English Heritage Battlefield Report: Bosworth 1485

Bosworth (22 August 1485)

Parishes: Sutton Cheney; Stoke Golding; Market Bosworth, Higham on the Hill

District: Hinkley and Bosworth

County: Leicestershire

Grid Ref: SK 398991

Historical Context

The deposition of Edward V by his uncle, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, in 1483 was widely resented. Richard III was never a popular King, especially in the South of England. For the first time since 1471, when the twin victories of the late Edward IV at Barnet and Tewkesbury extinguished the Lancastrian cause, circumstances favoured a renewal of the dynastic challenge to the Yorkist monarchy.

The most favoured of the alternative candidates for the throne was Henry Tudor, styled Earl of Richmond, who had lived in Brittany since 1471. A first attempt to oust Richard III and install the pretender in his place failed in 1483: the rebellion's prime mover, the Duke of Buckingham, was caught and executed. Nothing daunted, on 1 August 1485 Henry Tudor, accompanied by 2,000 French mercenaries, once again set sail across the Channel. Henry landed in Wales, where his family wielded its greatest influence. Thereafter the rebels' advance was rapid. Henry wanted to gain as much support as possible. He was particularly anxious to effect a junction with his stepfather, Thomas, Lord Stanley, whose backing was crucial but not altogether certain. As it transpired, Lord Stanley had good reason to be circumspect: King Richard took his son hostage as a pledge for Stanley's continued good behaviour.

Henry occupied Shrewsbury on 15 August. By 19 August he had reached Lichfield; on the same day Richard marched from his base at Nottingham towards Leicester. On 21 August the opposing armies advanced towards each other from Leicester and Tamworth respectively and camped that night only a few miles apart. Henry had 5,000 men with him; Richard between 10,000 and 15,000. Lord Stanley, acting in tandem with his brother Sir William Stanley, was also in the vicinity with 5-8,000 retainers from Lancashire and Cheshire. The Stanleys' uncommitted stance meant that neither side could be certain of their support.

Location of the Battlefield

The controversy over the precise location of Bosworth battlefield is today probably the most contentious of any to surround the battlefields of England. Since 1974 much time and money has been invested by Leicestershire County Council in a public presentation of the battlefield which depicts exclusively one interpretation of the course of the fighting. The quincentenary celebrations in 1985, however, acted as a catalyst to the renewal of the debate about where the battle was fought. Whereas the County Council's version - reinforced by a battlefield centre, battlefield trails and interpretative display panels - presents the battle as having taken place to the west of Ambion Hill, others believe it to have been fought to the south-west.

In pursuing their arguments, more than one writer has laid emphasis on the names by which the battle was originally known. The designation 'Bosworth' is to be found in various town chronicles - Fabian's *Chronicle*, the *Great Chronicle* and *Vitellius A XVI* (all London), as well as the *Calais Chronicle*[1]. But with the exception of the *Great Chronicle* these all date from after 1500, when they were recopied: only by then had the title 'Bosworth', taken from the nearest town, Market Bosworth, achieved general acceptance. More contemporary is the reference to the battle in the York municipal records. A memorandum dated the day after the fight reads: 'it

was shown by divers persons, and especially by John Sponer, sent unto the field of Redemore to bring tidings from the same to the city, that King Richard ... was piteously slain and murdered'[2]. A recently discovered note by a London citizen, probably datable 1485-6, also refers to the battle taking place at 'Redesmore'[3].

The historian who has made most of the title 'Redesmore/Redemore' is Peter J Foss[4]. As a means of locating 'Redemore', which is lost to present-day geography, he cites a transaction of 1283 between the Abbey of Lyre in Normandy and the vicar of Hinkley. This document referred to 6 roods of meadow in 'Redemor' *in campis de Daddington*. Redemore therefore becomes for Foss a link between the village of Dadlington (which lies to the south of Ambion Hill) and the battle. The connection is reinforced by the text of a 1511 Royal Licence issued to the churchwardens of the parish for the collection of alms 'for and towardis the bielding of a chapell ... standing upon a parcell of the grounde where Bosworth feld, otherwise called Dadlyngton feld in our countie of Leicestre was done'.

From such references the case for moving Bosworth battlefield south of Ambion Hill has been constructed. Foss, in an etymological discussion, also suggested that 'Redemore' derived from the Anglo-Saxon *Hreod Mor*, meaning 'reedy marshland', which made sense when the various references to a marsh in contemporary accounts of the battle were considered. Foss believes geological and ecological factors indicate that such wetland in Dadlington parish would have occurred near the Roman Road 'Fenn Lanes' (a title suggestive of marshy conditions) which passes east-west between Dadlington to the south and Ambion Hill to the north. This would be the heart of Redemore.

The location of the battlefield other than to the south-west of Ambion Hill has, so Foss maintains, been influenced by the work of the 18th-century antiquarian, William Hutton. In 1788 Hutton wrote the first full study of the battle, *The Battle of Bosworth-Field*. Foss blames Hutton for being the origin of the misconception that Redemore lay entirely in the parish of Sutton Cheney, to the north of the Sence brook, and not also in Dadlington parish, to the south. Early maps of Leicestershire, such as Smith's 1602 revision of Christopher Saxton's 1576 cartography, showed an area which, in the 16th-century, was known as 'King Richard's Field' (i.e. Bosworth Field) lying either side of the Sence. But the diagram in Hutton's book shifted King Richard's Field entirely north of the Sence. This, in conjunction with the erroneous impression given in John Speed's 1611 *Atlas and Theatre of Great Britain* that 'Redmore' lay in the northern part of King Richard's Field, strengthened the belief during the 18th-century 'rediscovery' of Bosworth that the battle was fought exclusively in Sutton Cheney parish.

