

THE BATTLE OF NORTHAMPTON

TRENCHES & TREACHERY

In 1460 it had been less than a year since the Wars of the Roses had broken out. There had been skirmishes and increasing political tensions fermenting for nearly ten years prior to this. The wars themselves were born out of the power that Margaret of Anjou had over her husband, Henry VI, and the appointment of her family and supporters to positions of power throughout the realm.

By Eoghan Kelly

The continuing feud between the Percy family and the Nevilles provided both the backdrop and catalyst to open conflict. The culmination of this happened when the Percys (traditional Earls of Northumberland) and the Duke of Somerset had entrenched Margaret as de facto ruler of the kingdom due to Henry's deteriorating mental health. York and his supporters withdrew from court to avoid their arrest and this led to both factions start to arm for war.

Conflict broke out when the Yorkist forces repelled an ambush at Blore Heath but the fortunes of the House of York were at a low following the collapse of their army at the battle of Ludford Bridge in 1459. The various leaders fled into exile. Richard, Duke of York, went to Ireland where he was Lord Lieutenant (and had the support of the Irish Parliament and landowners). More significantly, Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick left for Calais, where he had significant support.

The control of Calais allowed Warwick to control the seas and thereby also the wool trade. This economic stranglehold meant that the traders in London were aware their fortunes lay tied to York and his supporters. Despite having won a decisive victory, Margaret's supporters had frittered it away in less than six months, and her actions of promoting favourites and family members drove more marginal members of court into the opposition camp.

Feeling the time was right, Warwick (along with Salisbury and York's son Edward) landed at Sandwich in Kent in late June 1460. They only had a small force, but their broad support in the south of England allowed them to pick up garrisons from the channel ports and to march on London. There they entered on 2nd of July without any significant opposition. The garrison



The Earl of Warwick watches the action at the Battle of Northampton while Francesco Coppini, the Bishop of Turin, excommunicates the Yorkists' enemies. From the cover of *Medieval Warfare V.3*.

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Edward's men cross unopposed as Grey's men withdraw.

and command of London sought refuge in the Tower of London, and after leaving a small force to besiege them (the last siege of the Tower) Warwick marched north to try and raise the land in support of York who was waiting in Ireland for the right time to land. Warwick's goal was Coventry, where the court had resided for several years, and where Henry's power base was at its strongest.

On the 9th of July, Warwick approached the grounds of Delapré Abbey, a Clunian Convent, that lay to the southeast of Northampton and dominated the main road through the area. Henry and Margaret had deployed their army in a strong defensive position, with their flanks (and rear) protected by the river Nene. In their front, spread along the entire army, was a water filled ditch. On the 10th the Yorkist army deployed on the field and Warwick attempted to speak to

the King. The Yorkists persisted in their claim the conflict was not with the King but with his advisors and certain supporters. Somerset refused permission and after several more abortive attempts to talk, Warwick notified his opponents that he would join battle at 2 PM that afternoon.

THE GAME

This generic scenario is designed to be adapted to any Medieval rules. You should be able to adapt the simple special rules and the army lists to your favourite set. Some suggestions are made in the text for specific rules. Both *Swordpoint* and *Hail Caesar* use the concept of an Army Commander, for example.

THE FORCES

Yorkist Commanders

Left Battle (the Vanguard) - Edward, Earl of March, 18 years old and rela-

tively untested. Roll a d6 at the first melee clash of the battle, on a 1 he is considered a poor commander, on a 2 average, 3 or 4 he is good and 5 or 6 he is outstanding.

Right Battle - William Neville, Lord Fauconberg, 55 and an experienced commander having started his military career as a youth in Henry V's army in France. He is an outstanding commander.

Centre Battle - Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, was considered the leader of the Neville faction in the long standing feud with the Percy family. Warwick's power gained through political skill, military ability, and





clever marriage has made him one of the most powerful in the land, and this power will gain him the sobriquet of 'The Kingmaker'. He may act as Army General.

Troops

Three battles of roughly 1,000 men each. The make up is as follows:

- 600 foot men-at-arms, well armoured and equipped with bills, polearms, maces and swords. These are split into 2 units.
- 300 archers equipped with longbows, fielded as one unit.
- 100 mounted knights on armoured horses and equipped with lances and melee weapons, fielded as one unit. These were nominally the bodyguard for each of the commanders of the battles. They may dismount.

For Lion Rampant, treat each 'Battle' as a separate command with one Men at Arms, two expert Serjeants and one Expert Bowmen.

Lancastrian Commanders

Overall General - Henry VI, King of England. Henry is an inept commander and gives no 'Army Commander' bonus to the Lancastrians. He spent the battle in his tent praying.

Left Battle - John Talbot, 2nd Earl of Shrewsbury, 43 years old and an experienced statesman and leader. He originally sided with Warwick but changed allegiance following the First Battle of St Albans. A Good Commander. Loyalty rating 5+

Right Battle - Edmund Grey, 1st Earl of Kent (Lord Grey of Ruthin), 45 and an experienced commander. His ongoing feud with Henry Holland, 3rd Duke of Exeter, in a property dispute had caused considerable unhappiness with the lack of support he felt he was due from the Crown. A Good Commander. Loyalty rating 3+

Centre Battle - Humphrey Stafford, 1st Duke of Buckingham, 58 and was considered to be loyal beyond question. He served the Kings father in France and then acted as bodyguard to the current monarch. Although related to the Nevilles he staunchly supported the Queens position. An average leader. Loyalty rating 6+

Royal Tent - The bodyguard is commanded by Percy and Beaumont. Both are outstanding leaders but may only command the bodyguard. Henry and Margaret are also at the Royal Tent.

