

Northamptonshire Battlefields Society - Battle of Edgcote Book

Aims

The Society aimed to publish a thorough but readable book about the campaign and battle of Edgcote in 1469, to coincide with the 550th anniversary. The publication was required to reach appropriate academic standards and to include as far as possible reprints of all of the historic sources, so that the book should become the definitive reference source. It was also important to raise the profile of the battle and document the terrain before HS2 potentially destroys part of the battlefield.

Activities

The sources were identified through the use of catalogues and bibliographies, and then compiled from on-line resources such as archive.org or through scanning or transcription from original hard copies. Several of the sources were not in English, and required translations from Latin, medieval French, and medieval Welsh.

Translations were prepared by the author, but mainly by recognised experts in the field. The French documents were translated by Livia Visser-Fuchs, who has done similar work for the Richard III Society. The contemporary Welsh poems, which are a valuable untapped resource for writers in English, were translated by Ann Parry-Owen, assisted by Jenny Day, both of the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh & Celtic Studies. The importance of the Welsh sources is because one army was raised entirely by the Earl of Pembroke in Wales.

In addition to the work on the sources any evaluation of a battle must take into account the ground over which it was fought. There has been some controversy over the exact location of the battle so the potential areas have to be walked and examined in the light of the evidence contained in the sources. A review of archaeological work performed in the area was also undertaken.

Beneficiaries from the publication

It is early days yet as the book was only published in late March. The book has been written so that it can be read by a general audience and reviews have praised its readability. It is the first book written by the author, as the Society widens its talent pool and reduces reliance on key individuals. In many ways the beneficiaries are not who, but what, so that future generations will still be able to visit these important local heritage sites. Proceeds from the sale of the book go towards supporting the activities of the Society and keeping membership affordable.

The book has come to significant new conclusions about the campaign and the battle, and the Society anticipates a heightened profile because of these.

Involvement

Research and support for the publication came both from within and outside the Society. The involvement of a Battlefield Trust Trustee was important in developing the approach to the work and providing a sounding board and ideas to produce something new and different. Support from the Society's Chair, a published writer on historical subjects, was also key in delivery.

As indicated in the "Activities" section above, identifying qualified translators was an essential part of the process. Although the Society had an existing relationship with Livia Visser-Fuchs it had no such contacts in respect of medieval Welsh. Identifying Professor Parry-Owen as an expert in the relevant Welsh poets was a key part of the process in producing material for the book. Her

colleague, Dr Day, as an expert in the references to weaponry in medieval Welsh poetry, added valuable insights.

The exact format was agreed by Society volunteers. It was clear from early on when discussing ideas that the inclusion of sources reprints was a main requirement, as was the need to address the controversies that surround the battle.

Budget & Funding

Funding came from within the Society's resources and was less than £100 as it was decided to use print on demand. A formal budget was not allocated. Oversight was exercised by the Society's committee which dealt with requests for funding as required. Most resources were freely available or could be accessed for a minimal charge from websites such as "British History On-line". The continued availability of the Northampton local history collection in the Central Library for free was essential.

Problems

The principle problems encountered revolved around obtaining the relevant sources. This was severely hampered by the lack of inter-library loans from outside Northamptonshire into the county. This information therefore had to be obtained through other sources, such as personal contacts. Otherwise the careful planning before commencing the project paid off, and the publication was delivered on time and at an acceptable cost to the Society.