

Skirmish Wargame No. 6

“Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth 1485”

- A Game of Treachery, Cold Steel and Blood -

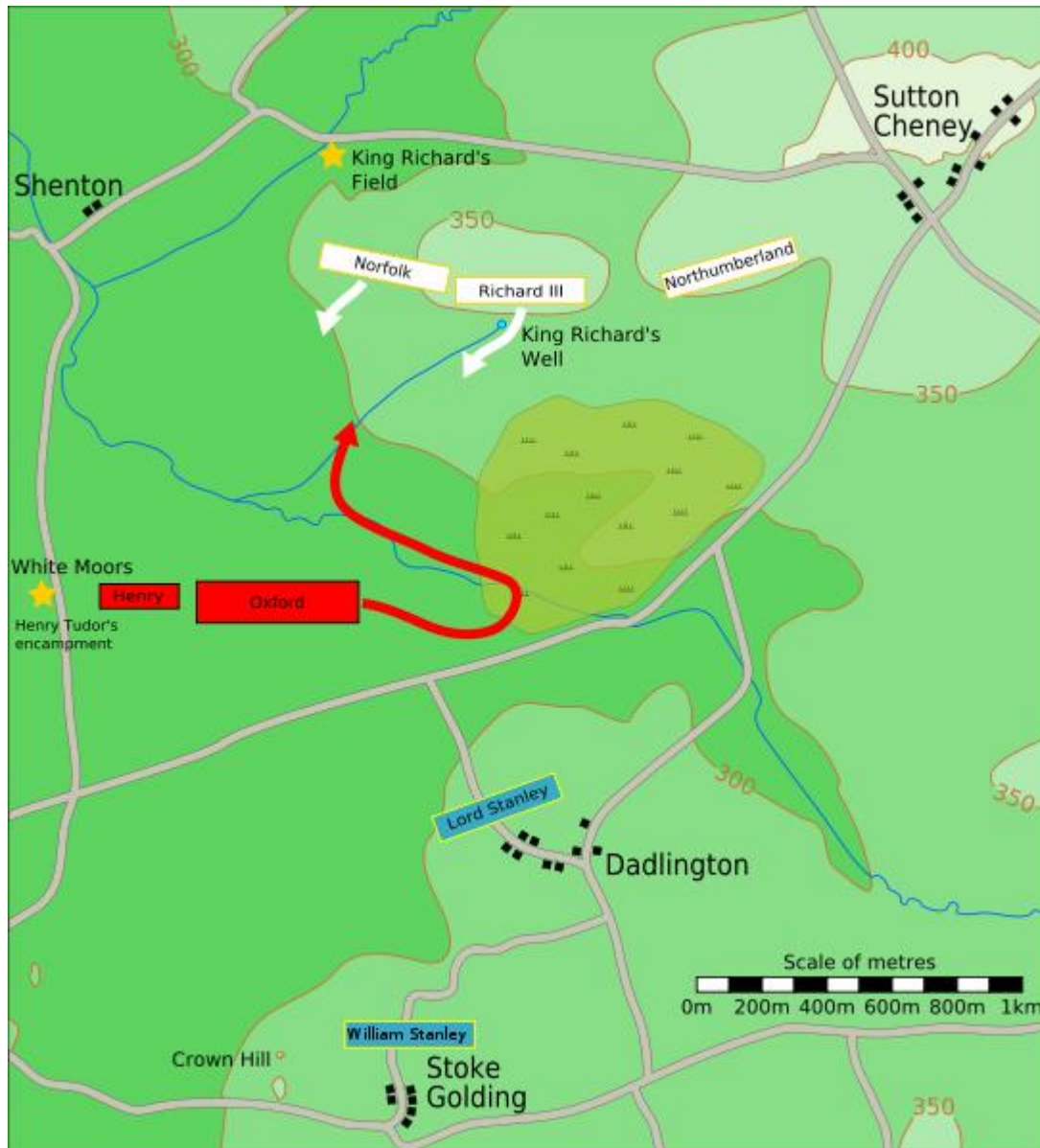
Historical Background

The **Battle of Bosworth** was the last significant battle of the Wars of the Roses, the civil war between the Houses of Lancaster and York, that raged across England in the latter half of the 15th century. Fought on 22 August 1485, the battle was won by the Lancastrians. Their leader Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, by his victory became the first English monarch of the Tudor dynasty. His opponent, Richard III, the last king of the House of York (Plantagenet dynasty), was killed in the battle.

