

The Route from the Battlefield to Gedling - A Conjecture

Evidence that Lovel left the battlefield at East Stoke

Two eye-witnesses reported Lovel's departure from the battlefield; one was a herald attached to Henry's court and the other an agent sent by the Mayor of York to report on the outcome of the battle. The herald reported that 'the Vicount Lorde Lovell was put to flight' and the agent from York that 'the Lord Lovell was 'discomfotid and fled, with Sir Thomas Broughton and many othre'. Sir Thomas Broughton of Broughton-in-Furness, then in Lancashire, now in Cumbria was credited with hiding Lovel after the collapse of his unsuccessful uprising the previous year. No other departures from the battlefield are reported.

Why did Lovel leave the battlefield?

Possible reasons for him leaving the battlefield are:-

- a) cowardice
- b) abandonment of the current fight to enable participation in a more successful fight later
- c) abandonment of the rebel cause and acceptance of Henry's legitimacy as king
- d) need for treatment of wounds
- e) avoidance of being captured and tortured by Henry.

a) Cowardice

Lovel had taken part in battles under Edward IV and Richard III before and had plenty of opportunities to abandon the rebel cause since Bosworth, but had not done so.

b) To enable a more successful fight later

Lovel was about thirty years old at the time of the battle but took no part in any of the plots against the Tudors which took place in various forms up to the execution of Margaret, Countess of Salisbury, the 'Last White Rose' in 1541.

c) Acceptance of Henry's legitimacy as king

Many of the rebels eventually accepted the Tudor regime and were rewarded by having some of their lands returned but Lovel was not one of them.

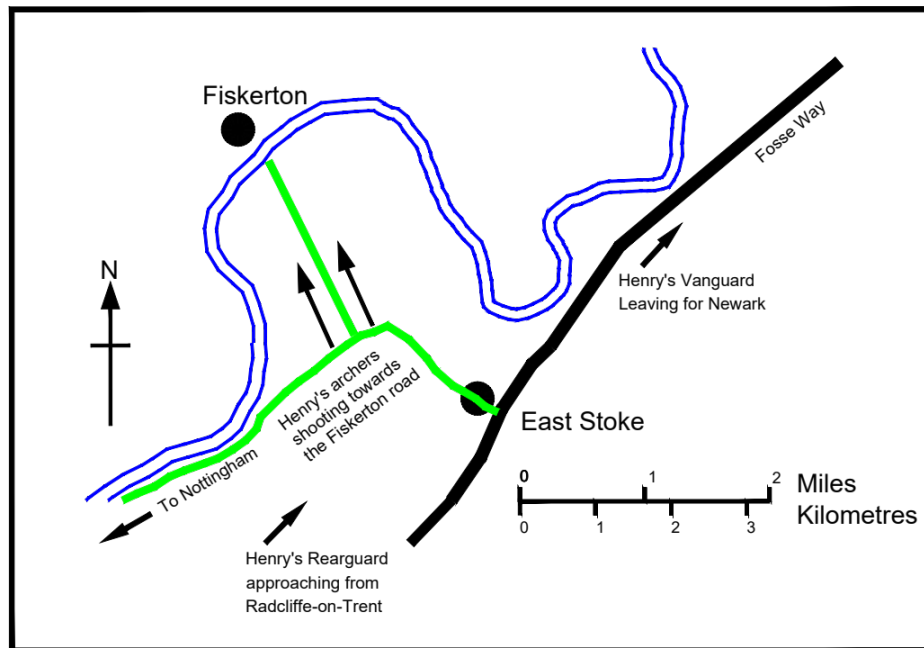
d) Need for treatment of wounds

Lovel may have been wounded to such an extent that he could no longer fight for the rebel cause.

e) Avoidance of being captured and tortured by Henry

Lovel had spent many years as a *confidante* of members of the Yorkist cause and would thus have been extremely valuable source of information for Henry who would have used torture to obtain it. Not only would he have wished to avoid capture himself, but his fellow Yorkists would have been very anxious to protect him from falling into Henry's hands because of the danger that he may reveal information about them to Henry. Had Lovel been either killed or captured making his escape it would have been a great cause of celebration and boasting by Henry and his army.

