#

# The War of the Roses.


#### The Prehistory

It was in this year [1411], that Richard Plantagenet was born to Richard, fifth Earl of Cambridge and Anne Mortimer. His father was the son of Edmund, the first Duke of York, who was in turn the fourth son of Edward III. If Henry VI had died before 1453, the year of the birth of Edward, Prince of Wales, then Richard would have undoubtedly been crowned King of England, since there was no other noble (since the death of Henry VI's uncle and heir Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, who had died in 1447) with such a strong claim to the throne at that time, other than Richard himself.

Being so highly placed in the royal household, Richard was destined to play a significant role in the Government and politics of England throughout his lifetime and in England's affairs in France during the later stages of the Hundred Years War. He was appointed Lieutenant of France in 1436. Throughout his service in Europe, he had to pay for the services of his men and finance the army in France from his own personal funds.

Although York was a wealthy man in his own right, (York was the sole benefactor of the childless Edmund Mortimer, who had died of plague in Ireland in 1425). It was his marriage to Cicely Neville in 1438 (who was known as 'The Rose of Raby'), daughter to Ralph Neville, Earl of Westmoreland and sister of Richard Neville, Earl of Salisbury, which had brought him great wealth. Thus, he was able, albiet unhappily in doing so, to fund the English army overseas. By the time he left France, York had forwarded some £38,000 of his own money to maintain English interests in France. To add insult to injury, in 1445 he was replaced as Lieutenant of France by Edmund Beaufort, Duke of Somerset. It is not to be doubted that it was on Somerset's advice (who was Henry VI cousin, and someone Henry trusted more than the Duke of York) that Henry VI created York Lieutenant of Ireland, which was in reality, exile by office. Somerset was no doubt fearful of York, a fear enhanced by the fact that Somerset, a man whom York equally detested, and a favourite of Henry VI was forwarded funds to the sum of £25,000 to sustain the king's army in France.

Not only did York detest Somerset because of his favouritism with the king, but he also detested the fact that he had been given the office he had previously held in France and the funds to support it, despite his inability as a soldier. York's fears over the management of the campaign in France was soon realised, as the war began to go badly for the English. The Duke of Somerset was personally responsible for the surrender of the strategic town of Rouen which subsequently led to the fall of Normandy to Charles VII of France. Because of this, Somerset became distinctly unpopular at home. However, because he retained the king's favour, he maintained his prestigious position at court. In June 1451, Bordeaux in France, and Gascony, were lost to the French. This was disastrous news for the English and the King, Henry VI, took the loss very badly. York in turn, was quick to blame Somerset for the disaster and, with support for the king and his adherents at such a low point (due mainly to English failings in France), York, decided to risk all and attempt to wrest control from the king by force of arms and arrest the Duke of Somerset, thus removing him from his position as the king's most senior advisor.

Doubtless this move was not only inspired by York's fear for the conduct of the war in France, but also because he was equally fearful that Somerset might take over the very position that York felt was his own, that of the most likely heir to Henry in the absence of the king having any children of his own. Thus York, believing that he had more popular support than he actually had, sailed from Ireland and landed in North Wales, gathered his forces and travelled straight for London and the encounter at Blackheath.

**The Wars of the Roses Begin**

After York's release from custody, there then followed several years of relative peace. However, by the year 1453, the political storm clouds were once again gathering over the country. By this year, England's possessions in France had been almost lost as the disastrous Hundred Years War had all but come to an end . It was this - it is said - that brought about the first bout of madness in Henry VI. What form this illness took is not recorded, but it seems that it manifested itself in a form of paralysis. York, with the king incapacitated, was made protector of England and took the opportunity to seek revenge on his earlier enemies, namely the Duke of Somerset, who was sent to the Tower on a revised charge of treason (for his poor management of the war in France) in September 1453. The Earl of Salisbury, Richard Neville and his eldest son Richard, Earl of Warwick, also took the opportunity afforded by the king's illness and, under the cover of their kinsman's protectorate began to seek their revenge against the Percy family, the Earls of Northumberland, with whom, they had held a long running feud, over the issue of ownership of property in Northumberland and Yorkshire .

Thus, England was plunged into a series of minor wars between the land's most powerful lords to which the Duke of York, as protector was able to use his authority to the advantage of his family and supporters. However, this all came to an end when the king recovered from his illness in January 1455. Somerset was released from the Tower, and immediately formed a natural alliance with Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland (and Percy's ally in the north Lord Clifford), against the Duke of York - who was stripped of his powers as protector - and his supporters, namely the Earl of Salisbury and the Earl of Warwick. With this the battle lines for the 'Wars of the Roses' were drawn. The pact between Somerset, Northumberland and Clifford, supported by the king would in later years go by the name of Lancastrians, taken from the family name of the House of Lancaster to which the lineage of Henry VI was derived. While the followers of the House of York, Warwick, Salisbury and the Duke of York himself became known as the Yorkists.

**1455-1464**

First St. Albans, Northampton, Wakefield, Mortimer's Cross, Second St. Albans, Towton and Hexham.

In May 1455 the queen and Somerset summoned a Council, to which no prominent Yorkist was invited, and ordered a gathering of the peers at Leicester to take steps for the king's safety. York marched south to secure a fair hearing from the king, while the court moved towards Leicester, escorted by a large number of nobles and their retainers. The king and Somerset did not learn of York's actions until they were en route to Leicester. They tried to assemble an army, but there was insufficient time; at nightfall on 21 May, when the two sides camped only 20 miles apart, the king's 'army' still consisted of just his escort and their retainers.

Both sides decided to advance against their adversary during the night, and these marches became a race for the chief town of the area, St. Albans. The king's army arrived there at 7am, and York halted at Key Fields, east of the town, at about the same time. There followed a pause of three hours while reconciliation was attempted, York offering to withdraw if the king would surrender Somerset, whom York considered a traitor. The king (i.e. Somerset!) refused, and York ordered the attack(see map).