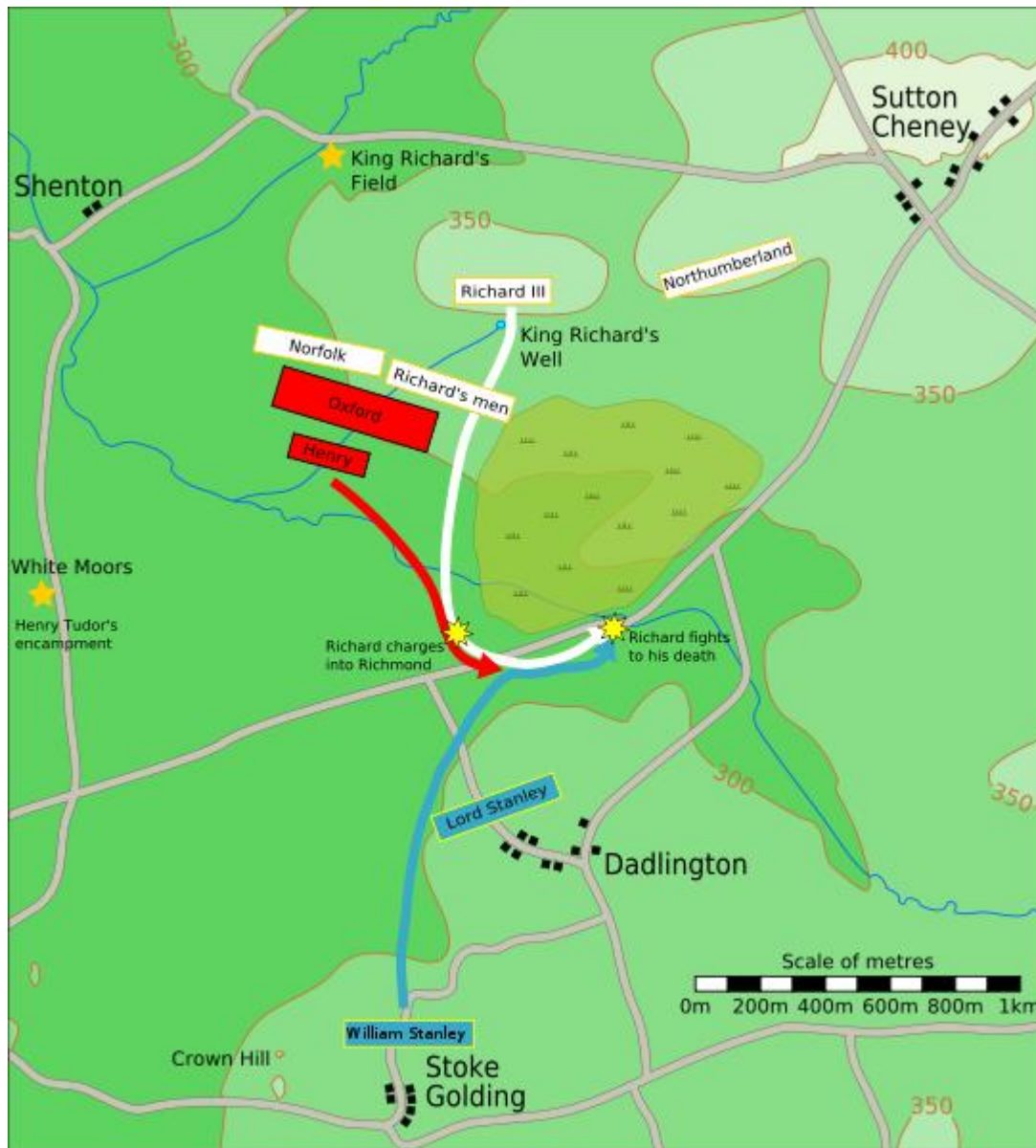
Richard's reign began in 1483 when he was handed the throne after his twelve-year-old nephew Edward V, for whom he was acting as Lord Protector, was declared illegitimate and ineligible for the throne. Richard lost popularity after the boy and his younger brother disappeared after Richard incarcerated them in the Tower of London, and Richard's support was further eroded by the popular belief he was implicated in the death of his wife. Across the English Channel in Brittany, Henry Tudor, a descendant of the greatly diminished House of Lancaster, seized on Richard's difficulties so that he could challenge Richard's claim to the throne. Henry's first attempt to invade England was frustrated by a storm in 1483, but at his second attempt he arrived unopposed on 7 August 1485 on the southwest coast of Wales. Marching inland, Henry gathered support as he made for London. Richard mustered his troops and intercepted Henry's army south of Market Bosworth in Leicestershire. Thomas, Lord Stanley, and Sir William Stanley brought a force of 6,000 men to the battlefield, but held back while they decided which side it would be more advantageous to support.

