

THE BATTLE OF BARNET

A paper in memory of John Northam

(based on a talk given by John in 2014 at the Oxford and Cambridge Club, Pall Mall.)



Fig 1 – a highly imaginative picture of the Battle showing the heroic Edward IV killing the Earl of Warwick with his lance (Ghent manuscript)

The 15th century 'Game of Thrones'

Anyone interested in the Battle of Barnet (Fig 1) needs some understanding of the tumultuous period of English history known as the Wars of the Roses - the series of bloody battles fought in the fifteenth century between the Houses of Lancaster traditionally fighting under the red rose and York under the white rose.

The Wars of the Roses have seized the popular imagination recently. In the concluding battle of the Wars at Bosworth in 1485 the Yorkist Richard III was killed, finishing up under a car park in Leicester from where his skeleton was exhumed in 2012 with the subsequent debate as to where he should be finally buried. His reburial in Leicester Cathedral, accompanied by much pomp and nostalgia for an England long passed, has sparked fresh debate about Richard's true character which underscores a

lack of hard historical evidence. Similarly, military historians have difficulty in reconstructing the various battles which ravaged England during the Wars since so few eye witness accounts exist. What makes Barnet so interesting is that it is a rare exception. A dozen major contemporary or near contemporary sources make it possible to piece together with some confidence what actually happened on 14th April 1471.

But first one myth should be dispelled. The opposing sides did not fight under the badges of red and white roses, despite the famous but wholly fictional scene in Shakespeare's *Henry VI* where rival leaders pick red and white roses for their followers. In fact the noblemen had their own individual personal badges the white rose being only one of many badges used by the Yorkists. The confusion between the multifarious badges had a key role in the outcome of the battle of Barnet. It's doubtful whether the Lancastrian Henry VI ever fought under the red rose. It was adopted by Henry VII the first Tudor king claiming to be the true heir to the House of Lancaster. The title Wars of the Roses only came into common use in the nineteenth century after the publication of Walter Scott's *'Anne of Geierstein'* based on the scene in Shakespeare's play.

Now for some historical background. An understanding of the Wars of the Roses requires some basic knowledge of the Kings of England and the tangled family tree of the Plantagenet dynasty (see Fig 2).