Warwick was to lay down a barrage of arrows in support of flank attacks by York and Salisbury. However, these attacks were repulsed and Warwick therefore ordered his archers to concentrate on their own front. He then attacked the center, broke through to the Chequers, and here established a rallying point. Falling back to prevent their divided forces from being outflanked by Warwick, the Lancastrians weakened their defense of the Sopwell and Shropshire Lanes, and the forces of York and Salisbury almost immediately burst into the town. The Lancastrians began to falter, panicked, and broke, to be pursued up St. Peter's Street by the triumphant Yorkists.

Somerset and some retainers took cover in the Castle Inn while Lord Clifford, with Percy, Harington and some other knights and esquires, fought on outside the inn. When those outside were slain, Somerset led his men in one last charge. He killed four men before being felled by an axe. The king, the Duke of Buckingham, and the Earls of Devon and Dorset were captured; Clifford, Somerset, Stafford, Percy and Harington were amongst those killed.

York was appointed Protector in October and Warwick became Captain of Calais, the city which possessed the only standing army of the king. For the next three years there was an uneasy peace. York lost the protectorship at the beginning of 1456 and returned to Ireland. Margaret gained control of court and government, but Warwick refused to surrender Calais to her, and this city thus became a refuge for the Yorkists, from which an attack might be launched at any time.

In the late summer of 1459 both sides began arming again, and in October York's forces were defeated at Ludford – mainly due to the treachery of Andrew Trollope, captain of a body of professional soldiers sent over from Calais by Warwick. York was forced to flee to Ireland again and his troops dispersed.

In June 1460 Warwick landed at Sandwich with 2,000 men of the Calais garrison, accompanied by the Earl of Salisbury and York's son Edward, Earl of March. The king and queen were at Coventry when they received news of the landing. Hastily gathering an army from his chief supporters – the Percies, Staffords, Beauforts, Talbots and Beaumonts – the king began to march south. However, in the meantime the men of south-east England had flocked to the standard of the popular Warwick, and on 2 July he entered London with 5,000 men. Only the Tower, commanded by Lord Scales, held out for the king and, hearing that London had gone over to the Yorkists, the king halted at Northampton and took up a defensive position to await reinforcements.

Pausing only to establish a siege force round the Tower, Warwick led his army northwards, arriving between Towcester and Northampton on the 9th. Early the next morning - 10 July 1460 – he deployed for battle, but first attempted to negotiate a settlement. At 2pm, no agreement having proved possible, Warwick gave the order to advance, with the three 'battles' in 'line astern'.

It was raining hard as the Yorkists arrived and Edward's 'battle', consisting entirely of men-at-arms, made slow progress over the sodden ground. As they came within bow range they were met by a fierce barrage of arrows and this, together with a ditch and stakes, prevented the Yorkists from getting to close quarters. At this critical moment Lord Grey suddenly displayed Warwick's ragged staff badge and ordered his men to lay down their weapons. Indeed, the men of Grey's command actually assisted their enemies over the defenses and, once established within the defenses in sufficient numbers, Edward and Warwick led their men-at-arms behind the king's archers in the center to strike Buckingham in flank and rear. Unable to maneuver within the narrow confines of the defenses, the Lancastrians soon broke and fled, many being drowned in the shallow but wide river at their backs. The Duke of Buckingham, Earl of Shrewbury, Thomas Percy, Lord Beaumont and Lord Egremont were among the Lancastrian dead. The king was captured again, taken to London, and compelled to sanction a Yorkist government.

York arrived from Ireland in mid-September and in October put forward a claim to the throne. The peers rejected his claim (while Henry lived) but made him Protector in view of the king's periods of insanity.

The queen and her son, who had remained at Coventry, fled to north Wales, then to the North, where she began to gather a new army. With these forces she overran Yorkshire, and a large number of Lancastrian supporters from the West Country began to march across the Midlands to join her. York sent his son Edward, Earl of March, to the Welsh borders to recruit an army and to handle the minor local troubles stirred up by the Earl of Pembroke. He left Warwick in London to ensure the capital's support and guard the king; and on 9 December he led the Yorkist army northwards to deal with the queen. He took with him his younger son Edmund and all the artillery then available at the Tower of London.

On the 16th York's 'vaward battle' clashed with the West Countrymen, suffered heavy losses, and was unable to prevent the Lancastrians from moving on to join the queen. Learning that Margaret's main force was at Pontefract Castle, York marched to his castle at Sandal, two miles south of Wakefield and only nine from Pontefract. He arrived at Sandal Castle on the 21st and, learning that the queen's army was now almost four times as numerous as his own, remained in the castle to await reinforcements under Edward. The Lancastrian forces closed round the castle to prevent foraging.

On 30 December 1460 half the Lancastrian army advanced against Sandal Castle as if to make an assault, but under cover of this movement the 'vaward battle', commanded by the Earl of Wiltshire, and the cavalry under Lord Roos, unobtrusively took up positions in the woods flanking the open fields.

York, believing the entire Lancastrian army to be before him, and much smaller than he had been told, deployed for open battle, and led his troops straight down the slope from the castle to launch an attack on Somerset's line. The Lancastrians fell back before the advance, drawing the Yorkists into the trap, finally halting to receive the charge.

The Yorkist charge almost shattered Somerset's line and the Lancastrian reserve under Clifford had to be committed to stem the advance. But then Wiltshire and Roos charged from the flanks, and the battle was over. York, his son Edmund, his two uncles Sir John and Sir Hugh Mortimer, Sir Thomas Neville (son of Salisbury), Harington, Bourchier and Hastings were among those killed. The Earl of Salisbury was captured, and subsequently beheaded by the Percies because of their feud with the Nevilles.

