

The Battle of Edgcote, 26th July 1469.

A discussion paper by Nigel Douglas

Researchers usually find this battle 'lumped in' as part of the Wars of the Roses, it was in fact no such thing. Edgcote was a Yorkist coup, carried out by Richard Neville, ("The Kingmaker") Earl of Warwick, against his King, Edward IV.

Neville saw his influence fade after Edward married (the reportedly fabulous beauty) Elizabeth Woodville. Her family acquired titles and influence, (her father becoming Lord Rivers), while Neville saw his influence fade.

As relationships plummeted, Neville, who also held the title Constable of Calais, assembled an army in France, ready to threaten the British crown. A simple invasion from the South could not succeed. One of Neville's allies, probably Sir William Conyers, was charged with raising a rebel army in the North. I say probably because he did this under the nom de guerre of "Robin of Redesdale".

The Nevilles, one of whom was Duke of Northumberland, had for some years been engaged in the border wars. They had laid waste to places like Lochmaben and would not have enjoyed wide support in their name. So it was that "Redesdale" assembled an army of 5000 men. Edward IV having heard rumours of this insurrection, had advanced North with a limited force, but upon realising the size of the rebel army, retreated to Nottingham Castle and awaited reinforcements from the SW, led by the Earls of Devon & Stafford. Ill equipped to lay siege to a castle, Redesdale circumvented Nottingham and sought to engage the King's reinforcements en route.

Contemporary accounts say that Devon and Stafford engaged in an argument over the favours of a woman, at Banbury on the Oxfordshire / Northamptonshire border, where they sought lodging on the night of 25/7/1469. Devon remained sulking with his troops, who contained the entire contingent of archers, whilst Stafford advanced on the 26th and made contact with Redesdale's force at 'Danesmoor' Edgcote.

Redesdale's rebels cut a swath through the Royal army, the archers arriving too late to be effective. As the conflict swung in the balance, an advance mounted element of Neville's force (coming North from London) swept onto the battlefield. Seeing Neville's banners and believing this was his main force, the royal troops broke and fled, great carnage being inflicted on their retreat.

The Earls of Devon and Stafford were executed, as was soon afterwards Lord Rivers and his sons. King Edward IV was later taken 'into custody' by Neville and forced to sign over many concessions and pardons. The rebel fighters were in the East Midlands, far from home and off the payroll. The battlefield was littered with dead knights and very expensive armour.....???

This was the probable migration path of the Douglas', from the Scottish Borders to Northamptonshire, where they became farmers. The Black Douglas had all been driven from their lands in Annandale in 1455, on the orders of James II. It seems reasonable to assume, that they would have spread out south of the border and survived as reivers, perfect recruiting material for Conyers rebel army. The land and animals in Chipping Warden, were very probably paid for with the proceeds from the armour. In the 19th Century a mass grave was found just south of the church in Chipping Warden, containing the skeletons of many men, only wearing spurs.

The next generation of Douglas' (there are no records to say how many there were) included Thomas Dugles probably born 1470. He would have been the first son as he appears to have (inherited ?) considerable wealth. In 1523 he paid tax on his moveable goods of fourteen pounds! He died before 1527 as his wife Agnes is referred to as a widow in her will.

I have not seen any persuasive evidence to suggest that the earliest Douglas in Chipping Warden was the progenitor of the Northamptonshire families. If more than one clansman joined Conyers, there is no reason to assume that they would all share the same Ydna either.

The earliest Douglas' I have found in Northants are:

Robert Douglis m. to Margrette, d.1569 in **Greatworth**

Richard Dugless d. c1568 in **Greatworth**

Thomas Dugles c 1470 to 1527 mentioned 1523, in **Chipping Warden**

William Douglas mentioned 1523 lived at **Everdon**

William, son of William bapt. 25.12.1590 **Culworth**

Henry Dougglas m Agnes Gammas 4.5.1560 in **Brington**

John Douglis bur. 16.4.1587 at **Wellingborough**

The children of William & Elizabeth Duglas b. **Easton Maudit:**

Thomas 1568, William 1571, John & Richard 1573, Nicholas 1574, Marie 1576 & Elizabeth 1580.

John Dukyliss d.1531 **Burton Latimer.**