



The Battle of Barnet

By Bryce King

We provide a brief background to this historic War of the Roses clash and a scenario using the Warhammer Ancient Battles rules and army lists that first appeared sometime ago inside Wargames Journal. Bryce has also provided some wonderful banners to adorn the various nobles that are available in the download section of the web site and has provided information on collecting the forces and painting them accurately.

INTRODUCTION

The Wars of the Roses had been rumbling along since 1455. By 1469 all of the most prominent supporters of the Lancaster cause were in exile and their 'King', Henry VI, was a prisoner in the tower.

It seemed that the threat to the reign of the Yorkist King Edward IV from the House of Lancaster had waned and he was secure.

Hope for the Lancastrian cause was however rekindled when the King mismanaged his relationship with his most loyal campaigner the Earl of Warwick, the famous Kingmaker, who had done so much to bring Edward to the throne of

England.

The Earl of Warwick crossed to Calais to find other rebels and to raise an army. He was joined by the King's own brother Clarence who cemented his loyalty to Warwick by marrying his daughter.

Prior to leaving England, Warwick had fermented rebellion in the north of England which Edward and his army was then forced to suppress. With the King engaged in the north, Warwick landed in Devon with an army funded by the French King and the army continued to recruit as it marched on London.

Edward soon realised that his small force could not fight on two

fronts and with no hope of recruiting in the north he promptly fled the country.

In 1470 Warwick released the hapless King Henry VI from his imprisonment and duly declared him to be King. Warwick was of course the same man who five years previously had led this same man and supposed traitor King to the tower!

King Edward IV spent his short exile drawing upon the support of his brother-in-law the Duke of Burgundy. In March 1471 Edward landed in Yorkshire with a small army and was able to recruit as he pushed south for London.

Warwick knew of Edward's landing and expected that his son the Earl of Montague would engage Edward in Yorkshire. Edward however simply bypassed Montague's forces, avoided Warwick who was in Coventry and marched to London unopposed.

Immediately amidst such treacherous times the loyalty of Warwick's son was called into question because of his

perceived inaction in Yorkshire.

Whilst this was going on Clarence, now of course the Earl of Warwick's son-in-law, defected again and without Warwick's knowledge re-joined his brother Edwards cause.

Edward's duly captured the Lancastrian King Henry VI who faced the humiliation of being held captive in Edward's baggage train as he pushed north to do battle with Warwick.

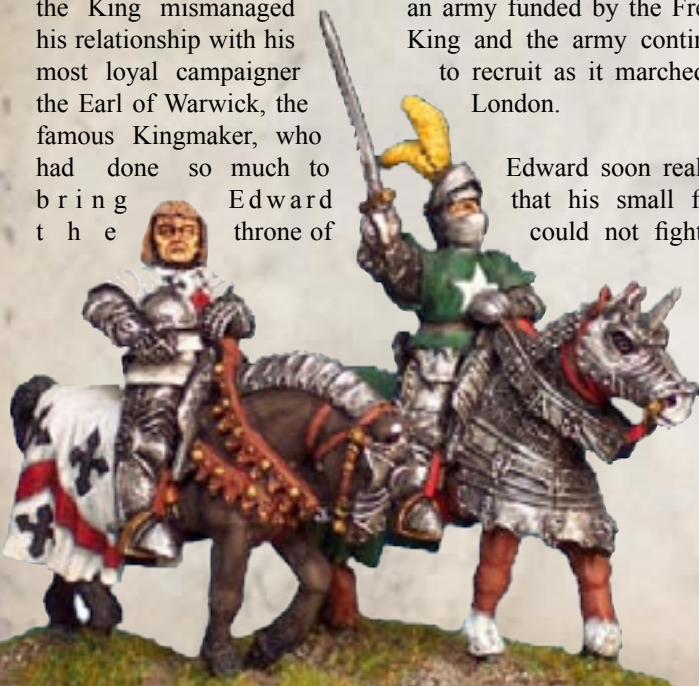
The scene was set for the Battle of Barnet.