The death of Richard of York was a severe blow to the Yorkists; but Warwick in London and Edward, now Duke of York, in the Welsh Marches, were both raising new armies. In the Welsh Marches, in particular, men flocked to Edward's banner to avenge Richard and their own lords who had died with him, and by the end of January 1461 Edward had a fair-sized army gathered round Hereford.

From here he set out to unite with Warwick, probably at Warwick Castle, in order to halt the queen's march on the capital. However, shortly after starting out he learned that the Earls of Pembroke and Wiltshire were moving towards Worcester from the west with a large force and, in order to avoid being caught between two Lancastrian armies, Edward moved northwards 17 miles to Mortimer's Cross, not far from Ludlow and only three and a half miles from his own castle at Wigmore, ancestral home of the Mortimers. Here the River Lugg, flowing south to join the Wye, was bridged for the main road from central Wales and the Roman road from Hereford, the two roads meeting close by the bridge. Edward deployed his army at this important crossroads and river crossing early on the morning of 2 February 1461.

The Lancastrians deployed for battle on the morning of the 2nd and advanced against the Yorkist line about noon. After a fierce struggle the Earl of Wiltshire and Ormond succeeded in forcing Edward's right flank back across the road (see map), but at the same time Pembroke's 'main battle' was completely defeated by Edward. Ormond's 'battle' reformed and moved on to the center to support Pembroke but, finding him already defeated, for some inexplicable reason halted and sat down to await the outcome of the fighting on the other flank.

Owen Tudor's 'battle' was the last to become engaged, having swung right in an attempt to outflank the Yorkist position. In carrying out this maneuver the Lancastrians exposed their own left flank, and the waiting Yorkists promptly seized the opportunity to charge, cutting the Lancastrians in two and scattering them in all directions. A general retreat by the Lancastrians in the direction of Leominstcr followed, quickly transformed into a bloody rout by the Yorkists. Owen Tudor was captured and later executed.

After the battle of Wakefield the queen's army of borderers, Scots, Welsh and mercenaries had begun to march on London, pillaging as it went and leaving a 30-mile-wide swathe of ruin in its wake: Margaret, whose aim was now to rescue the king, was unable to pay her army and had promised them the whole of southern England to plunder in compensation. London was panic-stricken, and Warwick found himself faced with the problem of being unable to raise enough men either to stop the Lancastrian advance or to defend the city. Edward's victory at Mortimer's Cross solved this problem, for men flocked to Warwick's banner when news of the battle reached London on about 10 February; and on the 12th Warwick was able to leave London with a force large enough to attempt to halt the queen, sending word to Edward to join forces as soon as possible.

Warwick marched to St. Albans and began to prepare a defensive position there with a three-mile front barring the two roads to London which passed through Luton and Hitchin. Detachments were also placed in St. Albans and Sandridge to watch the flanks, and in Dunstable to guard the Watling Street approach to St. Albans.

The queen left York on 20 January, marching down Ermine Street towards London. At Royston she swung left and moved south-west as if to prevent a junction between Edward and Warwick. On 14 or 15 February the queen received details of Warwick's deployment from Lovelace, who had commanded the Yorkist artillery at Wakefield but who had been spared by the Lancastrians. Margaret allowed the borderers to continue ravaging the countryside due south from Hitchin to divert Warwick's attention, and took the rest other army on a hard march south and west past Luton to Dunstable, intending to follow this with another march against St. Albans from the west, so turning Warwick's defensive line.

The queen's army arrived at Dunstable late on the 16th, took the Yorkists detachment there by surprise, and killed or captured every man. After a brief halt the Lancastrians set out on a 12-mile night march to St. Albans, arriving on the south bank of the River Ver before dawn. After a short pause to rest and organize an attack, at about 6am on 17 February 1461 the 'vaward battle' crossed the river and entered the town. The Yorkists were again taken by surprise but, as the Lancastrians rushed up George Street towards the heart of the town, they were halted by a strong detachment of archers left in St. Albans by Warwick, and eventually were driven back to St Michael's church.

Shortly afterwards scouts reported an unguarded entrance through the defenses via Folly and Catherine Lanes, and at about loam the town fell to the Lancastrians. The king was found in a house in the town.

Warwick's defense line had been rendered useless and he was now faced with the task of re-aligning his army in the presence of the enemy. His 'rearward battle', stationed by Beech Bottom Ditch, was wheeled to face south, and Warwick then rode off to bring up the 'main' and 'vaward battles'.

The Lancastrian army now attacked the Yorkist 'rearward battle' which, after a long and brave struggle, finally broke and fled towards the rest of the army. Warwick was already on his way to reinforce them with the 'main battle', but this now broke up as the fugitives streamed past, joining in the general flight. Warwick rode off to bring up his 'vaward battle', but on reaching it he found that Lovelace's detachment had deserted to the enemy and the remainder was badly shaken. Somehow Warwick managed to form a new line and held off further Lancastrian attacks until dark, when he managed to extricate about 4,000 of his men and march westwards to join Edward.

Margaret waited nine days at St. Albans while negotiating the surrender of London, only 20 miles away. London, panic-stricken by the behavior of the queen's army, which looted St. Albans after the battle, refused to open its gates to the queen and her king. The borderers began to desert in droves; and with Edward and Warwick united and advancing rapidly from the west, Margaret finally abandoned her attempt on the capital and withdrew to York with the king. Twelve days after second St. Albans the united forces of Edward and Warwick entered London: on 4 March Edward was proclaimed king by the Yorkist peers and by the merchants and commons of London.

Edward set off in pursuit of Margaret and Henry on 19 March, but his advance guard was defeated by a Lancastrian delaying force at Ferrybridge on the River Aire on the 27th. At dawn on the 28th the Yorkists forced their way over the bridge and all that day fought to push back the Lancastrian rearguard towards Towton, reaching the village of Saxton by nightfall. The next morning the queen's army, commanded by Somerset, was seen drawn up less than a mile away (see map).

