Essential Histories

The Wars of the Roses

1455–1485

Michael Hicks

OSPREY PUBLISHING

MICHAEL HICKS is Professor of Medieval History at King Alfred's College, Winchester. He holds three history degrees from English universities and has written extensively on the Wars of the Roses, mainly biographies of important protagonists such as Warwick the Kingmaker, False Fleeting Perjur'd Clarence and Richard III who shaped successive stages of the conflict. He is a regular contributor to history journals and to *The Ricardian*.

PROFESSOR ROBERT O'NEILL, AO D.PHIL. (Oxon), Hon D. Litt.(ANU), FASSA, Fr Hist S, is the Series Editor of the Essential Histories. His wealth of knowledge and expertise shapes the series content and provides up-to-the-minute research and theory. Born in 1936 an Australian citizen, he served in the Australian army (1955–68) and has held a number of eminent positions in history circles, including the Chichele Professorship of the History of War at All Souls College, University of Oxford, 1987–2001, and the Chairmanship of the Board of the Imperial War Museum and the Council of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, London. He is the author of many books including works on the German Army and the Nazi party, and the Korean and Vietnam wars. Now based in Australia on his retirement from Oxford he is the Chairman of the Council of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute.

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King Edward IV, on his throne and attended by courtiers, receives a suitor.
(Ann Ronan Picture Library)

Introduction

The Wars of the Roses were the longest period of civil war in English History. They followed immediately after the final English defeat in the Hundred Years' War (1337–1453) and commenced under the Lancastrian Henry VI (1422–61), a weak and ineffective king, who was briefly mad (1453–54). The wars did not end in 1485 at the battle of Bosworth, as so many historians since the Tudors have claimed, and they did not actually cause the strong rule of the Tudors, although they may have made it easier to achieve. The Tudor dynasty managed to keep the throne and endured for more than a century. The last serious challenge was in 1497, with the defeat and capture of the pretender Perkin Warbeck, but the potential threat supposedly posed by the White Rose of York continued at least until 1525.

This book surveys these wars as a group and investigates them in detail. It treats the international scene and the contexts of particular battles, and considers the impact of the wars on English society as a whole and on particular individuals. It deals not with a single war or campaign, but with a series of conflicts spread over thirty years. Some of the same issues are therefore examined separately for each war. It concerns itself with what the wars have in common – the underlying causes and systems – and what is distinct about each. The Wars of the Roses cannot simply be lumped together as a single conflict with common objectives, sides and personnel. The book looks at the causes, course, and the results of each war.

General summary

The Wars of the Roses were a series of wars. Besides the minor clashes and also the lesser disorders that occurred in every reign, there were three periods of sustained conflict: 1459–61, 1469–71, and 1483–87.

The loss of English occupied France made it difficult for Henry VI's government to resist its critics. Calls for reform by Richard Duke of York (d. 1460) and the emergence of two sides, Lancaster and York, several times overflowed into violence before sustained conflict began in 1459. Defeated and exiled, the Yorkists under Warwick the Kingmaker returned triumphantly in 1460 to present York's claim to the Crown and thereby provoked the most violent phase, from which there emerged York's son Edward IV (1461–83) as the first Yorkist king; Towton (1461) was the deciding battle.

Edward's new regime took until 1468 to achieve recognition and to eliminate lingering Lancastrian resistance in Northumberland, north-west Wales and Jersey. Yorkist divisions led to a coup in 1469 and the Lincolnshire Rebellion of 1470, both led by Warwick and Edward's next brother, George Duke of Clarence (d. 1478). Defeated and exiled, as in 1459, the rebels allied later in 1470 with Lancastrian exiles and swept Edward away. Henry VI reigned again: his Readeption (1470–71). With foreign support, Edward exploited divisions amongst his enemies, decisively defeating first Warwick at Barnet and then the Lancastrians at Tewkesbury (1471); his triumph was complete.

Edward IV was succeeded in 1483 by his eldest son Edward V, aged 12, but 11 weeks later Edward IV's youngest brother Richard III seized the throne. He alienated many of the Yorkist establishment, who rebelled, apparently initially on behalf of Edward V, who disappeared, and then Henry Tudor. Buckingham's Rebellion in 1483 failed, but the Bosworth campaign of 1485 did defeat and kill Richard. Opposition to the new regime and a plethora of Yorkist claimants

and pretenders led to further rebellions, invasions, and plots. The battle of Stoke in 1487 did not end the Yorkist conspiracies against Henry VII (1485–1509) and even his son Henry VIII (1509–47).

The place of the wars in history

The Wars of the Roses happened over 500 years ago and created little if anything of the modern Britain familiar to us today, having causes particular to its time and to no other. It was not a significant stage in the development of the English monarchy, constitution, society or military science. The best-known cause, the dynastic claims of rival sides, have little appeal to a modern age that prioritises merit, democracy and equal rights; and yet the Wars of the Roses are surprisingly well-known.

One reason is the abiding influence of William Shakespeare, whose cycle of eight fifteenth-century history plays – especially the masterpieces *Richard II*, *Henry V* and *Richard III* – are constantly revived both in performance and in film and continue to attract the best actors. Both Warwick the Kingmaker and King Richard III remain household names. Older generations were taught all periods of English history including the Middle Ages, whereas those under 40, the beneficiaries of subsequent educational reforms, lack this background and few have studied the Wars of the Roses at school. They have been familiarised with the events and personalities through the rise of interest in military history, especially in war-gaming and by the modern fascination with Richard III.

Concise summary

The first war was from 1459 to 1461, when King Henry VI was replaced by the Yorkist Edward IV (1461–83). Originating in the call for reform and personal animosities, it became irreconcilable when Richard Duke of York laid claim to the throne. The Lords in London agreed that York should succeed Henry VI on his death, thereby disinheriting Henry's son Edward (the *Accord*). Lancastrian supporters of Prince Edward rejected the deal, led by Queen Margaret of Anjou and Henry Duke of Somerset. Richard and Edward Dukes of York were backed by Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, the Kingmaker (d.1471).

The second war was in 1469–71, beginning with Warwick's attempts to control Edward IV through imprisoning him (1469) and then to replace him by Clarence (March 1470). Exiled in France, the rebels allied with representatives of Henry VI – notably Queen Margaret, her son Edward, another Duke of Somerset and Jasper Tudor, Earl of Pembroke – invaded and replaced Henry on his throne (October 1470). Next year Edward returned and exterminated his opponents.

The third war was in 1483–87. Almost bloodlessly Edward IV's brother Richard III (1483–85) deposed his son Edward V (1483). A full-scale rebellion of southern England in 1483 led by Henry Duke of Buckingham (d. 1483) and the family of Edward IV's queen, the Wydevilles, was followed in 1485 by a successful invasion. Richard lost his throne to the Tudor King Henry VII (1485–1509), repeated attempts to reverse the process being defeated.

Chronology

1399 Deposition of Richard II; accession of Henry IV (1399–1413), first Lancastrian king

1450 **Oct** Richard Duke of York takes the leadership of reform

1452 **Feb–Mar** York's abortive Dartford coup d'état

1455 **22 May** First battle of St Albans; Somerset killed York's Second Protectorate

1458 **25 Mar** The Loveday at St Pauls

1459 **23 Sep** The battle of Blore Heath; Salisbury defeats Audley
12–13 Oct The rout at Ludford. The Yorkist leaders desert and flee to Ireland (York) and Calais (the Nevilles)

1460 **26 June** The landing of the Yorkist earls from Calais at Sandwich
10 July The battle of Northampton
Oct York lays claim to the throne in parliament and is recognised as Lord Protector/heir to Henry VI in the *Accord*
30 Dec The battle of Wakefield; York and Salisbury killed

1461 **2–3 Feb** The battle of Mortimer's Cross; Edward Duke of York (son of Duke Richard) defeats the Welsh Lancastrians
17 Feb The second battle of St Albans; Margaret defeats Warwick
4 Mar Edward IV's reign (1461–83) commences
29 Mar Battle of Towton; decisive defeat of the Lancastrians

1461–64 Mopping up operations against the northern Lancastrians culminating in Yorkist victories at Hedgeley Moor and Hexham

1469 **June** Rebellion of Robin of Redesdale, front-man for Warwick
24 July Battle of Edgecote; Edward IV is taken into custody
Oct–Dec Collapse of Warwick's regime and reconciliation with Edward IV

1470 **12 Mar** The Lincolnshire Rebellion; defeated at Losecote Field (Empingham)
Apr Warwick and Clarence flee into exile in France
22–25 July Treaty of Angers between Warwick and Margaret of Anjou
Prince Edward of Lancaster marries Warwick's daughter Anne Neville
Sep–Oct Warwick invades and Edward IV flees into exile in Burgundy. Readeption (Second Reign) of King Henry VI begins

1471 **14 Mar** Edward IV lands at Ravenspur in Yorkshire
14 Apr Battle of Barnet; Edward defeats Warwick. Death of Warwick
4 May Battle of Tewkesbury; Edward defeats Margaret of Anjou and the Lancastrians. Death of Prince Edward of Lancaster. Henry VI's death followed on 21 May

1483 **9–10 Apr** Death of Edward IV; succession and deposition of his eldest son as Edward V (1483)
26 June Accession of his uncle Richard Duke of Gloucester as Richard III (1483–85)
Oct–Dec Buckingham's Rebellion
25 Dec Exiled rebels recognise Henry Tudor as king in Rennes Cathedral

1485 **7 Aug** Landing of Henry Tudor at Milford Haven
22 Aug Battle of Bosworth; Richard III killed; Henry Tudor succeeds as Henry VII (1485–1509)

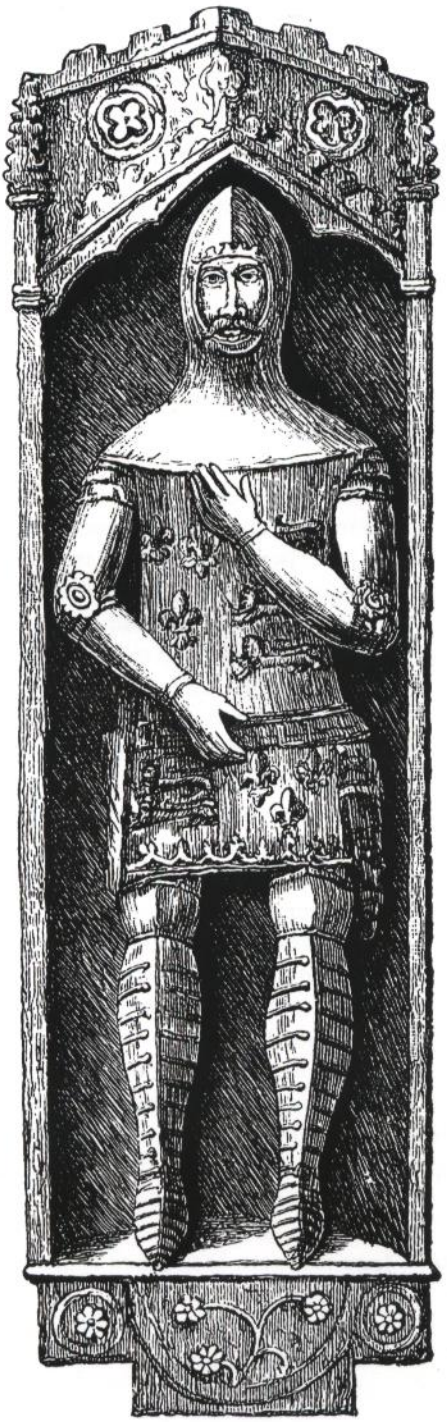
1487 **4 June** Invasion of Lambert Simnel from Ireland
16 June Battle of Stoke; Simnel defeated; Earl of Lincoln killed

1491–99 Conspiracies of Perkin Warbeck

Collapsing regimes

Everything in the 1450s appeared to be going wrong. A savage slump of *c.* 1440–80 beset most parts of the economy and the majority of people, the Hundred Years' War ended abruptly with English defeat, and the government was powerless to remedy these disasters. The problems were connected – war had plunged the government deep into debt and the depression had slashed its income – but the ineffectiveness of Henry VI himself, a king incapable and unwilling to reign, also contributed. People blamed the government for the state of the economy, which actually no late medieval state could control, and were unwilling to attribute England's military humiliation to the recovery of France. The king's bankruptcy and the loss of Normandy alike were blamed on the corruption and even treason of ministers and commanders, who were widely believed, incorrectly, to have been plundering the king's mythical resources. Hence parliaments and people refused financial help to the government, advocating instead retrenchment and recovery of what had been given away. They demanded reform, refusing to acknowledge when reforms had been achieved and kept repeating the same message.

