1480.

Online transcription: Alain Guervin. Le canton de Plouguenast. Web page dated 2010-December-11.

Web page visited 2011-March-01.

Online transcription: <http://www.guervin.fr/04-histoire-et-religion/a-histoire/2-histoire-de-la-bretagne/h-le-canton-de-plouguenast/>

Anonymous B.

Montre de Saint-Malo et Dol en 1480. 1480.

Online transcription: Garin Trousseboeuf. Forum des Coquillards de Villon. Web page dated 2006-March-19. Web page visited 2010-September-07.

Online transcription: <http://hermineradieuse.aceboard.fr/14766-5135-35825-1-tenue-archer.htm>

Anonymous C.

Monstres généralles des nobles annoblis et tenants fief noble d'en l'esvesché de Leon ... l'an mil cinq cent trois. 1503.

Online transcription: Mikael Le Bars. Tudchentil, les sources écrites sur les gentilshommes. Web page dated 2007-September-24. Web page visited 2011-July-11.

Web page: <http://www.tudchentil.org/spip.php?article422>

Anonymous D.

Les montres générales des nobles, anoblis, tenant fiefs nobles, autres sujets aux armes de l'évêché de Tréguier ... 1480. BM Saint-Brieuc, fonds de Boisgélín. 1480.

Online transcription: La Pérenne. Web page dated 2008-August-12. Web page visited 2011-July-13.

Web page: <http://www.laperenne-zine.com/articles.php?lng=fr&pg=776>

Bachelier, Gérard.

Poussard. A page in a web section entitled *Armorial Mérignacais*.

Web page dated 2001-November-15. Web page visited 2010-September-05.

Web page: <http://g.bachelier.free.fr/poussar.htm>

Bernard, Norbert.

Équipement requis pour la montre.

Web page dated 2003-January-06. Web page visited 2011-July-15.

Web page: <http://www.tudchentil.org/spip.php?article41>

Blason des Armoiries.

Édits et Ordonnances, Henri III.

Web page not dated. Web page visited 2011-July-21.

Web page: <http://www.blason-armoires.org/institutions/edits-ordonnances/henri-iii.htm>

Chassériaux, Jean-Michel.

Histoire du logis des Bourdinières en Poitou.

Web page dated 2006-October-22. Web page visited 2011-April-13.

Web page: http://www.boisdepaille.com/Photos/en_cours/RE_FERME_CLASSEE_79_LAPAGERIE/Histoire_du_Domaine_des_Bourdini%C3%A8res.pdf

Chérin, Louis Nicolas Henri.

Abrégé chronologique d'édits. Paris: Royez 1788.

Online facsimile: Google Books. Web page not dated. Web page visited 2011-March-05.

Online facsimile A: <http://books.google.ca/books?id=YR6CX8awrHcC>

Online facsimile B: <http://books.google.ca/books?id=CMO31fFqFwC>

Note: The quotation that is footnoted by Louis de la Roque as coming from this book by Chérin does not appear to be an exact quotation. The original text appears on page xxii and reads (in my translation) "Their descendants claimed to be Nobles, that is the *Archery Nobility*". The two facsimiles are different editions of the work, so perhaps the text that de la Roque read is in yet another edition. The meanings of the texts are similar.

Contamine, Philippe. [Contamine A]

War in the Middle Ages. Translated by Michael Jones. Oxford: Blackwell, 1984.

Contamine, Philippe. [Contamine B]

Noblesse française, nobility et gentry anglaises à la fin du Moyen Âge: une comparaison. Appears in "Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes", Number 13, 2006.

Web page dated 2009-November-27. Web page visited 2011-July-23.

Web page: <http://crm.revues.org/755>

d'Acigné, Guillaume et al.

Montre de Tréguier en 1503. 1503.

Online transcription: Phillipe Caron. Tudchentil, les sources écrites sur les gentilshommes. Web page dated 2009-July-17. Web page visited 2010-September-07.