At 9am on 29 March 1461, with heavy snow falling, the two armies advanced towards each other. When they were about 300 yards apart the Yorkists halted to discharge one volley of heavy armour-piercing arrows which, aided by a following wind, hit the Lancastrian line and caused some casualties. The Yorkist archers then fell back a short distance. The Lancastrians responded with several volleys, using the lighter flight arrows not normally used at all except short range. Impeded by the wind, these arrows fell short by some 50 yards, but the Lancastrians continued to discharge their arrows until their quivers were empty. The Yorkist archers then advanced again and poured a barrage of arrows into the Lancastrian ranks. Unable to respond, the Lancastrians moved forward to contact as quickly as possible.

The battle raged all day, but at about 3pm Lord Dacres, one of the senior Lancastrian commanders, was killed, and at the same time the Duke of Norfolk's force of several thousand men arrived to reinforce the Yorkist right flank. The Lancastrians began to ease off, the slackening of pressure increased to a withdrawal, and suddenly their whole line collapsed. About 12,000 Yorkists were killed or died of wounds and exposure, while some 20,000 Lancastrians were killed, making Towton the bloodiest battle ever fought on English soil. It was also the most decisive battle of the wars, in the very heart of Lancastrian country, and firmly established Edward IV on the throne. The queen, Henry, and their son Prince Edward fled to Scotland.

The first years of Edward's reign were pro-occupied with stamping out all remaining Lancastrian opposition. Pembroke and Exeter remained at large in Wales, but the Earl of Oxford was executed in 1462 for an attempted landing on the cast coast. The bulk of the surviving Lancastrians retired to the Scots border with Margaret and Henry, seeking support from Scotland and holding the powerful border castles.

In April 1464 a Yorkist force under Lord Montagu, Warwick's younger brother and Edward's lieutenant in the north, clashed with a Lancastrian force under the Duke of Somerset at Hedgeley Moor. The two Lancastrian wings, commanded by Lords Hungerford and Roos, promptly fled, but the men under Sir Ralph Percy stood fast and were annihilated. Montagu was unable to pursue, as he was escorting a Scottish delegation to York to discuss a peace. Somerset led his forces to Hexham and made camp two miles south of that town. As soon as Montagu had carried out his mission, he moved southwards to confront the Lancastrians again.

Early on the morning of 15 May 1464 Montagu attacked the Lancastrian camp, smashing through Somerset's center with a rapid downhill charge. Once again the two wings broke and fled. Somerset was captured and executed, along with Hungerford and Roos, among others. These executions almost completed the extinction of the old Lancastrian faction, and virtually ended Lancastrian resistance; and even the queen gave up, and fled to Anjou.

**1469-1471**

## Barnet and Tewkesbury.

The great northern strongholds of the Lancastrians – Ainwick, Norham, Bamburgh and Dunstanburgh fell soon after the battle of Hexham, and within a year Henry VI, who had been hiding in a monastery, was betrayed and placed in the Tower. Apart from Harlech Castle and Berwick-on-Tweed, Edward was now truly king of all England.

In November 1464 Edward secretly married Elizabeth Woodville, without the consent and against the wishes of Warwick (who was engaged at the time in trying to arrange a French marriage for the king). Warwick, trying to assume dictatorial powers over the new king, fell from favor, and Elizabeth's numerous relatives rose swiftly in rank and office as Edward formed his own Yorkist party: his father-in-law became Earl Rivers, his brother-in-law Lord Scales, Elizabeth's son by her first marriage became Earl of Dorset, while old supporters were also advanced – William Herbert was made Earl of Pembroke, Humphrey Stafford Earl of Devon, and the Percies were recruited in alignment against the Nevilles by restoring to them the earldom of Northumberland. In 1467 Edward openly broke with Warwick by repudiating a treaty with France and an alliance with Burgundy which Warwick had just negotiated. Enraged and humiliated, Warwick enlisted the aid of Edward's brother, George of Clarence, and from the security of Calais declared against Edward because of his oppressions.

At about this time Warwick engineered a Neville rising in the north, which began with the so-called rebellion of Robin of Redesdale. When the rising was well under way Warwick landed in Kent with a force from Calais but, before he could reach the scene of operations, the royal army was defeated at Edgecotc in Northamptonshire (6 July 1469). Edward was captured and handed over to Warwick, who executed many of Edward's leading supporters, including Queen Elizabeth's father, her brother John, and the newly created Earls of Pembroke and Devon.

Edward was confined for some weeks in Middleham Castle, but was released when he agreed to accept new ministers nominated by Warwick. But at the first opportunity Edward took his revenge. In March 1470 a Lancastrian uprising occurred in Lincolnshire. Edward gathered a force to suppress the rising, carefully calling to his standard all those peers with grudges against Warwick or who were not tied to him by family alliances. Edward defeated the rebels at the battle of Lose-Coat Field and the rebels' leader, Sir Robert Welles, confessed the rising was part of a plot by Warwick to make Clarence king. Unable to oppose Edward's army, Warwick and Clarence fled to France, where they allied themselves with Margaret and the Lancastrian cause.

In September Warwick arranged a rising in Yorkshire and, as soon as Edward moved north, landed with Clarence and a small force at Dartmouth. Devon rose to support them, Kent followed suit, and London opened its gates.

Edward, returning south in a hurry, found himself caught between Warwick's growing army in the south and the rising in the north. His army began to melt away, and Edward was forced to take ship at Lynn and flee to the Netherlands.

Henry VI was released and restored to the throne, but Margaret did not trust her old enemy Warwick, and refused to leave France: Prince Edward remained with her.

