

# The Battle of Bosworth

22<sup>nd</sup> August 1485  
St Symphorianus's Day

Following the death of Edward IV in April 1483 Richard of Gloucester, his brother, became Lord Protector. Edward's true successor, also called Edward, was a minor and never became king. He and his brother Richard were declared illegitimate. Gloucester had them removed to the Tower for their "safety". They never emerged. On 6<sup>th</sup> July 1483 Gloucester was crowned Richard III.

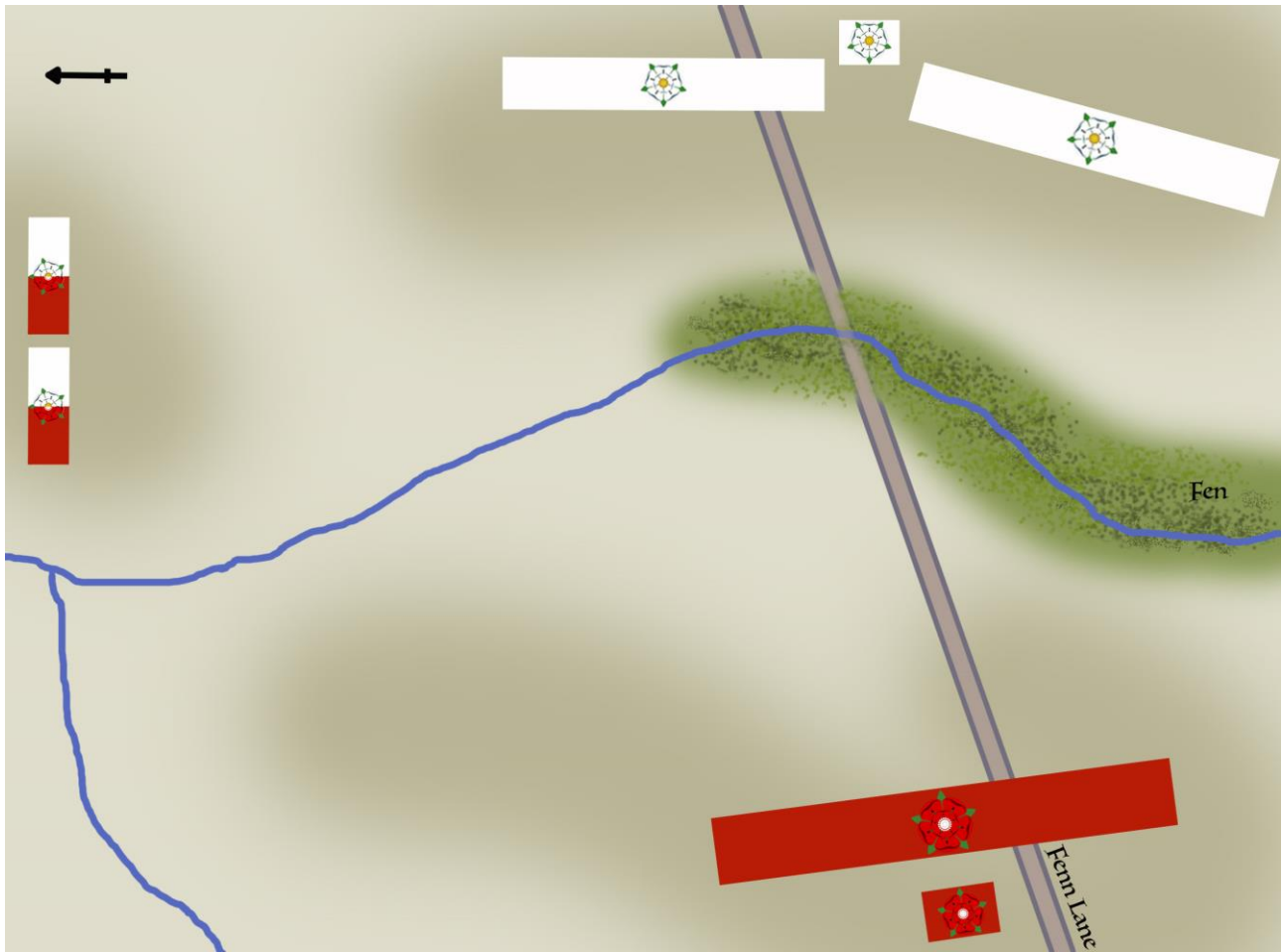
Richard's short reign was beset with unrest and strife possibly resulting from his dubious assumption of the crown. The chief focus of the unrest centred on Henry Tudor. Henry's claim to the throne derived from his mother, Margaret Beaufort, who was the great-granddaughter of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, the fourth son of Edward III and his third wife Katherine Swynford. Katherine had previously been John's mistress and John was one of the issues of that union. They did marry in 1396 and so John had a sort of legitimacy. Thus Henry's claim was somewhat tenuous, and legally doubtful, but it was the best the Lancastrian could come up with; Lancastrian heirs were few and far between.