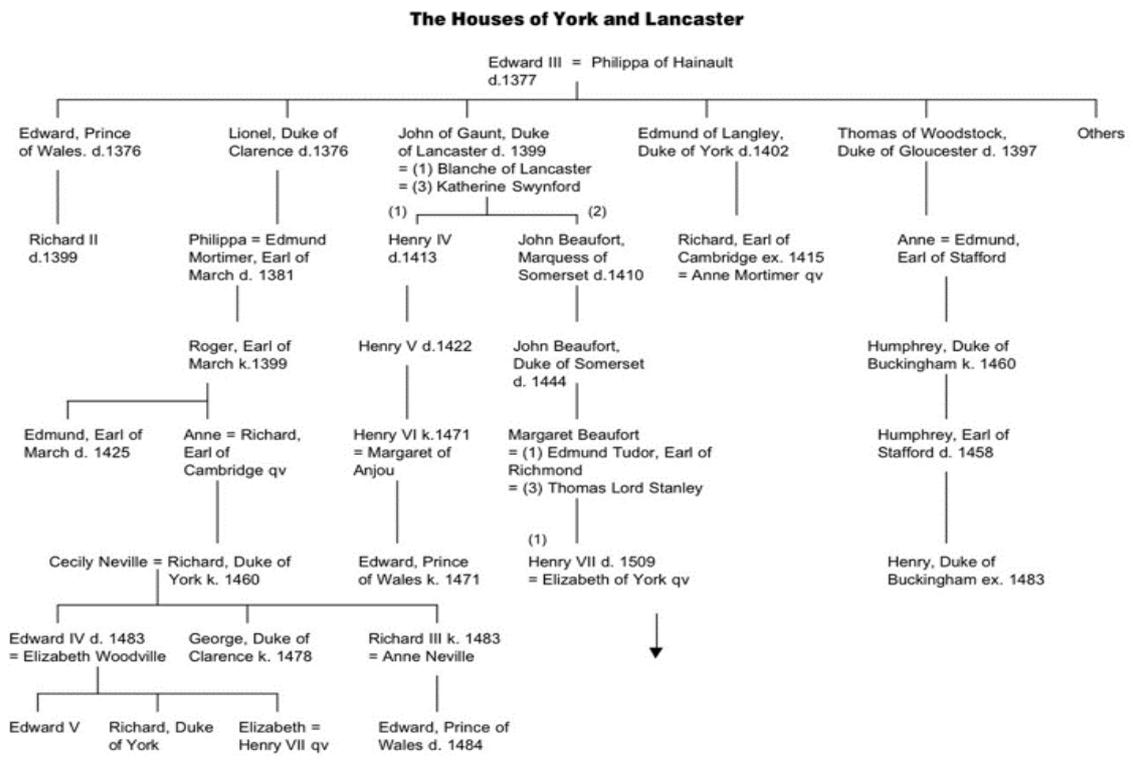


Fig 2 – the Plantagenet family tree

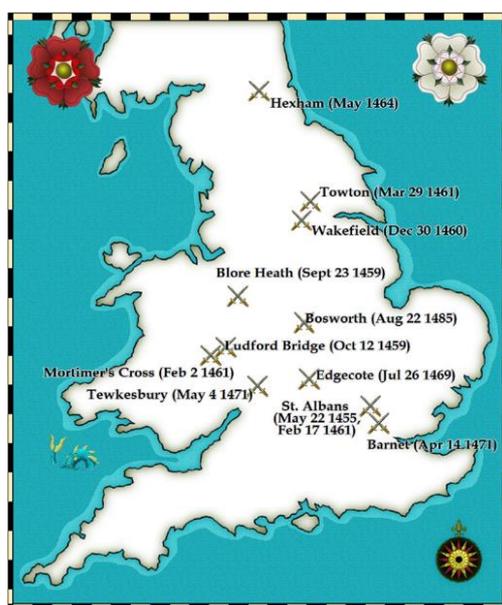
We start with Edward III (top centre of Fig 2). Many wars of succession are fought because of a lack of obvious successors but for Edward III we are spoilt for choice. On his death in 1377 he should have been succeeded by his eldest son Edward the Black Prince but he had died a year earlier and his son became king as Richard II. However he was deposed in 1400 by Henry Bolingbroke who became Henry IV. He was the son of John of Gaunt - Edward III's third son - and became the first Lancastrian Plantagenet king. In due course the throne passed to his son Henry V, the immortal victor over the French at Agincourt. However, problems arose with the untimely death of Henry V in 1422 when he was succeeded by his nine-month old son Henry VI.

Now for the House of York. On the right hand side of the family tree (Fig 2) appears the name of the fourth son of Edward III - Edmund Duke of York whose younger son was Richard Earl of Cambridge who married Anne Mortimer. Going back to the left of the family tree, Anne was the great granddaughter through the female line of Edward III's second son Lionel who had predeceased his father. Key players on the Yorkist side are Richard and Anne's son Richard Duke of York and their three grandsons Edward IV, the Duke of Clarence and Richard III. A trump card of the Yorkist claim to the English throne was that Bolingbroke had unlawfully deposed Richard II, denying him and his Lancastrian successors any vestige of legitimacy.

The first three Wars of the Roses (1455-1471)

The Wars of the Roses are generally considered to have started in 1455 with the first battle of St Albans. There were really four wars - the first from 1455 to 1460 with attempts to control the government of the royal household; the second from 1460 to about 1464 with the Yorkist Edward IV securing the throne; the third from 1469 to 1471 when Edward IV was temporarily exiled but returned to inflict final defeat on the Lancastrians; and fourthly from 1485 to 1487 when the Yorkist Richard III was defeated by Henry VII. This paper deals with the first three wars only up to 1471.

Fig 3 – the major battles in the Wars of the Roses



The map (Fig 3) shows the major battles. As well as Barnet there were fought the two battles of St Albans, and those at Ludford Bridge, Wakefield, Mortimer's Cross and Towton; and also at Northampton (which does not appear on Fig 3). The Wars of the Roses were in effect a series of individual conflicts separated by long periods of peace rather than a continuous war. Spin doctors for the Tudors were anxious to contrast the stability of the sixteenth century with the general lawlessness of the fifteenth but modern historians take the view that most people continued to enjoy lives of prosperity and tranquillity little affected by the sporadic conflicts fought between powerful lords and barons bashing themselves to pieces with their private armies.

