

# The Swan Song



THE STAFFORD NEWSLETTER

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# HAPPY NEW YEAR!



31 December – New Year's party at Kathryn's in Somercotes.

## What's in this issue?

A very happy new year to everyone

To start the year off in party mood, I give you some photos taken at Kathryn's house on 31 December. We managed to confuse Marcus' friend Martin by bundling him out of the back door at 23:59 with a bottle of whisky, some salt and a pencil (in lieu of coal – well, it's carbon-based) with instructions to come in at the front. He wasn't quite sure that we'd let him in again!

Since Duke Harry is on holiday for the winter, the archives section is bunked up to pages 2 and 3, with a selection of photos from the mid-90s.

On page 4 there is an article about the powers of saints to get you off the purgatory rap for most crimes up to but not including being a Minister of Education.

The second instalment of the not-yet-legendary history of the Wars of the Roses has taken over pages 5 to 8 and completely glosses over the life of Henry VI, as well as including brief accounts of the Battles of St Albans (1) and Northampton. Both of these battles are important dates in the lives of two members of the Stafford family: they died.

Page 9 has a report by Amanda Greaves on the Towton dead.

Page 10 is Findings and Discoveries on how to read the colour of urine and a book review (not related!).

Page 11 has L&M news, including details of L&M events.

Page 12 (the back) has other news, including details of other events.

# Once Upon A Time In The Staffords & York City Levy



Another delve into the archives, this time courtesy of Fiona Kay of the York City Levy. Fiona has provided a large number of pictures from the mid to late 1990s, from a period when it seemed the Stafford Household and the Levy would always work together.

*SwanSong* presents here a selection of photos taken from 1994 to 1997, at various events and parties around the Midlands and the North. If you were around then, however, and don't see yourself, don't worry – there are loads more to come. If you weren't around then – count yourself unlucky, you would have had fun!



Clockwise, from top left: Ali, Paul and Stuart Fox posing with the original Stafford Household cannons, Catherine and Barbara (DOVER 30/8/94); James Wilson, who for those of you who don't remember him made the remarkable transition from drummer to Richard III, and Rupert, Ali's brother, who has just returned to re-enactment with the Levy after a gap of several years (JAMES and JULIE'S WEDDING NOV 1996); then there is a party, and Allan, and the chariot race scene from Ben Hur (say no more) (JUNE 96); next photo shows the Stafford Household advancing towards what must be the enemy's barbeque smoke – I think I see Darren and Mark through the murk (LINCOLN 13/8/95).

The last picture will look a bit puzzling to anyone who joined the group after 1996, but if you put page 2 and page 3 of this issue side by side, insane reason may well strike you severely between the ears.



# Once Upon A Time In The Staffords & York City Levis



Clockwise from left: Kathryn and "The Hat of Power" (PORTCHESTER 2/3/94); Paul Morris and Emma-the-Goth (not entirely Emma's usual choice of fashion, I believe, but it suits her ...) (MANCHESTER ROCK CLUB sometime in 1997); Rhian and Vicki in party mood (GUISBOROUGH sometime in 1995); and finally, below, the Levy tent tries to sneak up on the Stafford Household block during an L&M event at Lincon Castle (LINCOLN 13/8/95).



So what were the Levy doing at Lincoln?

Well, in keeping with the fine Levy traditions of silliness, they came out on all fours, covered in sheepskins, behind "Little Bo Beep". The idea was to try and sneak up on the drilling L&M blocks.

This failed to work, so they next brought their tent out (above). After the strange spectacle of a tent marching up and down, they vanished, to return as "Mexicans". The Staffords responded in kind and shot them all!

# SAINTS, SHRINES AND MAGICAL POWERS

By our weird musical instrument correspondent

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It is hard for those of us in the twenty-first century to envisage how important religion was to people in the fifteenth century. It was more than just a part of their lives – rather their lives were often directed by their faith. Religion therefore formed part of their leisure activities and working life.

The catholic faith varied in form between countries and even by region. However fundamental to all versions of the religion was the belief in salvation through Christ with faith being shown in works. Attending religious festivals, undertaking acts of charity and leaving money in your will for masses to be said were all deeds which could count in a person's favour.

Saints were an important part of the religion for a number of reasons:

- Name days – children were often given the names of saints and the saint was thought to have a special interest in the children sharing their name. There was a tradition of gifts being given to a child on their 'name day', i.e. the day that was designated to the saint of their name. Paintings of the period showing the family at worship often show a person's name saint behind them.
- Appeals to saints – people could appeal directly to their own saint to intercede in any aspects of their life, e.g. to improve their crop yield.
- Saints were also thought to look after groups of people such as trade guilds, communities, etc.
- Cure for illness – some saints were thought to have special curative powers for certain illnesses and could be appealed to for a cure (for example St James the Greater was thought to look after sufferers of rheumatism and St Dymphna looks after the mentally ill).

The Middleham Jewel (so named because it was found at Middleham Castle) almost certainly belonged to an aristocratic lady, being gold with a large sapphire on the front, and dates from the third quarter of the fifteenth century. On the back is a depiction of St Bridget and around the rim are etched fifteen saints. The sapphire is also significant in that the colour represented purity and was thought to have magical powers in helping problems with the eyes and providing pro-

tection against treachery. It is not known who owned the jewel.[1]

It is a basic belief of the faith that after death the soul spends a time in purgatory before it passes over to its final resting place and the length of time spent in purgatory depends upon how virtuous the person's life has been. If you have lived a particularly bad life then you could expect to spend a long time in purgatory. It is thought that Jesus and the saints, through their good works, had built up a fund of goodwill which could be accessed by normal people doing special deeds which would gain them relief from time in purgatory. In this way you could atone for a previous bad deed by performing some form of act of faith *provided that you also repented your previous misdeed*. The church hierarchy could also grant indulgences which gave people relief from time spent in purgatory if they were unable to undertake a pilgrimage or other such act – again the person had to repent and also to pay a fine to the church which led to the appearance that indulgences were sold.