Henry had tried to land in England in 1483 but bad weather had aborted the attempt. Undaunted he persisted and in 1485 a second attempt was prepared aided by the French king who was happy to promote disunity in England. Richard was aware of events across the Channel and he moved from London to Nottingham in the Midlands. There he prepared to gather troops. This central location placed him in a position from which he could respond to any landing along the English or Welsh coast. He knew that Henry had two options open to him upon landing, move on London and claim the crown or move against him and defeat him in battle.

Henry landed at Milford Sound in southwest Wales on 7<sup>th</sup> August 1485 with about 500 exiled supporters and 1,500 French troops. He proceeded to march across Wales gathering strength and supporters as he went. One of the nobles whose support he sought out was Thomas Lord Stanley his stepfather who had married his mother Margaret Beaufort. Stanley did not reject Henry's approaches but he was placed in an invidious position when Richard got wind of his possible treason. Richard had directed Stanley to oppose Henry's march through Wales but Stanley was merely shadowed Henry's progress. When Richard became frustrated by Stanley's lack of action he summoned him to appear before him. Stanley begged off pleading sickness. Richard was not deceived and ordered Stanley's eldest son, George Stanley, Lord Strange, arrested and made it known that he was a hostage to Stanley's loyalty.

Henry marched 225 miles in 14 days to reach Atherstone on the 21<sup>st</sup> August there he had a clandestine meeting with Thomas Stanley. Richard received news of Henry's landing on the 11<sup>th</sup> August. On the 20<sup>th</sup> he moved to Leicester and joined John Howard, Duke of Norfolk who had been mustering his forces there. On 21<sup>st</sup> August Richard left Leicester and marched west twelve miles to confront Henry. He camped that night on Ambion Hill a few miles east of Atherstone.

On the morning of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Richard broke camp and moved west. He took up a position on a low ridge on Brown Heath covering Fenn Lane. Through the low ground west of the ridge ran a small stream. This stream broadened to form a fen or marsh across most of Richard's front. Henry approached this position from the west along Fenn Lane. When he drew near he deployed in line. Thomas Stanley and his brother William took post between the two forces.



## Yorkist



### Vanward

John Howard, Duke of Norfolk

**Courage 4**

(Peer, Committed Yorkist, Practiced [1 stratagem])

- 3 MAA
- 6 Retinue Bow
- 4 Levy Bow
- 2 Levy Spear

Richard Brackenbury of Selaby

(Committed Yorkist, Amateur)

- 2MAA
- 6 Retinue Bow
- 5 Levy Bow
- 1 Levy Spear

**Courage 3**

### Mainward

Richard III

(Monarch, Practiced [1 stm], Impetuous, Bloodthirsty,)

- 6 MAA mounted

**Courage 4**

### Rearward

Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland

(Uncommitted, Amateur [1 da], Trimmer,)

- 2 MAA
- 7 Retinue Bow
- 4 Levy Bow
- 2 Levy Spear

**Courage 1**

William Catesby of Ashby St. Ledgers

(Committed, Amateur, Bloodthirsty,)

- 2 MAA
- 7 Retinue Bow
- 4 Levy Bow
- 1 Levy Spear

**Courage 3**

Plus 2 field Gones

# Lancastrians



## Mainward

John de Vere, Earl of Oxford

### Courage 4

(Anti-Yorkist, Committed, Old Soldier [2 stratagem], Tenacity, Loyalty,)

- 3 MAA
- 5 Retinue Bow
- 2 Levy Bow
- 5 Levy Spear

Philibert de Chandee, A Captain of Company

(Committed, P 4, F 4,)

- 3 MAA
- 3 Pike
- 4 Crossbow

Courage 3

John Savage of Clifton

(Pro-Tudor, Audacious,)

- 1 MAA
- 3 Retinue Bow
- 1 Levy Bow
- 3 Levy Spear

Courage 3

Gilbert Talbot of Stodesden

(Pro-Tudor, Plotter, Practiced,)

- 3 MAA
- 4 Retinue Bow
- 4 Levy Bow
- 2 Levy Spear

Courage 3

Plus one field gonne.