Richard divided his army (10,000 men), which outnumbered Henry's (5,000 men), into three groups (or "battles"). One was assigned to the Duke of Norfolk and another to the Earl of Northumberland. Henry kept most of his force together and placed it under the command of the experienced Earl of Oxford (*See Map No. 1*). Richard's vanguard, commanded by Norfolk, attacked but struggled against Oxford's men, and some of Norfolk's troops fled the field. Northumberland took no action when signaled to assist his king, so Richard gambled everything on a charge

across the battlefield to kill Henry and end the fight. Seeing the king's knights separated from his army, the Stanleys intervened; Sir William led his men to Henry's aid, surrounding and killing Richard (*See Map No.2*). After the battle, Henry was crowned king below an oak tree in nearby Stoke Golding. (*Source: Wikipedia*)



Map No.1 - Early battle (a scenario based on historical interpretations): elements of Richard's army charged down Ambion Hill to engage Henry's forces on the plain. The Stanleys stood at the south, observing the situation



Map No. 2 - Late battle (a scenario based on historical interpretations): Richard led a small group of men around the main battle and charged Henry, who was moving towards the Stanleys. William Stanley rode to Henry's rescue

Historical Game

The aim of this skirmish wargame is not to simulate the battle but to concentrate on the final and decisive scene. This is Richard's encounter with Henry Tudor, after charging across the battlefield with his household troops to overcome his opponent. However, the outcome of the game may be different than what happened on 22nd August 1485, as an element of unpredictable treachery will have a strong influence.

It is important to remember that already prior to the battle a number of personalities had changed sides or were still even undecided during the course of the battle. This leaves a lot of room for speculation what could have happened if for example the Stanleys hadn't intervened to help Henry, or the Earl of Northumberland had joined the battle or Sir Gilbert Talbot might have decided to return to the side of his former master. Therefore let's have a look at the personalities involved and their possible motivations for a little treachery.

Personalities, Figures and Combat Points

Yorkists

- **King Richard III** – Small and slender, suffered from scoliosis, but enjoyed rough sports and activities. His courage and performance on the battlefield was outstanding. During the final charge to kill the enemy commander, he killed the Lancastrian standard bearer Sir William Brandon and unhorsed Henry's bodyguard burly John Cheyne. He saw the charge to kill Henry as his last chance because his vanguard battle commanded by the Duke of Norfolk was being defeated by the Earl of Oxford. The Earl of Northumberland did not engage in battle (was it treachery or the terrain which obstructed movement of his troops?). Baron Thomas Stanley, whose son Lord Strange was a hostage of Richard, would not side with the Yorkists (in spite of Richard's threat to kill his son).

10 figures needed for the skirmish game: Richard III (+2 combat points), standard bearer and 8 household knights

- **Henry Percy – 4th Earl of Northumberland** – Was a supporter of Richard III when he seized the throne in 1482 and supported him during the invasion of Scotland. Henry Percy was promised the position of *The Warden of the East March*, a most powerful position to control Northern England. However, Richard was passing over Northumberland for this position in favour of the Earl of Lincoln (Richard's nephew). Was this the reason for Northumberland to refrain from joining the battle or was it rather the difficult terrain for maneuvering his troops which delayed action? Could he become a turncoat?

6 figures needed for the skirmish game: Earl of Northumberland, standard bearer and 4 mounted knights

- **John Howard – 1st Duke of Norfolk** – Plays no role in this game as he had already been killed in combat at the time of Richard's charge.

Lancastrians

- **Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond** – Slender, but strong and decisive. He was unfamiliar both with the arts of war and the country he was about to conquer, as he had spent the last 14 years in Brittany. Henry was not much of a warrior and relied on his experienced military commander John de Vere, the 13th Earl of Oxford. Henry was aware that the support of the Stanleys would be decisive for the outcome of the battle and he had met them on the eve of the battle. When moving away from Oxford's battle towards the position of the Stanleys, he exposed himself to charge from Richard.

6 figures needed for the skirmish game: Henry Tudor, Jasper Tudor (his uncle), John Cheyne (+2 combat points), standard bearer and 2 mounted knights.

- **Sir Gilbert Talbot** – He deserted Richard and joined Henry as the first English ally with 500 men at Shrewsbury. Commanded the right wing of Henry's army at Bosworth. Talbot was the stepson of Lord Stanley. Will he follow the advice of his stepfather, whose son is held hostage by Richard, at the climax of the battle?