What were the threats when Lovel left the battlefield?



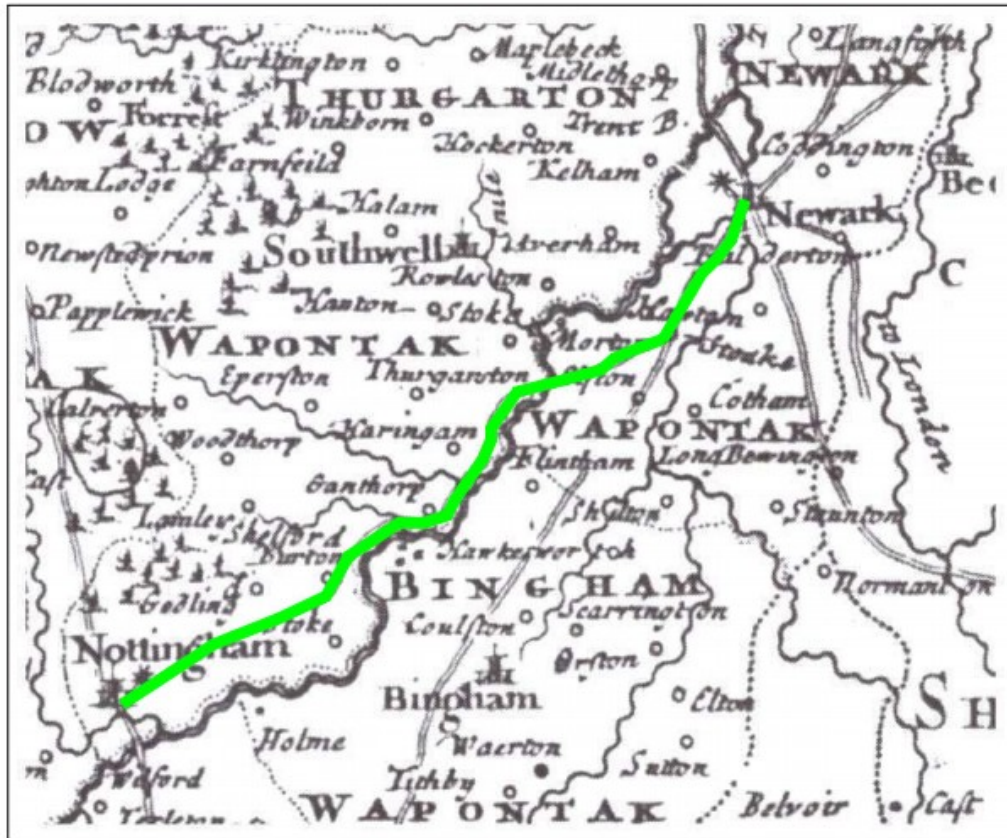
Henry was in control of the land to the south of the Trent because his army had spent the previous night at Radcliffe-on-Trent ten miles to the south-west of the battlefield and had marched alongside the Fosse Way towards the battlefield. His reserves were still to the south and south-west of the battlefield whilst the victorious vanguard left towards Newark.

The battlefield lies on level ground about 50m above the flood plain of the River Trent and so Henry's archers would have had a clear view of rebels escaping across the flood-plain towards the north bank.

The Newark to Nottingham Road

The road from Newark to Nottingham crossed the battlefield, having followed the Roman Fosse way from Newark to East Stoke where it left the higher ground and descended to the flood plain. It then passed under the shelter of an escarpment to cross the river at Hazelford to continue along the north bank towards Nottingham.

Below is a detail from Robert Morden's map of Nottinghamshire of 1738 on which the route of the road has been shown by the green line. The road fell into disuse when a new one was built to join Nottingham to the Fosse Way near Bingham in 1766 and it is now part of the *Trent Valley Way* long-distance footpath.