A convenient starting point for the story leading up to Barnet was when Henry VI became king in 1422 aged only 9 months. Perhaps surprisingly given what was to come later his minority ran smoothly. The Lancastrian council ruled economically and well and personal rivalries between members of the king's family and disputes between noble families which later led to warfare were settled in the council.

In 1437 Henry VI aged 16 declared his minority at an end, and in 1445 he married Margaret of Anjou who became a major influence in the Wars. England was very dependent on the king's personal authority. Unfortunately, Henry was far from the right man. He was ineffectual and gripped with a sense of inertia. To quote Dan Jones recent book 'The Hollow Crown' – "He may have been generous, pious and kind but these were not very useful qualities in a king who was expected to govern, keep the peace between his greatest subjects and sail across the sea at regular intervals to slaughter the French". Historians generally agree that Henry's character – or lack of it – was the main cause of the start of the Wars of the Roses, as into the vacuum arising from the young king's inability to rule stepped the Queen and the warring nobles who will feature in the story.

Matters came to a head in 1450 when the French conquered Normandy and then Gascony, previously English possessions. The loss of Normandy was a disaster and the search was on for a scapegoat; Henry VI's principal adviser the Duke of Suffolk was the 'fall guy'; he was impeached and banished and assassinated on his way into exile.

Richard Duke of York then appeared. He was previously the king's lieutenant in France but had been replaced by Edmund Duke of Somerset who like Henry was also descended from Edward III's third son John of Gaunt, but through his third wife Catherine Swynford. York said that he was not seeking the throne for himself but his complaint was against the corruption and incompetence of the king's ministers. He tried to have the Duke of Somerset removed from office and replaced by York himself.

His bid for power failed but in 1453 his position was transformed. First, an attempt to retake Gascony failed and York held Somerset personally responsible. Secondly, the Nevilles one of the most powerful families in the kingdom threw their weight behind the Yorkist cause; the Earl of Warwick later to be known as the 'Kingmaker' was a part of the Neville family and will be a key player in this talk. Thirdly, Henry suffered a nervous breakdown probably suffering from catatonic schizophrenia; he couldn't speak or respond in any way; this coincided with the birth of his only son.

And so in March 1454 Richard Duke of York achieved more than he could have hoped when appointed protector during the king's insanity despite intense opposition from the Queen Margaret of Anjou; Somerset was arrested and sent to the Tower to await trial for alleged treasonable negligence in the war against the French.

However, on Christmas Day 1454 Henry suddenly recovered. York's appointment as protector was terminated and Somerset released from prison with the charges of treason dropped.

The enmity between York and Somerset duly spread from the political to the military with the first battle of St Albans in 1455. Before the battle there were protracted negotiations for a settlement but the king's representatives refused to hand over Somerset. Growing tired of the delay the Yorkist forces attacked and overcame the barricades erected by the royal forces on the town's outskirts. A period of street fighting ensued and St Albans was soon overrun. This was little more than a scuffle with only about 60 deaths but significantly those included Somerset himself hacked to death outside the Castle inn.

Henry himself was unharmed but captured while hiding in a tanner's cottage and taken back to London. In a ceremony at St Pauls designed to show that he was not claiming the throne York reaffirmed his allegiance so, if we are to believe him, we are not at this stage concerned with a dynastic rebellion against Henry. York again became protector. However, he was faced by Margaret of Anjou who became an implacable enemy. The second protectorate was short lived and ended early in 1456.

The years 1456 to 1458 were times of uneasy peace with the Queen now firmly in control of the royal household. "Every lord in England durst not disobey the Queen" wrote one chronicler. In 1459 the two sides once more engaged in armed conflict with

the Yorkists this time suffering defeat at Ludford Bridge near Ludlow in Shropshire. In fact, although Ludford Bridge appears on every battle map of the Wars of the Roses, it was scarcely a battle. During the night before battle was due to be joined many Yorkist troops deserted and defected to the Lancastrians. Facing certain defeat, York, Warwick and other leading allies sneaked away in the dead of night. The following morning the leaderless Yorkist troops, instead of giving battle, found themselves surrendering and seeking a royal pardon. Richard Duke of York escaped to Ireland and Warwick to Calais still part of the English possessions.

