

= Henry Percy , 2nd Earl of Northumberland =

Henry Percy , 2nd Earl of Northumberland (3 February 1393 ? 22 May 1455) was an English nobleman and military commander in the lead up to the Wars of the Roses . He was the son of Henry " Hotspur " Percy , and the grandson of Henry Percy , 1st Earl of Northumberland . His father and grandfather were killed in different rebellions against Henry IV in 1403 and 1408 respectively , and the young Henry spent his minority in exile in Scotland . Only after the death of Henry IV in 1413 was he reconciled with the Crown , and in 1416 he was created Earl of Northumberland .

In the following years , Northumberland occasionally served with the king in France , but his main occupation was the protection of the border to Scotland . At the same time , a feud with the Neville family was developing , particularly with Richard Neville , Earl of Salisbury . This feud became entangled with the conflict between the Duke of York and the Duke of Somerset over control of national government . The conflict culminated in the first battle of the Wars of the Roses , at St Albans , where both Somerset and Northumberland were killed .

= = Family @-@ background = =

Henry Percy was the son of another Henry Percy , known as " Hotspur " , and Elizabeth Mortimer . Elizabeth was the daughter of Edmund Mortimer , Earl of March and Philippa , granddaughter of Edward III . Hotspur 's father ? the young Henry 's grandfather ? was also called Henry Percy , and in 1377 became the first of the Percy family to hold the title of Earl of Northumberland . Both Hotspur and his father were early and active supporters of Henry Bolingbroke , who usurped the throne from Richard II in 1399 , and became King Henry IV . They were initially richly rewarded , but soon grew disillusioned with the new regime . Hotspur rose up in rebellion , and was killed at Shrewsbury on 21 July 1403 .

Earl Henry was not present at the battle , but there is little doubt that he participated in the rebellion . After a short imprisonment , he was pardoned , and in June 1404 he delivered his grandson into the king 's custody at Doncaster . By May 1405 , however , the earl was involved in another rebellion . His plans failed , and he was forced to flee to Scotland , taking his grandson with him . The following years were marked by an itinerant life and further plotting , while the young Henry remained in the custody of the Duke of Albany . On 19 February 1408 , the first earl of Northumberland was killed in the Battle of Bramham Moor , leaving the young Henry Percy as heir apparent to the earldom . Henry remained in Scotland until the accession of Henry V in 1413 , when he tried to claim his grandfather 's title . His cause was aided by the king 's aunt , Joan Beaufort , Countess of Westmorland , who arranged his marriage to her daughter Eleanor . It was in Henry V 's interest to reconcile with the Percys , with their vast network in the north of England ; in 1416 Henry Percy was created Earl of Northumberland .

= = Service to the king = =

Northumberland served occasionally in Henry V 's wars in France over the following years . He joined the king on an expedition to the Continent in 1416 , and sent a minor contingent of soldiers the next year . His main task , however , was the defence of the Scottish Borders , and on 16 December 1416 he was appointed Warden of the East March . In late August 1417 , the Scots invaded northern England ; while Albany laid siege to Berwick Castle , the Earl of Douglas attempted to take Roxburgh Castle . Percy lifted the siege of Berwick , and forced both Albany and Douglas across the border . At the same time , he was also involved in national political affairs , and acted as steward at the coronation of Henry 's queen Catherine on 24 February 1421 .

When Henry V died in 1422 , Northumberland was appointed member of the council appointed to govern during the minority of Henry VI . He might have been involved in an embassy to the Council of Siena in 1423 , but still his main area of responsibility lay in the border region . In the council , he seems to have belonged to the circle around Bishop Henry Beaufort , and he followed Beaufort ? now cardinal ? to peace negotiations at Berwick in 1429 . As Warden of the East March , he was

constantly occupied with peace negotiations and defence of northern England , but his efforts were constantly frustrated , and in 1434 he resigned his commission . The next year , Richard Neville , Earl of Salisbury , equally exasperated by the lack of royal support , gave up his commission as Warden of the West March . Northumberland was appointed joint warden with the earl of Huntingdon of both marches for one year , during which time , although suffering defeat by the Earl of Angus at the Battle of Piperdean , he was able to repel a siege on Roxburgh by James I of Scotland . In 1440 he was once more appointed Warden of the West March , and this time held the position until his death .