The year 1450 commenced with the impeachment and murder of William Duke of Suffolk, the king's principal councillor, followed by the murder of two ministers and two bishops and with the massive rebellion of Jack Cade in the south-east, and ended with the government on the defensive against another parliament bent on reform. Critics saw themselves as a single movement seeking the same objectives through different means. They lacked a leader until

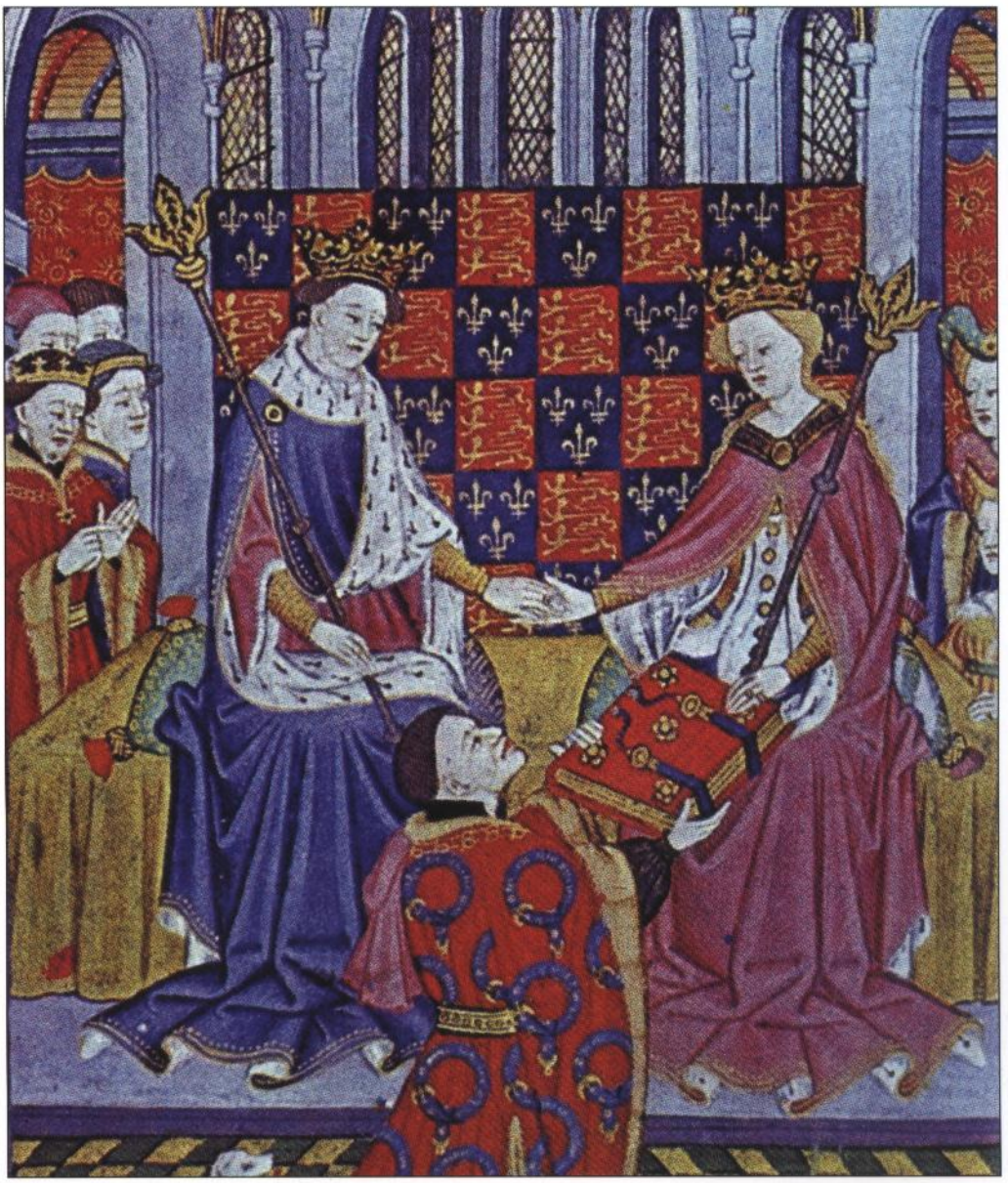


Richard Duke of York (1411–60), champion of reform, three times protector, and claimant to Henry VI's throne. (Ann Ronan Picture Library)

October, when Richard Duke of York – the premier duke, the richest nobleman, and a prince of the blood – returned from Ireland where he had been lieutenant to take up the leadership of reform. Reform implied no challenge to the king and York focused his attacks particularly against Edmund Duke of Somerset, the defeated commander in France and the most effective of Henry's favourites. Henry VI held Somerset blameless and made him his principal adviser, but York, who had earlier been lieutenant of France himself and who lost materially by defeat, wanted Somerset executed for treason, repeatedly rejecting the king's exoneration of him.

Henry VI resisted the challenge. He simply refused to give way to an apparently

Henry VI and his queen. A court scene. (Topham Picturepoint)



irresistible alliance and still enjoyed enough unquestioning loyalty to get away with his obstinacy. With Somerset's help, Henry rebuilt the effectiveness of his government and was on the point of bringing the powerful Nevilles to order in the summer of 1453. York continued to pursue the cause of reform. A first attempt to seize control of the government with an army recruited from his Welsh estates ended in 1452 at Dartford in humiliating capitulation. York was obliged to promise in St Paul's Cathedral that he would not resort to force again. York's opportunity came when the king went mad in 1453 and York was the majority candidate among several to head a new government as Lord Protector (1454–55). He owed much to his new allies, the two Richard Nevilles, father and son, Earl of Salisbury and Earl of Warwick, and rewarded them accordingly. York imprisoned but could not destroy Somerset, who was restored to favour on the king's recovery early in 1455. Perhaps fearing vengeance, York and the Nevilles ambushed the court at the first battle of St Albans (22 April 1455), eliminated Somerset and other opponents, and again took control of the government. York's Second Protectorate (1455–56) ended with his dismissal. A period of tense stalemate was ended by Henry VI's peacemaking in February 1458 (the Loveday at St Paul's), but the peace did not last, perhaps because the Yorkists expected too much favour and too much influence once they had been forgiven. The first stage of the wars proper opened in 1459 with yet another loyal rebellion – another attempt by the Yorkists to supplant Henry VI's government without changing the king. Their initial defeat and subsequent victory preceded and permitted York's claim to the Crown the following year.

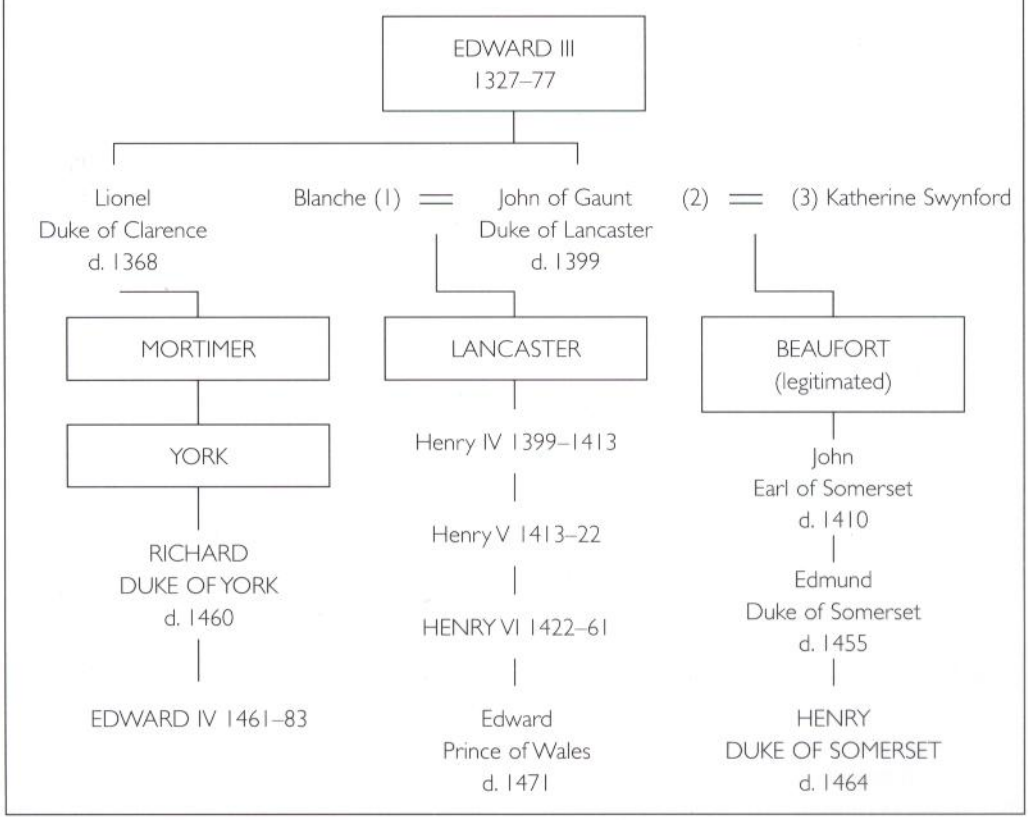
The origins of the conflict

Traditionally the Wars of the Roses have been seen as a dynastic conflict originating in the rival claims to the Crown of Edward III's third son John of Gaunt (the house of Lancaster) and of his second son Lionel (the houses of Mortimer and York). Shakespeare starts the story with the deposition of Richard II in 1399 and the succession of the Lancastrian Henry IV as male heir rather than Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March (d. 1425) as heir general. Edmund was a child in 1399, when the rules of inheritance for the Crown were yet to be defined. It may even be that the ageing King Edward III had entailed the Crown on the house of Lancaster. Once on the throne, the Lancastrians were entitled to the allegiance and service of all their subjects, including Mortimer and his heir York, and received it many times. Others wove plots around Mortimer and repeatedly ascribed dynastic significance to the names of Mortimer and York. Examples are the Southampton Plot of 1415, the destruction of the obscure Sir John Mortimer in 1423–24, and the Mortimer alias of the rebel Jack Cade in 1450; Edmund Mortimer himself repeatedly dissociated himself from such conspiracies. York's father Cambridge was executed for his part in the Southampton Plot but until 1460 York himself was careful not to identify himself as a dynastic rival to the king. Whatever he may have privately thought, York accepted the highest of commands and patronage from his cousin, King Henry VI – he certainly could not consider himself slighted or out of favour – and showed him all the requisite humility when politically ascendant in 1450 and 1455. York always claimed to be acting on the public's behalf and in the king's best interests. The houses of York and Lancaster had never fought before 1460.