The Lancastrians tried unsuccessfully to dislodge Warwick from Calais and in June 1460 Warwick counter attacked and launched a Yorkist invasion of south east England. Sending ahead their customary manifesto protesting absolute loyalty to Henry but condemning the failures of his household, the Yorkists met with no serious opposition marching through Kent and gaining control of London and then on to the midlands where the royal court was based. The speed of the Yorkist advance and the size of the nobles support which they attracted took the king's court by surprise - they had no choice but to engage the rebels in battle. This took place in the meadows on the bank of the river outside Northampton on a wet and miserable day with the rain pouring down, churning up the ground and putting the royalist guns out of action; perhaps like the Passchendale mud immobilising the British tanks. The battle however lasted a much shorter time than Passchendale; in fact only half an hour saw a royalist defeat and the capture again of the hapless king Henry VI.

Then the name of the game suddenly changed from a struggle for political domination to a dynastic conflict because after the battle York, alleging that his claim was superior to Henry VI's, demanded the throne for himself. This was a new situation as until then the Yorkists had said that their quarrel was not with the person of the king but with his circle of advisers. This was the start of the second war when it became dynastic.

The Duke of York had however misjudged. All that Parliament would agree was that Henry VI should remain as king but that on his death the crown should pass to the Duke of York. This was all very well but unlikely to be accepted by Queen Margaret of Anjou who had avoided capture at Northampton and was still at large with her son who would in normal circumstances succeed his father. She was in the north near Hull drumming up support from local barons. York rose to the challenge and with his army marched north to Sandal castle near Wakefield where he made his last and fatal mistake. He and his supporters spent a miserable cold Christmas inside the castle with only thin supplies as a result of their speedy departure from London. A foraging party was attacked by Lancastrian troops and York inexplicably left the protection of the castle with the remainder of his force to challenge the Queen's army. He was vastly outnumbered; York himself was captured, a paper crown put on his head and he was beheaded; modern day jihadists would have felt at home.

Buoyed up by victory Margaret marched south towards London. Warwick had not been present at the Yorkist defeat at Wakefield but had remained in London guarding the king. He mustered a large army to meet the Queen's troops at St Albans where the two forces met for the second time but, unlike the first skirmish, this was all out war. This time also there was a Lancastrian victory and not a Yorkist one. Because of poor reconnaissance the Yorkist vanguard engaged with the Lancastrian army before it was

in battle order and after heavy fighting it retreated. Warwick's main force melted away together with Warwick himself and his commanders. Worse still the Yorkists allowed the king to escape and he was reunited with his wife.

The way to London was now open for Margaret but popular feeling in the city was against her fuelled by stories of atrocities by her army on its march from Wakefield. Margaret hesitated and withdrew northwards to Dunstable. That decision was fateful; she lost her chance and the way was open for the future Edward IV the eldest son of Richard Duke of York, who had met his end at Wakefield, to enter London at the head of a victorious force.

Where had he come from? While his father went north to lose his life and Warwick remained in London to guard the king, the 18-year-old Edward had defeated another Lancastrian force at Mortimer's Cross in Herefordshire. Little is known about this battle



except for the appearance of a parhelion or sun dog when a pair of bright spots appears on either side of the sun giving the appearance of three suns (Fig 4). According to one story Edward convinced his frightened troops that this represented the holy trinity and that therefore God was on their side.

Fig 4 – a parhelion or the holy trinity at Mortimer's Cross?

When Edward reached London in March 1461 he had himself proclaimed as King Edward IV in ceremonies which stopped just short of a formal coronation. But Margaret was undefeated and had withdrawn to the north with her husband Henry VI. Edward spent a week or two in London and then set out north to confront Margaret drawing in vast numbers of troops as he went. The Lancastrian army was also huge. The two armies met on Palm Sunday outside the village of Towton in Yorkshire in the bloodiest battle of the Wars of the Roses. Unfortunately, despite its crucial importance we do not have any eye witness account as we do for Barnet. The most detailed and influential account was written 70 years after the event; the equivalent of writing today the definitive account of D Day and the battle for Normandy. The weather was bitterly cold with snow on the ground and a sleet blizzard. Unusually for the Wars of the Roses the battle lasted a long time from dawn to dusk. After a preliminary bombardment of arrows, which was unsuccessful because the wind was in their faces causing their arrows to fall short, the Lancastrian army was the first to advance but after early pressure on the Yorkists the Lancastrian line finally broke, the battle probably decided by the late arrival of fresh forces from the Duke of Norfolk's command; shades of the late arrival of Blucher's troops at Waterloo 350 years later. The two sides were originally deployed on an east – west axis but during the course of the battle they swung round so that they were fighting on a north-east – south-west axis, perhaps as a result of Norfolk's intervention on the Yorkists' eastern flank, so that the Lancastrians had their backs to a deep waterway known as Cock Beck. The pursuit turned into a carnage with the Lancastrian troops having to cross the wetlands - which became known as 'Bloody Meadows' - and wade or swim across Cock Beck. One area became so dammed with corpses that they could only scramble to safety