Online transcription: http://www.tudchentil.org/IMG/pdf/Montre_de_Treguier_en_1503.pdf

de Courcy, Pol Potier. [de Courcy A]

Montres De L'évêché De Tréguier Tenue En L'an M Cccc Lxxxvi. 1481. Transcribed in "Mémoires de la Société Archéologique et Historique des Côtes d'Armor", 1853.

Online transcription: Amaury de la Pinonnais. Tudchentil, les sources écrites sur les gentilshommes.

Web page dated 2008-April-03. Web page visited 2011-March-01.

Web page: http://www.tudchentil.org/IMG/pdf/Montre_de_Treguier_en_1481.pdf

de Courcy, Pol Potier. [de Courcy B]

Montre du Ressort de Goëlle tenue en l'an M.D Xliii. 1543. Transcribed in "Mémoires de la Société Archéologique et Historique des Côtes d'Armor", 1853.

Online transcription: Amaury de la Pinsonnais. Tudchentil, les sources écrites sur les gentilshommes.

Web page dated 2008-April-27. Web page visited 2011-March-05.

Web page: http://www.tudchentil.org/IMG/pdf/Montre_de_Lamballe_en_1543.pdf

de Courcy, Pol Potier. [de Courcy C]

Montres de l'évêché de Saint-Brieuc tenue en l'an M. CCCCLXIX. 1479. Transcribed in "Mémoires de la Société Archéologique et Historique des Côtes du Nord", 1870.

Online transcription: Amaury de la Pinsonnais. Tudchentil, les sources écrites sur les gentilshommes.

Web page dated 2008-October-04. Web page visited 2011-July-08.

Web page: http://www.tudchentil.org/IMG/pdf/Montre_de_Saint-Brieuc_en_1479.pdf

Note: The text of this muster roll says 1469, but the commentators say that it should read 1479, so that is the date that we use here.

de Kéralio, Louis-Félix.

Art militaire. Paris: Agasse, 1797.

Online facsimile: Google Books. Web page not dated. Web page visited 2011-July-25.

Online facsimile: http://books.google.com/books?id=ADo_AAAAcAAJ

de la Borderie, Arthur.

Monstres de l'Évêché de Vannes en 1477. Transcribed in "Revue Historique de l'Ouest", Vannes: Lafolye 1897.

Online transcription: Amaury de la Pinsonnais. Tudchentil, les sources écrites sur les gentilshommes.

Web page dated 2007-August-19. Web page visited 2011-July-12.

Online transcription: http://www.tudchentil.org/IMG/pdf/Montre_de_1477_a_Vannes.pdf

de la Chauvelays, Jules.

Les Armées des Trois Premiers Ducs de Bourgogne de la Maison de Valois. Appears in "Mémoires de l'Académie des Sciences, Arts et Belles-Lettres de Dijon", Volume 3 Number 6, 1880. Dijon: Darantiere 1881.

Online facsimile: Google Books. Web page not dated. Web page visited 2011-March-05.

Online facsimile: http://books.google.ca/books?id=_h8XAAAAAAAJ

de la Rogerie, Henri Bourde.

Rolle des nobles subgectz aux bans et aryere ban de lesveche de Leon esleuz a tenir garnyson en la ville de Saint-Renan sur lesquels est capitaine le seigneur de Kersymon du XXIII^e jour dauguste mil V^e LVII. 1557. Transcribed in "Bulletin de la Société Archéologique du Finistère", 1853.

Online transcription: Bertrand Yeure'h. Tudchentil, les sources écrites sur les gentilshommes. Web page dated 2010-July-19. Web page visited 2011-July-10.

Web page: http://www.tudchentil.org/IMG/pdf/M_1557_Leon-3.pdf

de la Roque, Gilles André.

Traité du Ban & Arrière-Ban. A separately paginated work that is part of *Traité de la noblesse, et de toutes ses différentes especes*. Rouen: Jore, 1734.

Online facsimile: Google Books. Web page not dated. Web page visited 2010-September-05.

