# Blood and Horse Droppings

## Recommended Army Lists, developed by Phil Jones

*As much as you might prefer not to,* ***PLEASE READ THIS FIRST*** *before proceeding to the lists.*

*Neither Rob Jones nor I like Army Lists. As “non-competitive” gamers, we may try to build balanced forces, but we also believe in “playing with what you’ve got”. However, in response to requests from gamers during the development of these rules, this section is being included.*

### CAVEAT/DISCLAIMER

These lists are NEITHER definitive NOR mandatory. They are provided to give the novice to the period a starting point for collecting his/her forces. Bluntly, there is so little certainty surrounding the composition of armies during this period that gamers should feel justified in producing just about any combination they wish to. However, for those trying to create some reasonable approximation of the forces engaged, based on the limited available evidence, these lists will hopefully prove helpful.

Given that confident beginning… a few more notes. First, the Wars of the Roses usually is taken to refer to the period 1455-1487, starting at First St. Alban’s and ending at Stoke Field. In this 32-year period, shifts were taking place both in the development of emerging technology and new tactics (artillery; handguns; pikes) and in the availability of various troop types in different years: the house controlling the Crown usually found it easier to raise levies (Commissions of Array) than their opponents; the Irish and Continental Mercenaries had to be brought in by sea- and paid! Second, and related to this, while we speak of the “Wars of the Roses” as if a continuing struggle, this is no Thirty Years War. Campaigns tended to be very brief, and there are often significant gaps between these campaigns anyway: there were no major actions in 1456-58; 1462-63; 1465-68; 1470; 1472-84; and 1486- i.e. in 19 of the 32 years. So it can be worthwhile for the gamer to consider if they wish to portray an army for the whole period, for a particular year or sub-period, or even a particular campaign or action. This also implies that geography may come in to play- as (obviously) a campaign in the Welsh borders would likely produce a different mix of units to one waged in Northumberland.

Beyond all of this, these lists are an attempt to produce a representative force in a given period/year/campaign/action based on the “recommended” force size of 12 units. As such, they are necessarily generic, with marginal troop types frequently being overlooked in favour of their more numerous comrades. Hence, mounted units, Irish, Continental Mercenaries and Gonnes are a rarity. And astute readers will notice there are no units of dismounted men at arms: this is not an oversight- if you want a lecture on the topic, ask Rob! And let’s also remember that battles were rarely encounters between equal numbers, but here we are consciously constraining ourselves to create lists of 12 units.

So, with all those warnings in place, here is the final point. If you don’t like these lists- change them or ignore them. Don’t complain that you don’t like them- take the responsibility and develop your own. To aid players in developing their own, some guidance is provided after the lists.

### 1455-1487 Generic

Lancastrian: 5 Retinues; 3 Array; 2 Spear; 1 Mounted (player’s choice); 1 Gonnes

Yorkist: 7 Retinues; 2 Array; 1 Continental or Spear; 1 Mounted (player’s choice); 1 Gonnes

*This is a potentially good starting point. Assuming foot units of 24, mounted units of 12, and gonne units of 8 gunners and 2 pieces, this produces two reasonably representative forces of 260 figures each, while covering most of the troop types engaged. Players hoping for Irish units should see Mortimer’s Cross and Stoke Field below.*

### 1455: First St. Alban’s

Lancastrian: 12 Retinues

Yorkist: 12 Retinues

That was easy!

