

Ricardian Riddle: the Casualty List of the Battle of Barnet by Livia Visser-Fuchs

On 4 May 1471 the Mayor and Aldermen of Dijon received a letter from their friend Jean de Molesmes, secretary to Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy. He assured them he had given their – unspecified – message to the Duke and that the matter would be seen to. He continued: '... today mylord has had certain news that the Earl of Warwick has been killed in the battle that was fought on Easter day and that one of his brothers is also dead, and that King Edward is king again in England, in peace, and that he was in the said battle in person, and King Henry has been returned to his cell in the Tower of London'. The letter had been written at Péronne 27 April 1471, almost two weeks after the battle.¹

Many similar letters were probably sent to various parts of Duke Charles' dominions at the same time, but few informants are likely to have been so close to the Duke as de Molesmes, who was able to offer proof of the veracity of his news as well. The scribe at Dijon who copied the letter used the whole of the next page for a transcription of a list of 'the names of those that were killed in the battle between King Edward of England and the Earl of Warwick ...'. His text is probably the earliest and the best copy, but the same list reached other contemporaries who were interested. Adrian de But, monk-chronicler at Les Dunes abbey in Flanders, knew it and worked it into his description of events in England;² Jean de Haynin, a Hainault nobleman, did the same in his memoirs;³ somehow the list attached itself to a copy of the newsletter about Barnet that Margaret of York, Duchess of Burgundy, wrote to her mother-in-law Isabel of Portugal,⁴ and it also survives, significantly, in a collection of contemporary poems on the death of Warwick and other events.⁵ Remnants of it reappear in the early-sixteenth-century Dutch *Divisie*-chronicle.

The list adds little to our knowledge of the battle, but as no English copy of it appears to have survived⁶ and because it caused a Babylonian confusion among continental scribes, it may offer a prosopographical and palaeographical puzzle of some interest. It demonstrates some of the problems one is confronted with in continental manuscript sources on English subjects. To the scribe at Dijon, to de But, Haynin and the other copyists, who are nameless, the list's main interest lay in its existence: the fact that it was made and the casualties named, proved that the battle had been fought, and the sender could only be the victor. In this respect it served a purpose similar to that of a modern newspaper and in its details it was equally untrustworthy. Especially if such a list was drawn up immediately after the battle it must have been impossible to make it entirely accurate. There would still be uncertainty about the fate of some participants; some, for example, though not included among the dead, may have died of their wounds later.⁷ Continental readers had the additional problem that many names – especially those lower down the social scale – meant nothing to them and their successive copies soon became incredibly garbled.

The general appearance and the similar, hierarchical order of the names in all copies of the Barnet list suggest that they all derive from one original, probably written in French by an Englishman. No two texts are identical and each has its own confusing array of scribal errors. Christian names were understood and copied correctly (in their French version); capital letters led to every conceivable misreading; s and f, v and b, x and g, m, n, v and u were confused; abbreviations and explanatory words were misinterpreted; the result is given here.

The Duke of Exeter heads the list in several copies; in some the first place is taken by Warwick himself.⁸ The spellings vary but there is no doubt about the identity of both. The fact that Exeter survived the battle was known to de But, who omitted his name. The Dijon scribe records an additional, though false, rumour at the foot of the page: 'The Duke of Somerset fighting on Warwick's side, fled the field and saved himself that day'.⁹ The names of Somerset and Exeter were well-known in Burgundy because of their long exile at Charles the Bold's court, and these are generally spelled correctly. Marquess Montague occurs in all texts and his relationship to Warwick is noted. The Earl of Oxford follows. In the original his name was probably written *le conte doxenfort*, but even this caused confusion: *le conte dambersech* (Dijon), *de Seufort* (le Roux)¹⁰, *de guiffort* (Registre)¹¹, *de grenfort* (Haynin)¹². In several versions he is said to have been *bien* or *fort bleschie et prins* ('badly wounded and taken').¹³ 'The brother of the Earl of Oxford' is also reported to have died. The abbreviated word *frere* ('brother') was misinterpreted; in some cases it was read as *fiez* ('son'), in others as *sieur* ('lord'), the latter leading to a second appearance of Oxford, called variously *duccenfort* (Dijon), *pennafort* (Haynin) or more correctly *doxenfort* (Registre).