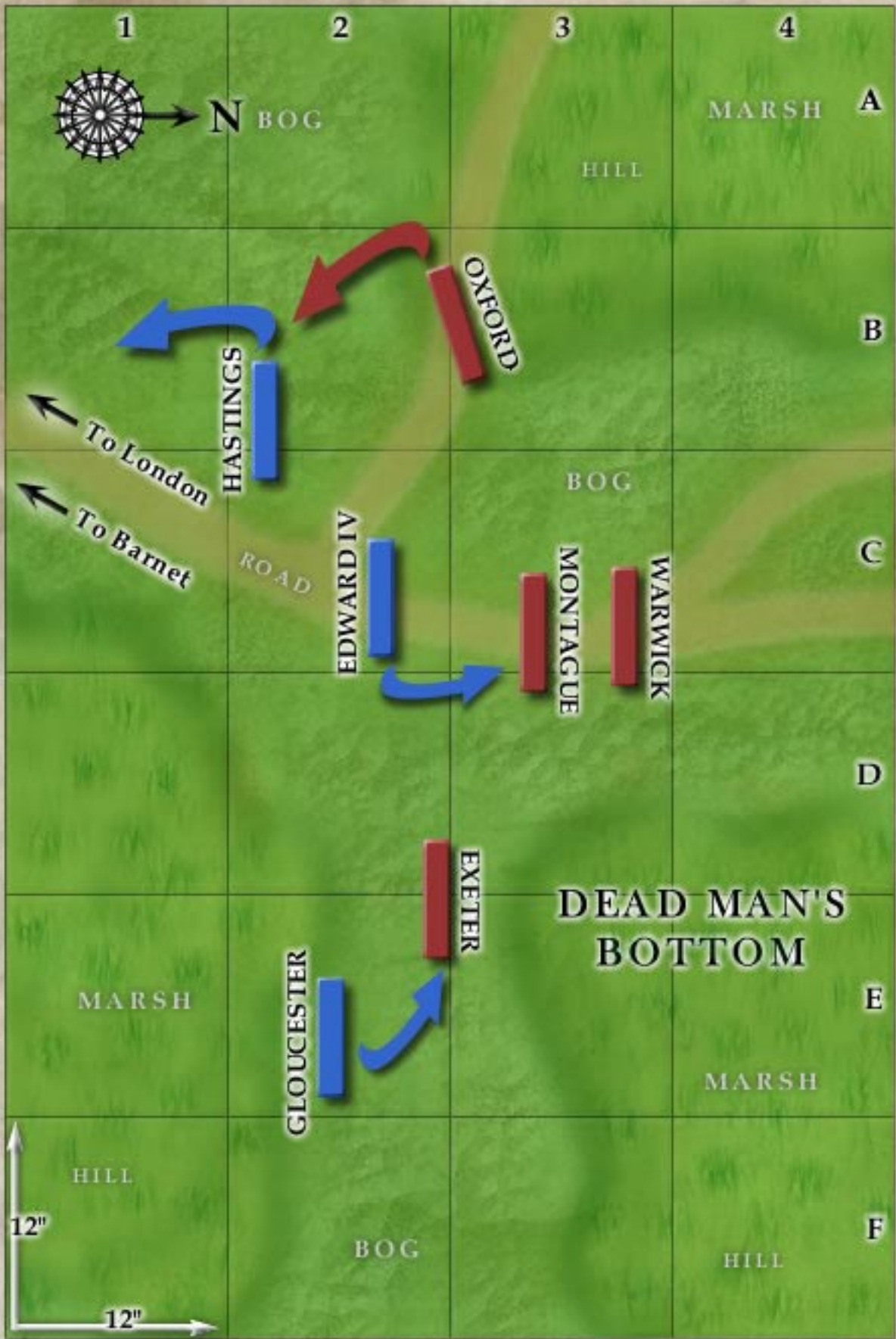
WARGAMING THE BATTLE

Barnet as a battle is not as well known as the battle of Tewkesbury that occurred around a month later and has often tended to overshadow it.

It is however a good wargaming subject for a variety of reasons and it makes a great subject for wargaming for a number of reasons including:

- The potential for treachery on either side with Clarence and Montague.