### 1459: Blore Heath

Lancastrian: 3 Retinues; 6 Array/Spears (player’s choice); 3 Mounted units (1-2 of each type);

Yorkist: 9 Retinues; 1 Array; 1 Spear; 1 Gonnes

### 1460: Northampton

Lancastrian: 6 Retinues; 4 Array; 2 Gonnes

Yorkist: 9 Retinues; 2 Array; 1 Gonnes

### 1460: Wakefield

Lancastrian: 6 Retinues; 3 Array; 1 Men at Arms; 2 Scurrours

Yorkist: 9 Retinues; 3 Array (May replace 1 Retinue with 1 Mounted Men at Arms)

### 1461: Mortimer’s Cross

Lancastrian: 6 Retinues; 3 Spears; 3 Irish (May replace 1 Irish with 1 Continental)

Yorkist: 8 Retinues; 3 Array; 1 Scurrours

### 1461: Second St. Alban’s

Lancastrian: 6 Retinues; 3 Array; 3 Spear (May replace 1 Spear with 1 Scurrours)

Yorkist: 9 Retinues; 2 Array; 1 Continentals

### 1461: Towton

Lancastrian: 6 Retinues; 4 Array; 2 Spears (1 Retinue may be placed in Ambush)

Yorkist: 9 Retinue; 3 Array

### 1461 Generic

Lancastrian: 6 Retinues; 2 Array; 2 Spears; 2 of: Array/Spears/Irish

Yorkist: 9 Retinues; 3 Array (May replace 1 Retinue with Continentals or Scurrours)

### 1464: Hedgeley Moor

Lancastrian: 6 Retinues; 4 Array; 1 Spear; 1 Scurrours

Yorkist: 7 Retinues; 2 Array; 1 Spear; 1 Men at Arms; 1 Scurrours

### 1464: Hexham

Lancastrian: 5 Retinues; 7 Array

Yorkist: 8 Retinues; 4 Array

### 1464 Generic

Lancastrian: 5 Retinues; 5 Array; 2 Units (0-1 each of: Retinue; Array; Men at Arms; Scurrours)

Yorkist: 7 Retinues; 3 Array; 2 Units (0-1 each of Retinue; Spear; Men at Arms; Scurrours)

### 1469: Edgecote Field

Lancastrian: 7 Retinues; 3 Array; 1 Men at Arms; 1 Scurrours

Yorkist: 6 Retinues; 3 Array; 1 Spear; 1 Men at Arms; 1 Scurrours

*Option: Since the Yorkist defeat here is attributed in part to the absence of archers, players may wish to reduce the shooting dice of Yorkist retinues, and perhaps increase their hand-to hand dice accordingly.*

### 1471: Barnet

Lancastrian: 7 Retinues; 4 Array; 1 Gonnes

Yorkist: 8 Retinues; 2 Array; 1 Continentals; 1 Gonnes

### 1471 Tewksbury

Lancastrian: 8 Retinue; 3 Array; 1 of: Continentals or Gonnes

Yorkist: 9 Retinues; 1 Array; 2 Units (0-1 of each; 0-1 mounted: Continentals; Gonnes; Men at Arms, Scurrours)

### 1471 Generic

Lancastrian: 7 Retinues; 3 Array; 1 Gonnes; 1 of: Array, Continentals, Gonnes

Yorkist: 8 Retinues; 1 Array; 1 Gonnes; 2 Units (0-1 of each; 0-1 mounted: Continentals; Gonnes; Men at Arms, Scurrours)

### 1485: Bosworth

Lancastrian: 3 Retinues; 2 Array; 2 Spears; 3 Continentals; 1 Men at Arms; 1 Scurrours (May replace 1 Retinue with either 1 Continentals OR 1 Gonnes)

Yorkist: 8 Retinues; 1 Array; 1 Spear; 1 Men at Arms; 1 Scurrours

Stanley: 6 Retinues; 4 Array; 1 Men at Arms; 1 Scurrours (May replace 1 Retinue with 1 Array)

Lancastrian AND Stanley: 5 Retinues; 3 Array; 2 Continentals; 1 Men at Arms; 1 Scurrours

*These lists are complicated by the possibility that gamers may wish to represent either the Lancastrian or Stanley factions separately, or may wish to play with them as a united force. In the former scenario, doubling the Yorkist forces would allow for a huge 4-player game with 24 units on each side.*

1487: Stoke Field  
Tudor: 6 Retinues; 4 Array; 2 Units (0-1 of each: Array; Continentals; Men at Arms; Scurrours)

Pretender: 2 Retinues; 2 Array; 4 Irish; 3 Landsknechts; 1 more Unit of any these types OR 1 Gonnes

## Guidance for Developing Your Own Lists

The main goals here are to help those who might want forces larger than the standard 12 Units; as well as creating more “representative” forces with unequal numbers of units. Anyway, it works for me!