The first stage of civil war grew out of 10 years of political debate, in which Richard Duke of York presented himself as a reformer committed to good government and aligned himself against each set of 'evil councillors'. Such critiques were legitimate forms of political activity, for reform was always popular and reforming manifestos in this era repeatedly brought the people out in force. From 1453 York was greatly

strengthened by his alliance with the Nevilles of Middleham (Yorks.), who needed his support against rival claimants to their sway in the north (the Percies) and their inheritances in Wales and the west midlands (Somerset). The enemies of the Nevilles became York's enemies also as his attacks on successive groups of the royal favourites and the repeated culls of them in 1450, 1455 and 1460 inflamed pre-existing personal animosities. The sons of Somerset and Northumberland, two peers slain at the first battle of St Albans, wanted revenge and were only reluctantly persuaded to accept compensation instead. Gradually two sides emerged, both comprising a minority of the elite: York, the Nevilles, and the protagonists of reform; and their enemies, comprising both their victims and the understandably fearful ministers and councillors of the king. The majority of the House of Lords, as always, stood outside factions, but put their allegiance to the king first. If York was ruthless and readily resorted to force and political murder, it was because he was allowed to behave in this way. King Henry was amazingly forbearing and merciful. Repeatedly he pardoned offences that would have been treasonable and deserving of death in lesser men. He constantly laboured for reconciliation although York's three solemn and explicit oaths to abstain from strong-arm tactics did not discourage him from further coups. It was hard for the regime to operate properly with such distractions – governments were allowed no credit for reforms that had been achieved or for the difficulties they had in managing when resources were so short.

Pedigree 1: The titles of Lancaster, York and Beaufort in 1460–61



The later outbreaks of violence, in 1469–71 and from 1483, had shorter-term causes, resulting from divisions, ambitions and struggles for power within the ruling elite, although in each case rebels attracted the support of unreconciled supporters of the previous regime. Warwick and Clarence in 1470 allied themselves to Henry VI, Queen Margaret, Prince Edward and Lancastrians both at home and in exile, whilst Henry VI's half-brother Jasper Tudor, Earl of Pembroke and their nephew Henry Tudor were retrieved from exile and the Earl of Oxford from prison by those opposed to Richard III. Such men carried earlier resentments, rivalries and principles from conflict to conflict, but there were very few of them. Jasper Tudor was almost alone in participating in all stages of the conflict, from the first battle of St Albans in 1455 to Stoke in 1487. Henry Tudor was a completely fresh face in 1483.

The effects of the wars

The Wars of the Roses started after defeat in the Hundred Years' War in 1449–53. Conflict in the Channel and raids on the south coast impeded trade and threatened foreign invasion, coinciding with the 'Great Slump' of roughly 1440–80. People in all walks of life were feeling the pinch, looked back nostalgically to better times and blamed the government as they do today. The wars themselves were short lived and the actual fighting was brief, so that there was no calculated wasting of the countryside, few armies lived off the land and there was little storming of towns or pillaging. A few individuals may have been fined or ransomed but they appear exceptional. The devastation wreaked by Queen Margaret's much-condemned northern army on its progress southwards in 1460 made little impact on surviving records, while Northumberland and north-west Wales in the 1460s suffered from repeated campaigns and sieges. More serious may have been the effects of large-scale mobilisation of civilians, both on sea and land, to counteract Warwick's piracy in the Channel in 1459–60 and 1470, and in anticipation of invasions in 1460, 1470–71 and in 1483–85. What such emergencies meant in practice is hard to detect for even these campaigns were brief, unsustained and geographically restricted, so that the challenge of feeding, accommodating and paying large numbers of troops for long periods never had to be faced. Civil war was not apparently paid for through taxation, though the Crown borrowed wherever it could; defeated armies did not have to be paid. Normal life continued apparently undisturbed for most of these 30 years and the campaigns directly affected few people, either as fighters or victims. Ironically things were getting better when Richard took the throne so that Henry VII benefited from a 'feel- good' factor.

What might have been

The wars were not inevitable for at each stage there was a choice. Henry VI staged a major reconciliation of the warring parties in 1458 and Edward IV did likewise both in 1468 with Warwick and on his deathbed in 1483. Kings were prepared repeatedly to pardon rebels and traitors on condition that they accepted them as kings and their authority. This was true not only of Henry VI in 1459 and 1460, but of Edward IV in 1469 and 1470; he even offered terms to Warwick in 1471. Richard III reconciled himself to the Wydevilles and was probably willing to make peace with others if they would agree – very few people, perhaps Jasper Tudor in 1471, were beyond forgiveness. That conflict happened in each case was because the aggressors – always the rebels – refused to give way.

This is surprising because they had so much to lose – their property, their lives and their families' futures – and were faced by stark choices. Their motives were a mixture of pragmatism, self-interest and principle, with mistrust being an important element:

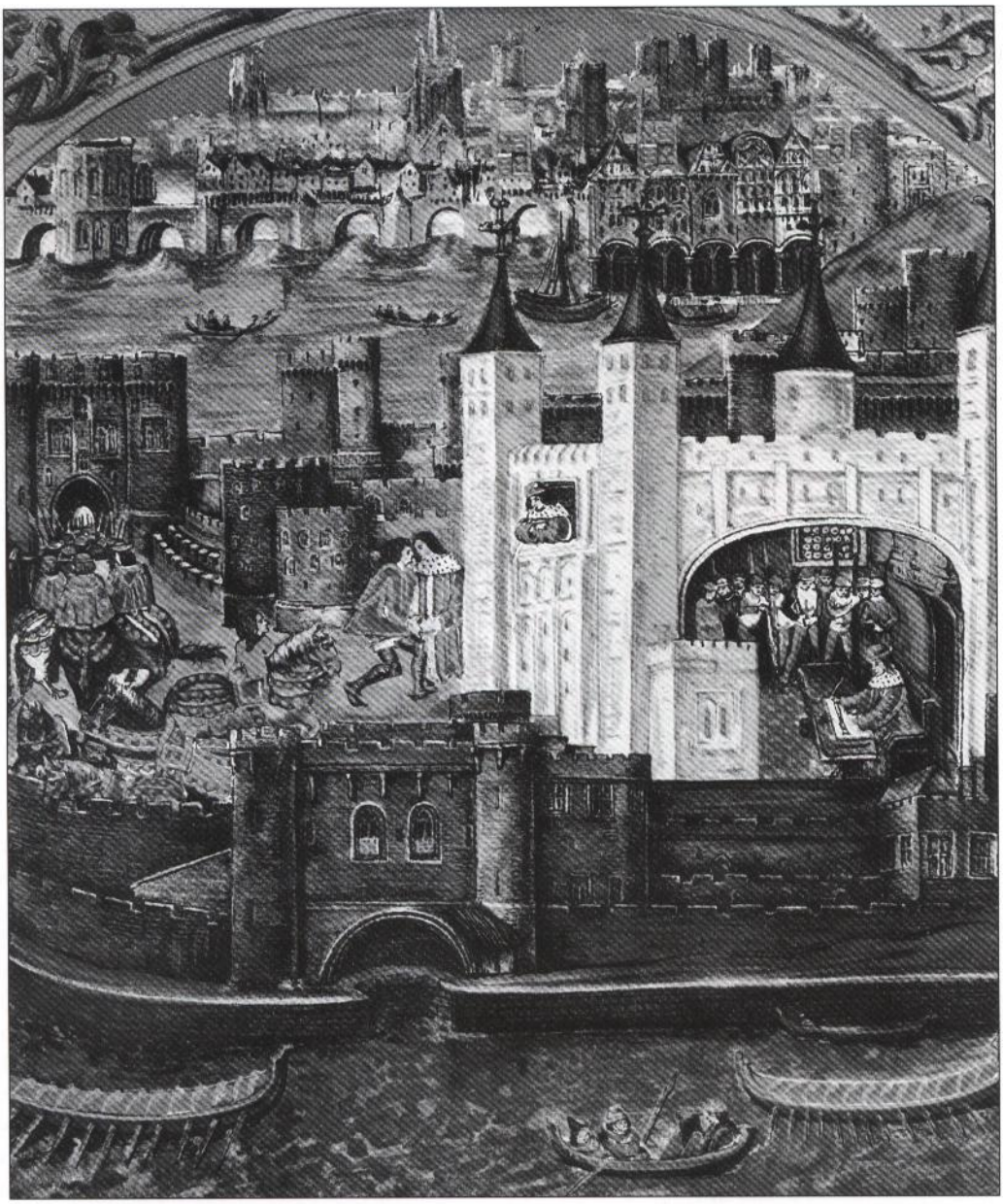
disbelief that forgiveness could be genuine. If Henry VI's motives could be trusted, could those of the people close to him who had private grounds for revenge? Whatever Edward IV's promises in 1469, his household men spoke otherwise: Warwick and Clarence feared that in due course Edward would wreak his vengeance on them. Was it possible for York in 1460 or Warwick in 1471 to live with former enemies and could they accept the political eclipse that submission implied? George Duke of Clarence, who did submit, was executed on trumped-up charges in 1478, but besides such negative motives, there were positive ones. York in the 1450s was sure that he could provide better government. So probably was Warwick a decade later. His breach with Edward IV was attributed by our most authoritative contemporary source to differing foreign policies. Richard III claimed to want better government and his opponents certainly thought this could be achieved by removing Richard himself. To submit meant abandoning these principles: temporary setbacks and submissions proved acceptable – York had three times to renounce his cause – but definitive abandonment was not. Pride, honour and self-esteem were intertwined with other motives. Although Warwick had submitted to Edward IV in 1469 and had abased himself to his former enemy, Queen Margaret of Anjou, to secure Lancastrian support in 1470, he refused all that was offered in 1471. Turning his coat again was bound to dishonour him. And, finally, of course there was dynastic principle. If York and later Warwick initially saw dynasticism as merely a means to an end – the end being better rule and control of the government – York from 1460, Richard III, and later White Rose claimants saw the Crown as the main objective. It was not that the dynastic struggle caused the Wars of the Roses, but that the wars created the dynastic struggle and that dynasticism became the principal issue. Since the Crown could not be divided, it made compromise impossible and conflict inevitable. Whilst Edward IV claimed to be seeking only his duchy of York in 1471, neither he nor any other reigning king was prepared in practice to surrender his crown for peace – death on the battlefield was to be preferred.

Richard III (1483–85): the vanquished general at Bosworth. (Topham Picturepoint)

Difficult choices faced not merely the leadership, but the nobility, gentry, and the rank and file. Risks that had seemed acceptable early in the wars, when so many rebellions succeeded, became too stark once most leaders perished. An unwillingness to take the risks, which was present from the start, was reinforced; some always sat on the

fence. The Stanleys in particular sympathised with the rebels in the first two wars, but somehow escaped commitment until the last minutes at Bosworth in 1485. A succession of rebels in 1469 and from 1486 sheltered behind the aliases of pretenders. Later plots failed or never really started because supporters declined to commit themselves, at which point, when too few were willing to rebel, the wars ended.

The Tower of London, besieged in 1460. Note London Bridge, attacked by the Bastard of Fauconberg in 1471, behind. Here the Tower serves as a luxurious prison for a French prince of the blood royal. (Ann Ronan Picture Library)



Part-timers, professionals, and people

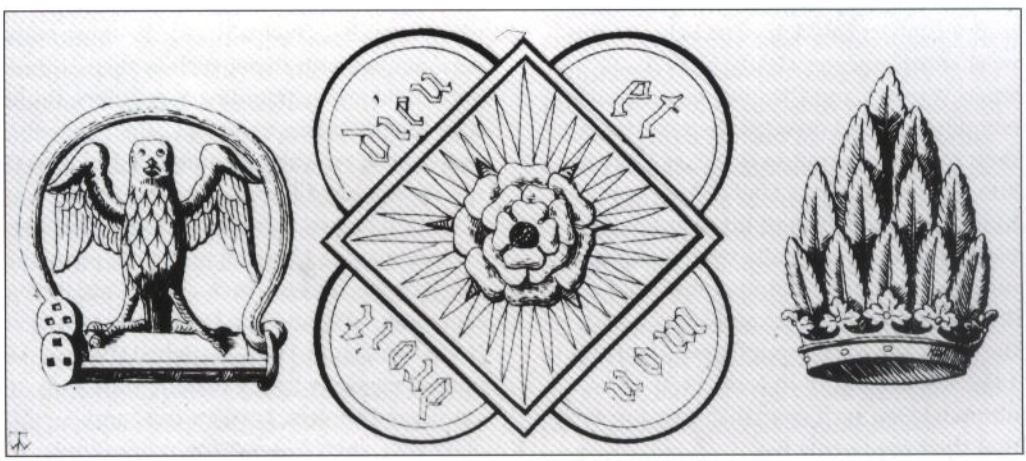
Who were the protagonists?

