

# BATTLE REPORT CRECY 1346



# Crecy 1346: Battle Report



Crecy was by medieval standards a very large battle which probably had a somewhere in the region of 50 000 combatants; however the number of French actually engaged in combat still remains an area of contention. The battlefield today remains very much unchanged from medieval times. The Crecy forest opens onto open farmland, which after a relatively short distance slopes upward towards what would have been the carefully prepared English defensive line. The English army which numbered between 10 and 14 thousand had all day to prepare for the French attack and so wooden stakes and pits would have awaited the French in front of the English line. The French army marched northwards along the road from Abbeville. The leading elements which would have composed of many nobles and their retinue would have emerged from Crecy forest to be confronted by the English defensive position. Although the French army is estimated to have been about 40,000 strong (some estimates are as high as 60,000), because this great host was strung out on the road from Abbeville it is difficult to say how many French arrived in time to fight. The French arrived in the evening, and therefore would have had little time to organise their forces in order to undertake any form of co-ordinated attack. The command and control in the French army must have been at best poor, and at worst non-existent, and as we say, the rest is history!





This game was set up as four player re-fight using the Hordes and Heroes medieval hex based rules. We created in effect a 'mini Crecy' which could be expanded in the future into a much more comprehensive scenario with commands for 8 or more players. The French outnumbered the English by 2.5 to 1, but with a command and control range of only one hex their movement and ability to control elements were severely restricted. And so to battle!



With Trevor and Andy as the French commanders looking on, Chris and Lee deployed the English army behind a hedge of stakes along the slope. Lee was in command of the English right and therefore became The Prince of Wales, and Chris the left wing and assumed the role of the Earl of Northampton. They chose to deploy most of their forces consisting mostly of longbowmen and a lesser number of men at arms and welsh spearmen in an unbroken line along the slope. King Edward III was positioned a short distance behind the centre with a small retinue. All the English were of good quality and were to fight dismounted.

Trevor and Andy then deployed the French army which was of very mixed quality but with plenty of excellent mounted men at arms and nobles. At this point I feel that it would be fair to say that Lee and Chris were looking a trifle worried by the sheer volume of troops that had suddenly emerged in front of them! However, their greater command and control range of three hexes enabled them to quickly make adjustments in response to the French deployment.

Trev and Andy, presumably having agreed a grand strategy before hand, sent forward as many missile troops as they could gather toward the English line. These were mostly crossbows but there was a fair sprinkling of inferior militia bowmen as well. Within a couple of game turns these troops were severely out-shot and generally mangled by the English longbows, which sent them fleeing back into there own troops causing much disruption and confusion. With the poor command and control of the French it took a couple of game turns before the next wave of troops was ready to assault the English line. This time it was the turn of vast numbers men at arms on foot and a mass of mounted sergeants thrown against the English right flank by Trev. Again the concentrated fire from the longbows broke up the attack with devastating effect. The English line stood firm and the fleeing French caused even more chaos throughout. Also the French casualty trays were filling up rapidly while the English losses remained relatively light.



Another period of calm followed as Trev and Andy scratched their heads to find away of opening the can without a can opener! In the meantime Lee and Chris started shuffling troops away from the centre to the extreme flanks where the French attacks had been most intensive and come close to breaking the line.

The next assault saw Trevor's mounted sergeants getting cut to pieces by the now massed longbows occupying the highest point on the extreme right of the English line. He also through his heavy cavalry against the centre which were bounced back with heavy losses. At the same time Andy attacked with all the armoured infantry he could muster on the other flank only to be butchered, but he did inflict enough casualties for Chris to move more troops from the centre to bolster the flank.

It was at this point with the French troops fleeing from the latest carnage that Trev announced an adjournment for lunch and he and Andy headed for the local burger joint in search of 'nutrition'. They'd be lucky!



When battle resumed once more in the afternoon, Lee and Chris sat confidently behind their unbroken line of longbows with a confidence born out of three hours of demolishing everything that the French had thrown at them. In contrast Trev and Andy, with almost a third of their force in the casualty trays, re-organised their battered army for another attack along the entire English line. In one respect this was easier for them now in that they didn't have as many troops to get in each others way!

The attack went in and at first everything went to plan – the English plan that is! On the extreme right one unit of longbowmen destroyed the mounted sergeants in front of them, and then advanced into the French to inflict more humiliation. Things weren't going much better for the French on the other flank, but in the centre the last of the heavy cavalry were launched once more into a do or die charge. This time they made contact with the longbowmen which for once failed to hit their targets with a round of abysmal shooting. The French horsemen broke through after massacring their opponents and found themselves facing King Edward III accompanied by only one unit of retinue. The rest of his retinue had been moved to support the flanks; in fact the only weak point in the English line was directly in front of the King. So Edward III was quickly surrounded and captured turning Crecy into a FRENCH VICTORY. In fact a fine example of the English grabbing defeat from the jaws of victory!



Edward III is captured and humiliated by the French!

*Paul K.*