We are dealing with so many unknowns: for almost every case that “proving” a certain point, it is possible to identify a case that disproves it. The “certainties” that we gamers often seek as the bases for building our forces are more like ghostly apparitions or educated guesswork in the late Middle Ages.

My own approach has been to assemble “data” (can we even call it such? Let’s remember- “garbage in, garbage out”) from as many sources as possible (historical and gaming) and smooth it to produce workable averages. This reduces the impact of outliers, and directs us more toward the “norm”. Which would be fine IF we could be certain that some “wild” outlier is not, actually, the accurate number we should be using! Oh, and that we are working with legitimate data. But, since we can’t know any of these things, we have to do the best we can.

From these questionable steps, I have derived the following general tenets to help me sleep at night:

Lancastrian troop numbers **ON AVERAGE** are larger than Yorkist, roughly 55% to 45% of those engaged. This was easy to generate: just add up the numbers given; divide by the number of actions. (But are those numbers, right?) The implication is that if you added the two forces together, something like 50-55% of your total would be Lancastrian troops, and 45-50% would be Yorkist.

Yorkist forces **ON AVERAGE** comprise a higher percentage of Retinue troops (66% vs 45% Lancastrian). Lancastrians **ON AVERAGE** have a higher percentage of Array (30% vs 18% Yorkist). With Henry VI on the throne, the Lancastrians found it easier to raise Commissions of Array, and the ongoing warfare from 1459-61 gave them time to recruit. Both the 1471 and the 1485 campaigns were over very quickly, giving little time for the Yorkist kings to recruit Commissions. Hence, Lancastrians would generally have a higher percentage of Array in their forces, while the Yorkist (relying more on their nobles) would generally reflect a higher proportion of Retinue troops.

Mounted troops **ON AVERAGE** only comprise around 4-6% of any force. Even at Blore Heath, that number was only around 10-20% (sources vary!) for the Lancastrians. Mounted units are a rarity! That said, the numbers of Men at Arms and Scurrours are (VERY roughly- after smoothing) equal. If there are an odd number of mounted units in a gamer’s force, the extra unit should more likely be Scurrours. More often, though, there may not be ANY mounted troops present. Their battlefield significance seems limited to Blore Heath, Ferrybridge and Bosworth: three actions in 32 years.

**Gonnes.** This one is really tricky. There is very little evidence of numbers or types of artillery present, and battle conditions were rarely ideal for their employment. Northampton did feature a prepared position (for all the good that did!), allowing more pieces to be deployed than usual and perhaps heavier pieces than was typical. So, we are smoothing for averages based on scant evidence, and with no clue as to its reliability. In fact, most of the "data” I’ve found comes from gaming sources. Great. So… Based on a Gonne company comprising 2 pieces and 8 figures, something like 2-4% of the total number of figures seems reasonable. For example, in my 1455-87 Generic List, one 8-figure Gonne company represents 3% of the 260 figures in the force. In a much larger force- maybe 600 figures?- that would yield 12-24 figures in Gonne companies, or 2-3 units. The most basic “rule” I have come up with for myself is 1 Gonne company per 1 Mounted company. Beyond that, you are on your own!

**Other troop types**: these being principally Northern Spears, Welsh Spears, Continental Mercenaries, Irish, and finally (at Stoke Field) Landsknechts. We have two new problems here, beyond what would be representative percentages for “others”. What would the breakout be between these various troop types, and how big does an army need to be to truly “justify” including a unit of them?