Such at least is the contention of Peter Foss. He discerns the baleful influence of Hutton's misconceptions resurfacing in the work on the battlefield of both James Gairdner, writing at the end of the 19th-century[5], and Daniel Williams, whose 1973 booklet sets forth the view of the battle endorsed by Leicestershire County Council's public presentation[6]. But how does this 'official' interpretation of the battle of Bosworth continue to justify itself?

Whilst the references in Williams' booklet do not go into great detail, an article by him in the September 1985 issue of *The Ricardian* is more closely argued[7]. As Williams indicates, the first mention of Ambion Hill in connection with the battle occurred in Holinshed's *Chronicle* of 1577. The writer had visited Bosworth and possibly acquired local knowledge in the process. He added to his *Chronicle's* account of the battle, which was otherwise based upon Polydore Vergil's version of Bosworth in *Anglicae Historiae*, the information that: 'King Richard pitched his field on a hill called Anne Beame, refreshed his souldiers and took his rest'. Similarly, William Burton, who lived near Bosworth and collected information for his *Description of Leicestershire* (1622) at the end of the 16th century, also refers to 'Anbian' in connection with the battle (although this was in the notes for his revised 1642 edition which was never published). Ambion Hill is therefore taken by Williams to have been King Richard's position before the Battle of Bosworth. However, for another academic, Colin Richmond, whose August 1985 article in *History Today* led to the controversy about Bosworth gaining exposure in the national press, these references are too tenuous. A proponent of the view that the battle was

fought at Dadlington, he asked bluntly in *The Ricardian*: 'What of Ambion Hill? Do we need to retain it in a reconstruction of the battle?' He thought not[8]. But in this respect Richmond is a lone voice and even Peter Foss is prepared to accept Ambion Hill as Richard's camp before the battle.

Having argued the importance of Ambion Hill, Williams proceeds to show that the battle was fought on its western slopes. In support of his view Williams cites the local tradition of King Richard's Well, near the top of Ambion Hill on its western side, from which Richard is supposed to have drunk before the battle. There is also the discovery of cannonballs on Ambion Hill. Finally, there is the location at the western foot of the Hill of the spot where Henry Tudor's first Royal Proclamation, dated 22-3 August 1485, stated Richard III was killed: a place called Sandeford. Until the 19th century no one knew where this was but in 1858 James Hollings identified 'Sandeford' as the point where the present Shenton to Sutton Cheney road passes over a watercourse that flows from Market Bosworth. Part of the road which crossed the ford was apparently known as 'the Sand Road' - so-called because the inhabitants of Shenton used to traverse it when exercising their ancient right to take sand free from the north side of Ambion Hill - and on this basis it has been assumed that the water crossing was 'the Sand ford'.

Foss is not convinced by Williams' espousal of this theory. Hollings relied on local hearsay. There is no mention of a Sand Road or Sand ford in the Shenton and Sutton Cheney estate records of the 17th-century onwards. Neither is there any known documentary reference to 'Sandeford' in any parish between Bosworth and Hinkley. Foss prefers instead to position Sandeford to the south in the wetland of Redemore. He argues that the ford in question need not solely be the crossing of a watercourse: in Berkshire place name studies have revealed the suffix 'ford' applied to settlements adjacent to causeways across marshy land. The title 'Sandeford', Foss believes, could be of similar derivation and was probably given to a crossing point on Fenn Lanes.

Williams, calling on local place-name patterns, has suggested that the inference that Redemore was a discrete area is in fact a misinterpretation, and that the term applies to a broad swathe of land characterised by reddish soils. Hence for Williams the link with Dadlington is not proven, Ambion Hill lying within the 'Redmoor' area too.

Before cutting short the cut and thrust of this controversy (the intricacies of which are such that a brief summary can hardly do it justice) another point made by Foss must be examined. It concerns what he maintains to be the continued misrepresentation of the Battle of Bosworth as having taken place on Ambion Hill. We have already read what Holinshed wrote - that 'Richard pitched his field on a hill called Anne Beame, refreshed his souldiers and took his rest'. This implies that Ambion Hill was where Richard made his camp. But Hutton, so Foss contends, makes a wrong deduction about the meaning of 'field', believing it to refer to the field of battle rather than the site of an encampment. He thus concluded that the battle took place on Ambion Hill. The influence of this conclusion, according to Foss, makes itself felt today.

Foss, on the contrary, is convinced that Bosworth was fought in a plain - Redemore plain - and a hill is not a plain. Foss first cites Edward Hall who, like Holinshed, used Polydore Vergil as the basis of his Bosworth account. Hall (whose *Chronicle* was published in 1550, after his death) wrote that King Richard 'pitched his field, refreshed his souldieres & toke his rest' by a village called Bosworth. The next morning his soldiers came 'oute of their campe into the plaine'. This, Foss argues, suggests that the plain was a different place from that of the camp.

Foss's second piece of evidence on this count is William Burton's description of the location of Bosworth Field. Burton, it will be recalled, was a Leicestershire historian who lived locally and was collecting information before the end of the 16th century. His credentials are good. As he himself wrote: 'some persons thereabouts, who saw the battle fought were living within less than forty years: of which persons myself have seen some, and have heard their discourses, though related by second hand'. Burton's verdict on the battle was that it did not take place at Bosworth as such: '...it being fought in a large, flat, plaine, and spacious ground, three miles distant from this town, between the Towne of Shenton, Sutton [Cheney], Dadlington and Stoke [Golding]..';

Bosworth simply lent its name to the battle as the nearest town of note.

The evidence seized on by Foss is that the battle is described as taking place in a plain (once again) and between four villages, three miles distant from Market Bosworth - a mileage which puts the battlefield closer to Dadlington than anywhere else. Foss regards this as useful proof.