5 figures needed for the skirmish game: Sir Gilbert Talbot and 4 archers.

- **Philibert de Chandée** – French mercenary officer who commanded 1,800 veteran troops consisting of French and Swiss mercenaries. Recruited by Henry in Normandy to invade England and challenge Richard III for the crown. Possibly there had been some collusion between Richard and de Chandée to change sides when time was ripe. A lot of gold may have been at stake.

10 figures needed for the skirmish game: Philibert de Chandée (+2 combat points) and 3 pikemen, 3 crossbow, 3 arquebus.

- **Rhys ap Thomas** –Welsh soldier and landholder. Rhys had declined to support Buckingham's uprising. In the aftermath, when Richard appointed officers to replace those who had joined the revolt, he made Rhys ap Thomas his principal lieutenant in south west Wales and granted him an annuity for life of 40 marks. However, Rhys decided to join Henry after he landed in Milford Haven and recruited 500 further men in Wales. Rhys's Welsh force was described as being large enough to have "annihilated" the rest of Henry's army. It is said that Rhys himself was responsible for killing Richard, possibly with a poll axe or halberd. Will Rhys remain loyal to Henry or double cross to Richard, who may have promised to pardon Rhys and increase his annuity for life to 80 marks?

6 figures needed for the skirmish game: Rhys ap Thomas (+1 combat point) and 5 pole axemen.

- **John de Vere, 13th Earl of Oxford** – is not involved in this game as he is heavily engaged in combat with the remains of Norfolk's vanguard battle.

The Stanleys

- **Sir William Stanley and Thomas Stanley (2nd Baron Stanley)** – were requested by Richard to gather their troops and join the main army. But the Stanleys were clever and vacillated between opposing sides until it was clear who would be the winner. Their non-committal stance, until the crucial point of a battle, earned them the loyalty of their men, who felt they would not needlessly send them to their deaths. They kept their forces away from the battle claiming to protect the flank (not saying against whom). The charge of Sir William Stanley effectively saved Henry and caused the final defeat of Richard III. But will they be prepared to commit their troops again in this skirmish game?

8 figures needed for the skirmish game: Sir William Stanley (+1 combat point) and 7 mounted knights.

Setting the Game

The players decide by the throw of a coin who takes the Lancastrians or the Yorkists. The game starts with the two main personalities Richard and Henry with their retainers facing each other in the middle of the table (small table 60cm x 60cm will suffice). 20cm distance between the opponents – Henry being protected by a screen of his body guards.

In order to bring the chance and treachery element into the game at this point of time, there is a heap of altogether 21 cards (i.e. personality and action cards) of which each player will pick a total of 8 cards and keep them secret. The remaining 5 cards will be removed without being looked at. The cards will indicate the personalities which the players can then employ for their side. That means they will remain loyal or become a turncoat (once again). In addition there is an indication when the personalities and their troops will enter (game move no.#) and from where they will enter the table (position on clock-face – example 3 o'clock – right hand side). The chance cards can be used at any time during the game.

The cards are as follows (please cut out and possibly stick to cardboard card)

<p><u>Personality Card</u></p> <p>Sir Gilbert Talbot</p> <p>Will join your cause (however, will immediately follow example of Stanleys, whatever their allegiance)</p> <p>Game move no.#5 Entry point 11 o'clock</p>	<p><u>Personality Card</u></p> <p>Henry Percy – 4th Earl of Northumberland</p> <p>If you are <u>Yorkist</u>, Northumberland will send troops. If you are <u>Lancastrian</u>, then Northumberland remains inactive.</p> <p>Game move no.#5 Entry point 3 o'clock</p>
<p><u>Personality Card</u></p> <p>Philibert de Chandée</p> <p>Will join your cause, whatever your allegiance, as the promise of gold is most important for mercenaries.</p> <p>Game move no.#4 Entry point 10 o'clock</p>	<p><u>Personality Card</u></p> <p>Rhys ap Thomas</p> <p>Will join your cause, whatever your allegiance.</p> <p>Game move no.#4 Entry point 8 o'clock</p>