Meanwhile, Clarence began to seek reconciliation with Edward; and on 15 March 1471, with a body of some 1,500 German and Flemish mercenaries lent to him by the Duke of Burgundy, Edward landed at Ravenspur in the Humber estuary. Marching swiftly southwards, Edward evaded an army under the Duke of Northumberland and reached Nottingham, where he learned that Warwick was gathering an army at Coventry. The Earl of Oxford was at Newark with another army, but Edward managed to slip between them, gathering adherents to his cause all the way to the capital. The most important of these was Clarence, who joined him with a force originally raised for the Lancastrian cause.

Edward reached London on 11 April, closely followed by the now united armies of Oxford, Northumberland and Warwick, and on 14 April 1471 was fought the battle of Barnet (see map).

The battle began at dawn in a heavy fog, with the right wing of each army overlapping the left wing of the other. Both the Yorkist and Lancastrian left wings were defeated. Consequently both armies swung to a new position, almost at right angles to their original lines, and in the fog the Lancastrian right under Oxford blundered into the rear of his own center, causing some casualties. Cries of treason rang out, and many of Oxford's men now quit the field, followed by some of those from Somerset's 'main battle'. At this moment Edward charged between Somerset and Warwick with about a 100 horsemen of his reserve. Warwick's men slowly gave way, eventually breaking and fleeing, and a general Lancastrian rout then ensued. Warwick, on foot, was cut down and killed. With him died his brother Montagu.

On the same day Queen Margaret and Prince Edward landed at Weymouth. Learning of the battle, the queen marched through the West Country, collecting men and heading for the Lancastrian strongholds in Wales. Edward, keeping his army intact, marched from London to prevent this new Lancastrian force from reaching Wales.

Gloucester, with its crucial first bridge over the Severn, closed its gates to the queen at Edward's request, and Margaret had no option but to bypass the city and move further up river to Tewkesbury. Here Edward caught up with her on 3 May after a series of forced marches.

The next day – 4 May 1471 – the outnumbered Lancastrians took up a strong position on a slope between two brooks (see map). The Yorkists deployed some 400 yards away, with their left flank under Richard of Gloucester apparently 'in the air'. Somerset took his personal command away to the right to attack Richard in the flank, giving Lord Wenlock orders to advance as soon as he saw Somerset attacking, thus pinning Richard in position. In the event Wenlock failed to advance;

Richard turned to face Somerset, who was now faced by the entire Yorkist left; and at the same time some 200 spearmen, placed on the extreme flank by Edward to guard against such a move, advanced to attack Somerset in the flank. Somerset's force gave ground, then broke and fled. Somerset escaped to confront Wenlock, and in a rage slew him with his battleaxe. The 'main battle' now began to give ground, and when Edward's center began a general advance the Lancastrian army broke and ran.

Most of the Lancastrian nobles were captured and slaughtered, among them Prince Edward and Edmund, Duke of Somerset, the last male Beaufort. Queen Margaret was captured and placed in the Tower, where she remained for five years until ransomed by her father. Henry VI was murdered in the Tower shortly after the battle.

Edward proclaimed his seven-month-old son Edward Prince of Wales and sent Hastings with a strong force to take possession of Calais. Richard of Gloucester was rewarded with Warwick's lands and offices, while Clarence received the lands of Courtenay in the West Country and the Lieutenancy of Ireland.

**1483-1487**

### Bosworth, Stoke, Blackheath and Exeter

Edward IV died in April 1483 when his son and heir, Edward V, was only twelve. Inevitably rival factions immediately emerged – the boy king and the court controlled by the queen mother and her relations, and Edward's favorites Lord Hastings and Thomas Lord Stanley, opposed by Richard, Duke of Gloucester, now the most powerful man in the kingdom, whom Edward IV had intended should be regent.

Richard acted swiftly. Moving south, he joined forces with Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, and seized Edward V en route to London in the care of Lord Rivers, the queen mother's brother. Her son, Dorset, at once fled the country, while the queen mother sought sanctuary in Westminster Abbey. Within a month of Edward IV's death, Richard was Protector of the Realm.

In June Hastings was suddenly arrested and executed. Two weeks later Richard informed Parliament that Edward's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville was invalid due to an earlier marriage, and therefore Edward V was a bastard – which left Richard the rightful successor. Richard became Richard III, Lord Rivers was executed, and Edward V and his younger brother Richard, Duke of York, were placed in the Tower.

That autumn there was a revolt in the West Country, led by Buckingham, apparently in conspiracy with the exiled Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond and now head of the House of Lancaster. (Henry could claim the throne, in right of his mother, Margaret Beaufort, as surviving male representative of the House of Lancaster, the Beauforts being descended from John of Gaunt.) Buckingham was supported by the Woodvillcs and Courtenays. Richard quickly and efficiently crushed the revolt, and Buckingham was executed. Henry Tudor withdrew to France, but in 1485, with about 3,000 French mercenaries, he landed in Pembrokeshire, where his uncle Jasper was earl. He marched quickly through Wales and the Marches, picking up considerable support on the way, and confronted Richard in battle for the throne at Bosworth in Leicestershire on 22 August 1485.

The two main forces drew up facing each other but both Henry Tudor and Richard III looked anxiously for support from the forces of the two brothers Stanley: those of Sir Willaim Stanley were visible to the north-west of the battlefield, and those of Lord Stanley to the southeast.

The battle commenced without the Stanleys, the opposing forces both making a bid for Ambien Hill. Richard's troops reached the ridge first, and his 'vaward battle' deployed on it in a defensive position. The 'main battle' followed, while the 'rearward battle' was ordered to take position on the left of this line as soon as possible, and to face due south.

Henry advanced to engage in an archery duel at long range, and Richard looked in vain for his 'rearward battle': the Earl of Northumberland had decided to avoid action until the Stanleys showed their hands.

