

Stoke Field Battlefield 1487



Above: Lord Lovell and Earl of Lincoln

- 1 9am, on 16 June 1487, the rebels thought their best chance was to take on De Vere's vanguard before the rest of the Royal army arrived and that is why they moved down off the high ground to engage them. The rebels were in a situation where they had no option but to win. There was no going back for them.
- 2 9.30am, Fighting was sharp, furious and for a while the rebels held their own. Although the Yorkists' mercenaries were experience and well equipped, volleys of arrows from the Lancastrian longbows took their toll, particularly on the lightly armoured Irish, who were said to look 'like hedgehogs'. King Henry Tudor did not commit the majority of his forces to the struggle, choosing rather to reinforce his vanguard with Lancastrian contingents until the rebel Yorkists were overcome.
- 3 10-12pm, The Earl of Lincoln and Martin Schwartz were slain, and it is said that many of the rebels were cornered, killed and left in the "Red Gutter", which probably gets its name from the red clay.

Prior to the battle ...

On 24 May 1487, in Dublin, the Yorkist rebels (Earl of Lincoln and Lord Lovell) declared a young imposter, Lambert Simnel, to be the rightful King Edward VI. After landing in Cumbria they marched south through Yorkshire, accompanied by the experienced German mercenary, Martin Schwartz and his army and an Irish force. After failing to attract the support they expected, their army numbered no more than 8,000 men. King Henry VII moved slowly from Kenilworth, where he had been waiting, to allow his army to join him. On 15 June 1487 the King was at Radcliffe, near Nottingham, where he received news that the Yorkists had crossed the River Trent at Newark. The Royalist army now numbered around 15,000 in total.

On the morning of 16 June 1487 the battle-hardened John de Vere, 13th Earl of Oxford, led a vanguard of 6,000 men along the Upper Fosse. The 9,000 strong main body of the Tudor army, led by King Henry, with Lord Strange commanding the rearguard, approached along the main Fosse Way. The Rebel army were already waiting for them on the high ground near the village of Stoke.



Right: Pikemen

Above: Faded armies show a possible alternative deployment for the battle



Above: Burham Furlong where the victorious Henry Tudor is said to have placed his standard

- 4 Aftermath - 7,000 in total died and there are mass graves sited along Church Lane in Stoke Hall Park. Willow Rundle, a spring that started to flow to quench a dying mans thirst, is traditionally where Lincoln is buried. Lord Lovell disappeared and is said to have escaped by swimming his horse across the river Trent. A body found walled up in a hidden room in his house, Minster Lovell, in 1708, could be the lost Lord himself. The boy pretender, Lambert Simnel, was pardoned and taken into the service of Henry VII as a kitchen boy, later to become a falconer.



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