## Pilgrimages

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As a special act of worship or appeal, a person could make a pilgrimage to a known shrine. It was considered that this effort would be recognised by the saint to whom the shrine was designated and that the person's appeal would be looked upon favourably. Mary was thought to have a special role in the treatment of infertility and ladies wishing to become pregnant would often make a pilgrimage to the shrine of 'Our Lady of Walsingham' in Norfolk in order to appeal to her to intercede on their behalf.

If you wanted to gain special favour or remittance of time in purgatory then you could undertake a journey further afield perhaps to Rome or the shrine of Santiago (St James) di Compostela in Spain, which was no mean feat in the fifteenth century. This was beyond the means of most people of the time. The following passage is from the pilgrimage of William Wey who travelled to Santiago di Compostela circa 1456 and shows the benefit he expected to gain from his journey

A third part of all their sins are remitted for anyone who makes a pilgrimage to the church of the blessed James Zebedee at whatever time. If they die on the way there, or at the shrine or returning, if they have repented of

their sins, these are all remitted. [2]

Pilgrimages, whilst having an important religious significance, would also have been seen as something of a holiday and break in the normal routine for people. Imagine walking along the Pilgrims Way in Canterbury and meeting other pilgrims, sharing stories of the journey and buying souvenirs of the visit. Each shrine would have its own tokens for purchase as proof of the visit, such as:

- Santiago de Compostela (scallop shell)
- Canterbury (the head of Thomas a Beckett)
- St Edward the Confessor at Westminster (a crown)

Once the pilgrim reached the shrine, they would expect to see relics of the saint to whom the shrine was dedicated. This may take the form of the saint's bones or some item that was personal to them. Robert Langton, a pilgrim to Santiago di Compostela in the 1430s lists the relics there:

here is St James buried. Also there is the head of St James the less. Also pieces of the holy cross. Also a thorn and a piece of our Lord's staff. Also blood of St Sebastian. Also of the shirt of hair that St Thomas of Canterbury did wear on. Also a tooth of St Sylvester, with many other relics. [3]

In fifteenth century terms, such a collection of relics would be bound to result in miracles!

## Notes

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1. Pollard, AJ (2000) *Late Medieval England 1399–1509*, Pearson Education.
2. Englander, N, O'Day and Owens (eds) (1990) *Culture and Belief in Europe 1450–1600: An Anthology of Sources*, Basil Blackwell.
3. *Culture and Belief in Europe 1450–1600, Popular Culture Humanism and Belief*, Open University.

# The Wars of the Roses

A Nice and Accurate History

by Sue Green and Allan Harley

*Cy parle de bataille de...* **Parte the Second** *... ont eurent tous pie en boutat...*



*le avecques vne partie de ses hommes. Mais la greigneur partie deulz demourerent mors n'...* **Henry VI The mad King** *... y parle de bataille de la rache darien. Et com...*

# The Wars of the Roses (2): Henry VI - the mad King

## The child King

Henry VI was only 9 months old when he succeeded to the throne following the death of his father Henry V, inheriting large debts from 22 years of campaigning in France.

During Henry's minority, there were disagreements between the King's great uncle, Cardinal Bishop of Winchester Henry Beaufort and uncle Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester but these were kept in balance by his uncle, the Duke of Bedford and the council; however, Bedford died in 1435. In November 1437 at the age of 16 Henry declared his minority at an end and that he would rule in his own right. Henry was easily led, however, and created much discord by being influenced by his favourites at court – this would be a familiar pattern throughout his reigns. He was described by Abbot Whethamstede as a simple and upright man who could not resist those who urged him to unwise decisions and wasteful prodigality. He was also deeply religious and very interested in education, founding both Eton College and King's College Cambridge.

By the 1450s he became increasingly under the control of his counsellors and his French wife, Margaret of Anjou. There were a lot of major issues at this time including crown debts of £372,000 (the crown's annual income was only £33,000) and complaints about corruption of the chief ministers and perversion of the law. In May 1450 Jack Cade led a rebellion in the south-east, complaining 'Also we say our sovereign lord may understand that his false council has lost his law, his merchandise is lost, his common people is lost, the sea is lost, France is lost, the king himself is so beset that he may not pay for his meat and drink ...'.

## The mad King

In 1453 Henry suffered a severe nervous breakdown, perhaps an inheritance from his maternal grandfather, the Valois King Charles VI of France who also suffered from bouts of mental ill health. Henry's only child, Edward Prince of Wales, was born in October 1453 during his illness. It is said that when he recovered he failed to recognise Edward as his own son, although he later acknowledged him as his heir. Richard, Duke of York another descendant of Edward III was appointed Protector of England during Henry's illness in April 1454. Henry's queen, Margaret, had attempted to become regent during her husband's illness and became a rival to York resenting his appointment and becoming involved in attempts to bring about his downfall. In February 1455



Henry VI (1421–1471), founder of Eton and King's College; ruled by his wife; influenced by his favourites. Did he prefer his religious devotions to ruling?

Henry regained his wits and York's protectorate came to an end with York himself once again sidelined whilst Henry's favourites, Somerset and Exeter, were re-established in their positions of influence.