Landscape Evolution

The only topographical feature of Bosworth battlefield about which we can be absolutely certain is the presence of a marsh, mentioned independently by more than one contemporary or near-contemporary writer[9]. It is, however, difficult to locate this marsh. Holinshed, writing in 1577, remarked on the role of the marsh in the battle but added 'at this present, by reason of diches cast, it is growne to be firme ground'.

Clearly, land improvement was taking place as early as the 16th century. It was a trend confirmed by William Burton. Enclosure of the land was taking place *c.*1600 as he wrote his *Description of Leicestershire* and in Sutton Golding this led to 'divers peeces of armor, weapons and other warlike accoutrements' being dug up.

Thus Bosworth Field in 1485 was unenclosed and in places marshy. Ambion Hill, although its southern slopes are today covered in trees, was probably unwooded. Apparently 'Ambion' means 'One Tree Hill'[10]. To the south of Ambion Hill, between it and Dadlington Hill a mile distant, was the shallow valley of the Sence brook, opening out into a plain to the west. Foss has remarked on the character of the valley, with its broad band of alluvial deposits, the product of prehistoric swamps and lakes left by a retreating ice cap. He continues: 'The resulting silting-up of the valley with rich alluvial deposits provided perfect conditions for marsh development; that is, a broad, poorly-drained plain, and alluvium rich enough with microbial activity to decompose vegetation sufficiently to prevent the large-scale accumulation of peat, but wet enough to allow the growth of reed swamp'. Such was Redemore, although it is completely drained today.

The pace of change in the landscape did not slacken in the 18th and 19th centuries. William Hutton noticed as much between his two excursions to Bosworth: 'I paid a visit in July 1807, to Bosworth Field; but found so great an alteration, since I saw it in 1788, that I was totally lost. The manor had been enclosed; the fences were grown up; and my prospect impeded'[11]. Subsequently, the Ashby-de-la-Zouch canal wrought further change to the battlefield. Later the railway arrived, an embankment carrying the line across the shallow valley of the Sence south from Shenton.

The Sources

The prime text for the Battle of Bosworth has long been considered to be Polydore Vergil's *Historiae Anglicae*. The later Tudor chroniclers Hall and Holinshed both made use of it. Although his History was not published until 1534, Polydore Vergil wrote his description of the battle between 1503 and 1513. He was able to draw upon eyewitness testimony.

The extract which follows begins with Richard III camped near Bosworth.

> The next day after King Richard, furnished thoroughly with all manner of things, drew his whole host out of their tents, and arrayeth his battle-line, stretching it forth of a wonderful length, so full replenished both with footmen and horsemen that to the beholders afar off it gave a terror for the multitude, and in the front were placed his archers, like a most strong trench and bulwark; of these archers he made leader John Duke of Norfolk. After this long battle-line followed the King himself, with a choice force of soldiers.
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> In the mean time Henry ... early in the morning [commanded] the soldiers to arm themselves, sending withal to Thomas Stanley, who was now approached the place of fight, as in the midway

> betwixt the two battles, that he would come to with his forces, to set the soldiers in array. He answered that the earl should set his own folks in order, while that he should come to him with his army well appointed. With which answer, given contrary to that was looked for, and to that which the opportunity of time and weight of cause required, though Henry were no little vexed, and began to be somewhat appalled, yet without lingering he of necessity ordered his men in this sort. He made a slender battle-line for the small number of his people; before the same he placed archers, of whom he made captain John Earl of Oxford; in the right wing of the battle line he placed Gilbert Talbot to defend the same; in the left verily he sat John Savage; and himself, trusting to the aid of Thomas Stanley, with one troop of horsemen, and a few footmen did follow; for the number of all his soldiers, all manner of ways, was scarce 5,000 besides the Stanleyans, whereof about 3,000 were at the battle, under the conduct of William. The King's forces were twice so many and more. Thus both the battle lines being arrayed, when the armies could see one another afar off, they put on their head pieces and prepared to the fight, expecting the alarm with intentive ear. There was a marsh betwixt both hosts, which Henry of purpose left on the right hand, that it might serve his men instead of a fortress, by the doing thereof also he left the sun upon his back; but when the king saw the enemies passed the marsh, he commanded his soldiers to give charge upon them. Suddenly making great shouts [they] assaulted the enemy first with arrows, who were nothing faint unto the fight but began also to shoot fiercely; but when they came to hand strokes the matter then was dealt with blades.

> In the mean time the Earl of Oxford, fearing lest his men in fighting might be environed of the multitude, commanded in every rank that no soldiers should go above ten foot from the standards; which charge being known, when all men had throng thick togethers, and stayed a while from fighting, the adversaries were therewith afeared, supposing some fraud, and so they all forbore the fight a certain space, and that verily did many with right goodwill, who rather coveted the King dead than alive, and therefore fought faintly. Then the Earl of Oxford in one part, and others in another part, with the bands of men close one to another, gave fresh charge upon the enemy, and in array triangle vehemently renewed the conflict. While that battle continued thus hot on both sides betwixt the frontlines, King Richard understood, first by espials where Earl Henry was afar off with small force of soldiers about him; then after drawing nearer he knew it perfitely by evident signs and tokens that it was Henry; wherefore, all inflamed with ire, he strick his horse with the spurs, and runneth against him from the other side, beyond the battle-line. Henry perceived King Richard come upon him, and because all his hope was then in valiancy of arms, he received him with great courage. King Richard at the first brunt killed certain, overthrew Henry's standard, together with William Brandon the standard bearer, and matched also with John Cheney a man of much fortitude, far exceeding the common sort, who encountered with him as he came, but the King with great force drove him to the ground, making way with weapon on every side.