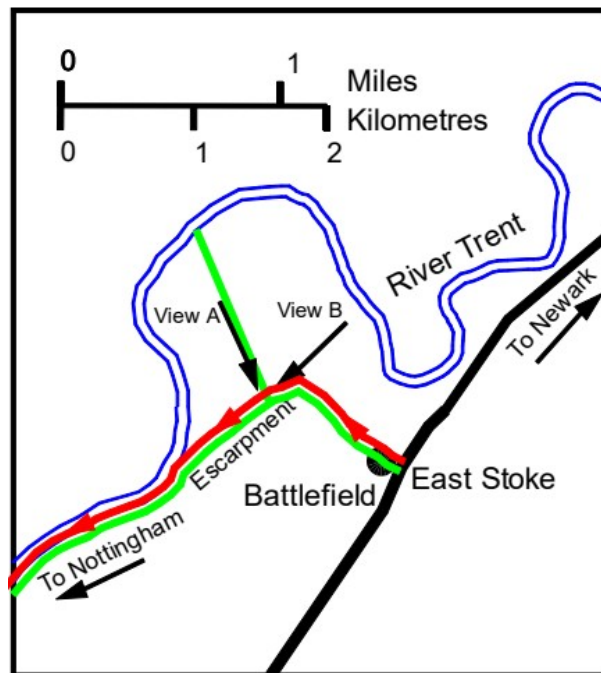


Chapman's map of Nottinghamshire of 1774 was surveyed to a higher standard than Morden's and the area of East Stoke which appears in the detail below, shows that the main street ran from the junction with the Fosse Way to the church. Beyond was a left turn which led to the south bank of the river passing under the escarpment. Sir George Smith was the local land-owner in Chapman's time and lived at Stoke Hall.



The only safe exit from the battlefield

The only safe exit was to take the Nottingham road which was hidden from the battlefield by the escarpment as shown in View A. View B shows the first few yards of the road from the junction with the Fiskerton road



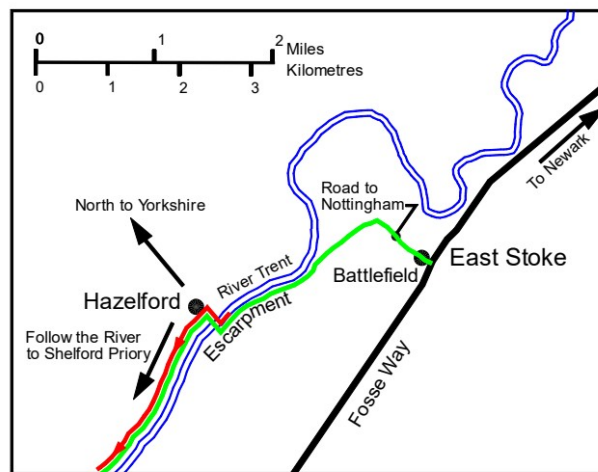
View A



View B

When was it safe to consider treatment for wounds?

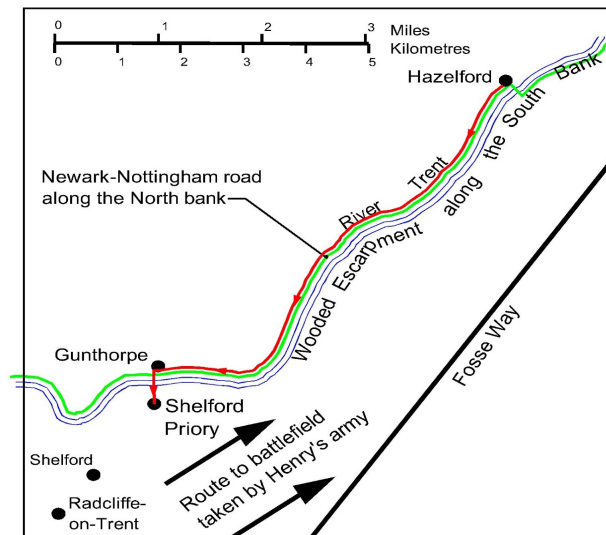
Having left the battlefield about two miles behind and crossed the river Lovel probably felt safe from capture and could consider obtaining treatment for his wounds.