## Reserve Ward

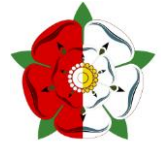
Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond

(Heir, Amateur [1 Danger], Merciful,)

- 3 MAA
- 3 Pike

Courage 3

# Stanleys



## Vanward

William Stanley

**Courage 1**

(Uncommitted, Amateur [**1 Danger**], Trimmer,)

- 2 MAA
- 3 Retinue Bow
- 1 Levy Bow
- 2 Levy Spear

## Rearward

Thomas Stanley, Lord Stanley

(Uncommitted, Amateur [**1 Da**], Trimmer,)

- 2 MAA
- 3 Retinue Bow
- 3 Levy Spear

**Courage 1**

## Scenario Special Rules

1. The Yorkist Gones are with the Yorkist Mainward. The Lancastrian Gones are deployed on the right of the Lancastrian Mainward.

2. At the start of the game only the Yorkist Vanward and Reserve Ward chits, and the Lancastrian Mainward and Reserve Ward chits are placed in the cup/bag.

3. At the end of any turn in which two opposing wards come within short range of each other the Lancastrian Vanward (William Stanley) and two Lethargy chits will be added to the cup/bag.

- In each subsequent turn if a Lancastrian Lethargy chit is drawn before the Lancastrian Vanward chit then that ward will not act that turn.
- If the Lancastrian Vanward chit is drawn first that ward will act and the two Lethargy chits are removed from the cup/bag.

4. At the end of the turn in which the Lancastrian Vanward activated the Yorkist Rearward chit (Northumberland), one Yorkist Treachery chit and two Yorkist Lethargy chits will be placed in the cup/bag.

- In each subsequent turn if the Treachery chit is drawn first then the ward will activate but it will adopt a "Withdrawal order". The Treachery and the Lethargy chit will then be removed and not longer placed in the cup/bag.
- If the Lethargy chit is drawn first the ward will not act that turn.
- If the Yorkist Rearward chit is draw first the ward will act and both the Treachery and Lethargy chits will be removed from the cup/bag.

5. If the Yorkist Rearward chit is the first to be drawn and that ward become an active participant on the Yorkist side then the following occurs.

- The Lancastrian Vanward (William Stanley) will lose a courage. If they are at that moment "disheartened" or are engaged in "handstrokes" they will rout.
- If neither of these things has happened the Lancastrian Vanward they will change sides and act as a Yorkist ward. Remove all their current and planned Attack and Approach orders. Any Archery orders will remain. Replace their ward chit with a Yorkist Treachery chit. Each turn that chit is drawn William Stanley's ward will be activated as a Yorkist ward.
- The Lancastrian Rearward (Thomas Stanley) will also change sides. Place the Yorkist Reserve Ward Chit in the cup/bag. In subsequent turns when this chit is drawn this ward will activate and fight for the Yorkist cause.

6. If the Yorkist Treachery chit is drawn first, and Northampton's ward commences "Withdrawing", immediately add the Lancastrian Rearward (Thomas Stanley) chit to the cup/bag.
7. Richard will not run if his ward routs. If another Yorkist ward is still on the field and in good order (that is not withdrawing or routed) he will ride and join it. If not then he will withdraw a D6 in inches. He will then dismount and stand and fight a round of handstrokes if needs be. A maximum of three Lancastrian stands are permitted to add their handstrokes values in this calculation. The remaining bands in the ward will stand off and observe the death of a king.
8. The hills shown on the map are very low and will have no influence on combat.
9. The streams are mere gutters and no obstruction to movement.
10. The fen is a significant obstacle. Movement through it is reduced to quarter speed and each move will require a falter check. The road through the marsh will permit only a one-band frontage and half speed of movement. Troops that fight while standing in the marsh have their handstrokes values halved. TBS and leadership bonuses are added after this calculation.
11. Considering the lay of the table and historical opinion that Henry's main line did move to the left to pass the fen, Oxford will be permitted to drift or incline his line to the left as they move so as to clear the fen.