As the archers began to run out of arrows, the two armies advanced to melee, and only now did the Stanleys move – to attack both flanks of Richard's line, while Northumberland remained immobile. Richard mounted, collected his bodyguard around him, and rode into the center of the enemy, intent on killing Henry Tudor or dying like a king. Unhorsed in the marsh, Richard was soon overwhelmed by superior numbers and killed. The battle ceased when his death became known, and his army melted away with little or no pursuit. Lord Stanley took the circlet indicating Richard's rank from the dead king's helmet and, placing it on Henry Tudor's head, proclaimed him King Henry VII.

In the early years of his reign Henry VII was in continual danger, and it is erroneous to regard Bosworth as the end of the Wars of the Roses. The first of the king's troubles was a rising in 1486 in the North Riding of Yorkshire, where Richard III had been very popular. It was led by Lord Lovel, Richard's chamberlain and admiral, but the rebels dispersed when Henry marched against them with a large force. Lovel fled to Flanders.

In May 1487 Lovel landed in Ireland with some 2,000 Swiss and 1,500 German mercenaries, supplied by Margaret of Burgundy and commanded by the Swiss captain Martin Schwarz, accompanied by John, Earl of Lincoln, and about 200 other exiled Yorkists. This revolt was in the name of Edward, Earl of Warwick, son of Clarence, but as he was a prisoner in the Tower a 'double' named Lambert Simnel played his part.

The invaders were welcomed by most of the Irish lords and 'Clarence' was crowned Edward VI at Dublin. Within a few weeks Lincoln had recruited some 4,000 – 5,000 Irish soldiers under Thomas Fitzgerald. These forces now sailed for England, landing in Lancashire. However, few Yorkists had joined the invaders by the time Henry VII brought them to battle at Stoke, near Newark, on 17 July 1487. Despite fierce resistance by the foreign mercenaries the rebels were routed, Lincoln and Fitzgerald killed, and Simnel captured. Lovel disappeared.

For the next four years Henry enjoyed a relatively peaceful reign, but then Yorkist conspiracies began once more to thicken. Ever since 1483 it had been rumored that one or both of Edward IV's sons had escaped from the Tower: Henry Tudor claimed they had been murdered by Richard HI, but no bodies had ever been found or displayed as proof of their death. One Perkin Warbeck, a citizen of Tournai, was chosen for his similarity of appearance to Edward IV, and declared to be Richard, Duke of York.

He gained some support in Ireland, and was recognized as York by Margaret of Burgundy and Maximilian of Austria. For two years Warbeck followed the Imperial court while his patrons intrigued with English malcontents; but in the winter of 1494-5 Henry's spies infiltrated the conspiracy and large numbers of the conspirators were arrested, including Lord Fitz Walter and Sir William Stanley. The latter was beheaded, as were several others, while the remainder were hanged or imprisoned.

Nevertheless, in July 1495 Warbeck sailed from Flanders with 2,000 exiles and German mercenaries. He attempted to land at Deal, but his vanguard was destroyed by Kentish levies and he drew off and made for Ireland. Henry had anticipated such a move, and had already sent to Ireland Sir Edward Poynings, who had suppressed the Irish supporters of Warbeck.

Warbeck landed at Munster, but only the Earl of Desmond came to his support. Unable to face Poynings' forces, Warbeck sailed to Scotland. With James IV he raided Northumberland in 1496, but a pretender backed by Scottish spears was not acceptable to the English borderers, and not one man rallied to the Yorkist banner.

However, discontent over the taxes imposed to pay for the war with Scotland did lead to rioting in the south-east counties, and in Cornwall open rebellion broke out. A rebel army marched on Eondon, sweeping over five counties unopposed and collecting recruits en route, and was only stopped by a hard fight at Blackheath.

Warbeck, hearing of the rising, landed in Devon in August. Gathering together 8,000 rebels, he marched on Exeter. The city closed its gates against him and, after an attempt to besiege the city, Warbeck had to march away to confront a royal army dispatched to relieve Exeter. When he reached Taunton Warbeck found his followers so dispirited that disaster was inevitable. He took sanctuary on the abbey of Beaulieu, and later confessed his fraud in exchange for his life. In 1498 Warbeck escaped from the Tower but was recaptured and thereafter confined in a dungeon. The next year he planned another escape, together with the unfortunate Edward of Clarence, but spies in the Tower betrayed this. Henry allowed the plot to proceed almost to completion, then had both Edward and Warbeck executed for planning rebellion.

The last real fighting of the Wars of the Roses had taken place at Blackheath and the siege of Exeter, but Clarence had been a true male heir of the House of Plantagenet and all the time he lived he was a threat to the House of Tudor. His death truly marked the end of the Wars of the Roses, and thereafter Henry VII’s reign was peaceful apart from a few minor and futile plots by the exiled Edmund, Earl of Suffolk, younger brother of John, Earl of Lincoln, and the last possible Yorkist claimant to the throne of England.

Appendix 1 Armies

In 1341 Edward III had revolutionized the structure of European armies by instituting in England a system of written indentured contracts between the Crown and prominent military leaders. Under this system the military leaders, or 'captains' and 'lieutenants', contracted with the king to provide an agreed number of men for military service, promising to bring them to a place of assembly by a certain date. The indenture set out precisely how long the men would have to serve, their rate of pay, obligations and privileges. The captains were responsible for paying these men, the king giving securities to repay the money at a later date.

These captains raised their companies by making a series of similar contracts with knights and man-at-arms, again stipulating the terms of service and the types of soldiers they would be expected to contribute. The captains usually sought these 'sub-contractors' amongst their friends, kinsmen, tenants and neighbors.

These companies, composed entirely of volunteers, created in effect a royal standing army; for the men were professional soldiers who, although raised, led and paid by their captains, regarded themselves firstly as English soldiers, owing allegiance to their king and fighting only his enemies.