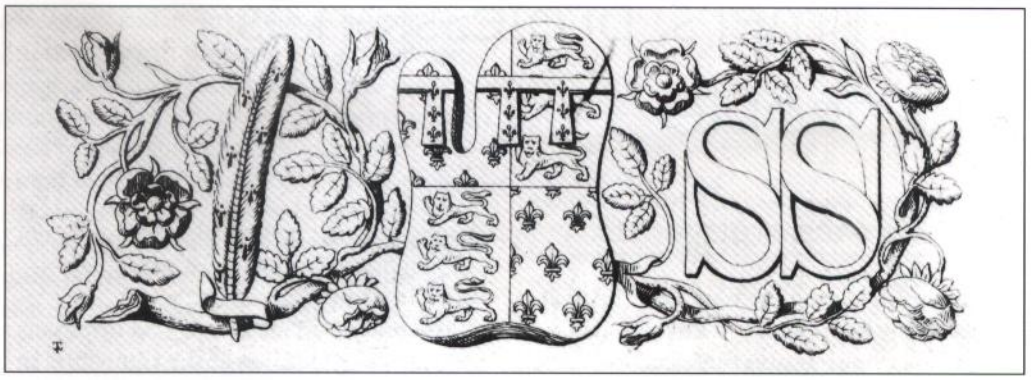
The leadership during the wars were the rival kings and the high nobility – dukes, earls, and lords – who were also the social and political elite, and whose activities are well recorded. Them apart, we know the identity of very few of the combatants. Mere hundreds are named in the case of Towton (1461), mere dozens at Barnet (1471) and at Bosworth (1485) – out of forces always thousands and sometimes tens of thousands strong. There survive no muster rolls, no payrolls, and no comprehensive lists of casualties. The vanquished, anxious to avoid punishment, had good reason to conceal themselves, and the victors to exaggerate. If everyone claiming credit from Henry VII or subsequently celebrated in the Stanley ballads *Lady Bessy* and *Bosworthfield*, had actually been at Bosworth, the Tudor army must have been several sizes larger than we believe it to have been. Archaeology here is little help – 38 bodies from Towton are a pitiful fraction of the casualty list.

How the armies were comprised, therefore, is speculative. We know the components, but not the numbers contained within each, not the proportions, which must surely have varied by campaign and battle.

The nucleus of every army, so historians believe, was composed of the companies or retinues of the great nobility, the greatest being that of the king. Such retinues were made up of several elements. The core was the noble household, both upstairs aristocrats and downstairs menials, who were generally young and may have been tall men selected with military potential in mind; all were especially committed to their lord. Second come the estate officers, stewards and receivers, all aristocratic; it was they who deployed and commanded the tenants from their lords' estates, the rustic peasantry. Third were the extraordinary retainers, typically country gentry retained for life by formal contracts for annual salaries (fees), with their own household and their own tenants. Sometimes, perhaps not infrequently, there

The Falcon and Fetterlock, a badge of Richard Duke of York worn by his retainers.
(Topham Picturepoint)





Badges of the house of Lancaster, including the Red Rose and Double S.
(Topham Picturepoint)

were others, possibly many others, recruited for the occasion by the issue of livery; 2,000 armbands bearing the Stafford knot were made for the Duke of Buckingham in 1454. On occasion the Calais garrison, as in 1459–60, or contingents of foreign mercenaries were involved.

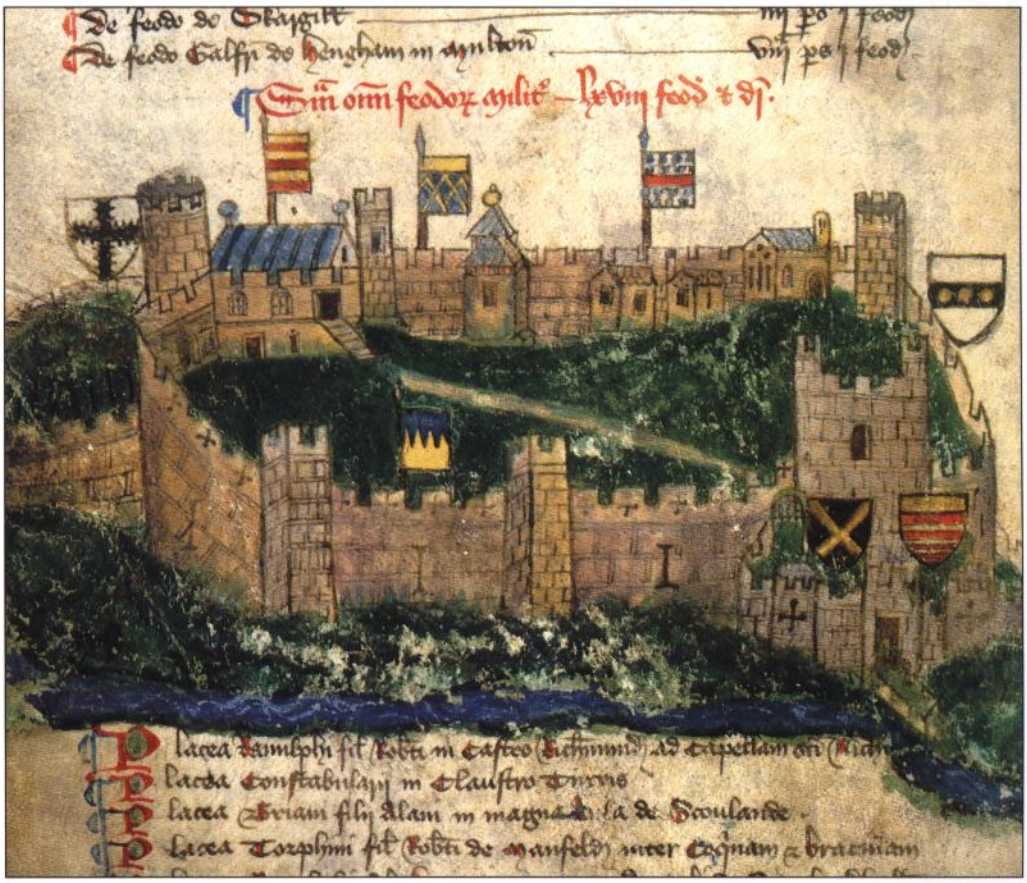
Only rarely can such aristocratic or professional companies have been the majority. At Blore Heath and Ludford in 1459 and at Stoke in 1487, when they were, it was a sign of weakness of the aggressors, who lost, having failed to engage the imagination and secure the commitment of the vast majority outside their own estates and employment. Much larger numbers of more doubtful effectiveness could be raised through enlisting the populace of town and country en masse through commissions of array, which only kings and their commissioners could do. The value of this mechanism emerges clearly in 1470–71, when Warwick and Clarence secured such commissions and diverted the manpower to their own causes; not to do so, as Warwick also discovered, was a fatal defect, as it lost him the support even of his own retainers. Because of the potentially overwhelming numbers that such commissions could deploy, the longer that campaigns lasted, the larger the royal armies grew: Henry VI in 1459 and Edward IV in early 1470 ultimately led such overwhelming forces that their opponents fled.

And, finally, there was the populace. At two points in the Wars of the Roses, in June 1460 and October 1470, the populace committed themselves to the cause of reform. Obviously made up of people otherwise susceptible to array, they turned out in such numbers against the king that no semi-professional army could stand against them: if they really amounted to the 60,000 suggested in 1470, sheer numbers made it no contest. In Yorkshire in 1489 and in Cornwall in 1497 such cross-class uprisings were confined to particular regions.

What were their motives?

The majority of the political nation wished to preserve the status quo most of the time, and in particular the current king, right or wrong, to whom they had sworn allegiance. Inertia, however, was seldom allowed to prevail.

Much more quickly mobilised were the retinues on which political leaders, on whatever side, principally relied – those with personal ties with them, such as their household and extraordinary retainers; those with long-standing traditions of dependence; those subject to their commands; and those specifically hired for the purpose. Some perhaps followed automatically or did as commanded, as kings supposed the people did; whereas others – such as the Calais captain in 1459 and the Derbyshire squire Henry Vernon in 1471 – weighed their options carefully before making their own considered choices. Loyalty, trust and obedience, mixed in varying proportions,



Richmond Castle, Yorkshire. The banners show the parts of the castle for which particular feudal tenants, such as the Nevilles of Middleham, the Lords Scrope and FitzHugh were responsible. (The British Library)

turned them out. Sympathy with a lord's objectives did matter. Not only might such congruence reinforce existing bonds, but its absence could cause even the most long-standing and most committed adherents to withdraw their support.

An element in such sympathy was conformity to accepted political principles and perhaps especially to the course of reform. It was such ideas, carefully nurtured, cultivated and inflamed by skilfully targeted propaganda, that York and then Warwick in 1450–71 used to convert popular discontent into effective political and military action. Such notions were recycled by Richard III in 1483 and Perkin Warbeck in 1497 when, however, the necessary precondition of popular discontent may have been absent. Certainly the popular component was not impressive in the conflicts of the 1480s.

Dynasticism, the legitimacy of a particular title to the Crown, was first raised in 1460 and was apparently a key issue in the popular enthusiasm that swept Henry VI back to his throne in 1470. Rival claims were crucial for claimants from Richard III, but they do not appear to have prompted such large numbers of any rank to put themselves at risk.

Participants were well motivated – there was little time for desertion – and generally expected to be paid, though there is almost no evidence that they were. We know of many rewards bestowed on the victors after the event, but only the Calais garrison and foreign contingents were professional salaried soldiers.

The combatants

All Englishmen aged from 16 to 60 had an obligation of home defence against invasions or rebellions, being called out by commissioners of array or by the lords whose tenants they were. They were responsible for their own armaments, which were generally rudimentary, and their own training, principally practice in archery. In Wales and Cheshire archery may have been more highly developed. Towns arrayed not the whole citizenry, but smaller contingents, properly equipped at public expense, probably pre-selected from those with military predilections. The protection of society against its enemies justified the privileges of the officer class, the aristocracy, who therefore had a chivalric style of education. They read histories and romances about past heroes and Vegetius' account of Roman warfare. Such inspiring and theoretical book-learning was accompanied by physical pursuits that equipped them to fight on horseback – apart from jousting, such lifelong recreations as hunting and hawking regularly refreshed these skills. Wartime experience was needed, however, to make generals out of aristocrats and to convert disparate individuals into disciplined and effective fighting forces.