**“Honestly, we’re only doing it because we’re loyal, your Highness; no, Somerset can’t be with us ... any more”**

The Yorkist leaders were summoned to appear before the great council at Leicester, probably to force an oath of submission. Their response was to arm themselves ready for conflict in alarm at what was in store for them. Attempts to negotiate failed and the rival factions clashed at the first Battle of St Albans on 22 May 1455 (see box). Henry VI never fought himself in any battle but was present in St Albans and was reputedly wounded in the neck whilst standing alone during the battle. This is often considered to be the first battle of what would later be known as the Wars of the Roses. The battle ceased as soon as York defeated his major protagonists, which indicates the fact that at this stage this was a war between rival parties at court rather than an attempt on the crown itself. York then controlled the person of the King and began a second protectorate in the name of the King. Regardless of his weaknesses, the nobility recognised the divine right of Henry to rule and York himself appears to have had no intention at this stage of taking the crown, being happy to swear an oath of loyalty to the king.

The great council was summoned to meet at Coventry on 24 June 1459 but York and his friends were not invited. The Yorkist leaders planned to meet at York's stronghold of Ludlow to discuss their response. The Queen's party tried to forestall this meeting and the Earl of Salisbury marching down from the north clashed with the royalist army at Blore Heath on 23 September 1459, a battle that was indecisive. Many of the protagonists were unhappy facing the King's army and when offered a pardon most deserted,

## Timeline

- 1421** Birth of Henry, son to Henry V and Katherine of France
- 1422** Death of Henry V; Henry VI left in care of Henry V's brothers – John and Humphrey, Dukes of Bedford and Gloucester – and Royal Council, led by Bishop Beaufort
- 1435** Death of Duke of Bedford, in Rouen
- 1441** Duchess of Gloucester accused of sorcery by Bishop Beaufort; Duke of Gloucester sidelined in politics. Beaufort now controls King, aided by nephew Edmund Beaufort, Duke of Somerset, and William de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk
- 1444** Henry VI marries Margaret of Anjou; Margaret aligns herself with Somerset and Suffolk
- 1447** Bishop Beaufort dies
- 1447** Suffolk impeached and banished; murdered en route to Flanders
- 1450** Cade's rebellion
- 1453** Battle of Castillon (end of Hundred Years War)
- 1453** Henry VI suffers mental breakdown; Prince Edward born; York declared protector
- 1454** Henry VI recovers; York sidelined
- 22 May 1455** First Battle of St Albans (see page 7): Somerset, Stafford (1st Duke of Buckingham's son), Percy and Harington (all L) killed; King, Duke of Buckingham, and Earls of Devon and Dorset (all L) captured by Duke of York and Earl of Warwick
- 1455** York appointed protector and Warwick Captain of Calais
- 1456** End of York's protectorate; York returns to Ireland; Margaret now in control of government and court
- 23 September 1459** Battle of Blore Heath; but York's forces defeated at Ludford and he flees to Ireland
- 10 July 1460** Battle of Northampton (see page 8): King again captured by York's supporters, led by Earl of Warwick and York's son, Edward, Earl of March; Duke of Buckingham (L) killed
- 1460** York returns and claims throne – claim rejected by peers, but he is made protector again; Margaret gathers supporters
- 30 December 1460** Battle of Wakefield: York killed, along with his son

# The Wars of the Roses (2): Henry VI - the mad King

forcing the leaders to flee the realm. York himself escaped to Ireland and his eldest son, Edward Earl of March, fled to Calais with Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick who was captain of Calais at the time. In November 1459 Parliament met at Coventry and attainted the Yorkists, who were declared rebels with all their lives, goods and lands forfeited to the crown.

This was to set the stage for the next 25 years of warring between factions when crown would change hands six times with three of the Kings dying violent deaths and the direct male lines of Lancaster and York both being totally extinguished

York returned from Ireland in September 1460, now making it clear that he intends to take the throne himself, however his claim is not supported by the lords who still hold to their oath of allegiance to Henry VI. This indicates how serious the medieval lords took such oaths, given that the King was weak, incompetent, had favourites, had huge debts and was subject to bouts of madness – he still remained the King and his right to rule was inviolate. On 10 October 1460 an Act of Accord was passed recognising York's superior claim to the throne and creating him and his sons heirs to Henry VI, thus disinheriting Henry's own son.

## The King is dead ... long live ...

Henry continued to be a pawn for the remainder of his life with various factions gaining hold of his person and ruling in his name, at some times by the Yorkist faction and at others by his wife and her supporters or other lords. It appears that Henry himself was much happier when he could concentrate on his religious devotions and many took his piety and simple nature as being indicative of holiness. Eventually the Yorkist cause was to exterminate most of the Lancastrian supporters and eventually killed Edward, Prince of Wales at the Battle of Tewkesbury. Once the line of succession was eradicated and the Yorkists had the upper hand, there was little to be gained by keeping Henry VI alive and he died reputedly on the same day that Edward IV returned to London after the Battle of Tewkesbury. Whilst the spin machine put it about that he died of 'pure displeasure and melancholy' on hearing of the death of his son, it is almost certain that he was murdered on the orders of Edward IV.

More will be told about the intervening years and the roles of Richard, Duke of York, Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick and Edward IV in future issues of *SwanSong*.

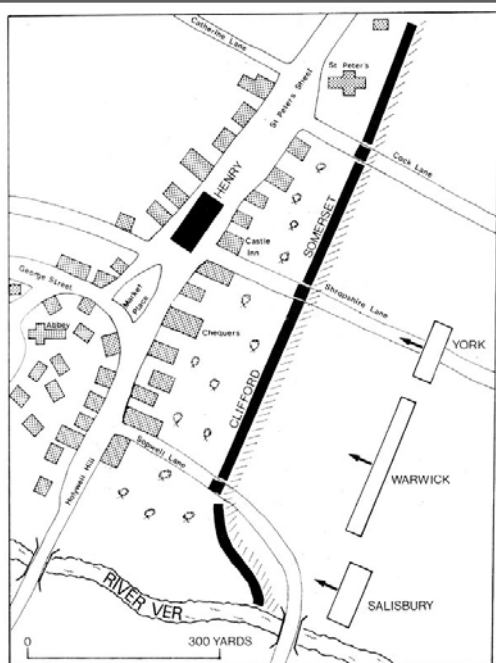
## THE FIRST BATTLE OF ST ALBANS

(Extract taken from Wise, T and Embleton, GA (1983) *The Wars of the Roses, Men-at-Arms Series 145, Osprey*)

[The armies met at St Albans at 7am, 22 May 1455, and reconciliation was tried], York offering to withdraw if the King would surrender Somerset, whom York considered a traitor. The King (i.e. Somerset!) refused, and York ordered the attack.