Online facsimile: <http://books.google.ca/books?id=SQRCAAAAcAAJ>

de la Roque, Louis.

Armorial de la noblesse de Languedoc, Généralité de Montpellier. In 2 volumes. Montpellier: Félix Sequin 1860.

Online facsimile: Google Books. Web page not dated. Web page visited 2011-March-05.

Online facsimile: <http://books.google.ca/books?id=GTwRAQAIAAJ>

de la Thaumassière, Gaspard Thaumaz.

Histoire de Berry. Paris: Billaine 1689.

Online facsimile: Google Books. Web page not dated. Web page visited 2011-April-11.

Online facsimile: <http://books.google.ca/books?id=tO-XLFCc10oC>

de Lacroix, Paul.

Histoire du château de Saint-Brice. A page in a web section entitled *Histoire P@ssion*.

Web page dated 2008-February-02. Web page visited 2010-September-05.

Web page: <http://www.histoirepassion.eu/spip.php?article832>

de Laigue, R.

La Noblesse Bretonne aux XVe and XVIe siècles. Rennes: Plihon & Hommay, 1902.

Web page not dated. Web page visited 2011-July-01.

Online facsimile: <http://www.archive.org/details/lanoblessebreton01laig>

de Laurière, Eusèbe-Jacob.

Ordonnances des roys de France de la troisième race, Volume 2. Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1729.

Online facsimile: Google Books. Web page not dated. Web page visited 2011-July-16.

Online facsimile: <http://books.google.com/books?id=V7c-AAAAcAAJ>

de Mesnard-Maynard, Benjamin.

Mesnard-Maynard.

Web page dated 2007-June-02. Web page visited 2011-April-11.

Web page: <http://mesnard.maynard.pagesperso-orange.fr/html/genea2.htm>

des Salles, Henri.

Montre des Nobles et sujets aux armes de l'Archidiaconé de Dinan en l'Évesché de Saint-Malo ... l'an mil quatre cent soixante douze. Appears in "Documents inédits sur la Bretagne 15e et 16e siècles". Paris: Chez France, 1864.

Online facsimile: Google Books. Web page not dated. Web page visited 2011-July-14.

Online facsimile: http://books.google.com/books?id=dTA_AAAAYAAJ

Edgerton, John.

War Archery and Social Status.

Web page dated 2010-September-10. Web page visited 2011-April-16.

Web page: http://www.telusplanet.net/public/prescotj/sirjon/War_archery_and_social_status.pdf

Forbes-Leith, William.

The Scots men-at-arms and life-guards in France. William Paterson: Edinburgh. 1882.

Online facsimile: Google Books. Web page not dated. Web page visited 2011-April-25.

Online facsimile: <http://books.google.ca/books?id=KWkaAAAAYAAJ>

Fréminville, Le Chevalier de (Christophe-Paulin de La Poix). [Fréminville A]

Monstre de l'Euesché de Cornouailles de l'an 1481. Antiquités de la Bretagne: Finistère. 1852.

Online transcription: Norbert Bernard. Tudchentil, les sources écrites sur les gentilshommes. Web page dated 2002-December-25. Web page visited 2010-September-05.

Online transcription: http://www.tudchentil.org/IMG/pdf/Montre_de_1481_en_Cornouaille.pdf

Fréminville, Le Chevalier de (Christophe-Paulin de La Poix). [Fréminville B]

Monstre générale de l'Euesché de Cornouailles, faite à Quimper les 15^e et 16^e du mois de may 1562.

Antiquités de la Bretagne: Finistère. 1852.

Online transcription: Norbert Bernard. Tudchentil, les sources écrites sur les gentilshommes. Web page dated 2002-December-27. Web page visited 2011-July-05.

Online transcription: http://www.tudchentil.org/IMG/pdf/Montre_de_1562_en_Cornouaille.pdf

GeneaNet.

Gabriel du Cloux.