Wartime experience was generally lacking. The Wars of the Roses could not be contested by veterans of the Hundred Years' War, for so long had the English been in retreat that potential recruits had been deterred. English forces were ageing even before they were severely culled by the decisive defeats of 1449–53. Sir John Fastolf, Sir Andrew Ogard and Sir William Oldhall died before the conflict proper commenced, and York himself, Bonville and Kyriel in 1460–61. English campaigns in France, in 1475 and 1492, were short lived and involved no serious fighting. Even the forces of the great lords, though physically fit, well equipped and well exercised, lacked practical military experience. Armies, therefore, were predominantly raw. Experience came from four principal sources:

1 At sea from professional mariners, such as those enlisted by Warwick from the mid-1450s most probably from West Country pirates, and unleashed by him on foreign commerce, on Henry VI's Kentish levies in 1459–60, and against London by the Bastard of Fauconberg in 1470–71.
2 From the Calais garrison, about 1,000 strong, the only truly professional force maintained to contemporary European standards by the Crown, which Warwick directed into English politics in 1459–60.
3 From the borderers of the northern marchers, where feuding and raiding with the Scots was endemic. The wardens of the marches were not only exempt from legal restrictions on retaining, but were actually paid to raise private armies. Successive wardens of the West March – from the Earls of Salisbury (1455) and Warwick (1470–71) to Gloucester (1483), and successive Percies Earls of Northumberland in the East March committed to the struggle manpower that, to southern eyes, was harder, wilder and more effective than their southern counterparts. The service of the men of Middleham and Richmond to Salisbury, Warwick, and Gloucester was crucial.
4 Foreign contingents. Numbers are seldom recorded and are difficult to assess. The Scottish borderers of the early 1460s and mid-1490s were comparable to their English counterparts, but confined themselves to the far north. A mere handful of Burgundian handgunners under seigneur de la Barde fought in 1461, but a substantial French force, led by the experienced Pierre de Brezé, intervened significantly in Northumberland in the early 1460s. Warwick in 1470 and Edward IV in 1471 came in foreign ships equipped at foreign expense and containing at least some foreign supporters. Professional and experienced French and Scottish forces were hired by Henry VII in 1485 and featured prominently at Bosworth. In 1487 it was not the wild Irishmen or the northerners, but the veteran Martin Swart

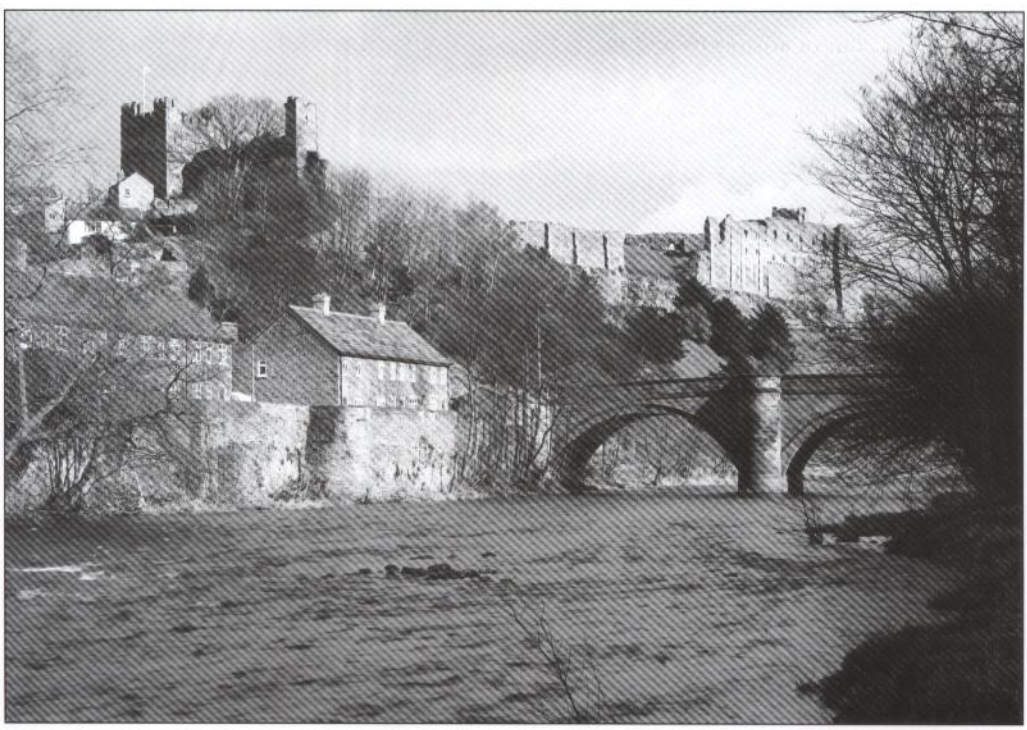
and his German troops, who were the nucleus of Lambert Simnel's defeated army at Stoke.

Many individuals fought in more than one stage of the Wars of the Roses, which were however too brief and sporadic for much expertise to be developed, but such intermittent service may have contributed to morale.

As for the commanders, those with significant experience in the early stages – York, Somerset, Salisbury, Northumberland – were in their fifties when fighting began and failed to survive into Edward IV's reign. Merely 19 at this stage, the young king was to prove the most successful general of the Wars of the Roses, deriving his experience entirely from domestic conflict. Both he and his cousin Warwick, who had prior experience as keeper of the seas and Calais, were students of modern developments in warfare. Both built up ordnance that was useful in the infrequent sieges, but actually ineffective in the battlefield. Richard Duke of Gloucester, the future Richard III, presented himself as a soldier to contemporaries. Involved as a teenager in the upheavals of 1469–71, being wounded slightly at Barnet and commanding a division at Tewkesbury, he participated in the abortive Picquigny expedition of 1475 and was commander-in-chief against the Scots in 1480–83; the recovery of Berwick, a conspicuous success, nevertheless appears less impressive in the absence of Scottish resistance. On the other hand, Pembroke and Oxford had track records principally of failure and defeat.

Where did they come from?

It follows that combatants came from all over the country, but seldom did either side deploy all their potential manpower. Great noblemen were strong in many different areas – York in Ireland, Wales, Yorkshire and East Anglia, his son Gloucester in the north and in south Wales – and their forces could



Richmond Castle today, showing its formidable natural defences across the River Swale. (Heritage Image Partnership)

not easily be united. The brevity of campaigns, which militated against this, was deliberate, for it was generally more important to deny complete mobilisation to opponents than to turn out all one's own supporters.

Particular groups mattered at different times. The Calais garrison and men of Kent were the foundation of Warwick's three invasions in 1459, 1460 and 1469. The Nevilles' northerners, especially the men of Richmondshire in Yorkshire, played important roles at the first battle of St Albans (1455), in Robin of Redesdale's uprising of 1469, in 1470 (twice), in 1471, underpinned Gloucester's usurpation in 1483, and were the apparently unresponsive focus of recruitment in 1486–87. Supporters of Lancastrian northerners, especially the Percy earls of Northumberland, supplied most of Queen Margaret's armies in 1460–61 and Northumbrian resistance until 1464. It was supposedly the 4th Earl of Northumberland's neutralisation of such men that enabled Edward IV's invasion to get off the ground in 1471. York, the greatest of Welsh marcher lords, relied in 1455 and 1459 on his Welsh tenants, who were surely the source of Edward IV's victorious army at Mortimer's Cross; Jasper Tudor in 1461–71 also relied repeatedly (but always unsuccessfully) on Welsh resources. Men from the West Country, supporters of the Courtenays and Beauforts, mattered in 1460–61 and 1470–71, while Cornishmen rebelled twice in 1497. The Stanleys' Cheshiremen and Lancastrians intervened decisively at Bosworth. Yet we know little of the origins of most combatants. In 1485 and 1487, it appears, fewer Englishmen turned out.

The brass of William Catesby, by the notorious henchman of Richard III, and his wife Margaret Zouche. (Geoffrey Wheeler Collection)

Force for change

The initial outbreak

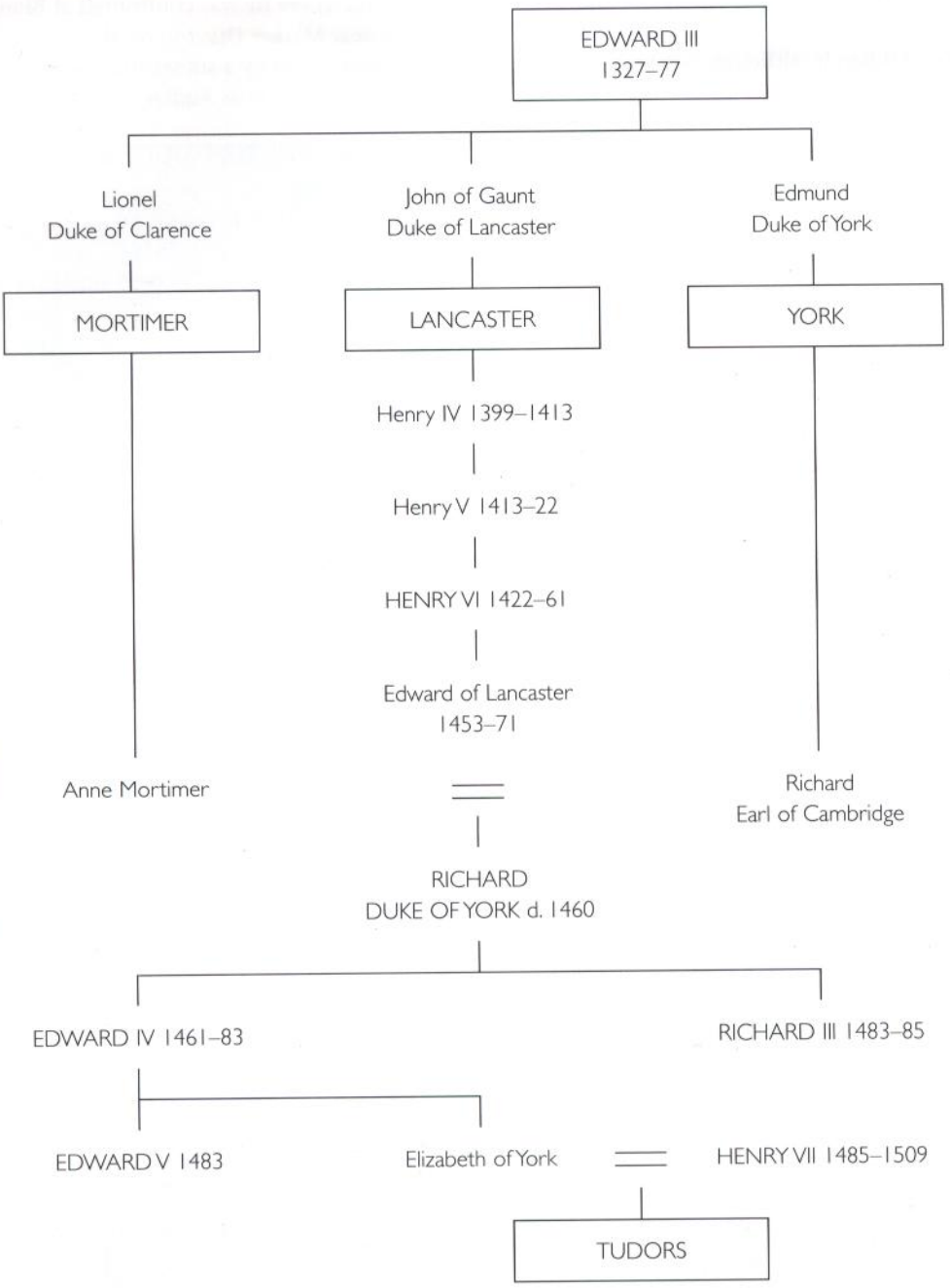
Contemporaries had high hopes of the Loveday at St Paul's – Henry VI's reconciliation of the warring factions on 25 March 1458 – but it did not endure. There appear to have been a series of minor frictions, misunderstandings and attempted reconciliations; perhaps also a more substantial, but undocumented, plot. However that may be, the Yorkist lords were charged with unspecified offences in a great council at Coventry in June 1459 where, having been convicted, York and Warwick were again forgiven, and allowed to renew their promises to behave. They suffered no other penalties, such as loss of offices and were free to resume their lives as loyal (but not special) subjects if they wished. On leaving, they immediately embarked on a new rebellion, in which they claimed to be the king's true lovers – loyal subjects anxious to clear the slur of unjust accusations and to reform the government in the public interest. Control of the government was the key objective. Their manifestos were designed to attract wider support, but they were prepared to go it alone. York was to recruit in Wales, Salisbury in the north, and Warwick in Calais, their agreed rendezvous being not far from the king's base at Kenilworth. We need not doubt the later statement of the rebels that they had not wished to fight: as in 1455, they hoped to coerce the king and his civilian court with overwhelming military force.

Such an elaborate plan involved time to recruit in different areas and to bring the component parts together; it also demanded

Yorkist Earls flee from Henry VI (on throne with sceptre) at Ludford to Calais, 1459.
(The British Library)

secrecy. It is unlikely that the king's advisers anticipated the insurrection or knew the plan, since no obstacles hindered Warwick's march from Kent through London to the West Midlands, although Salisbury's mobilisation in Yorkshire did come to their notice. The king shadowed the earl's progress south-westwards, diverting him through Cheshire, where he was confronted at Blore Heath near Market Drayton on the Shrewsbury road by a substantial force commanded by Lords Audley and Dudley.