Warwick was to lay down a barrage of arrows in support of flank attacks by York and Salisbury. These attacks were repulsed and Warwick therefore ordered his archers to concentrate on their own front. He then attacked the centre, broke through to the Chequers, and here established a rallying point. Falling back to prevent their divided forces being outflanked by Warwick, the Lancastrians weakened their defenses ... and the forces of York and Salisbury almost immediately broke into the town. The Lancastrians began to falter, panicked and broke, to be pursued up St Peter's Street ...

Somerset and some retainers took cover in the Castle Inn while Lord Clifford, with



Percy, Harington and some other knights and esquires fought on outside the inn. When those outside were slain, Somerset led his men in one last charge. He killed four men before being felled by an axe. The King, the Duke of Buckingham and the Earls of Devon and Dorset were captured; Clifford, Somerset, Stafford, Percy and Harington were amongst those killed.

Edmund; Earl of Salisbury (Warwick's father, Y) captured and executed

**2 February 1461 Battle of Mortimer's Cross:** Edward defeats Lancastrian army trying to stop him uniting with Warwick; Owen Tudor (L) captured and executed

**17 February 1461 Second Battle of St Albans:** Warwick defeated by Margaret, but escapes with 4,000 men

**29 March 1461 Battle of Towton;** victory for Edward; Edward IV now King; Margaret, Henry VI and Prince Edward flee to Scotland

**1462–4** Most surviving Lancastrians seek refuge in Scotland with Henry and Margaret

**15 May 1464 Battle of Hexham:** Somerset (L) captured and executed

**1464?** Henry VI found hiding in monastery, placed in Tower of London

**March 1470** Warwick falls out with Edward IV and flees to France after being implicated in uprisings

**September 1470** Warwick arranges rising in Yorkshire and lands at Dartmouth; caught between armies, Edward forced to flee to Netherlands; Henry VI restored to throne, although Margaret does not return immediately

**15 March 1471** Edward returns via Ravenspur

**14 April 1471 Battle of Barnet:** Warwick defeated and killed by Edward IV; Margaret lands at Weymouth

**4 May 1471 Battle of Tewkesbury:** Margaret's army caught and defeated by Edward IV; Somerset and Prince Edward killed, Margaret placed in Tower until ransomed by father in 1476

**May 1471** Henry VI murdered in Tower

## Bibliography

Charles Ross (1989) *The Wars of the Roses*.

AJ Pollard (2000) *Late Medieval England 1399–1509*.

Next installment ...

*Queen Margaret and the Lancastrians*

# THE BATTLE OF NORTHAMPTON

The royal army encamped in a meadow outside Northampton, between the villages of Hardingstone and Delapre Abbey. Here the men dug deep ditches around the whole encampment, made a defensive palisade of sharp stakes and blocked the road to London with cannon. They were not in the best strategic position, however, as the nearby river Nene, in flood due to two days of heavy rain, was not fordable and the only means of escape was a narrow bridge.

Humphrey Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, the commander in chief of the royal army, was anxious to get any battle over and done with so he could march on London and relieve Lord Scales at the Tower. It was also essential that he did deal with Warwick and March before they linked with York and Salisbury.

On 10 July Warwick's army arrived in Northampton. However, he now strove to avoid engaging the royal army by sending the bishop of Salisbury and Coppini to the King with a request that he hear the Yorkist lords' grievances. Henry refused, despite the added pleas of Archbishop Bouchier. Buckingham urged the King to pay no heed and accused the bishops of hypocrisy.

At midday the rain began, rapidly turning the Lancastrian camp into a quagmire. The royal army, some 20,000 strong, was only half the size of Warwick's, with many expected reinforcements failing to see action.

Warwick commanded the Yorkist centre, March, bearing aloft his fathers standard, led the vanguard along with Lord Scrope on the left, with Fauconberg leading the rearguard to the right. For the first time the Yorkist had mustered a large number of lords, including Bouchier, Abergavenny, Audley and Say, with large numbers of soldiers from Kent, Sussex and Essex.

On the Lancastrian side, the vanguard, located on the right wing, was commanded by Lord Grey de Ruthyn, (livery badge a black ragged staff), a wealthy landowner who had courted favour in the Coventry parliament. Prior to the battle, however, March had received word from Grey that he would change sides if the Yorkists would back him in a property dispute with Lord Fanhope. He was later to become treasurer of England in 1463.

Grey's principal captain was Thomas, Lord Stanley, brother in law to Warwick, and with little enthusiasm to fight against his powerful Neville in-laws.

At two o'clock, Warwick ordered a gen-

eral advance and all three Yorkist divisions simultaneously attacked the Lancastrian defences with orders to slay any noble they encountered but to spare the King, the common soldier and Lord Grey's men

The advance across the Nene marshes was met with a deadly series of volleys from Lancastrian archers and initially cannon fire, causing heavy casualties. Despite this they waded through the mud and assaulted the slippery embankment and palisade.