## Victory Conditions

If Henry's force is defeated and driven from the field the Yorkist win.  
If Richard dies then the Henry's forces win and he becomes king.

## Historical Outcome

Henry is believed to have brought 5,000 men to the field, 1,500 French troops with various armaments; 500 exiled lords and their retainers; and 3,000 Welsh and English supporters who had gathered to him in his progress from Milford Haven. He arranged this force into three wards and a small reserve with his main strength being in the center under John de Vere, Earl of Oxford. Sir Gilbert Talbot formed on Oxford's right and Sir John Savage formed on his left. This formation could be considered as one ward with a main center and two wings. Henry was in the rear of the line with the reserve.

Richard formed his 8,000 men into two wards. John Howard, Duke of Norfolk, commanded the Vanward and the Rearward was under Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland. Richard may have led a small mounted reserve and he host seems to have been plentifully supplied with artillery.

The wild card in the deck, Sir Thomas Stanley force, was reported to have formed two wards with Thomas taking the Rearward and, his brother, William the Vanward. Their exact location on the field is not known with any certainty. Other than a statement by Polydore Vergil (*ut medius loco pugnae appropinquaret*, who had already arrived in the middle of the battlefield) that Stanley was between the two forces prior to the arrival of Richard and Henry, we do not know if he formed north or south of the eventual battle line.

Foard and Curry place him to the south. I believe he formed to the north. \*

The battle opened with Henry advancing and coming under Richard's artillery fire. Oxford obliqued his line to the left away from the worst of the gunfire and towards Richard's right. This move placed the marsh on his right thereby protected it. Norfolk moved forward to engage with Oxford. There was an exchange of arrows and then they closed to handstrokes. Northampton does not seem to have joined Oxford. This is possibly because there was no room for his line to engage Oxford's right without entering the marsh.

At this point William Stanley joined Oxford and the two drove Norfolk back beyond the marsh. In response to Stanley's treachery Richard ordered the execution of George Stanley (which, mercifully was not carried out). With his Vanward in distress and the tide of battle seemingly to be flowing against him, Richard grasped a presented opportunity. As Oxford pushed Norfolk back his right became exposed as he advanced beyond the marsh. It would take time for Northampton to wheel his ward forward and take advantage of this though at that moment he did not seem to be moving. Before Northampton could act Richard was informed that Henry, in the rear of the Lancastrian line, might be reached through the gap now opened between Oxford's right and the marsh.

Richard did not let the moment slip. *"I have set my life upon a cast, and I will stand the hazard of the die."* (Richard III, Act 5, Sc 4). He led his mounted bodyguard through the gap and against Henry's reserve. He is reported to have killed Sir William Brandon, Henry's standard-bearer, in the charge. Henry himself withdrew within the safety of his reserve and the cavalry charge was stymied and then driven off.

Northampton did not move against Oxford. Instead his force melted away and joined Norfolk's men straggling to the rear. Richard, abandoned by all, was caught in a patch of bog, unhorsed and cut down. The fateful blow being delivered by a lowly Welsh billman Rhys ap Thomas. Tradition has it that his crown was found on the field under a bush and Sir Thomas Stanley placed it upon Henry's head.

Casualties on the field were not heavy and were mostly sustained by the Yorkist Vanward. The pursuit was not exceedingly vigorous and Henry was merciful though Norfolk did not escape. He was taken and executed. Northampton fared much better but only to a point. He was captured and imprisoned for several years but was later pardoned by Henry and his lands and title returned. He died in 1489, lynched by an angry mob protesting against a war tax while approaching York.

(\* Most of the fighting took place between the Yorkist Vanward and the Tudor host north of the marsh. If Stanley formed the Rearward of Richard's line as Foard and Curry claim William Stanley would have had to move across the front of Northampton's ward to become engaged. If he moved east of the marsh he would have placed his men within a few hundred yards of Northampton's line. He would also be seen to be performing a task that Northampton himself should have been doing, that is moving to attack Oxford's right. If he moved west of the marsh he would have placed the marsh between himself and Northampton protecting his right but this move would have brought him up behind Oxford's line. In either case he would still have had to move a great distance, perhaps as far as 1,200 yards to reach the action.

If he formed north of the field he would have been closer to the location of the main combat and would have not had to contend with Northampton's ward when he moved. His attack would have struck Norfolk in the flank and this sudden intervention would have triggered the collapse of Richard's line, which did take place.)