Pedigree 2: Outline Pedigree of the Lancastrian, Yorkist, and Tudor kings



At this stage, remember, Salisbury had done nothing irrevocable – nothing from which he could not withdraw and that imperilled his allegiance – but not to fight would stymie the whole plan. Unable to negotiate his opponents out of the way, on 23 September Salisbury attacked and defeated his opponents – the Yorkists had struck the first blow and

the way was clear for Salisbury to join up with York as originally planned; so did Warwick. So long had the process taken, however, that King Henry was able to recruit a formidable army of his own so that the Yorkists were obliged to retreat to Ludford. A last stand was rendered impracticable by the desertion of the Calais contingent and so the Yorkist nobles deserted their followers.

Once again Henry VI was prepared to offer terms to the Yorkist leaders. They however made good their escape – York fled to Ireland, where he was Earl of Ulster and a past lieutenant; his son Edward, Salisbury and Warwick went to Calais, where Warwick was captain and royal keeper of the seas. In each case they were well received, took control and could be winkled out only by force. Meantime the 'Parliament of Devils' at Coventry rightly condemned them to forfeiture as traitors, but the king, still more lenient than his advisers, was again prepared to compromise and forgive. The Yorkists repudiated their sentences, rejected all such offers and planned to return by force. The government was obliged to recover Calais by force, sending first Henry Duke of Somerset, who was marooned at Guines Castle, and then Lord Rivers, whose expeditionary force at Sandwich and he himself were captured by a combined

Margaret of Anjou, queen to Henry VI, who took up the leadership of the Lancastrians against the Yorkists late in 1460. (Topham Picturepoint)

operation. Warwick's command both of the only professional English garrison and the king's fleet was not surprisingly decisive. Henry could not afford effective naval or military defences against the threatened invasions, which could have fallen almost anywhere around the coast from Lancashire to East Anglia. Skilful Yorkist propaganda asserted that they were blameless, that they were loyal to the king, and that they wished only to rid him of his evil councillors. In June 1460 the Yorkists landed unopposed at Sandwich, progressed triumphantly through Kent into London, from which the king had withdrawn, and pursued him to his encampment outside Northampton. The royal army was defeated on 10 July at the battle of Northampton and Henry's principal supporters were eliminated. The king himself was captured, brought back to London with every sign of respect and a new parliament was convened to cancel the sentences against the Yorkists.

Had the Yorkists been content to control the government on Henry VI's behalf, York could have secured the permanent Third Protectorate that he desired, and his opponents, as on both previous occasions, might have accepted his authority as legitimate. Instead he now laid claim to the Crown, as the rightful heir of Edward III through Lionel Duke of Clarence, the elder brother of the Lancastrian ancestor John of Gaunt. Even a parliament packed with York's supporters would not consent to the removal of a king who had reigned for almost forty years. The *Accord* that was agreed left Henry on the throne, with York to govern, but set aside the king's son Edward of Lancaster in favour of York himself. The *Accord* brought not peace but war, creating a party for Queen Margaret of Anjou, Henry VI's consort, and their son, who had taken refuge in the north. York's own attempt to suppress them failed on 30 December 1460 in his disastrous defeat and death at Wakefield. On 17 February the second battle of St Albans restored the person of Henry VI, the key figurehead, to Lancastrian hands. Henceforth the Yorkists could no longer convincingly claim to be ruling on his behalf – both sides had wrongs to avenge and neither side could afford to compromise, tolerate the other or rely on its doubtful mercy. Edward IV's decision to raise the stakes even further, by declaring himself king, was his only way out. Towton was the decisive battle.

The second outbreak

Edward used his first reign (1461–70) to establish his government, to secure foreign recognition and to crush remaining Lancastrian resistance, the task being completed in 1468. Henry VI was captured in 1465 and imprisoned in the Tower. His queen and son retired to St Michel in Bar, one of her father's properties, where they maintained a shadowy government with Sir John Fortescue as chancellor in exile. Warwick was the man behind the throne: a famous joke by the Calais garrison was that there were two rulers in England, one being Warwick, and the other whose name they had forgotten. As the teenaged king grew up, he was bound to assert himself, being naturally anxious to make himself king of the whole nation and to look to others beyond the faction that had him king, to others apart from Warwick and his brothers, who had been exceptionally rewarded. The advancement of the queen's family, the Wydevilles, and their kinsmen, the Herberts, was achieved partly through manipulating the marriage market, which denied appropriate spouses to Warwick's daughters and heiresses and gave the earl a legitimate complaint. The key issue that came to divide them, however, was foreign policy. Warwick apparently recognised that the Hundred Years' War was lost and wished to ally with Louis XI of France against Burgundy, the third great state of northern Europe that included the modern Benelux countries. Edward, however, aspired to resume the Hundred Years' War and allied himself to Burgundy. Several shadowy clashes and reconciliations culminated in Warwick's marriage, without Edward's permission, of his daughter to the king's brother George Duke of Clarence at Calais on 11 July 1469, and his attempt to seize control of the government.

It is apparent that this had been carefully planned. An uprising was arranged by Warwick's northern retainers, which was disguised as a popular call for reform, led by one 'Robin of Redesdale' and publicised by a supposedly popular manifesto modelled on those of 1459–60, probably originating from Warwick himself. The earl again advanced from Calais through Kent and London. The Earl of Pembroke's Welsh supporters of the king were defeated at Edgecote near Banbury. Edward himself was arrested by Warwick's brother, Archbishop Neville, and imprisoned, while Rivers, Pembroke and Devon, his principal favourites, were murdered. Warwick governed on the king's behalf. The models of 1455 and 1460 are obvious. However Warwick could not maintain control and was obliged to release the king, forcing a compromise on both parties. Whatever the king's long-term intentions, Warwick's objectives remained; and the Lincolnshire Rebellion that he orchestrated next led inescapably to the subsequent conflicts.

The third outbreak

Barnet and Tewkesbury were decisive battles, with Warwick and the Lancastrians being annihilated, so that for the next twelve years Edward IV was more secure on his throne than he had ever been. His second reign ended in 1483 with his natural death and the automatic succession of his young son, Edward V. The Yorkist dynasty was secure.

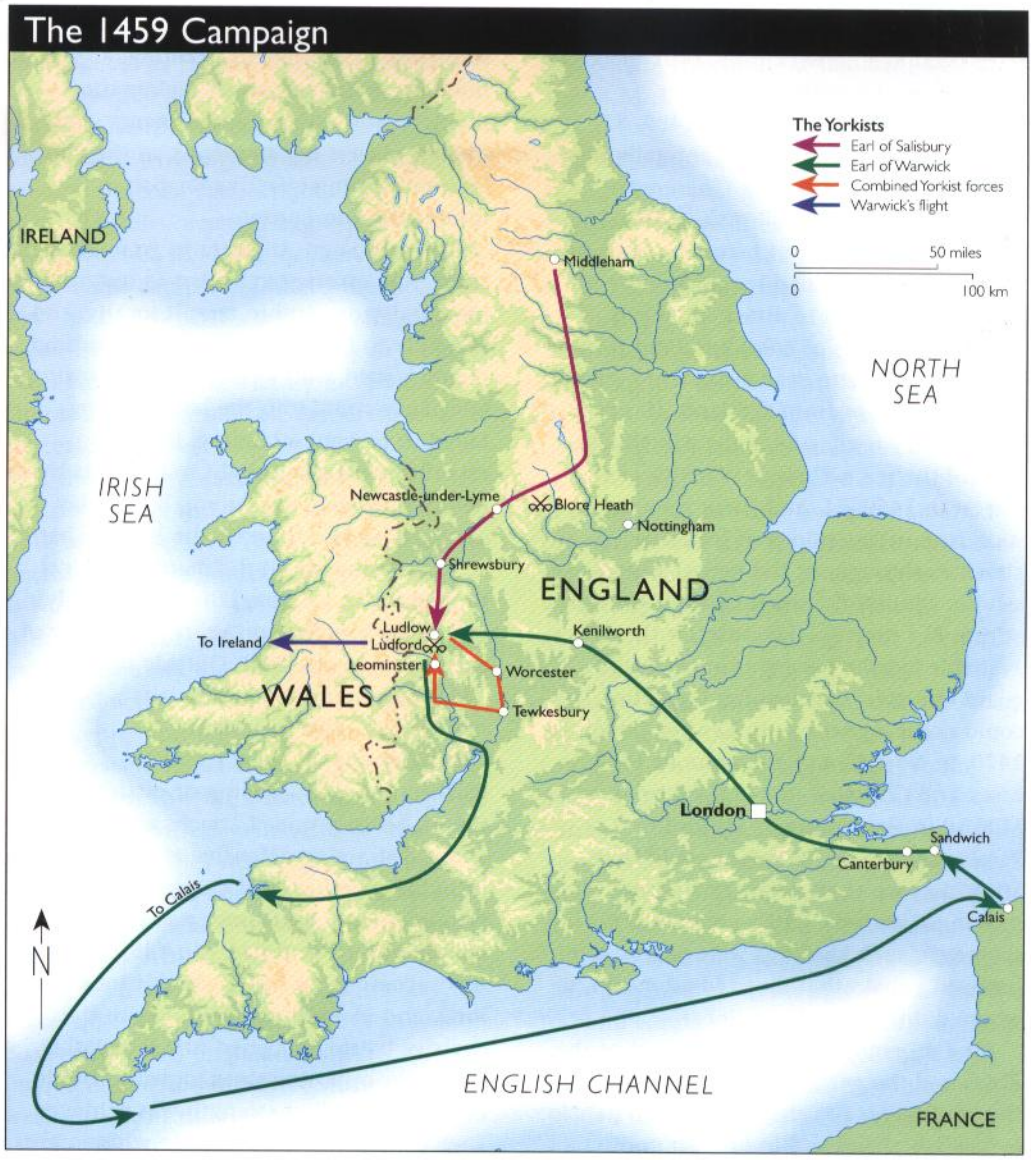
Ten weeks later Edward V had lost his throne to his uncle Richard III. It used to be supposed that factional disputes involving the queen's family, the Wydevilles, the late king's chamberlain Lord Hastings, and his brother Richard Duke of Gloucester carried over into Edward V's reign and explained at least to some extent what happened. The Wydevilles wanted to convert their kinship to the young Edward V into power and to use it to settle old scores with Hastings. Perhaps Richard's usurpation as Richard III was a defensive measure, a pre-emptive strike against his Wydeville foes, although such explanations now appear unlikely for Gloucester and the Wydevilles were not at odds before Edward IV's death. It was Gloucester who was the aggressor at all stages: it was he who first employed violence and shed blood; and Gloucester staged two coups d'états. The first at Stony Stratford wrested the young king from his Wydeville entourage and enabled Gloucester to become Lord Protector, albeit temporarily; the second, on 13 June, destroyed Lord Hastings, who was beheaded without trial. Edward V's uncle Earl Rivers and half-brother Richard Grey were also executed. Having discredited the young king's hereditary claim by questioning the legitimacy both of him and his father Edward IV, Richard acceded to the Crown on 26 June and was crowned less than a fortnight later. Unfortunately his arguments failed to convince or to carry the Yorkist establishment with him so that henceforth they opposed him and proceeded to extraordinary lengths, even backing Henry Tudor, to get rid of him. Thus Richard's usurpation created a wholly new civil war, with all subsequent events stemming from that.