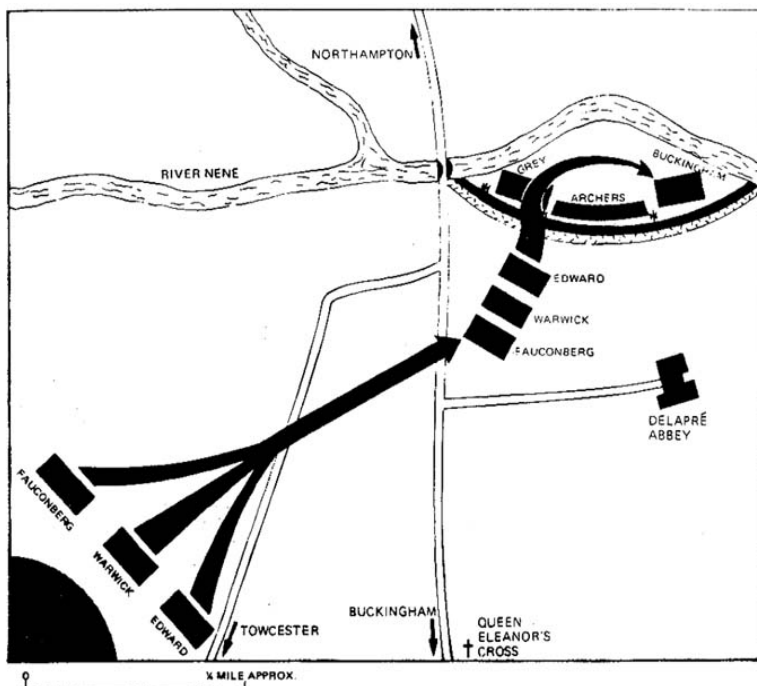
The weather conditions were now so bad that Buckingham's cannon were soon lying deep in water and rendered useless, while many of the Lancastrian cavalry were forced to dismount and fight on foot.

As the Yorkist right approached the palisade, Lord Grey signalled his men and with a cry 'a Warwick, a Warwick' they started to help the Yorkists over the wall.

Panic now ensued, with fierce hand-to-hand fighting giving way to rout. The fighting was swift, with the battle lasting only half an hour, and with the day lost, the Lancastrian soldiers fled, some fighting each other at the narrow bridge crossing with others making desperate attempts to swim the river, although few succeeded.

Around 300 to 400 men now lay dead in the field, Lancastrian losses being heaviest, with their commander-in-chief, the Duke of Buckingham, among them. Lancastrian dead also included John, Viscount Beaumont, Constable of England, Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury and Percy, Lord Egremont, who had been cut down by Warwick's men outside the King's tent. The King was captured by Henry Mountfort, archer, and confined to his tent.

With the battle over, Warwick, March



Map source: The Wars of the Roses, Osprey, p. 10.

and Fauconberg found Henry alone and threw themselves to their knees, craved his forgiveness and paid him homage

The dead were later buried in nearby Delapre Abbey

Allan Harley

## UNLUC(K)Y IN LOVE

At 2.00 o'clock on the 10th July 1460, with Standards raised a Yorkist Army advanced toward the palisaded encampment of the Royal Host outside Northampton. Alerted by the sound of the Lancastrian cannon, a local knight, Sir William Lucy, hastened to the King's aid.

Unfortunately, he arrived just as the Lancastrian rout was beginning, but even more unfortunately he was recognised by Sir John Stafford, a relative of the Duke of Buckingham.

Stafford, who had been having an affair with Lucy's wife for some time, instantly forgot about the Yorkist soldiers swarming over the walls charged over to his rival and killed him before scarpering a bit pronto.

Ghost



# WERE TOWTON DEAD EXECUTED?

*Amanda Greaves reviews a lecture by Anthea Boylston on the Battle of Towton Grave Pit, Church House, Ilkley, West Yorks, 21/11/02 (yes, I've had it for some time).*

THE SOLDIERS found in a mass burial pit near Towton battlefield may have been the victims of a post-battle massacre, a leading archaeologist believes.

Bradford University archaeologist, Anthea Boylston, one of the writers of *Blood Red Roses* – and a leading figure in the Towton dig – was invited to give the illustrated lecture in Ilkley by Olicana Historical Society.

She also featured in the Channel 4 documentary *Secrets of the Dead: Blood Red Roses*, which saw the face of a soldier recreated from one of the skulls found in the dig, and investigated the Yorkshire battle of Palm Sunday, 29 March 1461.

The dig itself took place in 1996 next to Towton Hall, several miles east of Leeds, where builders stumbled across the bodies while laying drains. Tragically, builders had also found and removed a pit of 25 bodies nearby, before the academics could get their hands on them.

The dig called for extreme care. The archaeology team had to conduct the excavation using teaspoons and knives (unlike the standard Time Team digger), and had to lie uncomfortably on planks over the pit, to avoid crushing the fragile skeletons.

Due to a lack of cash, the precious finds were unceremoniously shipped to the laboratory in banana boxes kindly donated by Morrisons supermarkets.

The Towton find was unique, with archaeologists being able to draw on just one other source for comparison – the Battle of Wisby mass grave in Sweden, dated to some 100 years before the Battle of Towton. More than 30 people were buried in the Towton pit, although less than that number were complete skeletons.

What struck the Bradford team about the bodies, was that they bore obvious hallmarks of medieval weapons, but few 'typical' battle injuries.

Anthea said medieval combat injuries frequently involved sword cuts to the left of the skull - as swordsmen fight right-handed - shin cuts, and the typical 'parry' injury, a full break in the lower arm. Only two of the skeletons showed arrow wounds.

The Towton Hall bodies were virtually unique in that most bore very severe head injuries, head injuries which suggested they

were not wearing helmets. While she does not entirely discount the idea that their helmets had been lost, or they were not equipped with helmets, one theory is that these men were taken prisoner and slaughtered later off the field.

The unfortunate victims appeared to have been unnecessarily hacked to bits from all sides, without offering any defence. Whether they were killed in the rout, or taken aside and slain after the battle remains to be seen.