These are best handled in reverse order.

Since **Landsknechts** only appear once, let’s take them first. They seem to represent about 30% of the total in the Pretender army. As this was their only action, it’s illogical to use them in any other army.

The **Irish** are also very rare, outside of two actions: Mortimer’s Cross and Stoke Field. At Mortimer’s Cross, they seem to have made up around 20% of the Lancastrian total; while at Stoke Field they were an even bigger presence- maybe 35-40% of the total Pretender army. Unless you are representing one of these two campaigns, you would likely need a truly massive force to fully justify the inclusion of an Irish unit if you are trying to be representative. That does not mean we are saying “don’t use them” (we’ve established, that’s none of our business!), just don’t imagine that your forces are representative.

**Continental Mercenaries** are beloved of gamers. Especially those little skirmish units of handgunners. As Dr. Rob has made clear in the body of the rules, there is precious little evidence for the existence of such penny-packets, and far more for them operating as combined arms units, possibly even less mobile than their English counterparts (Not least, pavises do not imply an intention for rapid movement). OK, so if we accept that, how common are they? Relatively uncommon in both armies, though more often found in Yorkist forces (mostly Burgundians) than Lancastrian (mostly French and Breton).

More numerous than the prior three types, **Welsh Spears** could appear on northern battlefields as well as in the Welsh borders- though NOT Tewksbury! These are troops from the mountains of North Wales, as those from the more accessible districts of South Wales more likely reflect the composition of the Commissions of Array, and would thus be virtually indistinguishable. Both sides made use of Welsh Spears, and often on the same field. They would be most common at Mortimer’s Cross and Bosworth.

That said, the most plentiful **ON AVERAGE** of the “other” types are the **Northern Spears**. Obviously, most plentiful in the battles in the north - Blore Heath, Towton, Hedgeley, Hexham - they were also numbered at other actions (e.g. Second St. Alban’s).

So, how to derive numbers and proportions? Given the numbers for Retinues, Array, Mounted units and Gonnes I have been using in the discussions above, “Other” troops represent relatively small proportions of forces- unless they don’t! (Blore Heath; Mortimer’s Cross; Stoke Field). In round terms, one would ideally have about 8 units of Retinue and Array for each “Other” unit on the table. In Lancastrian forces, **ON AVERAGE** they seem to represent about 15% of troops present, while for Yorkist forces **ON AVERAGE** they seem to be only around 6-8%. So, we would expect to see more in the larger Lancastrian forces. Beyond that, the typical distributions are very different.

Lancaster: of 15% of the force present- York: of 6-8% of the force present-   
60% Northern Spear 25% Northern Spear  
25% Welsh Spear 40% Welsh Spear  
10% Continental Mercenary 25% Continental Mercenary  
 5% Irish 10% Irish

From this, you would need (e.g.) 3,000 Yorkists to fully justify a 24-man Irish unit; or 266 Lancastrians to accommodate a Northern Spear unit. This does not mean “thou shalt not have these units”- just that you might think about limiting them unless other circumstances pertain (e.g., you are representing Blore Heath or Stoke Field). As example, I am building three Lancastrian Northern Spear units, no Welsh or Irish, and one Yorkist Continental Mercenary. Is that justified? Somewhat. Do I care? Not really. But I know I am probably not wildly off, given the sub-period and geographic location I am hoping to recreate.

## Final thought

After all the ramblings above, here is the generic set of percentages I have come with, after ALL the reading, number crunching, smoothing, teeth grinding and tears.

Lancaster. 6% mounted. 45% retinue. 30% array. 15% other. 4% artillerymen.

York: 6% mounted. 66% retinue. 18% array. 6% other. 4% artillerymen.

## Final, final thought

If you find this useful, you’re welcome. If you disagree, fine. Come up with your own

*Phil Jones, Pennsylvania, 2021*