Troops

Three battles of roughly 1,000 men each, similar to the Yorkist disposi-

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tion, a 2 to 1 ratio of billmen to archers and a small men-at-arms contingent. However, the units of men at arms must be deployed at the rear to guard the Royal tent.

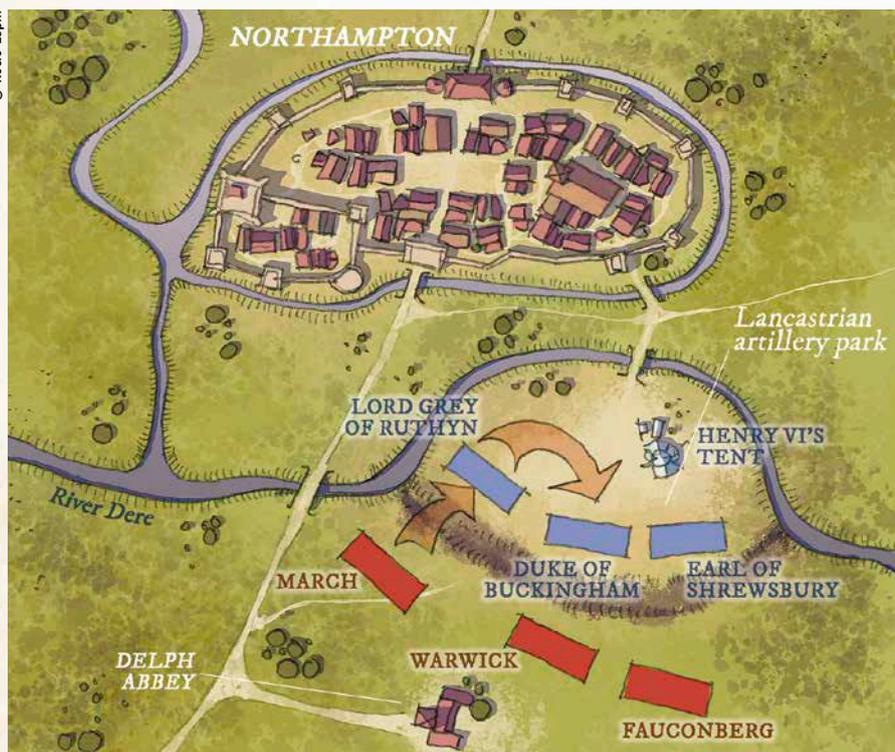
Finally, the Royal forces had four bombards – this was the first time that gunpowder weapons were deployed in England. These were deployed in front of the centre battle.

SPECIAL RULES

Loyalty

The Lancastrian player has three loyalty tokens. They are allocated to the Lancastrian Battles, with no maximum or minimum. The Yorkist player has four tokens. These are also allocated to the Lancastrian Battles. Any battle that has more Yorkist tokens than Lancastrian is subject to a Loyalty test. A roll is made per additional token and any roll equal to or over the value will cause that noble and all their Battle to become neu-

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Warwick's men force their way over the defences and into Buckingham's men who are guarding the camp.

trials and withdraw from the field. This test is only taken when forces are within charge range. To keep this a surprise, only the Yorkist player may know which force or forces will be testing their loyalty.

Artillery

The wonder weapons were slightly hampered by a heavy rainstorm just before the battle. To reflect this and to allow the possibility of their use (historically they never fired) test each gun when it wants to fire. Roll D6 and on a 6 a wise gunner has kept a single charge dry and the gun will fire once (and once only).

Defensive trench

This is a formidable obstacle and is considered to be the hardest terrain your rules allow for while still being passable. Defenders behind the ditch should get a defensive bonus from shooting and attack (apply the Schiltron rule if using *Lion Rampant*).

Initiative and weather

The Yorkists move first and always have the initiative. The weather is dry but misty due to recent rain, visibility is reduced and the ground is difficult going for cavalry.

VICTORY

Victory goes to the side who controls the field. A major victory is scored by the Yorkists if they capture the King. A Major victory is won by the Lancastrians if they kill either Warwick or Richard (and it's fair to say complete victory in the wars if they kill both!)

HISTORICAL OUTCOME

In true Wars of the Roses fashion, Lord Grey of Ruthin was bought off by the Yorkists and promptly switched sides, his troops actively helping the Yorkist forces to cross the barrier. The battle was effectively over in a matter of minutes. The Lancastrian forces collapsed and in the mayhem Henry was abandoned by

his retainers and his Queen. Shrewsbury, Buckingham, Egremont and Beaumont were all killed trying to save Henry and he was captured by an archer called Henry Mountfort.

Following this victory the Duke of York was spurred to land in England and following a campaign he was killed at the Battle of Wakefield, leaving Edward as the Duke of York. He fought a series of campaigns that culminated in his destruction of the last Lancastrian force in March 1461 and he was duly crowned Edward IV, the first Yorkist King of England... **WS&S**

We know Yorkists wore a white rose, and history attributes the red rose to Lancaster – but evidence suggests this was only worn by Tudor supporters after the Battle of Bosworth in 1485.

