

# *The Battle of Wakefield*

*30th December 1460*

St Egwin's Day

## Background

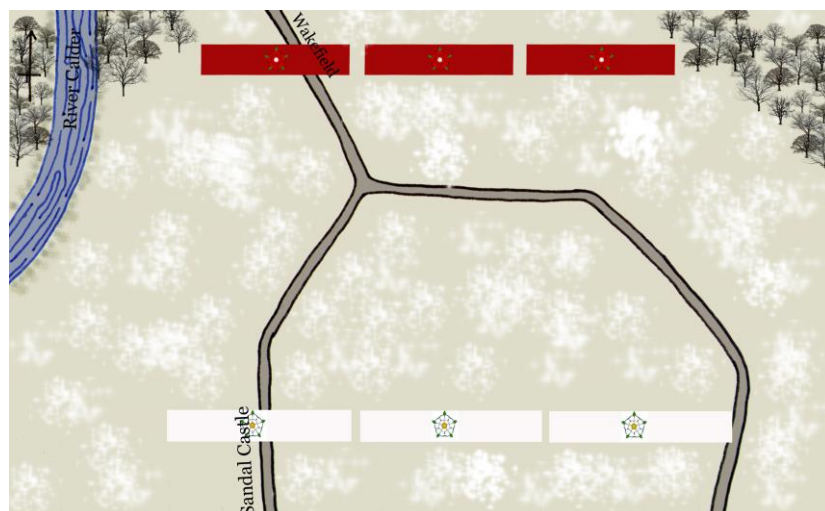
After the battle of Northampton the Duke of Salisbury returned to London with the king. A few weeks later the Duke of York returned from exile and attempted to claim the throne before Parliament. In an attempt to placate him the Lords passed the Act of Accord that recognized him as Henry's heir; effectively disinherited Margaret and Henry's son Edward the Prince of Wales. This was not acceptable to the Lancastrians.

In the West Country and Wales Jasper Tudor and the Duke of Exeter started to gather troops. In the North The Earl of Northumberland, Lords Clifford and Roos, the Duke of Somerset and the Earl of Devon did the same. They congregated around Pontefract Castle with about 15,000 men and began foraging from the local area, much of which belonged to the dukes of York and Salisbury.

The Duke of York responded by sending his eldest son Edward, Earl of March, to the West Country to deal with Jasper Tudor and Exeter; he left the Earl of Warwick to hold London; and he marched North with his second son Edmund, Earl of Rutland and the Earl of Salisbury. They reached Sandal Castle 9 miles south of Pontefract just before Christmas with between 8,000 and 9,000 men.

Sometime before Christmas John Neville, Lord Raby, approached York requesting a Commission of Array to raise 8,000 men. Though John Neville would later fight and die on the Lancastrian side at Towton he had family connections to York and Warwick vouched him for. His request was granted and he joined York with this force at Sandal Castle. One account also states that Andrew Trollope joined York with 400 men. Trollope was a professional soldier and the Master Porter of Calais. He was also another who would fall at Towton fighting on the opposite side.

Either on the 29<sup>th</sup> or 30<sup>th</sup> December the Lancastrian host under Henry Beaufort, Duke of Somerset, left Pontefract and arrived for battle before Sandal Castle. York, now reinforced by John Neville, marched from his camp to meet him.





# *Lancastrians*



## **Vanward**

James Butler, Earl of Wiltshire

(Anti-York, Committed, Amateur, Timorous, Peer,)

- 2 MAA
- 5 Retinue Bow
- 5 Levy bow
- 1 Levy spearman

Courage 4

Lionel Welles, Lord Welles

(Pro-Beaufort, Committed, Old Soldier,)

- 1 MAA
- 5 Retinue Bow
- 5 Levy bow
- 1 Levy spearman

Courage 4

## **Mainward**

Henry Beaufort, Duke of Somerset

(Anti-York, Committed, Audacious, [2 stm] Peer,)

- 2 MAA
- 6 Retinue bow
- 2 Levy bow
- 5 Levy spearmen

Courage 4

Thomas Courtenay, Earl of Devon

(Committed, Amateur, Peer,)

- 2 MAA
- 5 Retinue bow
- 2 Levy bow
- 4 Levy spearmen

Courage 4

## **Rearward**

John "Butcher" Clifford, 9<sup>th</sup> Baron of Clifford

(Anti-York, Committed Lancastrian, Audacious, Bloodthirsty, [3 stratagems])

- 1 MAA
- 4 Retinue bow
- 4 Levy bow
- 2 Levy spearmen

Courage 3

Henry Holland, Duke of Exeter

(Anti-York, Committed Lancastrian, Practiced, Bloodthirsty, Heir)

- 1 MAA
- 4 Retinue bow
- 4 Levy bow
- 2 Levy spearmen

Courage 3



# Yorkists



## Vanward

Richard Neville, Earl of Salisbury

(Anti-Percy, Committed, Old Soldier [2 stm], Peer,)

Courage 4

- 1 MAA
- 7 Retinue bow
- 4 Levy bow
- 1 Levy spearman

Thomas Harrington of Hornby

(Pro-Neville, Committed, Old Soldier)