over what became known as the bridge of bodies. Chroniclers estimated the number of deaths as high as 28,000. This is probably an exaggeration but it doesn't seem too fanciful to compare the death toll in with those of British soldiers on the first day of the Somme.

Having effectively secured the crown Edward spent the next few years consolidating his power particularly in the north east. Queen Margaret fled with her son into exile in France. Henry remained on the run in the north until finally captured, and confined to the Tower of London surprisingly not being executed – at least not then.

However, Edward's reign was rudely interrupted when he lost his crown in 1470 which brings us to the third war. The cause was Edward's chief backer the Earl of Warwick who couldn't accept the erosion of his early influence on Edward. Two events in particular caused a final breakdown between the two men. First Edward fell in love with and married a pretty young widow, Elizabeth Woodville, when Warwick was planning a political marriage with a French princess. Secondly Edward was going his own way in foreign policy. Warwick favoured an alliance with the French king but Edward was moving towards a connection with the Duke of Burgundy.

From late 1468 Warwick planned a coup d'état. He formed two unlikely alliances; first he persuaded Clarence the elder of Edward's two brothers to join him and secondly he went to France and after begging forgiveness from his erstwhile deadly enemy Margaret of Anjou agreed a plan with her to drive out Edward IV and restore Henry VI to the throne.

To cut a relatively long story short in September 1470 Warwick returned to England with a landing in Devon. Edward by then in Doncaster panicked and took himself off into self-imposed exile in the Low Countries. Henry VI was released from the Tower and in yet another turn of events in this extraordinary story of musical chairs restored to the throne.

Prelude to the Battle – Edward IV returns from exile (14 March 1471)

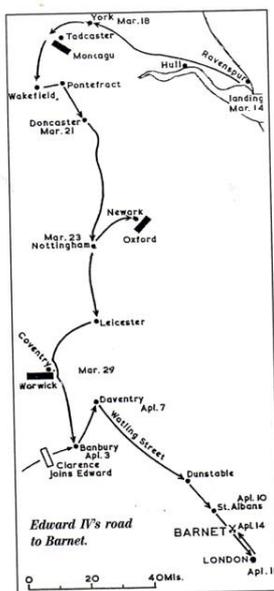


Fig 5 – Edward IV's march to Barnet

Henry's turn on the throne was however short lived as this story approaches its climax in April 1471. On 14 March that year Edward landed back in England in the mouth of the Humber with some 1200 men (Fig 5). With such small support he should have had little chance of success. Indeed, Hull refused to open its gates. However, he gained access successively to York, Tadcaster, Wakefield and Doncaster gaining more support on the way. Montagu - Warwick's brother - based at Pontefract Castle did nothing to check his progress. Matters improved even more for Edward as he went south into the midlands and more men joined him at Nottingham and Leicester. At Newark 4000 men under the Lancastrian Earl of Oxford fled rather than giving battle. When Edward moved on to Coventry Warwick crucially remained within its walls preferring to avoid a fight until having the support of reinforcements

and also gambling that London would be closed to Edward. However, Warwick suffered a major setback when Clarence changed sides yet again, switching his allegiance back to his brother and with his 4000 men joined Edward at Banbury on April 3. Edward pressed on to London where in fact the city's dignitaries did decide to admit him and he entered the capital in triumph on Maundy Thursday April 11 just four weeks after landing in Yorkshire in such unpromising circumstances. This march in which Edward totally outmanoeuvred and outwitted the hesitant and defensive Warwick was a remarkable military feat. It justifies the opinions of Charles Ross and other historians that Edward was the most successful commander of the Wars as a result of his appreciation of speed of movement and emphasis on attack. In many respects the march can be compared with Harold's from Stamford Bridge to Hastings in 1066 to face William of Normandy, but with a happier ending for Edward than for Harold.