Web page dated 2010-November-25. Web page visited 2011-April-11.

Web page: <http://gw0.geneanet.org/index.php3?b=darbois&lang=en;p=gabriel;n=du+cloux>

Guérard, Benjamin.

Cartulaire de l'église Notre-Dame de Paris, Volume 3. Paris: Crapelet, 1850.

Online facsimile: Google Books. Web page not dated. Web page visited 2011-July-15.

Online facsimile: <http://books.google.com/books?id=XfA-AAAAcAAJ>

La Pérenne.

Enquête des exempts de fouage du pays de Dol en juin 1478.

Web page dated 2008-August-24. Web page visited 2011-July-22.

Web page: <http://www.laperenne-zine.com/articles.php?lng=fr&pg=778>

Lucas, J. P.

Au sujet des montres générales des nobles de l'évêché de Léon reçues à Lesneven en 1481.

Web page not dated. Web page visited 2011-July-25.

Online facsimile: <http://www.hermine-radieuse.net/PDF/MonstreLéon.pdf>

Merlin, Philippe Antoine.

Répertoire Universel Et Raisonné De Jurisprudence, Volume 12. Brussels: Tarlier, 1826.

Online facsimile: Google Books. Web page not dated. Web page visited 2011-July-25.

Online facsimile: <http://books.google.com/books?id=9QNCAAAAAAAJ>

Morice, Dom.

Ban & Arriere-ban de l'Evesché de Saint Malo en l'Archidiaconé de Dinan 1569. Transcribed in "Preuves pour servir à l'histoire de Bretagne", Vol III. 1742-6.

Online transcription: Amaury de la Pinonnais. Tudchentil, les sources écrites sur les gentilshommes.

Web page dated 2009-January-20. Web page visited 2011-July-12.

Online transcription: http://www.tudchentil.org/IMG/pdf/Montres_de_Dinan_en_1569.pdf

Ouvrard, Jean-Marie.

Les Blasons de la Charente.

Pages dated 2011-March-06. Pages visited 2011-April-11 and 2011-April-13.

Web page 'Angely': <http://jm.ouvrard.pagesperso-orange.fr/armor/fami/a/angely.htm>

Web page 'Ceris': <http://jm.ouvrard.pagesperso-orange.fr/armor/fami/c/ceris.htm>

Web page 'Dexmier': http://jm.ouvrard.pagesperso-orange.fr/armor/fami/d/dexmier_1.htm

Parker, Geoffrey.

The Military Revolution. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Perroy, Edouard.

"Social mobility among the French *Noblesse* in the later Middle Ages." *Past and Present* 21:1 (1962).

Roy, Maurice.

Le ban et l'arrière ban du bailliage de Sens au XVIe siècle. Sens: Charles Duchemin, 1885.

Online facsimile: Google Books. Web page not dated. Web page visited 2011-July-15.

Online facsimile: <http://books.google.com/books?id=TyFBAAAAYAAJ>

Société des Archives Historiques de la Saintonge et de l'Aunis.

"Revue de Saintonge & d'Aunis", Bulletin III 1880-1882. Paris: Texier, 1884.

Online facsimile: Google Books. Web page not dated. Web page visited 2010-September-05.

Online facsimile: <http://books.google.ca/books?id=VgIMAAAAMAAJ>

Société Éduenne.

"Mémoires de la Société Éduenne", Volume 11 (1882). Autun: Dejussieu, 1882.

Online facsimile: Google Books. Web page not dated. Web page visited 2011-July-19.

Online facsimile: <http://books.google.com/books?id=O1pMAAAAMAAJ>

Stegmann, André.

Édits des Guerres de Religion. Mayenne: Floch, 1979.

Online facsimile: Google Books. Web page not dated. Web page visited 2011-July-07.

Online facsimile: <http://books.google.com/books?id=uQOcj27H7bUC>

Strickland, Matthew, and Robert Hardy.

The Great Warbow. Yeovil: Haynes, 2011.

-- explicit liber --