> But yet Henry abode the brunt far longer than ever his own soldiers would have weened, who were now almost out of hope of victory, when as lo William Stanley with three thousand men came to the rescue: then truly in a very moment the residue all fled, and King Richard alone was killed fighting manfully in the thickest press of his enemies. In the mean time also the Earl of Oxford after a little bickering put to flight them that fought in the front-line, whereof a great company were killed in the chase. But many more forbare to fight, who came to the field with King Richard for awe, and for no goodwill, and departed without any danger, as men who desired not the safety but destruction of the prince whom they hated. There were killed about a thousand men, and amongst them of noblemen of war John Duke of Norfolk, Walter Lord Ferrers, Robert Brackenbury, Richard Ratclyff and many more ... Henry lost in that battle scarce an hundred soldiers, amongst whom there was one principal man, William Brandon, who bare Earl Henry's standard ... the fight lasted more than two hours.

The report is that Richard could have saved himself by flight. His companions, seeing from the very outset of the battle that the soldiers were wielding their arms feebly and sluggishly, and that some were secretly deserting, suspected treason, and urged him to fly. When his cause obviously began to falter, they brought him a swift horse. Yet he, who was not unaware that the people hated him, setting aside hope of all future success, allegedly replied, such was the great fierceness and force of his mind, that that very day he would make an end either of war or life.

...Henry, after the victory obtained, gave forthwith thanks unto Almighty God for the same; then after, replenished with joy incredible, he got himself unto the next hill, where, after he had commended his soldiers, and commanded to cure the wounded, and to bury them that were slain, he gave unto the nobility and gentlemen immortal thanks.... [Upon Henry's head] Thomas Stanley did ... set anon King Richard's crown, which was found among the spoil in the field ... as though by commandment of the people proclaimed king...[12]

There are a number of points to note in this account of Bosworth. The Duke of Norfolk commands the Royal advance guard; Richard follows. At the outset the Stanleys refuse to commit their forces: they remained 'as in the midway betwixt the two battles'. Henry disposes his forces carefully, strengthening his front line and leaving himself a small reserve. When Henry's troops advance they manoeuvre to the left of a marsh which lay between the two sides; in doing so they put the sun behind them. Once they pass the marsh, Richard's army attacks.

The Earl of Oxford marshals his men well and the Royal army's first onslaught is repulsed. The fighting is inconclusive. Richard, impatient, sees Henry Tudor and decides to secure victory by killing him. He rides out 'from the other side, beyond the battle line'. Richard's charge almost achieves its aim but the intervention of Sir William Stanley turns the day against the King. Richard is killed. Afterwards Henry is crowned by Lord Stanley on a hill.

The second main source for Bosworth is the continuation of the *Crowland Chronicle*. Its author is unknown, but he was undoubtedly a senior figure in the Yorkist civil service, accompanying Richard III on campaign only to be left behind at Leicester. Although well-informed, he was not an eyewitness of Bosworth.

According to the writer Richard suffered nightmares the night before the battle. Next day:

The Earl of Richmond with his men proceeded directly against King Richard. For his part, the Earl of Oxford, the next in rank in the army and a most valiant soldier, drew up his forces, consisting of a large body of French and English troops, opposite the wing in which the Duke of Norfolk had taken up his position. In the place where the Earl of Northumberland was posted, with a large company of reasonably good men, no engagement could be discerned, and no battle blows given or received. In the end a glorious victory was given by heaven to the Earl of Richmond, now sole King, along with a most precious crown, which King Richard had previously worn on his head. For in the thick of the fight, and not in the act of flight, King Richard fell in the field, struck by many mortal wounds, as a bold and most valiant prince. [Many were slain] ..and many, especially northerners, in whom the King so greatly trusted, took to flight without engaging... this battle, which was fought near Merevale, ... took place on 22 August, 1485[13].

In this account Henry attacks. The Earl of Oxford engages the Duke of Norfolk's wing. One of Richard's divisions, commanded by the Earl of Northumberland, sees no action. Richard is killed; Henry wears his crown. The battle took place near Merevale.

Merevale Abbey is near Atherstone, some six miles or so from Ambion and Dadlington. On the basis of the reference David Starkey of the London School of Economics has recently suggested that the battlefield should perhaps be relocated near Merevale, especially as compensation was later paid to villages in the area by Henry VII for damage done 'at our late victorious field'[14]. However, as no further work on this point has been forthcoming, the suggestion cannot be given full consideration, merely noted.

The third source quoted here at length is Jean Molinet's *Chroniques*. Molinet was historiographer to the Burgundian court and sympathetic to the Yorkist cause. His account of Bosworth was written *c.*1490.

> King Richard prepared his battles, where there was a vanguard and a rearguard; he had around 60,000 combatants and a great number of cannons. The leader of the vanguard was Lord John Howard, whom King Richard had made Duke of Norfolk, granting him lands and lordships confiscated from the Earl of Oxford. Another lord, Brackenbury, captain of the Tower of London, was also in command of the van, which had 11,000 or 12,000 altogether ... The French also made their preparations marching against the English, being in the field a quarter of a league away.
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> The King had the artillery of his army fire on the Earl of Richmond, and so the French, knowing by the King's shot the lie of the land and the order of his battle, resolved, in order to avoid the fire, to mass their troops against the flank rather than the front of the King's battle. Thus they obtained the mastery of his vanguard, which after several feats of arms on both sides was dispersed. In this conflict was taken the Duke of Norfolk with his son. The former was taken to the Earl of Richmond, who sent him on to the Earl of Oxford who had him dispatched.
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> The vanguard of King Richard, which was put to flight, was picked off by Lord Stanley who with all of 20,000 combatants came at a good pace to the aid of the Earl. The Earl of Northumberland, who was on the King's side with 10,000 men, ought to have charged the French, but did nothing except to flee, both he and his company, and to abandon his King Richard, for he had an undertaking with the Earl of Richmond, as had some others who deserted him in his need. The King bore himself valiantly according to his destiny, and wore the crown on his head; but when he saw this discomfiture and found himself alone on the field he thought to run after the others. His horse leapt into a marsh from which it could not retrieve itself. One of the Welshmen then came after him, and struck him dead with a halberd, and another took his body and put it before him on his horse and carried it, hair hanging as one would bear a sheep[15].