She claims Edward IV gave an order to give no quarter, meting out revenge for the slaughter of his father, Richard, Duke of York, and brother, Edmund, Earl of Rutland, at Wakefield several months before.

The mass grave itself was some miles off the battlefield.

Some of Anthea's assertions about the grave are a little more controversial to reenactors. The teeth of some of the soldiers appear to show scoring, consistent, so it is claimed, with archers using their teeth to string a bow! But other marks on the teeth indicate that some had been painfully clenching their teeth – perhaps with fear – as they went into battle.

The ages of soldiers in the mass grave ranged from around seventeen to 55, the average age of those found being 35. It has been impossible to determine on which side the slain men fought, although popular theory points to them being 'Lancastrian' supporters of Henry VI.

Further research into Towton battlefield is an extremely tantalising prospect, to solve issues of pinpointing the battle lines, determining the numbers of participants and casualties, and not least, finding where all the bodies are.

Anthea says the lack of bodies on battlefields is not unusual, with Tewkesbury yielding surprisingly few. The frozen ground of Towton may have precluded the possibility of burial at once.

Research on the battlefield continues. Metal detectorist Tim Sutherland does regular walks of the site, and has turned up small finds including fragments of horse trappings and cauldron feet – does this mean the Lancastrians had camped on the field awaiting Edward IV's army?

Anthea is sceptical about the current figures that estimate up to 28,000 people died in England's bloodiest battle, believing the involvement of such a proportion of the able-bodied male population is doubtful.

Full details of the Towton dig appear in *Blood Red Roses: The Archaeology of a Mass Grave from Towton AD1461*, by Anthea Boylston and Chris Knusel.

## SUGGESTED NEW YEAR RE- ENACTMENT RESOLUTIONS:

- I must get fit before the start of next season
- I must make that jack for next season
- I must finish that dress/doublet/hose/purse for next season
- I must not drink so much\*
- \*For Marcus, read 'I must drink'
- I must think of some useful living history to do next season
- I must move this backlog of wool/linen from my spare room/garage/living room
- I must get fit *before* the start of next season
- I must start saving for those new shoes
- I must get rid of this crap hat
- I must get up earlier at events
- I *MUST* get fit before the start of next season
- Yes, really
- I really must unpack my kit from that bag after Blore ... yeeuuuhhhh

# Findings & Discoveries

## ‘WHEN THU HAST CONSIDERID WEL AS THIS, THEN BEHOLDE THE DIVERSITE OF COULRS OF TEH URYNS’

or *The Noble Art of Urine Examination*

It seems our good group physician Master Mark (and his frightening array of authentic instrumentation) has been in practice far longer than we first assumed. According to one of 38 surviving infirmarers' accounts from Norwich Cathedral Priory for the first half of the fifteenth century, Master Mark, a university trained practitioner, was retained by the monks at 13s4d a year specifically for 'the examination of urine'. He served the monks until c.1460.

Apparently, uroscopy was very popular in the mediaeval period for diagnosis, with the wealthy sending regular samples to their physicians.

Should you wish to examine your own when you next visit the urinal (but for goodness sake, don't bring your work into the camp! -ed):

- 'Rubicunda' colour, 'lyke to a flaume of fyre sentte out', means acute and sharp fever.
- 'Lactea' (name derived from cow's milk) was produced during protracted fever or dropsy and could warn of early death.
- 'Lyght water and ful bright' meant 'stedfast virginite'.
- Urine that is troubled, corrupt or tinged with lead could indicate sexual promiscuity.

Perhaps we should remind Mark of his past skill and set him to a task he obviously once took to well?! Any gathering of reenactors can certainly produce plenty of samples, especially after a heavy night on the beer!

Indispensable knowledge, wouldn't you say?!

Lou

## BOOK REVIEW

### 1421: The Year China Discovered the World

Gavin Menzies (2002), published by Bantam Press, ISBN 0-593-05078-9

This book tells the fascinating story of how a huge empire, having thrown off Mongul control, dispatched a number of treasure ships to bring the world into a tribute system of trade. Emperor Zhu Di was responsible for the trips and we should know the names of his admirals Hong Bao, Zhou Man, Zhou Wen and Yang Quin as well as we remember those of later explorers.

The book reveals that Columbus, Diaz and Magellan, far from being adventurous pioneers who sailed off into uncharted waters, actually had seen a number of maps showing the lands of the world. Even Cook knew where he was going as a result of some of the charts that came from these voyages.

The Chinese went on to leave traces of their voyages and Menzies contends that they had discovered degrees of accuracy as regards latitude and longitude that weren't approached in Europe until the sixteenth Century or even later. This is something that Umberto Eco relies upon in his book *The Island of the Day Before*.

The Chinese had a very different approach to the world from the Europeans. The Chinese respected local customs and religions and even took the trouble to learn the languages of the strange lands they encountered. Although they sought dominion over the spice trade and influence over foreign peoples they tried to do this through trade and sex rather than the robbery and genocide of the Europeans.

The book also reveals that when Columbus 'discovered' a route to the East by sailing west he knew full well where he was sailing as there had been a Portuguese settlement in the Carribean since the 1430s. To get funding for his voyage, however, he, with his brother's collusion, had conned the Spanish to finance his travel. This was done with stolen maps from Portugal.

So why did the Chinese not capitalise on their discoveries? Why did they not develop colonies across the globe as later fifteenth Century discoverers did? These questions and the rôle of the Venitian Niccolò da Conti are answered in the book. Alternatively, you can visit the website that has been produced to aid further research ([www.1421.tv/](http://www.1421.tv/)).

The book is divided into a number of

sections and sub-chapters: 'Imperial China', which explains the background to why China ventured out; 'The Guiding Stars', which begins the voyages through waters known to the Chinese; 'The Voyage of Hong Bao', voyage to Antarctica and Australia; 'The Voyage of Zhou Man', which talks about the Chinese colonies and the Spice Islands.