<p><u>Personality Card</u></p> <p>Sir William Stanley If you are <u>Yorkist</u>, Stanley will remain inactive. If you are <u>Lancastrian</u>, Stanley will attack</p> <p>Game move no.#3 Entry point 6 o'clock.</p>	
<p><u>Chance Card</u></p> <p>ELITE STATUS (+1) CARD</p> <p>Can be used only once at any time to provide one unit with an Elite Combat Status of +1 point for one move</p>	<p><u>Chance Card</u></p> <p>ELITE STATUS (+1) CARD</p> <p>Can be used only once at any time to provide one unit with an Elite Combat Status of +1 point for one move</p>
<p><u>Chance Card</u></p> <p>FOG OF WAR CARD</p> <p>This card will render one unit disoriented when it enters the battle field. Unit will remain stationary/inactive for one move.</p>	<p><u>Chance Card</u></p> <p>FOG OF WAR CARD</p> <p>This card will render one unit disoriented when it enters the battle field. Unit will remain stationary/inactive for one move.</p>
<p><u>Chance Card</u></p> <p>1st Class Treason Card</p> <p>Can be used only once at any time to force any <u>one</u> unit (except Richard's and Henry's personal units) to change sides immediately.</p>	<p><u>Chance Card</u></p> <p>1st Class Treason Card</p> <p>Can be used only once at any time to force any <u>one</u> unit (except Richard's and Henry's personal units) to change sides immediately.</p>
<p><u>Chance Card</u></p> <p>2nd Class Treason Card</p> <p>Can be used only once at any time to force the <u>French mercenary or Welsh</u> unit to change sides immediately.</p>	<p><u>Chance Card</u></p> <p>2nd Class Treason Card</p> <p>Can be used only once at any time to force the <u>French mercenary or Welsh</u> unit to change sides immediately.</p>

<p><u>Chance Card</u></p> <p>1st Class Counter-Treason Card</p> <p>Can be used only once at any time to prevent any one unit from changing sides.</p>	<p><u>Chance Card</u></p> <p>1st Class Counter-Treason Card</p> <p>Can be used only once at any time to prevent any one unit from changing sides.</p>
<p><u>Chance Card</u></p> <p>2nd Class Counter-Treason Card</p> <p>Can be used only once at any time to prevent the <u>French mercenary</u> or <u>Welsh</u> unit from changing sides.</p>	<p><u>Chance Card</u></p> <p>2nd Class Counter-Treason Card</p> <p>Can be used only once at any time to prevent the <u>French mercenary</u> or <u>Welsh</u> unit from changing sides.</p>
<p><u>Chance Card</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>JOKER</u></p> <p>Can be used once only as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1st Class treason card or - 2nd Class treason card or - 1st Class Counter treason Card <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2nd Class Counter treason Card or - Elite Status Card or - Fog of War Card 	<p><u>Chance Card</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>JOKER</u></p> <p>Can be used once only as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1st Class treason card or - 2nd Class treason card or - 1st Class Counter treason Card <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2nd Class Counter treason Card or - Elite Status Card or - Fog of War Card
<p><u>Chance Card</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">NIL – Bad Luck!</p>	<p><u>Chance Card</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">NIL – Bad Luck!</p>

Special Rules

Sequence of the game move:

1. Firing of missiles / 2. Movement / 3. Combat

Firing of missiles:

- Longbow 0-20 cm effective range (hit person with dice 6 / group 5,6)
21-40cm long range (hit only group with dice 6)
- Crossbow/ 0-20 cm effective range (hit person with dice 6 / group 5,6)
Arquebus 21-30cm long range (hit only group with dice 6)
- Spear/axe 0-10 cm effective range (hit person with dice 6 / group 5,6)
- Saving throws: When figure gets hit by missile there is the chance of getting saved with a dice 5,6. One throw each for hardcover, shield, and body armour.

Movement:

- Foot 20cm
- Horse 30cm

Combat Points:

- To be applied as per above list by adding to the throw of a dice.
- Points draw: Combat continues to next move / +1: The loser falls back 10cm / +2 and more: kill.
- Whenever 3 figures of one side fall back in one combat, automatically a fourth figure close by will join the withdrawl. Whenever a personality/ officer/sergeant falls back, automatically one further figure close by will join.
- Whenever two figures of one side fight against an individual figure, the first combat is according to the above rules, while for the second combat the individual figure gets one point deducted (-1).

Victory Conditions:

The game is won as soon as enemy commander is killed!

Enjoy the Game!

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Gallery with pictures from my War of the Roses Collection



Richard III and his banner man Sir Percival Thirwell



John de Vere, 13th Earl of Oxford



Sir Gilbert Talbot and Lancastrian archers



*Henry Tudor – The Earl of Richmond with standard bearer
(Richard III in background ready to strike)*



Battle Scene with crossbow and men-at-arms advancing