THE BATTLE OF BARNET

14th April 1471

- The appalling weather conditions. The battle was fought in dense fog that caused utter confusion. This coupled with doubtful alliances has the potential for totally unexpected outcomes. As a field Commander you would only be aware of what is happening where you are and not to your left or right
- Leading from the front Edward IV has a good chance of being killed in the Battle
- The Duke of Gloucester, who commanded Edward's left flank at Barnet, was later to become King Richard III
- There is the possibility of friendly troops rescuing, or perhaps even over-zealous troops accidentally killing, the captive Henry VI

As you can see the game has the potential for several twists and turns and potential sub-plots within the battle itself.

Imagine yourself as Edward IV. It's early morning and you can't see what is ahead of you but you do know that you are pitched against a man who was once your closest ally.

You know his army is bigger and that his Commanders are better than yours, you even doubt your own brother's loyalty.

DEPLOYMENT

The map illustrates the deployment of the various contingents. It also illustrates how Edward deployed his army slightly towards one side. This went against all conventional wisdom as normally opposing armies aligned themselves in a

more regular fashion.

Barnet is a contest between two similar forces but with Warwick's army being larger at around 13,000 compared to Edward's total of around 10,000 men.

The numbers present at any medieval battle are always hotly debated. Just bear in mind the old adage that it is the victor that writes history. Edward's chronicles put Warwick's forces at 30,000 to make Edward's ultimate victory seem more dramatic. It is always safer to opt for somewhere between any two extremes.

In any battle of this period forces were generally aligned conventionally. Casualties would be fairly even on both sides until one army managed to swing in its reserve on an exposed flank and the melee would pivot until breaking point was achieved.

If the break became a rout then as with most ancient or medieval warfare the victor would inflict a disproportionate number of casualties on the fleeing enemy.

Superficially Barnet would have seemed likely to be a victory for Warwick's larger army however Edward's unusual deployment was set to change the script.

Edward's deployment meant that Edward himself would clash with Warwick and Montague's forces.

On his right his most

inexperienced Commander, Richard, Duke of Gloucester had his forces arranged so that when they met the veteran Exeter's force they could spill around Exeter's exposed left flank and turn him.

However the flip side to this was going to happen on the opposite wing, as Hastings would be outflanked by Oxford. This unusual deployment may have been a cunning plan by Edward to create the illusion of a larger force but most historians put the misalignment down to the presence of the thick fog.

VISIBILITY

The poor visibility was more of an advantage to the numerically inferior Edward. It also meant that the superior enemy artillery was even more ineffectual than was normal for the times.

Edward had advanced his armies forward to be able to strike at dawn. As the fog began to gather during the night it was so thick by the time the battle began at dawn that the archers would be lucky to fire off one salvo before the forces clashed.

Each command would almost literally have tunnel vision and not be aware of either their own or enemy forces to their left or right.

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As Edward's forces advanced his left flank under Hastings was first to engage the enemy as it clashed with Oxford's force, closely followed by Edward's centre meeting Montague

and Warwick's troops and Gloucester meeting Exeter on the right wing.

Very soon Oxford's superior numbers overlapped Hastings' exposed flank and rather than just falling back in good order, Hastings' men panicked and ran.

Oxford devastating attack swept away Hastings' division in a total rout.

Under normal circumstances this would have been a total disaster for the Yorkist forces as Oxford's men would sweep in on Edward's flank and rear but instead they disappeared into the fog without anybody noticing the significance.

On the right wing Gloucester's overlap of Exeter's forces proved very effective but Exeter's troops were more disciplined and although pushed back continued to keep their cohesion and fight on.

Oxford's men meanwhile thought the battle was over and began looting Edward's baggage train. As a result they rescued King Henry VI who must have felt more like a pawn in a game of chess than the King of England!

It is reported that some of Oxford's men rode into London and proclaimed their victory not knowing that the rest of their forces were still fully engaged. Oxford being a veteran Commander soon took command of the situation



and remarkably under these circumstances managed to rally about a quarter of his force to return to the battle to cement an almost certain victory.

Oxford's men appeared through the fog and were not presented with Edward's flank but an arrow storm from Warwick's own exposed flank. It is popularly believed that Oxford's badge of a star was mistaken for Edward's sun badge. Whatever the truth of the matter cries of treason went up from all sides and panic gripped Warwick's army. Morale crumbled.

Some commentators believe that Montague tried to go over to Edward's side as believing the battle to be lost and that Warwick's men cut him down.