The chapter 'The Voyage of Zhou Wen' details research from North America and a few mysteries such as The Rhode Island Tower and dismisses earlier speculation about aliens being responsible for unexplained buildings and carvings. Another chapter, 'The Voyage of Yang Qing', develops how the riddle of longitude was solved by the Chinese. The final chapter, 'Portugal Inherits the Crown', explains how our oldest ally in Europe moved beyond the superstition that held Europe back combined with Arabic and Chinese science to become a world empire.

The book is fairly comprehensive and explains in a non-academic way the details of the story. The author admits when there are uncertainties and makes it clear which aspects are his view and that there may be contention from some. The only thing that would have been nice would have been some pictures showing the construction of the Junks so Paul could make one in one of his winter projects. There are colour plates of the crucial maps (Piri Reis, Waldseemüller, Pizzigano Chart, Cantino Chart) and excellent detail is given on all sorts of anthropological aspects of the fifteenth Century. Pictures are also included of the Ming pottery and artefacts found from around the postulated voyage routes.

It is best to await the paperback edition that is coming out in the UK in January. This is because it will be an updated version to correct errors and with more information in it than the hardback edition reviewed here.

Marcus Petz

## LIVERY & MAINTENANCE NEWS

### Getting involved with L&M

NOW is your chance to get involved in what goes on at this year's L&M events.

Three paying events are booked for 2004 (see *Factfile*) – and the Livery and Maintenance committee is keen to include your ideas, and give you a chance to show off your own talents and specialities.

The sooner we hear from anyone willing to organise a display of any kind or contribute a skill or activity, be that advanced iron-working or discussing clothing or archery with anyone who drops by, the sooner we'll be able to present an event plan to the organiser.

All events should work better for us all this year, as organisers are letting us in on the planning at this stage. We can get our plans in first instead of having to make way for other groups and performers.

We ask if individuals can support the organisation and its insurance collective by attending L&M events this year. The more you are involved, the more the rest of the groups can give back to you, in terms of incorporating your ideas for better joint events, sharing knowledge, playing together, and some more practical aspects!

Money made at L&M-organised events will pay entirely for your public liability insurance at most of the events attended by the Buckinghamshire or any other L&M member groups. (Except Wars of the Roses Federation events which have their own insurance scheme). Your insurance this year is paid for by the £2,000 made mostly at Stoneleigh and Tutbury in the 2003 season, as is the cover of the other L&M member groups.

The L&M committee would like to make a payout to participating groups in 2004, depending what money must be set aside at the end of the year for any insurance shortfall or urgent costs. The amount we can negotiate from the employers depends on what we can offer – and we want to make sure no one group ends up doing too much in putting together a really good overall display.

Anyone is welcome to get in touch with me about any of the L&M events, otherwise please pass your ideas on to the Buckinghamshire committee.

Amanda Greaves, Livery and Maintenance Internal Secretary  
E-mail: [amandagreaves@ymagier.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:amandagreaves@ymagier.fsnet.co.uk)  
Phone: (01943) 462388; 07813 565719

### Get online with L&M

L&M at long last have a cyber presence at [www.liveryandmaintenance.org.uk](http://www.liveryandmaintenance.org.uk).

The website has a registered members-only section, which contains useful information on events, health and safety, draft kit guidelines, past newsletters and a regularly-updated Announcements section.

Non-web connected group members need not worry about being left out, however, as notification of major developments, appeals and events will still be sent to every group, plus warning orders before events.

An L&M information pack with relevant information on insurance, health and safety and other matters will be sent out to each group early in 2004.

In addition to the website, a Yahoo Group discussion forum has been set up for members of Livery and Maintenance groups, as another means of keeping everyone as up-to-date with developments as possible.

Any member of an L&M group can sign up to the Yahoo Group (subject to their appearing on the submitted insured members' list) at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/LandM>.

The forum can be used to chat to other reenactors, and the L&M committee promise to regularly post messages about events and other L&M matters.

To register for both the general L&M site, and the Yahoo group, go to the web addresses listed and follow the on-screen instructions. In both cases you will need to supply a log-on name, as well as an e-mail address that you can be contacted at once your group membership has been confirmed and a password or approval sent to you.

Remember, though, that L&M can only become what individual members and groups make it. Buckingham's Retinue members are urged to register on both sites, so that we can continue to have a stake in what happens within L&M both next year and into the future. You don't have to be a committee member to help with events or come up with useful ideas, nor do you have to be a long-term member of the group – your ideas are welcome whether you have been in the group for one event or ten years.

Retinue members should contact Amanda in the first instance (address opposite).

### L&M events Factfile 2004

**Venue:** WREST PARK, Bedfordshire  
**Date:** April 24-25  
**Event Title:** St George's Day Festival  
**Theme:** A medieval feast day/Battle of the Flags  
**Employer:** English Heritage  
**Military activities:** 'Battle of the Flags' contest – each team fights to 'capture' the others' flags; soldiers' games, e.g. toggle, buckler ball  
**Possible camp activities:** Multi-group games (eg tug of war, hat fencing, football); music; dancing; fancy food; 'Sunday best' clothes; serving the gentry; mumming; puppet shows; any other celebration or feast-related activity; archery range subject to negotiation with EH; Multi-period event, L&M has own camp and arena.

**Venue:** TUTBURY CASTLE, Staffs  
**Date:** 19–20 June  
**Event Title:** Life in a Medieval Castle  
**Theme:** Muster, bringing to life history within the castle's walls  
**Employer:** Tutbury Castle  
**Military activities:** Muster; drill; individual combat; archery shoot; fight through gatehouse; possible gate guard duties  
**Possible camp activities:** Any aspects of household everyday life portrayals, such as gentry, servants, soldiers, merchants, craftsmen; armoury exhibition; L&M annual archery contest; games, cooking, crafts, medicine, waiting on the gentry. Colour and noise are very welcome – and that doesn't just mean the expected wedding guests!