A point of particular interest in Molinet's description of the battle is that he credits command of the Royal vanguard to the Duke of Norfolk, which was also the implication of Polydore Vergil's account. Molinet goes on to write that Henry Tudor's army attacked the flank of the Royal vanguard. It will be recalled that the continuator of the *Crowland Chronicle* also commented how the Earl of Oxford 'drew up his forces ... opposite the wing in which the Duke of Norfolk had taken his position'.

The Stanleys are held to have entered the fray when the Royal vanguard was already defeated. Although the intervention is not as dramatic as that described by Polydore Vergil, it was equally belated.

In common with the Crowland chronicler, Molinet represents the Earl of Northumberland as being unengaged in the battle. On this occasion, however, the accusation of treachery is explicit. King Richard, betrayed, is cut down after his horse becomes bogged in a marsh.

The final source for Bosworth to be quoted here at length was also written by a foreigner. Diego de Valera, a Castilian courtier, compiled his account in March 1486 for the catholic kings, Ferdinand and Isabella. He derived his information from Spanish merchants returning from England.

When King Richard was certified of the near approach of Earl Henry in battle array, he ordered his lines and entrusted the van to his grand chamberlain with 7,000 fighting men. My Lord Tamerlant with King Richard's left wing left his position and passed in front of the King's vanguard with 10,000 men, then, turning his back on Earl Henry, he began to fight fiercely against the King's van, and so did all the others who had plighted their faith to Earl Henry. Now when Salazar, your little vassal, who was there in King Richard's service, saw the treason of the King's people, he went up to him and said: 'Sire, take steps to put your person in safety, without expecting to have the victory in today's battle, owing to the manifest treason in your following'. But the King replied: 'Salazar, God forbid I yield one step. This day I will die as a King or win'. Then he placed over his head-armour the crown royal, which they declare to be worth 120,000 crowns, and having donned his coat-of-arms began to fight with much vigour, putting heart into those that remained loyal, so that by his sole effort he upheld the battle for a long time. But in the end the King's army was beaten and he himself killed, and in this battle above 10,000 are said to have perished on both sides. Salazar fought bravely, but for all this was able to escape. There died most of those who loyally served the King, and there was lost all the King's treasure, which he brought with him into the field[16].

Although Valera had visited England in the 1440s and was enough of a historian to later write the *Cronica de los Reyes Catolicos*, his account of Bosworth is confused. Who, most importantly, is Lord Tamerlant? We gather from an earlier passage in Valera's account that Henry Tudor had a prior understanding with Tamerlant. Anthony Goodman and Angus Mackay, who have made a close study of the text, believe Tamerlant to have been the Earl of Northumberland with an added dash of Lord Stanley. Valera may have confused two characters but the motivations he attributes to Tamerlant tally well with those of Northumberland, hence the identification made by Goodman and Mackay[17].

The Spaniard Juan de Salazar, mentioned in Valera's account, was a soldier who had made a name for himself fighting in the Low Countries for the Emperor Maximilian. Interestingly, the passage in Valera's account where Salazar's advice to Richard III to flee is spurned is reminiscent of Polydore Vergil's description of Richard rejecting his friends' urgings that he retire; but Valera, of course, wrote of it first.

The Battle

The main sources for the Battle of Bosworth have been dealt with above. Those that remain will be referred to in the discussion of the battle that follows.

As has been indicated, there are various points of view concerning the Battle of Bosworth. The established theory, which visitors to Bosworth battlefield today discover, represents the fighting taking place on the western slopes of Ambion Hill. The majority of revisionist theories, however, prefer to site the battlefield to the south-west of Ambion Hill[18].

There is agreement on the directions from which the two sides approached the vicinity. Richard marched westwards from Leicester; Henry Tudor pushed on eastwards from Atherstone. According to tradition Henry camped the night before the battle at Whitemoors, which is on the direct line of march from Atherstone, a mile and a quarter short of Ambion Hill. He then moved off early next morning to attack.

The question is: where did Richard meet him? Most revisionists are happy to accept that Richard's encampment the night before the battle was on Ambion Hill. But did he remain atop the hill on the defensive, or did his army descend into the plain to give battle? Almost as importantly, where were the forces of the two Stanleys situated? Were they to the north or south of the battlefield? And where precisely was the marsh around which Henry manoeuvred before the fighting began?

It is probably easier to consider the last question first. Most historians have placed the marsh to varying degrees south and south-westward of Ambion Hill. Hutton located it on the slopes of the hill itself, created, he argued, by poor drainage of the spring at Richard's Well. Others have tended to site the marsh nearer the Sence brook, regarding this as the probable source of waterlogged ground. Peter Foss, however, in keeping with his theories about Redemore, has the marsh over half a mile to the south-west at the Fenn Lanes crossing.