Inevitably, many of the most powerful captains were of the nobility, for they had the position at court, the wealth, and the connections to raise large contingents. In order to be able to satisfy at once any request by the king for a company, such lords frequently maintained a permanent force, contracting their sub-contractors for life with annuities. These men often held offices (such as chamberlain or steward) in the magnate's household or on his estates, and probably provided in their turn the key contingents in his company.

This system was introduced to deal with the demand for expeditionary forces to invade France during the Hundred Years' War, and the need to maintain permanent royal garrisons in the castles and towns across the channel. But it had the effect of creating large forces commanded by the great barons, and during the course of the Hundred Years' War these magnates became virtually petty kings within their own domains: the great northern families of Percy and Neville, for example, fought each other in the Wars of the Roses as much for supremacy in the North as for who should control the government of all England.

The three greatest landowners of the second half of Henry VI's reign were the Earl of Warwick and the Dukes of Buckingham and York. Humphrey Stafford (died 1460), 1st Duke of Buckingham, had a personal retinue often knights and 27 esquires, many of whom were drawn from the Staffordshire gentry. These men were paid annuities to retain their loyalty (hence 'retainers'), the best-paid in Buckingham's retinue being Sir Edward Grey (died 1457) who was retained for life in 1440 at £40 per annum. Two knights (Sir Richard Vernon and Sir John Constable) received annuities of £20 p.e., but £10 was the customary annuity for a knight, with esquires paid from £10 to £40 marks per annum.

These knights and esquires were the subcontractors, and each would have provided a contingent of archers and men-at-arms. When their contingents were amalgamated, considerable armies could be gathered. For example, in January 1454, 2,000 badges of the Stafford knot were produced for distribution to Buckingham's men; in 1469 the Duke of Norfolk fielded 3,000 men and some cannon; while a great soldier and statesman of the ability and ambition of Warwick would have been able to count on thousands of men scattered over no fewer than 20 shires.

Note the predominance of archers. The contemporary Paston letters give a good idea of the value of the longbowman during the Wars of the Roses. When Sir John Paston was about to depart for Calais, he asked his brother to try to recruit four archers for him: 'Likely men and fair conditioned and good archers and they shall have 4 marks by year and my livery', (i.e. they were to be permanent retainers, on annuities).

These were ordinary archers, as opposed to an elite or 'de maison' archer who would serve permanently in the household troop of a great lord. Warwick considered such men to be worth two ordinary soldiers – even English ones! In 1467 Sir John Howard hired such an archer, offering him £10 a year – the annuity paid to knights – plus two gowns and a house for his wife. As an extra inducement he gave the man 2s. 8d., two doublets worth 10s. and a new gown (a term often applied to the livery coat). When Sir John bought himself a new bow, for which he paid 2s., he bought for this elite archer four bows costing 5s. 11.5d. each, a new case, a shooting glove, bowstrings, and a sheaf of arrows which cost 5s.: at that price they were probably the best target arrows available.

Edward IV's leading captains for his 1475 expedition to France had the following retinues:

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| Duke of Clarence | 10 knights 1,000 archers |
| Duke of Gloucester | 10 knights 1,000 archers |
| Duke of Norfolk | 2 knights 300 archers |
| Duke of Suffolk | 2 knights 300 archers |
| Duke of Buckingham | 4 knights 400 archers |

This contract system still existed in the mid-15th century, and the end of the Hundred Years' War in 1453 flooded England with large numbers of men who had no trade other than that of soldier. Returning to England, these men now assumed the aspect of mercenaries, unemployed and troublesome. Bored and hungry, they eagerly sought employment with the great barons. Such large private armies were extremely dangerous to the king. Lacking a standing army of his own, he could now only control unruly or even disloyal barons by using the private armies of those barons who remained loyal. Of course, loyal barons were rewarded with valuable offices and vast estates – which enabled them to hire even larger armies until, as with Warwick, they became powerful enough to attempt the overthrow of their benefactor.

This weakness in the royal authority led to corruption in high offices, and especially in the judiciary system. Whenever the interests of a landowner were involved in a legal case, rival bodies of armed men, wearing the liveries and badges of the lords who maintained them, would ride into the county town and bribe or intimidate judge and jury.

During the regency of Henry VI's reign the legal system finally collapsed, and the barons began to resolve their quarrels over land and inheritances by making war against each other: might was right, and it became commonplace for heiresses to be abducted, minor lords to be imprisoned or even murdered, and for 'evidence' to be procured by bribery or threat.

Since justice was no longer obtainable by fair means, many of the yeoman farmers and smaller landowners of the lesser gentry now turned to the barons for their personal protection and for the protection of their lands and rights. This led to the polarization, which is such a feature of the Wars of the Roses.

The yeomen and lesser gentry entered into another form of contract, known as 'livery and maintenance', whereby they undertook to wear the baron's livery – i.e. a tunic in his colors and bearing his household badge – and to fight for him in times of need. In return they received his protection whenever they needed it.

From the above can be seen that an 'army' of the Wars of the Roses might consist of a magnate's personal or household troops (or bodyguard – usually of knights, sergeants and archers), plus his tenants, together with paid mercenaries or contract troops – both English and foreign specialists such as gunners and hand gunners – and 'livery and maintenance' men who were unpaid but who had a personal stake in the fighting.

The only forces under the king's personal command were his bodyguard of knights and sergeants and the large, professional body of men who formed the royal garrison at Calais. Edward IV also had a permanent bodyguard of archers, and one of Henry VII's first actions on seizing the throne was to found the Yeomen of the Guard, a body of some 2,000 archers under a captain. These first saw active service in 1486, when they were used in the suppression of northern rebels.

Finally, in times of great need, the king might also use Commissions of Array to call out the local militia. In theory the king's officials chose the best-armed men from each village and town to serve the king for up to 40 days, the men's provisions being provided by their community. In practice, the king's authority was frequently misused, and great landowners often sent letters to the lesser landowners and councils of towns where they had influence, reminding those in authority of past favors and hinting at benefits yet to come.

