

AFTERMATH OF BOSWORTH FIELD

Town Council of York

Following the Battle of Bosworth Field, across England men had to decide their course of action. The government of the City of York, in the north of England, called a hurried council session to decide their response to Henry's victory. This brief record of that meeting is the earliest known mention of the battle.

York, 23 August 1485

Were assembled in the council chamber, where and when it was showed by diverse persons, and especially by John Sponer,¹ sent unto the field of Redemore² to bring tidings from the same to the City, that King Richard, late mercifully reigning upon us, was, through great treason of the Duke of Norfolk³ and many others that turned against him, with many other lords and nobles of this North, was piteously slain and murdered, to the great heaviness of this City, the names of whom follow hereafter.

Wherefore it was determined that, since the Earl of Northumberland⁴ was come to Wressle,⁵ a letter should be conceived unto the said Earl, beseeching him to give unto them his best advice how to dispose them at this woeful season, both to his honor and worship, and the well and profit of this City, the tenor wherefore follows hereafter:

Right potent and right noble, our most honorable, special, and singular good lord,

In our most humble wise we recommend us unto your good lordship, loving almighty God for your homecoming at this woeful season, beseeching your good lordship to be towards us and this City as you have been heretofore—a right good and tender lord—and so to advise us at this time as may be to the honor of your lordship, the well and profit of us, and the safeguard of this said City, whereunto we shall apply ourselves both with body and goods, and ever to owe unto your lordship our faithful hearts and true service.

Further, we beseech your lordship to give full faith and credence unto our servant John Nicholson, the bearer hereof, in such things as he shall show unto your lordship on our behalf.

And the blessed Trinity, etc.

Yours etc.,

Mayor, aldermen, sheriff, twenty-four of the council of the City of York, with the whole commonalty of the same.

A.F. Pollard, ed. *The Reign of Henry VII From Contemporary Sources* (London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1913), I:17–18. [modernized]

¹ The town council had sent John Sponer, their Serjeant of the Mace, to Richard's army on 16 August 1485.

² Englishmen throughout the North referred to the Battle of Bosworth Field as the Battle of Redemore, a derivation of an Anglo-Saxon phrase indicating a reedy marsh.

³ John Howard (c. 1425–1485), Duke of Norfolk, commanded the vanguard of Richard III's army. Henry's army defeated this advanced force, some elements of which then fled the field. Despite his death in the battle, immediately after Bosworth an unfounded rumor circulated that Norfolk actually betrayed his master.

⁴ Henry Percy (c. 1449–1489), Earl of Northumberland commanded 4,000 knights on the left flank of Richard's army at Bosworth, but never in fact engaged Henry's army during the battle.

⁵ Wressle Castle, one of the Earl of Northumberland's primary residences, lies approximately 20 miles southeast of York