In London Edward lost no time in seizing the hapless Henry VI and two days later on 13 April Easter Saturday marched north out of London taking Henry along as a hostage for his final showdown with Warwick who had eventually marched south and decided to do battle. The stage was set for the battle of Barnet.

The Battle of Barnet (14 April 1471)

Where and what is Barnet? The location of the Battle is now known as Chipping Barnet or High Barnet. It was only a village in 1471 but is now a London suburb about 10 miles north west of Central London; High Barnet is the final station on the Northern line on the London Underground. The traditional battlefield site is Hadley Common, immediately to the north of Barnet, on a high ridge running south-north with the ground falling away to the west and the east.

The two armies first made contact as light was fading late on Saturday afternoon when Warwick's scouts were intercepted and chased away by Edward's men. Edward forced his men forward in the growing darkness so that they took up position close to

Warwick's forces; when the two armies camped for the night they were probably only about 450 metres apart. Throughout the night Warwick's artillery fired in the general direction of the Yorkist camp but, not realising that the enemy's camp was so near, most of the cannon balls overshot and did little damage. Edward enforced silence on his troops and restricted the fire of his own cannon so as to deceive the enemy as to his position.

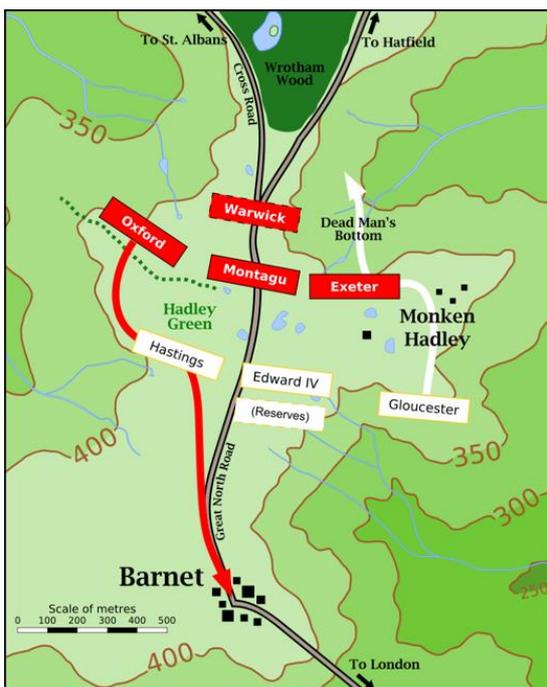


Fig 6 – the battle dispositions at Barnet at about 5:00 am on Easter Day

Dawn broke at about four o'clock. Each army was massed in three divisions (Fig 6). In the Yorkist army Edward was in the

centre, probably with Clarence so that he could keep an eye on him, with a reserve in the rear, Hasting's division was on his left and his brother Duke of Gloucester, the future Richard III, on his right. On the Lancastrian side Warwick's brother Montagu was in the centre with Oxford on the right, Exeter on his left and Warwick commanding the reserve.

How large were the armies who fought at Barnet and the other battles? At Towton total numbers involved are likely to have exceeded 75,000, the Lancastrians numbering about 40,000 and the victorious Yorkists rather less. That was exceptional. At Barnet Edward had about 9000 men under his command while Warwick's forces were probably about 15,000 making about 24,000 in all. The numbers at Bosworth in 1485 when Richard III was killed were slightly smaller. At lesser engagements numbers were far less; for example at the first scuffle of St Albans which kicked off the Wars of the Roses total numbers were unlikely to have been much more than 5000.

Returning to Barnet, it will be apparent (Fig 6) that the rival armies were not lined up directly opposite each other; this was to have an important bearing on the course of the battle.

Edward launched his men forward the following morning Easter Sunday at about five o'clock. Dawn brought a thick mist which persisted throughout the battle. According to a contemporary document Edward "committed his cause and quarrel to Almighty God, ... did blow up trumpets and set upon them first with shot and then soon they joined and came to hand strokes".

By "shot" is meant a volley of arrows probably with limited artillery support.