Courage 4

- 1 MAA
- 7 Retinue bow
- 3 Levy bow
- 1 Levy spearman

## Mainward

Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York

(Anti-Beaufort, Committed, Practiced [1 stm] Impetuous, Heir)

Courage 4

- 2 MAA
- 5 Retinue bow
- 4 Levy bow
- 2 Levy spearmen

Edmund Plantagenet, Earl of Rutland

(Committed, Practiced, A Captain, Pu 3, Fd 3, Heir)

Courage 4

- 1 MAA
- 5 Retinue bow
- 4 Levy bow
- 2 Levy spearmen

## Rearward

John Neville, Lord Raby

(Heir, Committed [Lancastrian], Practiced [1 stm], Impetuous, Lethargic, Treacherous,)

Courage 3

- 1 MAA
- 2 Retinue bow
- 8 Levy bow
- 1 Levy spearman

A Captain

(Well-Wisher, Practiced, Pu 3, Fd 3,)

Courage 2

- 1 MAA
- 2 Retinue bow
- 8 Levy bow

- 1 Levy spearman

## Scenario specific rules

1. John Neville is both Lethargic and Treacherous, but not at the same time. He will at first be Lethargic and the normal rules governing Lethargy apply. When and if his ward becomes active the two Lethargy chits are removed and replaced with a single Treacherous chit. In subsequent turns, if his ward chit is drawn first he will fulfill his orders as a Yorkist and the Treacherous chit ignored. If the Treacherous chit is drawn first the ward will change sides. The Treacherous and Lancastrian Rearward chits are replaced next turn by the Yorkist Reserve chit.
2. Three Retinue Archers in the Earl of Salisbury's ward are under the command of Andrew Trollop. Trollop's force was small and so he will not be represented as a MAA band or by his card. These three bases must be deployed on the left flank of the left company of Salisbury's ward.

When, and if, John Neville's ward becomes Treacherous these three bases will also change sides. However, Trollop's bases will behave as loyal Yorkist's until contact is made with a Lancastrian company, at which point they will change sides. When they change sides, they will become part of the Lancastrian company they are in contact with.

3. When John Neville's ward turns their livery the two remaining Yorkist wards must make a faltering check as if a "Bushment" had been sprung. "The odds be great" verse is added to the Yorkist Chronicle, due to the change in numbers on each side, and the "Uncurable discomfit reigns" verse is added, due to the loss of a ward.
4. The Lancastrian host may adopt a defensive posture if they wish but given the victory conditions they may not wish to so. The Yorkist host may not adopt a defensive posture; they must choose a set of Overall Orders that constitutes an attack.
5. The 'Retiring' optional rules are in effect.
6. If, after John Neville changes sides, a Yorkist company routs a Lancastrian company facing them they may attempt to exit the field off the Northern edge.

They will do this by making one piecemeal or steady approach Northward, at the end of which they will about face. Henceforth they will retire Northward. This Yorkist company can abandon up to one quarter of its bases if those bases are still in contact with a second enemy company. The abandoned bases will either combine with an adjacent friendly company if they are within 3" or they will surrender automatically at the start of the next turn.



7. After John Neville changes sides, any company can face about and move in the opposite direction to the one it was previously facing. They must give up their current order if they do so.

## Victory Conditions

Once again, we have a situation that makes it difficult to envisage one side in this fight having any chance of winning the actual battle. As a result, a conditional outcome will be applied to allow for a possible Yorkist victory.

The Yorkist can claim victory if either Richard Duke of York or his son Edmund succeed in exiting the table off the Northern or Southern edge; If the Lancastrians prevent this occurring they win.

## Historical Outcome and Aftermath

According to Helen Cox<sup>1</sup> most of the stories associated with this battle are fabrications based on faulty reading of the historic texts or embellishments added by later writers to dramatize the story. Little is actually known about what happened in the battle.

What is known is that the Duke of York offered battle when the Lancastrian host under the Duke of Somerset arrived in front of Sandal Castle. York was defeated when his force was surrounded and destroyed. Treachery may have been the cause of this happening. York fell in the battle as did Salisbury. The Earl of Rutland was captured and executed at or near the Chantry Chapel on the Wakefield bridge either after the battle or the next day. Legend has it that John Clifford himself performed the deed in revenge for the killing of his father at St Albans. He earned the sobriquet of "Butcher" for doing so.

Edmund's death at the Wakefield bridge suggests that he and his men attempted to flee the field in that direction.

Beside the loss of all their main leaders the Yorkist's lost upwards of 2,500 men while the Lancastrians suffered only 200 casualties.

The heads of York, Rutland and Salisbury were placed on pikes and mounted over the Micklegate Bar in York. The story that a paper crown bearing the inscription "Let York overlook the town of York" may be true but it could also be an invention of Shakespeare's. Either way it is the origin of the title for these rules.



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<sup>1</sup> Cox H. (2010) The Battle of Wakefield Revisited: A Fresh Perspective on Richard of York's Final Battle, December 1460, YPD Books, ISBN: 978-0-9565768-0-4