Dash to battle

Overview

The Wars of the Roses were not continuous – thirteen campaigns were spread across 30 years, in 1459, 1460, 1460–61, 1462, 1463, 1464, 1469, 1470 (2), 1471, 1483, 1485 and 1487. Before, in 1452 and 1455, and afterwards there were coups d'état actual and attempted, abortive plots, local insurrections, sieges and raids (1461–68, 1469 (2), 1473–74, 1486, 1489, 1497), private wars and private battles. Most campaigns were decisive, ending in complete victory for one side or another, the annihilation or flight of the vanquished, the total scotching of plots, and the suppression of rebellions. Wars were brief, lasting generally only a few months or a few weeks. The longest, from mid-September 1459 to 29 March 1461, fell into three distinct phases separated by months of actual or apparent peace. The

The battle of Northampton. The victorious Edward Earl of March (later Edward IV) kneels before the captured Henry VI outside his tent. (The British Library)



The Neville Earls join York at Ludlow, Warwick from Calais and Salisbury (after brushing aside the Lancastrians at Blore Heath) from Middleham. Advancing to Worcester, they were confronted by Henry VI, withdrew via Tewkesbury and Leominster to Ludford, just south of Ludlow, and then dispersed. York fled to Ireland and the three Yorkist Earls to Calais.

most protracted hostilities were possible only because there existed foreign refuges – in Calais, France, Scotland, Ireland, Burgundy and Brittany – where the defeated could retire, regroup and plan their return.

Such bases and the backing of foreign powers explain why the defeated were so often able to return and even overthrow their conquerors in the extraordinary reversals of fortune that were so characteristic of the Wars of the Roses. There were at least eight major invasions from overseas, in 1459, 1460, 1469, 1470, 1471, 1483, 1485 and 1487, five of which – in 1460, 1469, 1470, 1471 and 1485 – succeeded in capturing or overthrowing the government and three (1470, 1471, 1485)

in changing both king and dynasty. The Scots occupied Berwick from 1461 to 1483 and crossed the northern frontier repeatedly in 1461–63 and in 1480–82. Lesser raids occurred almost annually in the 1460s and in 1472–74. There were series of northern rebellions in 1469–71 and in 1486–92. Never before or since has the kingdom of England seemed more of an island, exposed to attack anywhere along 2,000 miles of coast and land frontier and nowhere more than a day from enemy bases overseas or from Scotland. Hard though they tried, no regime was able to control the sea, although Warwick came closest in 1459–61, and there were no successful interceptions of seaborne attackers throughout the period. Once ashore, admittedly, small expeditions were at risk, but they quickly outgrew the forces available locally. No government could guard effectively against landings that could occur anywhere, in Kent or Devon in 1470, in Norfolk and Yorkshire in 1471, in Essex and Cornwall in 1472–74, or at Milford in Hampshire or Milford in Pembrokeshire in 1485. Nor could they afford to keep their defences alert for prolonged periods. Often enough, moreover, such landings were part of multi-pronged attacks that diverted attention, so where did the real threat lie?

One difference between the Wars of the Roses and the periods before and after was the willingness of foreign powers to dabble in English affairs and in English politics. Their actions were self-interested, arising principally from the rivalry of the great north European powers of France (and its Scottish ally) and Burgundy. The Wars of the Roses were part of the struggle between France and Burgundy that was fought on English soil. Merely providing the shipping enabled Louis XI, Charles the Bold and Margaret of Burgundy to exploit pre-existing political divisions within England.

A handful of Burgundian handgunners in 1461 and a few thousand French (1485) and German professionals (1487) exerted disproportionate force against amateur armies that fell short of continental standards of equipment, training, and numbers. Relatively small diplomatic, financial and military investments paid foreign powers big dividends, at the very least preventing effective English intervention in Europe.

The campaigns themselves were very short. Aggressors sought first to outgrow local resistance and to recruit locally, and secondly to force a battle with the ruling regime's field army before all those owing allegiance could join the king. Having failed to prevent a landing, the establishment also sought to crush its rivals before they were too strong. Both sides always hastened to settle the issue in battle, so that neither faced the major logistical problems of accommodating and supplying armies for months and years in the face of the enemy in the field. Outside the years 1461–64, when the Lancastrians maintained their toehold in Northumberland, there was little garrisoning or blockading of castles or towns. Multi-pronged attacks were as much about distracting defensive efforts as bringing together all the aggressor's resources; only four times was such a combination attempted – in 1455, when it was successful, in 1459, when it took too long, and in 1469 and 1470, when the decisive battle happened first. Inevitably, therefore, opposing sides joined in battle before their fullest strength was achieved. Each preferred known risks to what might have been, hence there were no semi-permanent frontiers between rival spheres of influence, no gains or losses in one another's territory and no stalemates between rival front lines. Several times efforts were made to settle quarrels by negotiation – in 1455, 1459, 1460, 1470 and 1471 – always by securing the same concessions as were sought by force, but agreement was never achieved. It was unusual for either side to refuse battle, although the Scots did at Alnwick in 1463 and Warwick did at Coventry in 1471, and rarer still for such policies to succeed. Four

times the weaker party acknowledged its weakness by fleeing abroad. These were wise decisions in retrospect, since in each case the vanquished returned triumphant within two years. The original strategy, even in these cases, as in all others, whether aggressive or defensive, was to force a decisive battle early in the campaign. Indeed there were no drawn battles and no commander ever withdrew his defeated army in good order from the field. Victory in battle almost always fulfilled all the victor's strategic objectives.

If the strategy was always offensive, this was not always true of the tactics, which were often defensive. Armies were typically organised in three or four divisions. At Towton the Yorkists advanced in column, with a vanguard, second and third line, but more commonly the divisions were stretched across the field, with a right wing, centre and left wing, sometimes with a reserve or (as at the second battle of St Albans, Towton, Barnet and Tewkesbury) with detachments on the flank. Crucial roles were played by late-comers at Towton and Bosworth when the Duke of Norfolk and Sir William Stanley respectively arrived late on the scene. At Barnet both armies advanced, while at Wakefeld (1460), Edgecote (1469) and Bosworth (1485) preparations were incomplete before highly confusing battles were joined. At the first battle of St Albans (1455), Blore Heath (1459), Northampton (1460), the second battle of St Albans and Towton (1461), Barnet (1471) and Bosworth (1485) one army took a defensive stance, sometimes behind entrenchments and artillery – that all but the last were defeated suggests an advantage in attack. In three other instances, however, at Wakefield, Empingham and Tewkesbury, rash aggression, beyond defences or before all forces were available, proved fatal.

Such generalisations oversimplify – the size of an army mattered, but was seldom decisive; favourable ground helped although several times flanks were inadequately secured. At Ludford (1459) and at Northampton (1460), in 1470 and at Bosworth (1485) it was treachery that was decisive. What marked Edward IV out as the best general was his repeated success, the result as much of his decisiveness and aggression as the conspicuous superiority of his tactics.

Armies were rarely brought to battle unwillingly – they fought where and when they did because this was what both commanders wished. Sometimes indeed, at Northampton, the second battle of St Albans and Towton, one army selected the terrain well in advance and waited for the other to arrive and attack. Armies would draw up in line opposite one another with the troops on foot; aristocrats and others with horses normally dismounted. At Towton Warwick allegedly dismissed his horse to signify his willingness to fight to the death. Battle would commence with a barrage of artillery and archery, which caused many casualties and which was so much to the advantage of the Yorkists at Towton and at Tewkesbury that the Lancastrian armies were obliged to leave their prepared positions and attack. Hand-to-hand conflict would ensue, although not always all along the line. Once the battle was joined, rival commanders could do little to influence the results except when they committed their reserves; Richard III at Bosworth hoped to kill his rival and forced his way directly at him. Once one side had the upper hand, the other was almost inevitably routed and scattered, everybody seeking to save themselves by fleeing the battlefield, concealment or sanctuary, many being slain in flight. Only after the second battle of St Albans was a defeated army reconstituted even in part to fight again.

Precisely where the battles were fought is generally unknown. Plaques and monuments, as at Blore Heath, Towton, Barnet and Stoke, may reflect local

Queen Margaret (top) advances southwards to St Albans, where she defeats Warwick (17 February). Following the defeat of the Welsh Lancastrians at Mortimers Cross (2–3 February), Edward Duke of York beats her into London, where he is recognised as King Edward IV (4 March). Margaret retreats northwards to Yorkshire, where Edward pursues her and wins the decisive battle of Towton (29 March).

traditions, but they all date from long after the events. Past historians have produced detailed maps of each battle of the Wars of the Roses, often contradictory; almost all are based on scanty contemporary accounts, written years later, sometimes long afterwards, normally by non-soldiers who were not at the battle. These have been compared to the surviving landscape and rationalised to fit it, yet the landscape has changed. The marsh (redemore) at Bosworth has been drained. Where are the small hedged fields and the hollow ways that the *Arrival* records at Tewkesbury? The proposed sites for the battle of Bosworth, at Ambion Hill, Dadlington, Sutton Cheney

(Leics.) or at Merevale (War.) are seven miles apart. The battlefields of Wakefield, Edgecote and Empingham are vague indeed. We cannot be sure precisely where Warwick set out his lines of battle at the second battle of St Albans in 1461 and at Barnet in 1471. Archaeology so far has been little help – battlefields were evidently combed by contemporaries with extraordinary thoroughness for anything of value, especially if metallic, and corpses were robbed and stripped before they were interred. Sometimes we can be more certain – for example, at Blore Heath, Northampton and at Towton, where a concentration of metal-detected finds indicates the approximate location, albeit in the adjacent parish of Saxton. Even in these cases, however, the respective sizes of the opposing forces, their precise orientation and movements, the structures of commands and locations of divisions, are much less certain than one would wish. This discussion focuses therefore on the campaigns and on the strategies, rather than the tactics.

The campaigns

Precursors: Dartford and St Albans

The first major campaign was preceded by Richard Duke of York's two attempted coups. On the first occasion, in 1452, York had raised his supporters in the Welsh borders, declared at Shrewsbury his intention to seize power, and progressed south-westwards towards London. Attracting less forces for him than against him, he was diverted around London and capitulated at Dartford. The preliminary stage of his next attempt in 1455 is concealed from us, deliberately. York's Welshmen, Warwick's midlanders, and Salisbury's northerners were already at arms and together at Royston in Bedfordshire before York despatched his ultimata to London to the king and intercepted King Henry at St Albans on his progress to a great council at Leicester. Hardened northern borderers, including archers and artillery, outnumbered, outgunned and overwhelmed the king's civilian administrators and ill-prepared courtiers. Temporarily thwarted by barricades at the town gates, Warwick broke through the houses into the market place, and cut down his principal opponents (Somerset, Northumberland and Clifford). Henry VI was wounded by an arrow. No more than five days had passed between the initial signs of trouble and the first battle of St Albans (22 May). Victorious, York took power (his Second Protectorate), Parliament perversely declaring him blameless and condemning the fallen lords as the aggressors. The first battle of St Albans was the model for numerous later coups, several of which also succeeded.

The 1459 Campaign

The great council at Coventry in June 1459 sought to bring the Yorkist peers to order, but provoked them to a further uprising. Intending to seize control of the king and hence his government, the plan was to unite their forces as in 1455, but bringing together such disparate forces presumed secrecy and no opposition, neither of which happened. Salisbury's march from Middleham (Yorks.) was diverted westwards and then blocked at Blore Heath. Having defeated his opponents (23 September) – Audley being killed and Dudley captured – Salisbury met York at Ludlow (Salop.). Warwick meantime crossed from Calais with members of the royal garrison commanded by Sir Andrew Trollope, almost certainly on horseback, and marched via London (20 September) to the west Midlands (21 September) and Ludlow. Emerging therefrom and protesting their peaceful intention to set the government to rights, the Yorkists advanced to Worcester, before retreating before the king's advance in stages via Tewkesbury and Leominster to Ludlow again. Blore Heath had discredited their claims to be loyal subjects in pursuit of the public good. All the king's overtures of peace failed, because the Yorkists still

insisted that all their demands be conceded. At the last, confronted at Ludford across the River Teme by the king's superior forces in battle array and certain that any resistance would brand them traitors, Trollope and the men of Calais defected. During the night of 12/13 October the Yorkist leaders followed, York to take refuge in Ireland and the earls of March, Salisbury and Warwick in Calais, where they were well received by the garrison. The king spared the rank and file, though some were fined and others attainted.

