



Joining Instructions

We meet at the point on the map marked MEETING POINT. It is a long lay-by, a stretch of the original road often used by battlefield walkers, naturalists, etc. If approaching from the A1(M) (recommended) along the B1217, you will pass the *Crooked Billet* inn on your right.

Immediately after this, look out for the lay-by on your left. It may be entered from either end. We walk in both directions (not simultaneously, obviously) so it does not matter which end you park at.

Alternatively, you may wish to eat first at the *Crooked Billet*. It has an excellent reputation, though I have not eaten there since 1965, for no real reason!

If you approach via Tadcaster along the A162, turn right immediately after Towton village; it is signed Towton Battlefield. Follow this road for about a mile or a bit more until you see the lay-by on the right.

From the A1/M62 Junction at Ferrybridge you can access the A162 from the roundabout. Follow it towards Tadcaster making sure that you do not miss the exit from the dual carriageway (this was the old A1 as far as Brotherton). Follow the 162 until just before Towton, turn left signed Towton Battlefield. Beware, it is an acute bend from this direction. Then proceed as above.

The Towton Campaign

The Towton campaign can be said to have started immediately after the Yorkists lost the Battle of Wakefield on December 30th 1460 (modern calendar). Edward, the surviving elder son of Richard of York marched quickly on London from the Welsh Marches. At the same time Queen Margaret also marched on London. Whilst Edward was crossing the Cotswolds, Margaret fought and beat the Yorkist Earl of Warwick at St Albans, and then retreated back to York.

Edward was crowned as Edward IV, and began to send his men northwards in separate batches. By the time they reached Darrington the whole army was together, and numbered about 40,000 men.

On March 27th, the Yorkists occupied Ferrybridge, where they were surprised in the night by a Lancastrian force under Clifford.

The following day Edward sent Lord Fauconberg with a force of mounted archers upstream to cross the Aire at Castleford and outflank Clifford. Meanwhile, his men kept up a steady pressure on the Lancastrians in Ferrybridge, who eventually had to retreat as Fauconberg came into sight.

Clifford was finally caught and killed at Dintingdale, in full sight of the Lancastrian

army, which stayed on the ridge and did not descend to help.

As by now night was approaching, the Yorkists occupied Saxton village, and the Lancastrians occupied Towton.

Margaret had been advised by Somerset to fight Edward on the triangular plateau between Saxton and Towton, but she was also advised to stay in York with her husband, the wimpy Henry VI.

The morning of Palm Sunday, March 29th dawned cold and cloudy, with flakes of snow! Unknown to the armies, a cold front was sweeping up from the south. Both sides were up early, being shriven of their sins. Somerset, with 60,000 men was so confident of victory that he gave the order "No Quarter."

As the fighting began, the blizzard set in, helping the Yorkists. Badly outnumbered, Edward held on until the arrival of the Duke of Norfolk from Pontefract clinched the victory. The surviving Lancastrians retreated towards Tadcaster across the flooded river Cock, where innumerable men were drowned as the bridge collapsed. Tadcaster bridge had been destroyed to discourage retreat!

Margaret, Henry and their son Edward headed north towards Scotland. Edward IV went into York where prisoners were executed the following day where the public toilet is now outside M & S.



Queen Margaret. From a Tapestry in St. Mary's Hall, Coventry.