The first influence of the marsh on the battle occurred when Henry, advancing, 'of purpose left [it] on the right hand': this means that the rebels turned left. But Polydore Vergil has caused confusion in continuing thus: 'by the doing thereof also he left the sun upon his back'. Subsequent historians have grappled with the problem that this phrase poses. Henry approached the battlefield from the west but manoeuvred round the marsh in such a fashion that he put the sun at his back i.e. he turned back on himself and faced west. The standard interpretation of this is that the rebel army advanced along the road from Atherstone, were impeded by the marsh and so marched back past its south-western edge in order to round it to the north. This seems plausible. Molinet wrote that the rebels manoeuvred so as 'to mass their troops against the flank rather than the front of the king's battle', a likely effect of Henry's march round the marsh northwards. And there is corroborative evidence of a flanking manoeuvre in one of the ballads that describe Bosworth and which survived oral transmission long enough to be set down in the 17th century. *The Rose of England*, which in common with the others that describe Bosworth originated in the Stanley heartlands in north-west England, contains a stanza that reads:

Then the blew bore [Oxford] the vanguard had;
He was both warry and wise of witt;
The right hand of them [the enemy] he took'
The sunn and wind of them to gett[19].

Henry's vanguard engages Richard's right flank; in doing so it gains the advantage of the sun (as Polydore Vergil also observed).

The Bosworth ballads have not been mentioned before and must obviously be treated with caution. But where their evidence coincides with that of other sources they can prove useful.

The opening phase of the Battle of Bosworth has begun to take on a shape. The two sides' vanguards have clashed. Watching the struggle, having initially been 'midway betwixt the two battles', were the Stanleys. At one time, because of an interpolation by Edward Hall in Polydore Vergil's narrative which makes Henry Tudor refer to his army being 'compassed between our enemies and our doubtful friends', it was believed that the two Stanleys ('our doubtful friends') were on either side of the battlefield[20]. This is now discounted. An ambiguous reference in an invented speech constitutes poor evidence. Daniel Williams and the public presentation instead place the Stanleys together and to the north near a place called Hanging Hill. This choice of location rests chiefly on the authority of John Nichols' identification in *History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester* IV (1811), although the contention that the Stanleys were stationed on high ground is strengthened by a reference in another of the Stanley ballads, *The Song of Lady Bessy*, which has Lord Stanley pronouncing before Bosworth:

And I my selfe will hover on this hill
That ffaire battle ffor to see[21].

More recently, however, the case for positioning the Stanleys elsewhere on the hills around Dadlington and Stoke Golding to the south of the battlefield has received support from a reinterpretation of the written evidence[22]. It will be recalled that Valera described Lord Tamerlant, who commanded the left wing of the royal host, deserting King Richard and joining the enemy. Since it is clear from other sources that the Earl of Northumberland remained aloof these actions correspond more to the conduct of the Stanleys who, before their intervention on Henry's behalf, might have appeared to a distant observer to be part of Richard's army. Moreover, if the Stanleys were perceived to make up Richard's left wing that places them on his southern flank,

the side of the battlefield that those who argue for Dadlington as the scene of battle would prefer. While the train of thought is arguable, it remains the only documentary evidence extant that hints at the position of the Stanleys on the compass dial.

Valera's appraisal of Tamerlant's conduct may appear fantastic but it begins to seem less so in light of what the Stanley ballads - which should know most - say of the matter. Both *The Ballad of Bosworth Field* and *Lady Bessy* refer to Henry Tudor's request at the start of the battle that the Stanleys join him (as did Polydore Vergil), but in the ballad version the Stanleys prevarication is not so extreme: Lord Stanley at least sends a small party of knights to bolster Henry's army. Lord Stanley then withdraws to a hill top and leaves it to his rearguard, under his brother, to play the active part. *The Ballad of Bosworth Field* continues:

Sir William, wise and worthy,
Was hindmost at the outsetting;
Men said that day that did him see,
He came betime unto our King [Henry VII][23].

The interpretation placed on these manoeuvrings by Michael Bennett in one of the fullest recent studies of the Battle of Bosworth[24] has Henry directing his march towards the Stanleys in an endeavour to effect a junction. Polydore Vergil's narrative, Bennett believes, implies that Henry aimed for this: he wanted to incorporate the Stanley forces in his line of battle. Upon Henry's approach, however, Lord Stanley withdraws to Dadlington Hill in order to maintain his distance: he had his hostage son to think about. Yet Stanley does not want to discourage Henry Tudor entirely, so in the midst of these obscure movements some knights (most notably John Savage) join the rebel army. Sir William Stanley, meanwhile, remains in closer proximity, at hand and able later to make a decisive intervention. With much of this interpretation Peter Foss is in agreement[25].

Fortunately for Henry Tudor the disappointment caused by Lord Stanley's partial rebuff is soon dispelled when the Earl of Oxford, in the battle of the vanguards north of the marsh, checks the onslaught of the Duke of Norfolk's men. It soon becomes evident to the entourage of King Richard that his army is not fighting wholeheartedly. The Earl of Northumberland, we know from more than one source, was reluctant to get involved. Richard, rejecting the counsel of those who urge flight, decides to enter the fray himself. According to Polydore Vergil he tries to win the battle by seeking out and killing Henry Tudor. The drama of Richard's ensuing death ride has provided the climax of innumerable books and a notable film, Olivier's *Richard III* (the battle sequence of which is shown regularly at the Bosworth battlefield centre). Charging into the enemy's midst, Richard cut down more than one of the knights who sought to protect Henry Tudor, but at the crucial moment Sir William Stanley's men intervene. Richard is killed, sword in hand and still fighting.

In the battlefield reconstruction that features at Bosworth today Richard's charge takes place down the north-western slopes of Ambion Hill. It carries him as far as Hollings' 'Sandeford', conveniently sited for Richard to be overwhelmed by Sir William Stanley's men streaming down from the rising ground to the north. But questions have been raised about the accuracy of the reconstruction. Objections to the Hollings' theory about Sandeford have already been noted. Even O.D. Harris who, in a thoughtful article in *The Ricardian*, otherwise supports the Daniel Williams reconstruction of Bosworth, dismisses it[26].