**Venue:** STONELEIGH PARK, nr Coventry  
**Date:** 7–8 August  
**Event Title:** Festival of History  
**Theme:** Life in the Wars of the Roses/Battle of St Albans  
**Employer:** English Heritage  
**Military activities:** Daily drill; pm military display – EH is keen to have us portray a street section of fighting from one of the St Albans – i.e. we get to fight among the period houses they had last year. Lots of help with planning and captaining is needed for this! As well as bill fighting, a semi-choreographed sword or pollaxe fight would look excellent as part of the fight. Banner waving, battlefield drummers and posh men-at-arms would also be great.  
**Possible camp activities:** EH is asking for a variety of other talks, displays or any crafts, games, demonstrations, portrayals or hands-on exhibits around camp on both days. What we agree to do with EH depends on what people would like to do individually or as a group. Camp and arena not on 2003 site.

# Group News & Views

## THE L&M AGM

In case you missed the report in the latest *LaMB* (contact Mark Hewitt if you weren't on the circulation list), the L&M AGM was held at Tutbury Castle and attended by Chris and Darren.

The meeting was well attended by all member groups. A number of agenda items were discussed including events for next year; so far a training weekend has been agreed for Tutbury and the English Heretics show at Stoneleigh is also in the offing (see previous page – ed). The structure of L&M has been revised, with the committee now formed of a nominal Chairman to chair meetings (Neil McGurk, Gascoignes), an External Secretary for event booking and external communication (Vicky Shearman, Gascoignes), an Internal Secretary (our own Amanda Greaves), a Treasurer (Jo Robson, Clarences), and a Health and Safety (Colin Dalton, Gloucesters).

The survey of members was discussed and responses were high with no real surprises, people generally preferring mixed events at historical sites in the Midlands (see *LaMB* report for more detail). It was generally acknowledged that L&M is a much smaller entity than it once was and will look for events that are in accordance with its size. The insurance has now been settled for this year and is expected to absorb all event fees for the foreseeable future. The first draft of a kit guideline was also discussed, but it will need some revisions prior to publishing.

Chris reports that the meeting went well and that L&M will continue to serve the aims of Buckingham's Retinue for the foreseeable future.

## TEWKESBURY 2004

As well as the other events listed on the news pages, the date of Tewkesbury has also been confirmed as the weekend of 12–13 July, on the same site as 2003 (I believe).

This year, I understand that the intention is to be much stricter with both the authenticity (C.15th) and the admission to the site (individual passes for everyone, or no entry). Mind you, I know we've heard this before, but last year there did seem to be a larger than usual number of non-reenactment hangers-on, which could be a problem, especially since the camping space is quite limited compared with previous years. I guess the organisers have to decide between large authentic medieval battle reenactment or festival with fighting attached. For reenactors, Tewkesbury has certainly developed a unique kind of festival atmosphere that I would not wish to lose, although if you go too far down the route of "festival" you do run the big risk of turning it into an event where the serious history takes second place to the souvenirs and balsa swords.

What do you think? Let me know!

## PROVISIONAL EVENTS, 2004

Phil has supplied me with the following provisional list of events booked for 2004. As you can see, there's quite a few! There also appears to be a clash between Stafford and Stoneleigh. Hopefully, any problems will be ironed out in the next month or so, and I expect to have the definite list by the next issue, or the feast, whichever is sooner.

Organisers are given in brackets; if no name given, assume it is one of ours. See page 11 for further details of L&M events.

**10/11 April** Tamworth Castle

**24/25 April** Wrest Park (L&M)

**1/2 May** Holdenby Hall (Fauconbergs)

**29/30 May** Lincoln Castle (Fed)

**19/20 June** Tutbury Castle (L&M)

**10/11 July** Tewkesbury (Black Bear)

**17/18 July** St.Aubin, France

**24/25 July** Castle Rising

*- This is provisionally booked as a siege*

**30/1st August** Berkeley Castle

**7/8 August** Stafford Castle/Stoneleigh (L&M)

**21/22 August** Bosworth (Fed)

**28-30 August** Kenilworth (Fauconbergs)

**4/5 September** Tutbury Castle

*- This will be a Tudor event*

**18/19 September** Blore Heath (Fed)

Help is always required in planning, organising and running events. If you can help, please get in touch in the first instance with Phil (01782 395834).

### New Forum address

The Bucks' Web Forum has a new address

**[www.bucks-retinue.org.uk/bucksboard.html](http://www.bucks-retinue.org.uk/bucksboard.html)**

That's it for another month. Reports, photos, stories, research, findings, jokes, etc, always needed. Send them to David Hemsley: 473 Lower Somercotes Somercotes Alfreton Derbyshire DE55 4NS Tel: 01773 528801 [david@purpleardvark.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:david@purpleardvark.freeserve.co.uk)

## BIRTHS, MARRIAGES ...

Firstly, congratulations to Tony Roe (76) and Alison Preston (19) of Langley, Southampton on their marriage, which took place at Lincoln Judges' Lodgings during September.



Secondly, congratulations to Hilary and Keith, on the birth of their second billman/archer/gunner. The diminutive Stafford, Benedict Francis Folkes Williams, was born on 24 November at 5.35 am.

Thirdly, and with the newest Stafford to date, congratulations to Zoe Service on the birth of Benjamin, born 8 December at 8.12 pm.



Apparently, everyone is doing well, although Keith admitted to being ... bl ... tired.



A couple of off-duty photos. The first, above, is of Marcus protesting against a nuclear-powered tractor in

Germany. And on the left is Paul H the trainee archaeologist digging up the skeleton of an ancient Black Country guide dog for the blind.