Fig 7 – the use of artillery in the Wars of the Roses (by Graham Turner c Osprey Publishing).

In the Wars of the Roses cannon were used differently in mainland Europe (Fig 7). On the other side of the Channel cannon proved their worth in siege warfare battering down walls of castles and towns with huge stone and iron projectiles at a range of around 1500 to 2000 metres; however the Wars of the

Roses were characterised by pitched battles rather than sieges. Loading a gun was laborious and it had to be cleaned after every round, slowing things down even more. A good gun crew fired no more than 10 shots in an hour. In the Wars of the Roses it was customary to fire just one or two volleys before troops engaged in the melee of close combat.

In addition to cannon artillery was supplemented by the use of hand guns. At Barnet according to the chroniclers Edward had as many as "three hundred of Flemmynges with hande-gonnes." What they achieved on the battlefield is uncertain, but Barnet was probably the first occasion when hand guns were deployed in a major clash of arms on English soil.

Arrows would have been shot from a 6 foot longbow probably made from yew. It was a difficult weapon to use also requiring great strength to draw it; lethal at 150 metres – at that range it could penetrate armour. Maximum range was about 400 metres. A proficient archer could shoot 10 or 12 arrows a minute. The longbow was used to devastating effect by English archers against the French in the Hundred Years War at Crecy and Agincourt.

And then the phrase “came to hand strokes”; this was close quarter hand to hand fighting which took up most of the battles. The common soldier would have worn a metal helmet and possibly armour to protect part of his face and neck while body protection would have consisted of a padded tunic. A knight would have worn plate armour ideally encasing all his body comprising many small plates strapped together to allow maximum movement. (Fig 8) The weight of the armour must have had implications for combat efficiency. One historian has estimated that it weighed between 50 and 70 pounds roughly the load carried by an infantryman in World War One. It was common practice in the Wars of the Roses for men at arms to dismount and fight on foot using their horses only to ride to or escape from a battle.



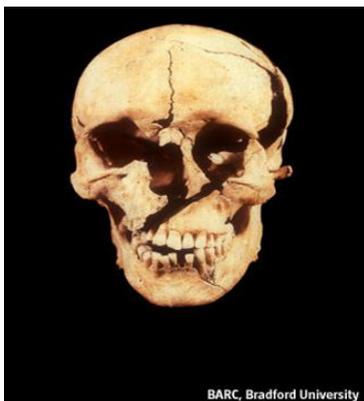
Fig 8 – 15c plate armour, a heavy burden

Standard weapons would have been daggers and swords varying from short swords about 60 cm long up to massive 110 cm long two handed broadswords. As armour became more sophisticated so the weapons became nastier (Fig 9) - battle axes and maces with hooks and spikes; iron balls attached to a staff by a chain designed to crush both the armour and the man inside. A particular nasty weapon was the pole axe – a shaft up to 180cm long topped by a sharp curved blade on one side and a claw on the other with a spike on top.



Fig 9 – weapons used in hand to hand combat

Men would have soon become exhausted in this type of fighting which is one reason why most battles lasted only a few hours.



(Fig 10) The discovery of mass graves at the site of the battle of Towton shows just how brutish the warfare was with bodies showing huge gashes and head fractures.

Fig 10 – the ferocity of fighting at close quarters

The fact that the armies were not lined up directly opposite each other soon began to tell. On Edward's left the Hastings division, overlapped by the Lancastrian right wing under Oxford, soon broke and fled - pursued uncontrollably by Oxford's men into Barnet and beyond. On Edward's other flank however Gloucester's division made the most of the advantage afforded by the overlapping line and pressed hard on the Lancastrian left under Exeter.

In the centre the battle was more even but, after about two hours, the Lancastrian greater numbers began to tell and, with Warwick's reserve having stabilised the left flank, began to drive the Yorkists back. It seemed that a small push might tip the balance towards the Lancastrians. This could have been provided by Oxford's division which had set off in pursuit of the Yorkist Hastings division but had rallied and now returned to the battlefield.