Revisionist historians in the main prefer to try and link the place of Richard's death with Polydore Vergil's marsh, which was to the south/south-west of Ambion Hill rather than the north-west[27]. Molinet states that just before Richard was killed 'his horse leapt into a marsh from which it could not retrieve itself', which suggests a connection. Postulating that Richard's charge took him southwards towards the marsh enables more to be made of Polydore Vergil's description of the attack: 'he [Richard] ... runneth against him [Henry] from the other side, beyond the battle-line'. If the inconclusive battle between Oxford and Norfolk was taking place north of the marsh, by this reckoning Richard's thrust carried him to the south. 'Sandeford', where Richard met his death, would then be located either on the Sence or, if Foss is to be believed, half a mile to the south-west at the Fenn Lanes crossing.

The refinement of Foss's argument depends on a theory first floated by Anthony Goodman in his book *The Wars of the Roses* (1981) that the struggle between Oxford and Norfolk and the melée resulting from Richard's impetuous charge towards Henry Tudor occurred some distance apart. According to Goodman, Richard realised that a gap had opened between Henry (who, as Polydore Vergil puts it, was espied 'afar off') and Oxford's vanguard, and the King determined to take advantage. Henry Tudor's hanging back in this fashion was, as Goodman suggests, possibly deliberate. He did the same at the Battles of Stoke 1487 and Blackheath, 1497[28]. Be that as it may, Peter Foss supports the theory, hypothesising that while Oxford and Norfolk clashed to the north of the marsh crossed by Fenn Lanes, Richard III fought and died half a mile away on the marsh's eastern edge. Foss's 'Sandeford' is situated on Fenn Lanes west of Dadlington Hill and north of Stoke Golding.

The clash of the vanguards, it would seem (Foss's sketch map is not explicit[29]), occurred south of Shenton in the vicinity of the present-day Greenhill Covert. This, of course, accords with his belief that the Battle of Bosworth took place in the Dadlington-Shenton-Stoke Golding plain away from Ambion Hill. Others, such as Michael Bennett, while supporting the revisionist line are inclined nonetheless to place the battle further east, nearer the Sence and south south-west of Ambion Hill[30].

The discrepancy between the 'established' interpretation of Bosworth and the revisionist view may appear such that reconciling the two is impossible. Yet strangely the differing standpoints do come together in the end, primarily because the significance of 'Crown Hill' near Stoke Golding is appreciated by all. This is where traditionally, in the aftermath of battle, Henry Tudor was crowned by Lord Stanley. Polydore Vergil referred to the ceremony taking place upon 'the next hill'; *The Ballad of Bosworth Field*, with a measure of hyperbole, has the crowning performed at 'a mountain on height'. The association of the hill near Stoke Golding with the impromptu coronation is certainly of longstanding: 'Crownehillfield' is mentioned in a Stoke Golding deed dated 1605[31].

What this means is that whatever a given historian's interpretation of the battle of Bosworth he/she has to contrive to have it end at Crown Hill. It is rather easier for writers who represent the battle as being fought between Ambion Hill and Dadlington to accomplish this; their battle is much closer to hand. Nevertheless, those who favour the established view, with the battle taking place to the west of Ambion Hill, remain undaunted: they envisage the pursuit of the broken remnants of Richard's army sweeping south a mile and a half as far as Stoke Golding. Sir William Stanley's intervention from the north makes this the natural direction for a rout to take[32].

Under this interpretation, of course, the active pursuit carries both sides over the Dadlington Plain, where the revisionists believe that the main battle was actually fought. So ultimately there is considerable overlap in battlefields and both could be accommodated within one enlarged battlefield area.

Indication of Importance

The historical significance of the Battle of Bosworth does not need labouring. Traditionally, it marks the end of the Middle Ages and the significance of the date 1485 stands second only to that of 1066 in England's chronology. The Plantagenet dynasty came to an end to be replaced by the Tudors. Richard III, the last English King to be killed in battle, has become - thanks to the efforts of Tudor writers - literally a mythical figure. The legend of the mis-shapen tyrant maintains its fascination to this day.

The importance of the Battle of Bosworth tends to disguise the fact that relatively little is known about it. We all imagine that we know what happened at Bosworth so the realisation that the documentary evidence for the battle is slight (and much of that culled from unlikely sources) is something of a surprise. Nevertheless, the diligent endeavours of historians have made the best of what little information there is and produced a number of coherent theories about what took place. Their efforts in some measure compensate for the dearth of hard

evidence.

The artefactual evidence for the Battle of Bosworth is similarly disappointing. A number of cannonballs have been discovered on Ambion Hill, mainly on its western face. As far as they go, these finds tend to lend weight to the established view of the battle, promoted by Daniel Williams and the public presentation. Peter Foss lists the archaeological finds (without comment) in an appendix to his book *The Field of Redemore*.

Battlefield Area

The battlefield area boundary defines the outer reasonable limit of the battle, taking into account the positions of the combatants at the outset of fighting and the focal area of the battle itself. It does not include areas over which fighting took place subsequent to the main battle. Wherever possible, the boundary has been drawn so that it is easily appreciated on the ground.

Happily, the different theories about where the Battle of Bosworth was fought can be reconciled in a single, continuous battlefield area without any one area relying too much on a single theory. Both the established and revisionist theories are intellectually coherent and deserve serious consideration. Whilst the more detailed research has gone into making the revisionist case, the established view has, thanks to the popularity of the Bosworth public presentation, achieved the higher profile.