Warwick now decided to make his exit but was 44 years old, wearing 50lbs of plate armour and had fought for 3-4 hours. He tried to find his horse tethered towards the rear but never made it. He was found dead and stripped of his armour on the battlefield the next day.

Oxford was more fortunate and managed to escape to Scotland but Henry VI was re-captured and taken back to the tower where he is said to have died of melancholy a year later.

T H E

AFTERMATH

The number of high-ranking Yorkists who died around Edward and Richard's contingents illustrates how hard fought the battle was up to the point of the panic that ended it.

The number of dead is hard to estimate but I believe the most accurate figure to be 500 dead on the Yorkist side and 1,500 dead on the Lancastrian side. These figures are recorded in the Paston letters; John Paston of Norfolk was present on the day.

Like many medieval battlefields where there has been a rout the names of the terrain features indicate elements of the battle. At Barnet you probably noticed the marshy area called Deadman's Bottom. This marks the area where most Lancastrians were slaughtered as they tried to flee through the clinging fog.

ORDERS OF BATTLE

The following are a rough estimate of the orders of battle, plus basic statistics for each unit from our previously-published set of extensions for WAB. For some variety, we have set out a basic points allowance for each army and allowed some basic upgrades.

The numbers given are for a fairly large game, even with the expensive troops available, with around 2,460 points and 150-170 figures for the Yorkists, and 2,740 for the Lancastrians, with around 170-200 figures. This would require a large

table and several commanders on each side!

However, the figures can be scaled down in proportion and Montague and his men at arms can be removed from the Lancastrians, and Clarence and his foot knights can be removed from the Yorkists, assuming each personality become absorbed into Warwick's and Edward's command figures.

Given this was well past the start of the war, and numbers were larger than at the initial battles, we have ensured that some troops are the equivalent of "Shire Levy". These are brittle but with care can be used to good effect.

Given the potential for treachery, no general or battle commander can command any troops other than his own, and must remain within 6" of one of their normal units at all times, or must move as soon as possible to within 6" of one of their units. Moreover, all command influence (Ld) and Battle standard (reroll) distances are reduced to 8" due to the fog.

The Duke of Burgundy sent over some mercenaries, but these may have been Flemish or German. For variation, you can either field these as Handgunners or mercenary Pikemen.

For each unit, a standard bearer and musician can be added. Note that the Combined Formations rule insists that casualties from ranged weapons (bar artillery) are taken

from all figure types in the unit, not as previously stated, but that figures shooting from behind the front rank still count as half their number.

The artillery described below is Light Artillery with average crew with WS 3 and Ld7. The guns themselves have a range of 15" in the fog, and otherwise are S4 (-1 per rank penetrated), T 6, W 2 and inflict D3 wounds per hit. Refer to the ballista rules for details, though the artillery should be subject to deviation - for the ranges at which they will be used we suggest half the number specified on the deviation dice.

We have presented the Orbats as a PDF file that you can download from the Wargames Journal web site:

Barnet Orbats

SCENARIO NOTES FOR WARGAMING BARNET

Terrain

There are several marshy areas indicated on the map these should be regarded as rough ground for purposes of movement. The very marshy areas should be impassable for cavalry or men-at-arms in full armour.

Fog

To simulate the effects of the fog play the following special deployment rules:

- Deploy each division aligned as per the map and with the opposing armies 24" apart.
- No units may move normally until the first combat between units from



opposing sides.

- Edward's troops advance but each unit must roll A D6 to determine which direction they move each turn. On a 1 the unit will oblique 45 degrees to the left on a 6 they will oblique 45 degrees to the right. Any other roll and they move straight ahead.

- If Edward's troops fight each other during their advance then Warwick's units may advance to take advantage but also move randomly.

- If a unit veers into contact with a neighbouring friendly unit they must fight at least one turn of melee. If treachery is a real possibility, i.e. with Clarence's units then fight two turns of combat if required.

In addition half all missile ranges due to the effects of the fog and only test morale due to a unit breaking in combat if the unit is in the same division and is within 6".

