

Mortimer's Cross



February 3rd, 1461

Edward, Earl of March was at Shrewsbury when he heard the news of his father's defeat and death at Wakefield.

He seems to have begun to muster his strength in the region almost immediately, most probably with the intent of heading north to seek vengeance. However, news from the west caused him to pause. For James Butler, Earl of Wiltshire- an implacable foe of the house of York- had landed with a force of French and Irish mercenaries, and joined with Jasper Tudor, Earl of Pembroke. Tudor was a half-brother to King Henry VI, and the King's leading man in Wales. Together with their Welsh supporters, Pembroke and Wiltshire began the arduous task of trudging eastward towards Herefordshire (the center of pro-Yorkist sentiment in the Marches), across central Wales in the dead of a particularly cold winter. He probably had about 3-5000 men with him, many of them inexperienced Welsh levies. Edward's supporters in the Marches knew that they could not expose their lands to Pembroke's fury, so the plan to move north was put off- for now. Edward made his way by an easy march to Wigmore, to await the Lancastrians on favourable and friendly ground (Edward may have spent time in his youth in the region). He chose a position athwart an important crossroads in the area, at Mortimer's Cross. Edward had perhaps 2500-3500 men- mostly retainers of the warlike Marcher lords of Herefordshire.

Pembroke arrived on the eve of St. Blaise's Day, and found Edward holding a strong position at the higher end of a valley. Tudor planned to attack on the following morn, perhaps confident in his numbers, or expecting low morale from his enemies for having lost the elder Duke of York. But Pembroke also had disadvantages- mainly an army wearied by a difficult and rapid march, a polyglot force of English, Welsh, Irish, Breton and French speakers, and a partner of dubious courage, famed more for flight than fierceness- the Earl of Wiltshire.

In the morning, Pembroke deployed his three wards; Owen Tudor probably led the vaward, Pembroke the main, and Wiltshire and his mercenaries had the rear. Edward probably had the main in his army with William Herbert and Walter Devereux possibly commanding his van and rear. There may have been a fourth Yorkist ward (or perhaps an extended vaward) on the high ground on the Yorkist right, enfilading the Lancastrian attack. The Lancastrians rushed forward, perhaps eschewing archery (they may have been deficient in bowmen) for a headlong rush. The expert longbowmen of the Yorkists, lying on higher ground, did fearful execution on them, particularly on the unarmoured Irish. The two armies soon came to blows; however, the tired and decimated Irish may have been the first to break, shaking the Lancastrian host. As the Yorkists right swung into the gap and pressed the remaining Welshmen towards the river Lugg, the levies of Tudor proved no match for the stout Marchers, and inevitably broke after a sharp fight. Pembroke managed to get away, and of course Wiltshire had, true to form, already shown a clean pair of heels- but the rest of the tired Lancastrian force did not fare as well. Twelve of their commanders, including Owen Tudor, were taken prisoner and executed soon after the battle.

Before the battle, an astronomical phenomenon called the Parhelion was seen around the morning sun- a sign that Edward took as a good omen. It proved to be just that to him, and he thereafter displayed an image of the event as a badge, next to the white roses on his standards- known as the Sun in Splendour.

Orders of Battle

Yorkist



Edward Earl of March - now Duke of York
•2 RR, 3WW



William Herbert, Baron Herbert
•2 RR, 2WW



Walter Devereux, (Baron Ferrers)
•1 RR, 1WW



John Touchet, Baron Audley
•1 RR, 2WW



Roger Vaughan
•1 RR, 1WW



William Hastings (Baron Hastings)
•1 RR, 1WW, 2 CoA

Lancastrian



Jasper Tudor, Earl of Pembroke
•2 RR, 5WW, 5 CoA



James Butler, Earl of Wiltshire
•2 RR, 2 Irish, 2 Footsoldiers, 2 CB



Owen Tudor
•1 RR, 1WW, 3 CoA



James Skydmore
•1 RR, 1WW, 2CoA

NOTES:

1. The deployment shown is only a conjectural recreation; players may deploy as they see fit within their respective deployment areas.
2. The Yorkist player gets the "Celestial Omen" Happenstance card before the start of play.
2. Lancastrian Forced March: The Lancastrian host starts with the "Time hath worn us into Slovenry" verse on their Chronicles.
3. Wind is from the east, and has no effect at start.