Beginning in the north the battlefield boundary includes a triangle of land north of Ambion Lane where, according to the 'official' version of the battle, Sir William Stanley's men were stationed. Lord Thomas Stanley, who was supposedly further north still at Hanging Hill, took no part in the battle and can be excluded. The boundary then runs east along Ambion Lane as far as one of the battlefield trail's car parks before heading south down the eastern edge of Ambion Hill towards the Ashby-de-la-Zouch canal. By the inclusion of this dog-leg of ground, room is created for the Earl of Northumberland's division (as situated in Foss's plan of the battle). The official version places Northumberland's wing close behind King Richard's main body, but Peter Foss (in common, incidentally, with James Gairdner) prefers to see him at a greater distance, nearer Sutton Cheney, citing as his authority Michael Drayton's poem *Poly-Olbion* (1622). In this work Richard is represented vainly awaiting help from Northumberland

That from the battle scarce three quarters of a mile
Stood with his power of horse, nor once was seen to stir[33].

Drayton (1563-1631) was a native of Atherstone and it is assumed that he had access to local information for Northumberland's whereabouts.

From the canal the battlefield boundary continues south across Fenn Lanes and follows the road to Dadlington. Included in the battlefield area is the passage of Fenn Lanes over the Sence Brook, the crossing having been mooted as a possible 'Sandeford'[34]. The boundary then passes north of Dadlington across Dadlington Hill, where Foss places Lord Thomas Stanley (and Bennett Sir William Stanley) before rejoining the canal and heading south to Stoke Golding. Here, according to Foss, Sir William Stanley was poised, waiting to intervene.

Thereafter, having traced a line across Crown Hill but beyond the limits of Stoke Golding itself, the battlefield boundary runs north back to Fenn Lanes, encompassing the likely extent of the marsh, and then continues north along Mill Lane towards Shenton. The ground covered by Foss's battle of the vanguards lies to the east of Mill Lane, within the battlefield area, as does the ground over which, according to the official version, the pursuit occurred after the battle. Most importantly, the 'large, flat, plaine, and spacious ground ... between the Towne of Shenton, Sutton, Dadlington, and Stoke', identified by William Burton as the place of battle, is included in its entirety in the battlefield area.

At Whitemore Farm, just south of Shenton, the battlefield boundary follows a stream north-eastwards across parkland, under the canal, as far as the intersection of Ambion Lane and Shenton Lane. This completes the battlefield area. A few yards away is the spot where the official version of the battle places Sandeford. A memorial to Richard III was erected here in 1973.

Notes

1. Cited in Michael Bennett's *The Battle of Bosworth* (Gloucester 1985) pp156-7.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*

4. See Peter J Foss's 'The Battle of Bosworth: Towards a Reassessment' *Midland History* XIII (1988) pp21-33 and *The Field of Redemore: The Battle of Bosworth, 1485* (Rosalba Press, Leeds, 1990).

5. Gairdner, James 'The Battle of Bosworth' *Archaeologia* 55 Pt.1 (1896) pp159-179.

6. Williams, D T *The Battle of Bosworth 22 August 1485* (Leicester UP, 1973).

7. Williams, D 'A Place Mete for Twoo Battayles to Encountre': The Siting of the Battle of Bosworth, 1485' *The Ricardian* VII no.90 (Sept. 1985) pp86-96.

8. 'Research Notes and Queries' *The Ricardian* VII no.92 (March 1986) pp226-7.

9. Jean Molinet, *Chroniques* (c. 1490); Polydore Vergil *Anglicae Historiae* (1534); prose version of *The Ballad of Bosworth Field* (16th century; originally composed *c.*1490?).

10. Gairdner *op. cit.* p160.

11. Quoted in Richard Brooke *Visits to Fields of Battle in the Fifteenth Century* (1857) p159.

12. The Tudor translation into English of Vergil's Latin is quoted in J R Lander's *The Wars of the Roses* (Gloucester 1990) pp195-9.

13. Translated in Bennett *op. cit.* pp158-9.

14. *History Today* vol. 35, October 1985 p62.

15. Translated in Bennett *op. cit.* p161.

16. Quoted in Bennett *op. cit.* p160.

17. A Goodman & A Mackay 'A Castilian report on English affairs, 1486' *English Historical Review* 88 (1973) pp92-99.

18. Foss, Bennett *op. cit.*; M J Phillips 'The Battle of Bosworth: Further Reflections on the Battlefield Site' *The Ricardian* VII no.96 (March 1987) pp350-62.

19. Quoted in Bennett *op. cit.* p170.

20. Gairdner *op. cit.*; Burne, A H *The Battlefields of England* (London 1950) pp137-55.

21. Quoted in Williams 'A Place Mete for Twoo Battayles to Encountre' *The Ricardian* VII no.90 (Sept. 1985) p91.

22. Foss, Bennett *op. cit.*

23. Bennett *op. cit.* p172.

24. Bennett, Michael *The Battle of Bosworth* (Gloucester 1985) p109.

25. Foss, Peter J *The Field of Redemore* (Leeds 1990) pp27-8.

26. Harris, O D "...even here, in Bosworth Field': a Disputed Site of Battle'. *The Ricardian* VII no.92 (March 1986) pp194-207.

27. Foss, Bennett, Phillips *op. cit.*

28. Goodman, A *The Wars of the Roses. Military Activity and English Society, 1452-97* (London 1981) p93.

29. In *The Field of Redemore* op. cit.

30. Bennett, Phillips *op. cit.*

31. Foss, 'The Battle of Bosworth: Towards a Reassessment' *Midland History* XIII (1988) p32.

32. Harris *op. cit.* p203.

33. Quoted in Gairdner *op. cit.* p175.

34. Phillips *op. cit.* sketch map p351.