

Battle Report

Edgecote Moor
3/11/2017

The battle opened with the Yorkist line moving forward while the Rebels maintained their position on the high ground. On the second turn the Yorkists pressed on and the Rebels loosed their first cloud of Flight arrows. For the most part this fire had little effect but on the small Yorkist Vanward, under John Dwnn, the fire was devastating. A band was cut down; the ward commander was only spared by the prompt action of a "Stout Ensign"; and the ward faltered.

Turn three saw an exchange of Flight archery between the two hosts with again Dwnn's men taking the worst of it. They lost another band yet their courage held and they returned the fire. After this round of archery the Yorkist line moved forward again but now under a Rapid Approach order. They hoped their speed and courage would see them through the Rebel close range killing zone.

These hopes confounded by two events. The weakened Yorkist Van collapsed under the weight of Rebel Sheaf arrows, broke and fled the field. Meanwhile on the Yorkist left the Rebel reinforcements under John Clapham arrived. Clapham's ward contained all retinue troops and they entered the table opposite the open flank of the Yorkist Rearward under Thomas Vaughan. When the time came the Clapham activated first and charged into the Vaughan's flank.

In the centre the strong and courageous Yorkist Mainward under William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, crossed the Rebel's killing zone unscathed and engaged the Rebel Mainward, under John Conyers, but this brave advance left both flanks exposed. To their left the Thomas Vaughan's ward had been stopped and engaged by Clapham's men leaving the Rebel Rearward, under Henry Neville, free to manoeuvre against them. To their right the rout of the Dwnn's ward left the Rebel Rearward under William Conyers free to turn on to Pembroke's right.

Henry Neville's men were closer and they quickly wheeled onto Pembroke's left. William Conyer's ward was further off and they wheeled more slowly so for the first exchange of Handstrokes Pembroke only had two wards to contend with and not three.

Thomas Vaughan flanked ward initially did badly. They lost bands and were pushed back but with Henry Neville's men wheeling onto Pembroke's flank there was no longer a threat to their front so the ward turned to fully face Clapham and formed a short but solid front. Then, remarkably, the two wards separated and commenced to exchange Sheaf arrows. This firefight continued while dramatic events in the centre determined the issue.

Though heavily outnumbered and flanked, clever choices of handstrokes cards kept Pembroke in the fight. His ward was pushed back and they lost bands but they did not lose heart and they did not break. Then the Yorkist Reserve Ward under Humphrey Stafford, Earl of Devon, arrived and for a moment it appeared the Yorkist would triumph.

Devon's ward appeared over the brow of the hill directly behind John Conyer's ward. When Devon moved onto the field the Rebel Rearward was still in the act of wheeling forward onto Pembroke's flank but they had not yet made contact. Seeing this new threat appear to his right William Conyers turned his men to the right and formed a rough column facing the Yorkist Reserve Ward.

The final turn, turn 8, saw a remarkable confluence of events. First Devon's men charged into the Rebel Mainward's rear. When Devon charge into John Conyers' rear William Conyers charged into his flank. Five wards now formed a huge melee on the top of the hill. John Conyers' ward was in the centre. They faced Pembroke to their front and Devon's men to their rear. Pembroke had Henry Neville on his flank and Devon had William Conyers on his.

Both sides then chose the "I'll not shrink back" Handstokes card. This card required that the ward commanders fight. Pembroke was wounded and so unable to comply. Henry Neville was only in contact with Pembroke's men and so did not have an opponent to face. This left Devon to face off against both of the Conyers. In a fine act of chivalry (or blind stupidity) the two Rebel leaders politely took turns engaging Devon. It was to their detriment as Devon easily outmatched them both with the sword, wounding each in turn.

Devon's courage and skill availed his side but little. In the end numbers determined the outcome of the great melee and the battle. Pembroke's ward was pushed back and crushed. They broke and ran taking Thomas Vaughan's men with them. Seeing the rest of the Yorkist host collapse before their eyes disheartened Devon's men and they too fled the field.

John Conyers' host held the field but the cost had been heavy. Both John and William were wounded along with three "Stout Ensigns" and a number of bands.