It is also possible to identify *Richard dustalh* (Dijon), *d'Eustal* (le Roux), *Donchel* (de But)¹⁴, *douscal* (Registre), *doustal* (Haynin). Very likely this is Sir Richard Tunstall who in fact survived both the battle and the House of York.¹⁵ *Robert sardale* (Dijon) and *Robertus Fordelle* (de But), *Jehan Goselle* (le Roux) and *jehan griselle* (Registre and Haynin), in one case said to be wounded and captured, elude identification. Both are included among the 'knights' and members of the Russell and Gresley families present themselves as candidates.

Guillaume Cheriel (le Roux), *thierel* (Dijon and Haynin), *Treul* (de But) and *thierret* (Registre) can be none other than Sir William Tyrell, one of whose brothers is also said to have died. The last mentioned *chevalier* in some texts is *Thomas stocphart* (Registre), *estorfart* (Haynin), *Scophart* (le Roux), *Stanfordt* (de But) or *casfert* (Dijon). It is not clear whether he died or was wounded and taken; both possibilities occur. His identity has to be guessed at.

Edward's other prisoners, though their names are curiously spelled, present, no problems: *le roy henri*, *larcevesque diorh* (George Neville) and the bishops of *vincextre* (Dijon), *vincestre* (Haynin and Registre), *Wicestre* (le Roux), *Excestriae* (de But); of *lynor* (Dijon), *lincolle* (Haynin), *lincel* (Registre), *Lincol* (le Roux and de But); of *saint davis* (Dijon), *saint denis* (Haynin and Registre), *St Devys* (le Roux) and of *chez* (Dijon), *cestre* (Haynin, Registre and le Roux). The last is

Chichester, of which the initial letters looked like an unnecessary repetition to copyists; St Davids could all too easily be read as the better known French St Denis (*Sancti Dionysii* to de But).

Finally, there is the short list of those who died fighting for Edward, six or seven names. Four of them are classed as knights: *le seigneur de cromby* (Dijon), *Cronueil* (le Roux), *cromeil* (Haynin), *cornaille* (Registre); *le seigneur de say* (in all versions except de But); *le seigneur de bousset* (Dijon), *Vrurset* (le Roux), *boursset* (Haynin and Registre); *le seigneur de lafosse* (in all versions but omitted by de But and the Registre). These clearly are Humphrey Bouchier, Lord Cromwell, William Fiennes, Lord Say and Sele and Sir Humphrey Bouchier, son of Lord Hemmers, whose names are corroborated by many other sources. Bernard de la Forssa was a Gascon nobleman.¹⁶

More of a puzzle are the last three Yorkist casualties, all called 'squires'. In the Dijon manuscript their names are written: *thomas perquier / le seigneur de serby et / ioffroy grenet escuiers*. The last word is crossed out and the three names, written the one above the other, are connected by a primitive accolade, followed again by the word *escuiers*. The descriptive *escuiers* was the cause of some confusion: *perquier* (Dijon and Registre), *Pasquier* (le Roux) and *margurer* (Haynin), no doubt was Thomas Par, who very probably died at Barnet and whose confusingly short name got linked to his status.¹⁷ *le seigneur de serby* suffered more or less the same fate: in other versions he is called *serbi testiner* (Registre and Haynin) and *Fervy l'escuier* (le Roux). It is possible that this is a member of the Ferriby (or Fereby) family, perhaps John, whose will was made in September 1470 and proved 26 July 1471.¹⁸ *Geoffrey Garnet* (correctly in le Roux and Registre), *gabnet* (Haynin) was probably related to Richard Garnet, pavilioner to Edward IV and Richard III.¹⁹

The 'continental edition' of the casualty list of Barnet is one of the documents that were copied and survive because people in Burgundy and the Low Countries used them to satisfy their curiosity about events in England in the spring of 1471. Together with the casualty list of Tewkesbury, the poems on Warwick and his defeat, and the so-called 'short version' of the *Arrivall*, they were preserved as memorials of those six anxious months when the Earl and his Anglo-French alliance threatened the safety of the Duke of Burgundy and his lands.²⁰

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale Ms. français 3887, f 104 b: ... *cejourduy quil [the Duke] a eu nouvelles certaines que le conte de virhviht a este tue en la bataille qui fut le jour [de] pasques et ung sien frere aussi mort. et que le roy edouard est paisible roy en engleterre lequel roy en sa personne est[oit] en ladite bataille, et a este le roy henry remis en son lo[ge ?] en la tour de londres* ... Editorial additions are in square brackets.