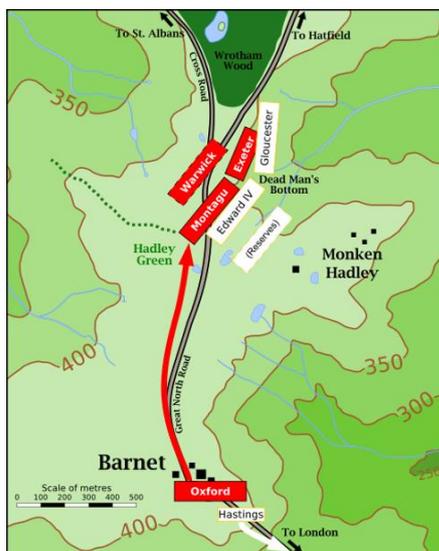


Fig 11 – the 'tipping point' of the Battle at about 8:00 am on Easter Day

However, because of the pressure on both flanks caused by the two armies not having lined up directly opposite each other the battle line had swivelled until it lay at right angles to the original position (Fig 11). The Lancastrian centre now occupied the position vacated by the fleeing Yorkist Hastings division. Unfortunately, Oxford's badge - a five pointed star – was similar to Edward's badge of a sun with five rays. In the thick fog the Lancastrian archers confused the two insignia and thinking they were faced by Edward's army unleashed a volley of arrows into

their own comrades; a supreme example of friendly fire. Oxford's men fled - this time not to return.

Now was the moment for Edward to introduce his reserves and urge his men forward. The chroniclers refer to Edward's prowess and personal courage. He was indeed a very powerful man about 6 feet 4 inches high. As the chroniclers record: "the king manly vigorously and valiantly assailed the enemy in the midst of the strongest of their battle where he with great violence beat and bore down before him all that stood in his way and then turned to the range first on that one hand and then on that other hand so beat and bear them down that nothing might stand in the sight of him". That could never have been written about the saintly Henry VI.

This illustrates the importance of the fighting qualities of commanders who were to be found in the thick of the battle rather than directing strategy from behind the lines as we've been used to in modern warfare. Possibly an example of a commander in modern warfare being so involved in the thick of the battle might be Erwin Rommel leading his tanks in the 1940 'Blitzkrieg.'

At the same time there was a leadership crisis in the Lancastrian ranks. Oxford had already left the battlefield. Exeter had been struck down and left for dead although he later recovered. Loss of their leader triggered the collapse of the left flank. Then came

a report that Montagu was dead as indeed he was. Warwick realising the battle was lost tried to escape but he was overtaken and cut down. As at Towton most of the casualties took place in the ensuing rout of the Lancastrian troops. It was all over by about 10 o'clock.

The fourth War of the Roses - Aftermath and Legacy

Three weeks later an army assembled by Margaret of Anjou was also defeated by Edward IV at Tewkesbury where her son was also killed. Henry VI died soon afterwards in the Tower whether executed or of natural causes we shall never know. Barnet and Tewkesbury marked the end of the third war and the demise of the Lancastrians. Edward had brilliantly destroyed his enemy by exploiting their weaknesses and divisions.

To round the story off, Edward died in 1483 succeeded as king by his brother Richard III. He became desperately unpopular and was killed at Bosworth in 1485 in the fourth war by Henry VII who seized the throne as the first Tudor king and sealed the new dynasty by marrying Elizabeth of York. Without the decisive defeats of the House of Lancaster at Barnet and Tewkesbury, the Tudors may never have had the opportunity to seize the throne and England would have continued for longer in the shadows of the medieval age.

At a more tangible level, the Wars of the Roses have left behind a rich and varied legacy. From a national perspective Henry VI founded Eton school and King's College Cambridge, reflecting his commitment to education. In Barnet there are many permanent reminders of the Wars. In the nineteenth century a new suburb was built known as New Barnet. The developers obviously had an eye to history as all the road names reflect the Wars of the Roses. There is Lancaster Road, York Road, Bosworth Road, Edward Road, Henry Road, Warwick Road and many others including Woodville Road after Edward IV's wife and Margaret Road after Margaret of Anjou and rather confusingly a Boleyn Road; either the builder ran out of names or got his history muddled. The trend has continued into the twenty first century with a new block of flats named Clarence Court after Edward IV's brother. And finally and rather presciently there is a Leicester Road which brings us back to where this paper started - to a skeleton under a car park and where the Wars of the Roses ended.

Edited by John Hall and with gratitude to Jill Northam and John's family for making his lecture notes available and giving permission to use them.

May 2016