= = Feud with Neville family = =

Initially , Northumberland 's relations with the other great northern family , the Nevilles , were friendly . He was already connected to the Neville Earls of Westmorland through his marriage with Eleanor Neville , and in 1426 he married his sister Elizabeth to the young Ralph Neville , 2nd Earl of Westmorland . In the early 1440s , Northumberland was involved in other disputes . A conflict over land with the Archbishop of York escalated into open violence . The king intervened on the archbishop 's side , though Northumberland remained in favour at court . Nevertheless , he spent less time involved in central affairs at Westminster in the later 1440s .

In the early 1450s , the relationship between the Percy family and Salisbury ? who belonged to a cadet branch of the Westmorland Neville family ? started to deteriorate . What triggered the conflict was the marriage between Salisbury 's son Thomas and Maud Stanhope , niece and heiress of Lord Cromwell . By this marriage Wressle Castle , which had traditionally been in the possession of the Percy family , would pass to the Nevilles . At the same time , the Neville @-@ Cromwell wedding had led Huntingdon (now Duke of Exeter) to join the cause of the Percys , because of a territorial dispute with Cromwell . Northumberland himself , who was nearing sixty , did not take action at the time , but one of his younger sons did . Thomas Percy had been created Baron Egremont in 1449 , relating to his possessions in the Neville @-@ dominated county of Cumberland . On 24 August 1453 , Thomas attacked the Neville @-@ Cromwell wedding party at Heworth near York with a force of over 700 men . No one was killed in the skirmish , and the wedding party escaped intact .

The conflict , however , continued over the following years . On 8 October , Northumberland and Salisbury were summoned to court and ordered to end the conflict , but the warnings were ignored . Instead , the collective forces of the Percy and Neville families gathered at their Yorkshire strongholds of Topcliffe and Sand Hutton respectively , only a few miles apart . Both sides had ignored royal commands to disband , and battle seemed inevitable , but eventually a truce ensued and the forces withdrew . Then , in October 1454 , Thomas Percy and his brother Richard were captured by the Nevilles in a battle at Stamford Bridge . The conflict was escalating , and converging with events in national politics .

= = Towards civil war = =

Discontent was brewing in England against the personal rule of Henry VI , who had been declared of age in 1437 . The main antagonists were Richard , Duke of York , and Edmund Beaufort , Duke of Somerset . Somerset enjoyed great influence over the king , but after Henry had been incapacitated by mental illness in 1453 , York was appointed protector in 1454 . The Nevilles were by this time closely associated with York , so the natural option for Northumberland was to side with Somerset and the king . Attempts were made to reconcile Northumberland and Salisbury in the north , but little was accomplished . In December , the king rallied sufficiently to resume control of government , and York 's protectorate was terminated . With Somerset back at the centre of power , civil war seemed imminent .

In May 1455 , Northumberland was travelling with the king and Somerset to a great council at Leicester , when the party was intercepted by York and the Nevilles . On 22 May 1455 , at the First Battle of St Albans , the royal forces clashed with the forces loyal to the Duke of York , in what has been described as the first battle of the Wars of the Roses . The battle was a complete victory for

the Yorkist side , and led to another reversal of the political situation . The king was taken captive , and Somerset was killed . Northumberland was also among the casualties , and was buried at the nearby St Albans Abbey . A suggestion made by a contemporary chronicler , and supported by modern @-@ day historians , said that the true purpose of the battle was to settle personal scores . Once York and Salisbury had killed Somerset and Northumberland respectively , the battle was effectively over .

= = Estates and family = =

The Percy estates were primarily located in the northern counties of Yorkshire , Northumberland , and Cumberland . Even though the title was restored in 1416 , and the Percy estates were officially regranted , this did not mean the immediate return of all the family possessions . Protracted legal battles followed , particularly with John , Duke of Bedford . Even at the time of his death , Northumberland had not recovered all the estates once held by his grandfather .

Northumberland 's marriage to Eleanor Neville produced at least ten children . Henry Percy was succeeded by his son Henry Percy , 3rd Earl of Northumberland , who himself died fighting in the Wars of the Roses , at the Battle of Towton on 29 March 1461 .

= = Ancestry = =