The distance he could ride to obtain such treatment depended on the severity of his wounds. Given that his wounds were severe enough to prevent him from continuing to fight in the battle, his need for treatment must have been acute, so his best option was to follow the road to Shelford Priory, which was the nearest source of medical treatment, rather than continue northwards to Yorkshire. Had Lovel ridden north and survived his wounds his options would have been to continue to oppose Henry or to accept his regime. He did neither so the evidence points to his early death close to the battlefield.

Shelford Priory

The road to Shelford continued along the north bank of the river but was still hidden from view by the escarpment which extended along the south bank as far as East Bridgford, leaving a short distance to the river crossing and the Priory.



Lovel's uncle William, the second Viscount Beaumont was the Lord of the Manor of Shelford as well as Gedling. This created a dilemma for Richard Stokes the Prior, because, on the one hand he had a duty to care for any sick person, particularly one related to his Lord of the Manor, but doing so created a risk of his actions being discovered by Henry's soldiers.

This dilemma was particularly acute as Henry's army had camped the previous night two miles away at Radcliffe-on-Trent and had passed close to the Priory on their way to the battle that morning, so there was a danger that some of his soldiers may have returned to Shelford to have their wounds treated.

Transfer to Gedling

An attractive solution to Prior Stokes' dilemma would have been to move Lovel across the Trent to their cell about four miles (six km) away from the priory across the river at Gedling. The monks of Shelford belonged to the order of St Augustine which required them to go out into the world and minister to people in nearby parishes and to do this to the north of the river, they had a cell attached to the church in Gedling.

Archaeological evidence that the monk's a cell existed at Gedling is cited by C. M. Oldrid Scott, the architect who built the vestry and organ chamber to the north of the chancel when he reported that he had encountered the remains of the previous building when digging the foundations in 1925.¹

Documentary evidence that monks from Shelford lived and died at Gedling over long periods of time comes in the form of a petition to King Edward II in 1318 from Thomas de Gunthorpe, chaplain, seeking permission to extend the churchyard by adding land that was 'close to the cemetery of the Prior of Shelford'²



In the fifteenth century, Gedling church had two clergy, a Rector appointed by the lords of the manor and a Vicar appointed by the Prior of Shelford. In 1487 the Vicar was Brother Robert Helmsley, one of the monks from Shelford. The cell at Gedling would have provided a safe place for the monks to treat Lovel's wounds, well away from Henry's soldiers who were on the south bank of the river.

Death from battle wounds

A major reason for injured soldiers to die after a battle was infection of their wounds from soiled arrowheads or fragments of their clothing being driven into wounds. Without today's antibiotics there was very little chance of successful treatment and death often followed in a few days. The illustration below, taken from a German manual for treating battle wounds

1 C. M. Oldrid Scott, All Saints Church, Gedling, *Transactions of the Thorton Society*, 33, (1929), 11-12

2 John Standish (ed.), *Abstracts of Inquisitiones Post Mortem relating to Nottinghamshire, 1279 to 1321*, Thorton Record Series Vol IV, (1914), 288-9

shows a surgeon pulling a broken arrow from the chest of his patient who grips the seat of his chair whilst a colleague holds him down and the battle continues in the background.



From *Feldbuch der Wundarznei* published in Germany in 1542

Conclusions

1) The belief that Lovel left the battlefield because he was severely wounded is credible because he had shown no signs of cowardice, took no part in subsequent revolts against Henry and made no peace with Henry.

2) He must have left the battlefield on the Nottingham road because he would otherwise have been captured by Henry.

3) He sought treatment close to the battlefield at Shelford Priory because of the severity of his wounds.

4) The monks transferred him to Gedling to protect themselves against reprisals from Henry's army.