An example is given in the contemporary Stonor letters and papers for the Oxfordshire half-hundred of Ewelme, which provided from its 17 villages a total of 85 soldiers, 17 of whom were archers. Eweime itself produced six men: 'Richard Slythurst, a harness [i.e. armored] and able to do the king service with his bow. Thomas Staunton [the constable], John Hoime, whole harness and both able to do the king service with a bill. John Tanner, a harness and able to do the king service with a bill. John Pallying, a harness and not able to wear it [presumably it did not fit him]. Roger Smith, no harness, an able man and a good archer'. Other men without harness are described as 'able with a staff.

Muster rolls are another source of such information. The muster on 4 September 1457 before the king's officials at Bridport, Dorset, shows that the standard equipment expected was a sallet, jack, sword, buckler and dagger. In addition, about two-thirds of the men had bows and a sheaf or half a sheaf of arrows. There was a sprinkling of other weapons – poleaxes, glaives, bills, spears, axes and staves; and some odd pieces of armour – hauberks, gauntlets, and leg harness. Two men also had pavises, and the officials recommended more pavises be made available.

In May 1455 the mayor of Coventry was ordered by royal signet letter to supply a retinue for the king. The town council decided to supply a hundred men with bows, jacks and sallets, and a captain was elected to lead them.

The retinues supplied for Edward IV's expedition to France are divided into 'lances' in the Continental manner, but it is most unlikely that the forces engaged in the Wars of the Roses were ever formally divided in this manner. Rather they were grouped by weapon and armour, by companies and under the banners of their captains, and grouped into 'vaward', 'main' and 'rearward battles' under the standard of a major figure. The army as a whole would often be commanded by the leading political figure, assisted by military advisers. In the case of the king's armies the commander-in-chief would be the lieutenant or captain of the region: officers such as the Warden of the Marches, Lieutenant of Ireland, or Lieutenant of the North, the latter post being granted to Fauconberg in 1461 and to Warwick in 1462.

Many of the commanders, particularly at company level, were not knights but experienced soldiers, though many of them were subsequently knighted on the field of battle. Lovelace was only an esquire, but rose to be Captain of Kent through his military skills. Trollope was another soldier who rose to high command, and was rewarded for his services by a knighthood at Second St. Albans. Men such as Trollope were frequently the military brains or 'staff officers' behind the magnates who led the 'battles'. On the other hand, constables of towns played a key role in recruiting contingents, and they may often have commanded companies, as may sheriffs. Such men may not have had any military skill.

Although the wars started with small armies of experienced soldiers, as time went on the proportion of veterans diminished and, generally speaking, the armies had insufficient cohesion for elaborate tactics: most battles began with an archery duel, which tended to cancel out the value of the longbow, followed by a vast and contused melee on foot. The commander of an army could do little once the melee commenced, though he might hold back a small mounted reserve under his personal command, or detach a formation prior to the battle to use in an outflanking maneuver.

Large numbers of the troops were mounted – not just the knights and esquires, but many of the men-at-arms. Some of these 'mounted infantry' were used as mounted scouts, flank guards and the like, but apart from an occasional mounted reserve of only 100 men or so, the armies dismounted to do battle, all horses being sent to the rear with the baggage. Primarily this was because of the weapons used and the facts that few mounted men were sufficiently experienced to fight effectively on horseback. However, the fact that many men of all arms were mounted did tend to lead to the formation of special vanguards of all-mounted troops, who were used to spearhead movement prior to a battle.

Because of the fear of treachery, it was essential that the major commanders fight on foot to indicate their willingness to stand and die with their men. It was for this reason that so many of the nobles were so easily killed or captured once their army was defeated. The mounted reserves therefore tended to be composed of lesser knights or bodyguards, and were led by minor commanders, such as Sir John Grey of Codnor, an experienced soldier but a knight of low rank and position, who led the Lancastrian cavalry reserve at Second St. Albans.

 Appendix 2 Characters.

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| **Henry V (1387 - 1422) - King of England**  |
| **Years lived:** 1387 - 1422**Years ruled:** 1413 - 1422**Son of:** Henry IV and Mary de Bohun**Married to:** Catherine de Valois**Children:** Henry VI  |
| Henry V, a member of the House of Lancaster, was crowned king in 1413 at the age of 26. Henry spent most of his reign campaigning in France in order to regain territories claimed by his ancestors. The highlight of his three invasions of France (1415, 1417-1421, and 1422) was the Battle of Agincourt fought on October 25, 1415 during the Hundred Year's War. In a span of a few short hours, Henry crushed a much larger French army leaving him in control of Northern France. Henry died at the age of 35 of an unknown illness, leaving the crown to his infant son, Henry VI.  |

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| **Richard III, King of England 1483 - 1485**  |
| **Years lived:** 1452 - 1485**Years ruled:** 1483 - 1485**Son of:** Richard, Duke of York, and Cecily Neville**Married to:** Anne Beauchamp Neville (1472)**Children:** Edward, Prince of Wales  |
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| Richard III, the younger brother of Edward IV, was made duke of Gloucester at age nine. He fough for Edward at the battles of Barnet and Tewkesbury in 1471. When Edward died in 1483 he took control of Edwards heirs, Edward V and his brother Richard. The young brothers were held in the Tower of London and murdered in June 1483. Richard III was crowned king that year. He was killed by Henry VII at the battle of Bosworth Field in 1485.  |

Appendix 3 Genealogies

**House of Lancaster**

The Lancastarian claim to the throne was via Edward III's third son John of Gaunt. In October 1460, an Act of Accord designated that the royal succession would move to the house of York after Henry VI's death. The houses of Lancaster and York were united when Henry VII married the Elizabeth of York, daughter of Edward IV.

Sons of **Edward III (1312-1377)**