2. Adrian de But's 'Chronicon' is printed in *Chroniques relatives à l'histoire de Belgique sous la domination des Ducs de Bourgogne. Textes Latins I Chroniques des religieux des Dunes: Jean Brandon - Gilles de Roye - Adrien de But*, ed. C. Kervyn de Lettenhove, Commission Royale d'Histoire, Brussels 1870. The list occurs in two versions, on pp.507-8 and 512; in the second instance there is some confusion with the casualty list of Tewkesbury, which also reached the continent.

3. In de Haynin's autograph of his memoirs, Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale Albert I, Ms. II 2545, f. 207 b; printed for instance in the edition by D. D. Brouwers, 2 vols., Liège 1905, vol. 2, p.129.

4. Margaret's letter survives in two slightly variant copies. One was included by Haynin in his memoirs (see n. 3), the other is in Namur, Archives de l'Etat, Registre aux reliefs du souverain baillage 1467-1477, ff. 72-73 b, among miscellaneous papers of an entirely different nature.

5. Printed by A.J.V. le Roux de Lincy, *Chants historiques et populaires du temps de Charles VI et Louis XI*. Paris 1857, pp.174-5, item 32. In the original ms. - the whereabouts of which are unknown - the list was closely connected with two ballads on Warwick, the one ridiculing the fugitive Edward and the frustrated Duke of Burgundy, the other rejoicing at the Earl's death. It has to be remembered that the spelling of le Roux's edition may not be correct in every instance.

6. English sources mention only the more important names. See C. L. Scofield, *The Life and Reign of Edward the Fourth*, 2 vols., London 1923, vol. I, pp.580-1 and references given there.

7. Compare C.A.J. Armstrong, 'Politics and the Battle of St Albans, 1455', in *England, France and Burgundy in the Fifteenth Century*. London 1983, Appendix III, Lists of the Slain; there is nothing in the Barnet list to show when it was made.

8. Warwick's death was by far the most interesting item of news to readers in the Low Countries, witness the ballads and epitaphs written about him. The author of the contemporary 'Chronicle of Flanders', composed in Bruges, thought the event merited one of his chronograms (Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale Ms. 13073-74, f. 275 b):

edVVVaert VICTorleVs dle VerVVan
VVerreVVIIIC te paessChe aLs VLIende Man
m.cccc.lxxj.

[Edward, victorious, defeated/Warwick at Easter, a fleeing man].

The letters printed as capitals here are touched in red in the ms.

9. *Le duc de sombreset tenant le party de verhint sen fouyt et se saulva a ladicte journee*, BN Ms. français 3887, f.105.

10. See note 5.

11. See note 4.

12. See note 3.

13. Apropos of the expression *bien bleschie* I would like to point out a possible error in the translation of the newsletter on Barnet by the Cologne merchant Gerhard von Wesel printed in the *Journal of Army Historical Research* (1968), pp.65-9 (article by J. Adair): *de herzoch van Gloucester und lord Scales sijn got gewondet* does not mean that Gloucester and Scales were slightly wounded - if so, why thank God 'that it does not trouble them'? -, but rather that they were badly injured and yet were not in danger. The German words are analogous to French *bien bleschie* (and, for example, to English 'a good hour').

14. See note 2.

15. I would like to thank Mr W.E. Hampton for his help. His knowledgeable suggestions in some cases added pleasantly to my confusion, in others they were very clarifying. The present pages do not aim to solve the more difficult problems of identification - since I am unable to do so -, they merely offer the facts.

16. See W. E. Hampton's review of Patrick Delaforce, *Family History Research. Vol. I: The French Connection*, London 1983, in *The Ricardian*, vol. 6, no.86 (1984), pp.389-90 and Scofield (see n. 6), vol. I, p.581, n. 1.

17. See C. Ross, 'Some "Servants and Lovers" of Richard in his Youth', in *Richard III Crown and People*, ed. J. Petre, London 1985, pp.146-8.

18. Personal communication, W.E. Hampton.

19. *Edward IV's French Expedition of 1475*, ed. F.P. Barnard, reprinted Dursley 1975, pp.134-5 and *British Library Harleian Manuscript 433*, ed. Rosemary Horrox and P.W. Hammond, 4 vols., Gloucester 1979, vol. 1, p.147; vol. 3, p.193.

20. Unfortunately none of the authors that used the Barnet list, nor any other continental chronicler, memorialist or poet I have seen so far, records any evidence of the Duke of Gloucester leading the van in the battle, or makes express mention of any command held by him or by others. Compare Anne F. Sutton, 'Richard, Duke of Gloucester, and the Battle of Barnet' in *Richard III Crown and People* (see n. 17), pp.258-9.

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