Through Trial and Error: Learning and Adaptation in the English Tactical System from Bannockburn to Poitiers

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During the late thirteenth century and early fourteenth century, the English in medieval Europe fought in two wars: the Scottish Wars of Independence followed by the Hundred Years War. The final engagements of the Scottish Wars of Independence mentally, culturally, and physically changed English notions of what tactics and strategies should be used in warfare. From these experiences, the English learned lessons from Scottish methods of war that helped them devise a tactical fighting system that would eventually transform the ideals of chivalry and its application in warfare. The English then employed their new tactical fighting system decisively against the French during the Hundred Years War. During the early stages of the Hundred Years War, the French in turn learned hard lessons fighting against the English and attempted to adjust their tactics to counter the new English fighting system. This paper explores what techniques were learned by the English from the Scots, and how the English then modeled and improved on Scottish tactics to defeat the Scots then employ them against the French.

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