

DECLARATION AFTER BOSWORTH FIELD

Henry VII (1457–1509), King of England (1485–1509)

Fifteenth-century England experienced more than thirty years of civil war as Yorkists and Lancastrians claimants vied for the Throne. These Wars of the Roses culminated on 22 August 1485 with the Battle of Bosworth Field, where Henry VII defeated Richard III and became the King of England. Henry, son-in-law of Edward IV and great-great-grandson of Edward III, issued the following declaration shortly after his victory.

28 August 1485

Henry, by the grace of God, King of England and of France, Prince of Wales, and Lord of Ireland,

Strictly charges and commands, upon pain of death, that no manner of man rob or spoil any manner of commons coming from the field, but suffer them to pass home to their countries and dwelling-places, with their horse and harness.

And, moreover, that no manner of man take upon him to go to any gentleman's place, neither in the country nor within cities nor boroughs, nor pick any quarrels for old or for new matters, but keep the King's peace, upon pain of hanging, etc.

And, moreover, if there be any man offered to be robbed and spoiled of his goods, let him come to Master Richard Borrow, the King's serjeant here, and he shall have a warrant for his body and his goods until the time the King's pleasure be known.

And, moreover, the King ascertains you that Richard, Duke of Gloucester, lately called King Richard, was lately slain at a place called Sandeford within the shire of Leicester, and there was laid openly, that every man might see and look upon him.

And also there was slain upon the same field John, late Duke of Norfolk;¹ John, late Earl of Lincoln;² Thomas, late Earl of Surrey;³ Francis, Viscount Lovell;⁴ Sir Walter Deveres, Baron Ferrars;⁵ Richard Ratcliffe, knight;⁶ and Robert Brackenbury, knight;⁷ with many other knights, squires, and gentlemen. On whose souls God have mercy!

A.F. Pollard, ed. *The Reign of Henry VII from Contemporary Sources* (London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1913), I:12 [modernized]

¹ John Howard (c. 1425–1485), Duke of Norfolk, KG. Long a supporter of the Yorkist cause, Norfolk fought and died with Richard at Bosworth.

² John de la Pole (1464–1487), Earl of Lincoln and nephew of both Edward IV and Richard III. Most of his contemporaries considered him the heir of the childless Richard III. Lincoln fought with Richard III at Bosworth, but reconciled with Henry VII after the battle. Soon, however, Lincoln began claiming Lambert Simnel was the long-lost Yorkist heir and raised a rebellion against Henry, and died at the Battle of Stoke Field.

³ Thomas (1443–1524), Earl of Surrey, KG, fought for Richard III at Bosworth, but in fact survived the day as a prisoner of Henry VII's army. In 1489, Henry VII restored him to his title and Surrey served as Henry's commander in the north of England for ten years and went on to serve Henry VIII, who created him Duke of Norfolk.

⁴ Francis (1456–1488?), Viscount Lovell, KG, Richard III's closest friend and Lord Chamberlain, survived the Battle of Bosworth and continued armed resistance to Henry VII for several years.

⁵ Sir Walter Devereux (1432–1485), Baron Ferrars of Chartley, KG, fought for the Yorkist cause throughout the Wars of the Roses.

⁶ Sir Richard Ratliff (–1485), KG, a wealthy landowner and long-time supporter of Richard III.

⁷ Sir Robert Brackenbury (–1485), Constable of the Tower of London (1483–1485) and guardian of Richard III's illegitimate son, John. Brackenbury commanded the vanguard of Richard's forces at Bosworth Field, and died in the final charge.