LIVERY COLOURS & BADGES OF ARCHERS/BILLMEN

LANCASTRIAN

EARL OF WARWICK'S
COMMAND - Red with white
ragged staff

EARL OF MONTAGUE
- Halved black and red with
white griffin

DUKE OF EXETER - Halved
white and red with yellow
wheat ear

EARL OF OXFORD - Red
with blue boar

YORKIST

KING EDWARD IV's
COMMAND - Halved blue and
murray (dark pinky red) with
black bull or white rose

DUKE OF CLARENCE
- Halved blue and murray with
black bull

RICHARD, DUKE OF
GLOUCESTER - Halved blue
& murray with white boar or
White rose

LORD HASTINGS - Halved
murray and blue with black
bulls head or yellow lion with
mans face

FIGURE AVAILABILITY

There are many excellent figure

ranges available in a number of scales. I prefer 25/28mm figures and so will concentrate on these.

If you are just starting to collect in this era it is worth considering which figures are compatible with which.

I have found the more traditional "true" 25mm tend to be dwarfed by 28mm figures, especially mounted ones. As a very rough guide use the following for compatible ranges, although the odd figure mixed in will make no great difference:

Traditional 'Smaller' 25mm

Old Glory
Wargames Foundry

Newer 'Larger' 28mm

Essex
Front Rank
Games Workshop

I personally prefer the larger 28mm figures and rate Front Rank as the best figures available.

The bonus of opting for these 'larger' figures is that if you hunt around at shows you can nearly always come away with a bag full of Games Workshop archers from their Bretonian range that is ideal when you need to fill the ranks.

BUILDING AN ARMY

It's my experience that it's a great temptation to buy far too many knights, as troops in full plate armour seem to be the image of the War of the Roses soldier.

In the C15th buying a full set of plate armour would be the equivalent to purchasing a brand new prestige car today. It really was for the nobility and well off knights. Troops of this period tended to fight on foot due to the vulnerability of horses to massed longbow fire.

Mounted knights look very nice as models but were something of a rarity if wargaming this period as they would dismount and fight on foot. Lighter cavalry on horses with no

armour were often used on the wings to exploit any exposed flanks or fill in breaches.

Exotic troop types such as crossbowmen and handgunners were usually foreign mercenaries and an unusual addition to any army.

The composition of most armies of this period should probably be as follows:-

Longbow (around 50% of any army)
Dismounted men-at-arms (around 10% of any army)
Billmen (around 30% of any army)

The remaining 10% would be made up of hobilar cavalry on unarmoured horses, the crossbowmen, pikemen, spearmen and handgunners.

Artillery was pretty primitive in the C15th and was basically large fixed bombards set into earthworks that were really only used for sieges.

Lighter "slightly" more mobile early cannons were used but the firing rate was very slow and the range was short with no useful arc of fire.

Heraldry can be totally baffling throughout the medieval period but thankfully by the War of the Roses it was generally less intricate as shields were no longer universally used. Having said all of this the flag colours are often different from the livery coats worn by the foot soldier!

If you paint the commander's badge on his troops in theory they can only be used with that commander and perhaps only for the duration of a single battle.

It's best to pick a snap shot in history and raise an army for that moment and then re-use it for other battles without getting too carried away with accuracy otherwise it will prove to be an expensive way of raising armies.

This may upset a few heraldry buffs out there but if you want useful generic armies to cover most of the engagements then choose correspondingly generic figures with leather jerkins or gambesons. If you want to capture the right feel of the various armies then you could paint the livery colours but simply omit the badges so troops in red for example could be Warwick's or Oxford's.

This is fine for the rank and file but it is important to get the commander's flag or standard right as this is what will stand out on the gaming table. I use the excellent flag sheets available from Freezywater Publications, 13 Rochester Drive, Lincoln, LN6 0XQ.

They have really good quality flag sheets covering every engagement of the Wars of the Roses and other medieval eras also. Through this address you can also purchase various useful booklets on the War of the Roses and could also join the Lance & Longbow Society and receive a quarterly journal on Medieval Warfare.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Battles in Britain by William Seymour, Wordsworth Military Library (1997)
British Battles – Ken & Denise Guest – English Heritage – Harper/Collins (1996)
Standards, badges, livery colours of the Wars of the Roses – Pat McGill & Jonathan Jones – Freezywater Publications (1992)

"We'd like to thank Front Rank for very kindly allowing Wargames Journal to use their images within our articles. As a company Front Rank has supplied high quality figures for many years. Its WoTR figures are full of character and worthy of any battlefield."

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