

YEW TREE

The British adopted the use of the bow and arrow from the Welsh people and its adoption was encouraged by Edward I. This bow was high and made with yew wood, which guaranteed a great impact and a greater reach, so an archer was required years of training and strength to use the bow. The English army began to use archers more and more, surpassing the infantry by three or four times (Saecomori, 2011). The longbow could reach a length greater than a man, and both its span and its flexibility had an influence on the length of the arrows, which measured about 90 cm and had a wooden shaft and a metal tip (Barroca et al. 2003).

To handle a longbow required a lot of training and a good physical constitution.



“They are tall bows that can be about 70 inches (177,8cm) long and have a draw weight of 75-100 pounds (34-35kg). The arrows were between 69 and 91,5cm long. A trained longbowman could shoot 12 arrows per minute, but some sources claim that the best ones could shoot twice as many. One arrow might reach 230m, kill at 90m and penetrate an armour at 55m. The arrows were about 3 feet long (between 69 and 91,5cm), were made of ash, oak or birch wood, with a broad point to bore the infantry’s armours or a narrow point to pierce the knights’ armours. In the Hundred Years’ War the longbow was used by the English with devastating effects. The longbow was also used at naval wars”. 1



Agrupamento
de Escolas
Alberto Sampaio

AESAS



**We plant a tree
celebrating the value of
Friendship**

**Plantamos uma árvore
celebrando o valor da
Amizade**

**On the 650th Anniversary of the
Anglo-Portuguese Alliance
On the 50th Anniversary of the
Alberto Sampaio Secondary School**

**No 650.º Aniversário da
Aliança Luso-Britânica
No 50.º Aniversário da
Escola Secundária Alberto Sampaio**



2022

The Longbow

"The best longbows were made of yew wood, which is sturdy, flexible and quite hard. The yew is native to Europe, North Africa, and Southwest Asia. The rods were cut during the winter and worked gradually, taking advantage of the climatic variation of the seasons. Only six longbows survived, but none of the so-called golden age. They were found in the "Mary Rose" ship which, when it sank preserved them as if it were a time capsule, including the longbowmen themselves and their equipment.

"It should be noted that the English yew wood was not considered suitable for manufacturing longbows and most of the rods were imported from Italy, Spain and Portugal (where yews grow spontaneously and a few hundreds of stems can still be found in the northern mountain ranges, especially Gerês and Estrela, as well as in the archipelagos)".¹

Thus, it is thought that in Portugal there were more crossbowmen than archers for purely economic reasons, since crossbows could be made of another type of more abundant wood. The importance of yew wood for the English to manufacture bows was so great that we are told: "In order to maintain supply, every ton of certain imports, including wine, had to be accompanied by 10 yew rods."



The english archers in Portugal

For a long time, England has been the country with which Portugal has the most friendly and cooperative relationship. Either through commercial, military or diplomatic relationships, this friendship gave origin to valuable teachings, especially at the military level. In the Christian Reconquest, English knights participated in the taking of Lisbon as Crusaders.



In 1372, D. Fernando and the Duke of Lancaster (son of Edward III of England) signed an alliance against Castile and Aragon, which the Duke was preparing to wage war.

This Treaty was signed in Tagilde, Vizela. The two intervening parties promised to be **'good, loyal and true friends forever and that they would love each other well and truly and that at no time would they be against each other, nor against their kingdoms, successors, or heirs'** (Treaty of Tagilde, Article One, 1372).

There, on July 10th, 1953, a Pattern with the symbols of the Kingdoms of Portugal and England was implanted. Its consolidation took place with the signing of the Treaty of London on 16th June 1373.



The following year, the alliance was strengthened with the signing of a friendship pact in which mutual assistance was due in case of war.

Military collaboration, when necessary, such as sending men-at-arms, archers and crossbowmen, was provided for in this alliance (Faria and Miranda, 2010).

In 1380, the previous treaty was confirmed and the entry of English troops into Portugal to fight Castile was established. Following the dynastic crisis that occurred with the death of D. Fernando, D. João I and Ricardo II, in 1386, once again assumed the commitment of mutual assistance in case of need. The marriage between King John I and Philippa of Lancaster was sealed, which would bring several compatriots to the Portuguese Court, thus also promoting contacts between the two kingdoms.

Military and politically, the English had important interventions in different periods of the Portuguese History.

It was largely thanks to archers from beyond the Channel that the decisive victory at the Battle of Aljubarrota against the numerical superiority of the Castilian forces was possible. (...) The recruitment of English troops destined to assist D. João I dragged on in time, while the conflict with Castile continued. (...)"

According to Carlos Filipe Ribeiro Branco, in his final scientific report of Applied Research, Lisbon, May 2017, the British transmitted knowledge and innovative military tactics to the Portuguese: "the use of a foot vanguard, with archers and crossbowmen on the flanks", "both the Condestável and the Portuguese King had met some English nobles, who were in Portugal during the reign of O Formoso and with them had conversations about the military tactics that the British applied in the Hundred Years' War (Pinto, 1985)".

¹ Coelho, José Pedro, *Breve História do Longbow*