The 1460 Campaign

Henry VI was willing to commute the sentences against the Yorkists, but his overtures were again rejected. Repeated efforts to winkle the Yorkist earls out of Calais failed: with the support of the garrison and control of the sea – he had been the king's keeper of the seas since 1456 – Warwick repelled and cut off his replacement Somerset, struck pre-emptively against a force in preparation against him at Sandwich, and captured its commander, Lord Rivers; he even visited York in Ireland to agree the strategy for the next campaign. Warwick's activities were a model of contemporary combined operations. Whereas the substitute navy impressed by Henry VI and commanded by the Duke of Exeter as Lord Admiral was unpaid, mutinous, and dared not take on Warwick's squadron, it was the Yorkists at Calais who acted, although York, in fact, held back. Landing unopposed at Sandwich on 26 June, the three Yorkist earls encountered no opposition and much support from the men of Kent and London where they were admitted to the City, causing four Lancastrian peers to retreat into the Tower. The king, who was in the north Midlands, summoned his supporters to Northampton, where Warwick and March marched to meet him. The royal army was strongly entrenched south of the town across a bend of the River Nene. Again the Yorkists were uncompromising in their demands, which the king could not accept. Preliminary mediation having failed, the Yorkists attacked all along the line in conditions that were too wet for effective use of the Lancastrian guns. A change of sides by Lord Grey of Ruthin on the Lancastrian right flank enabled the Yorkists to break through and roll up the Lancastrian army in a few minutes. There may have been as few as 300 casualties, most of high rank, though others were drowned attempting to cross the river. The Lancastrian peers Buckingham, Shrewsbury and Egremont were cut down and King Henry was captured in his tent. Returning to London, where Salisbury had by now captured the Tower, Parliament was induced to overturn the sentences of the previous year. York's claim to immediate kingship was rejected: Henry VI would continue to reign, York would rule on his behalf (his Third Protectorate), and on Henry's death York would succeed.

The 1460-61 Campaign

Queen Margaret of Anjou and other Lancastrians refused to accept this *Accord*, which disinherited Henry's son Prince Edward. The king's half-brother Jasper Tudor, Earl of Pembroke, was active in Wales, whilst Margaret herself retreated to the north and based herself at York. There she was joined by the West Country men led by Somerset and Devon. She also negotiated for support from the Scots. York despatched his eldest son, Edward Earl of March, to Wales, whilst he himself and Salisbury repressed the northerners. Arriving at Sandal (Yorks.), which proved inadequately provisioned, they found the Lancastrian forces, though dispersed, to be much larger than expected. Obliged to sally forth, they were crushed at the battle of Wakefield (30 December 1460) in which York, Salisbury and their sons Edmund and Thomas were all killed in battle or executed soon afterwards. The topography and other details of the battle are highly confused.

Margaret's victory at Wakefield emboldened her to march southwards on

London, where the Yorkist regime still held Henry VI and governed in his name. Warwick, now the senior Yorkist commander, drew up a defensive line north-east of St Albans across the two roads south from Luton (Beds.). The best of contemporary defensive technology – cannon, handguns, pallisades with loopholes, nets with nails, caltrops, pikes – made up for the inadequacies of a large untrained force. Warwick's intention was to shoot to pieces a Lancastrian frontal assault down the main roads, but unfortunately the Lancastrian field commander manoeuvered with speed and decision, traversing eastwards from Dunstable and then southwards by night to St Albans, where he overran Warwick's outlying defences on 17 February 1461, and fell on his left flank. Although Warwick tried to realign his forces and counter-attacked, the terrain was against him, his army lost its cohesion and melted away. Several prominent Yorkists were taken and executed, Henry VI himself being captured, while Warwick and Norfolk withdrew westwards and abandoned London to the Lancastrians.

London lay exposed before Queen Margaret, but fearful of bad publicity and anxious to negotiate admittance to the City, she allowed her opportunity to pass. Meantime York's son Edward, now Duke of York, had marched from Gloucester to intercept the Welsh Lancastrians under Pembroke and Wiltshire on their march eastwards. Meeting at the crossroads of Mortimer's Cross (2–3 February 1461), near his marcher castle of Wigmore and not far from Ludlow, Edward was the victor in an obscure and probably small-scale battle distinguished principally by the strange atmospheric conditions: apparently three suns were observed, a good omen for the Yorkists, whose emblem was the sunburst or sun in splendour. Proceeding westwards, Edward met up with Warwick in Oxfordshire and entered London on 27 February. No longer in possession of Henry VI and hence unable convincingly to claim to be acting on his behalf, the Yorkists were obliged to legitimise their regime by laying claim to the Crown themselves – Duke Edward thus became King Edward IV (4 March 1461).

Margaret meantime withdrew northwards, thereby abandoning much of the kingdom to her own opponents, and drew up her army in line of battle at Towton south of Tadcaster in Yorkshire to await the Yorkist response. Edward followed slowly, to maximise his support, forcing a crossing over the River Aire at Ferrybridge (28 March 1461). Although we cannot be certain of the numbers on each side, the Lancastrians containing more noblemen, the battle of Towton (29 March) was probably the largest of the Wars of the Roses. It was windy, cold and there was even a snowstorm. The battle was hard fought and lasted for most of the day. Having advanced within bowshot, the Yorkists showered the enemy with arrows, adverse winds preventing the Lancastrians from replying effectively. Responding by a headlong charge, the Lancastrians initated a lengthy hand-to-hand struggle, pushing the Yorkists back and outflanking them with men concealed in woodland to the right. The late arrival of Yorkist reserves under Norfolk first redressed and then reversed the balance so that eventually the Lancastrians broke. Most of their leaders were killed or executed. The fugitives were pursued for ten miles, some drowning in the rivers, the bridges having been destroyed, and others being cut down by their pursuers. A mass grave of 38 such victims has been excavated at Towton Hall.

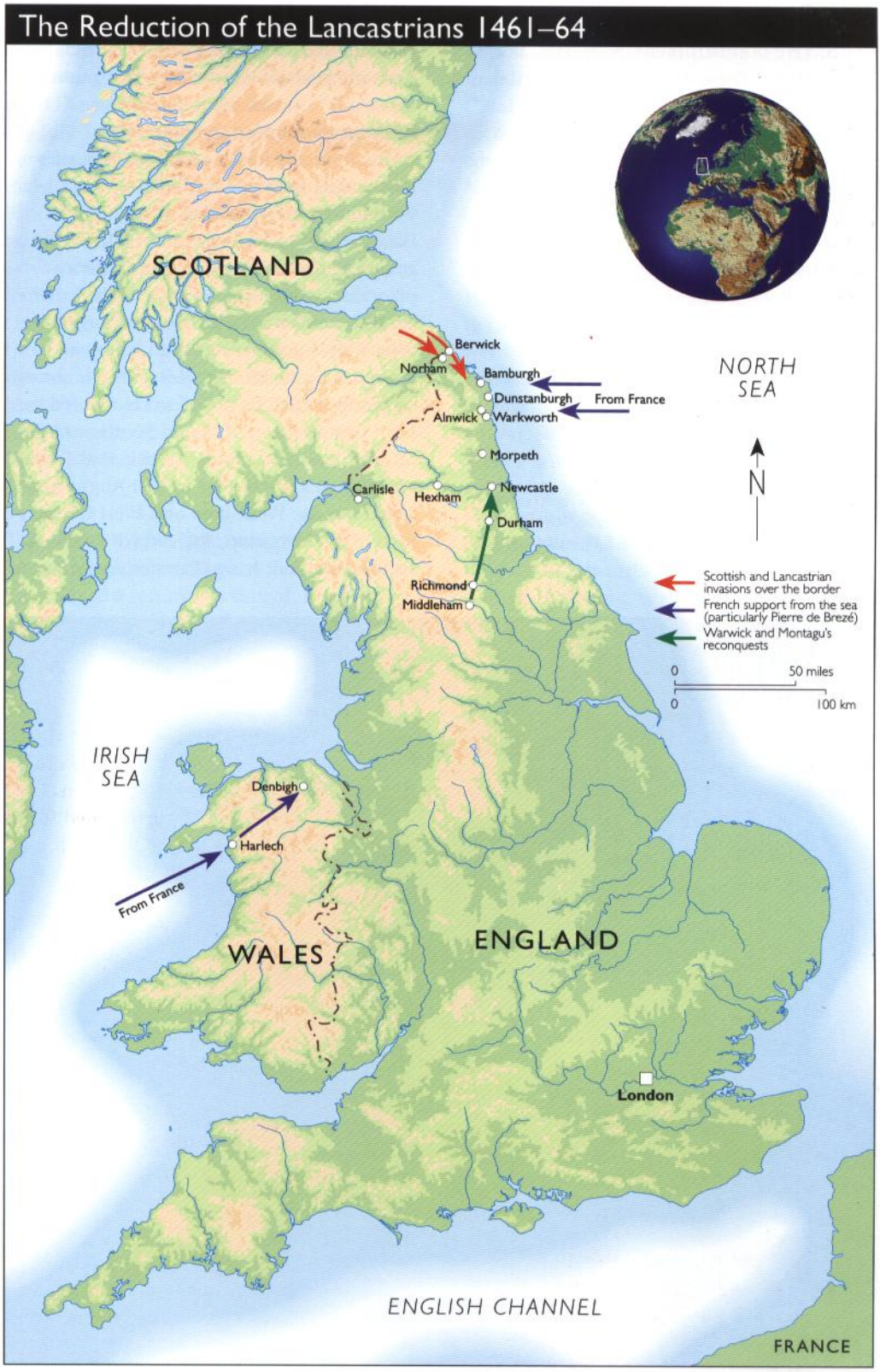
Lancastrian Resistance 1461–68

Towton secured the throne for Edward IV and his Yorkist dynasty. There were many Lancastrians like Lord Rivers who realised that their cause was irretrievably lost, although a handful fought on. Henry VI, Queen Margaret and their son remained at liberty. Foreign powers, such as Scotland and France, were sympathetic and offered help, admittedly with conditions: the

The battle of Mortimer's Cross 1461. The victorious Edward Earl of March, later Edward IV, stands in the centre. The prophetic signs seen at the time, three golden suns (of York) shining through three golden crowns, are shown above. (The British Library)

surrender of Berwick to the Scots and of the Channel Isles to France. Several noblemen and gentry, in particular several northerners, fought on. Edward IV, at first in person, then through his deputies Warwick and Warwick's brother John, Lord Montagu, quickly quelled resistance west of the Pennines, but Northumberland proved much more recalcitrant. This was Percy country, two Percy earls of Northumberland having been slain in 1455 and 1461, and was easily reinforced across the border by the Scots, and from the sea by Pierre de Brezé's 800 Frenchmen. Campaigning so far from base, often in the winter, strained Warwick's considerable logistical abilities to the full: more munitions and supplies, he wrote to King Edward, were preferable to more men. On 5 January 1463 Warwick's bedraggled forces outside Alnwick were confronted by the Franco-Scottish army of de Brezé and the Earl of Angus, which however contented itself with removing the Lancastrian garrison. Thrice the Lancastrians recovered the coastal castles from the Yorkists and thrice they were ousted, finally in 1464 following the decisive defeat of the paltry Lancastrian field army at Hedgeley Moor (25 April 1464) and at Hexham (10 May). Since the castles were never adequately supplied, they were apparently starved out rather than stormed, although the

After Towton, the Lancastrians held out in coastal castles in Northumberland and in North Wales, which were repeatedly supplied and reinforced from the sea by the French, and in Northumberland's case, by the Scots. Several campaigns in Northumberland culminated decisively in Yorkist victories at Hedgeley Moor and Hexham in 1464. Harlech held out until 1468.


The Reduction of the Lancastrians 1461–64
SCOTLAND
Berwick
Norham
Bamburgh
Dunstanburgh
From France
Alnwick
Warkworth
Morpeth
Carlisle
Hexham
Newcastle
Durham
Richmond
Middleham
NORTH SEA
N
Scottish and Lancastrian invasions over the border
French support from the sea (particularly Pierre de Brezé)
Warwick and Montagu's reconquests
0 50 miles
0 100 km
IRISH SEA
Denbigh
Harlech
From France
WALES
ENGLAND
London
ENGLISH CHANNEL
FRANCE

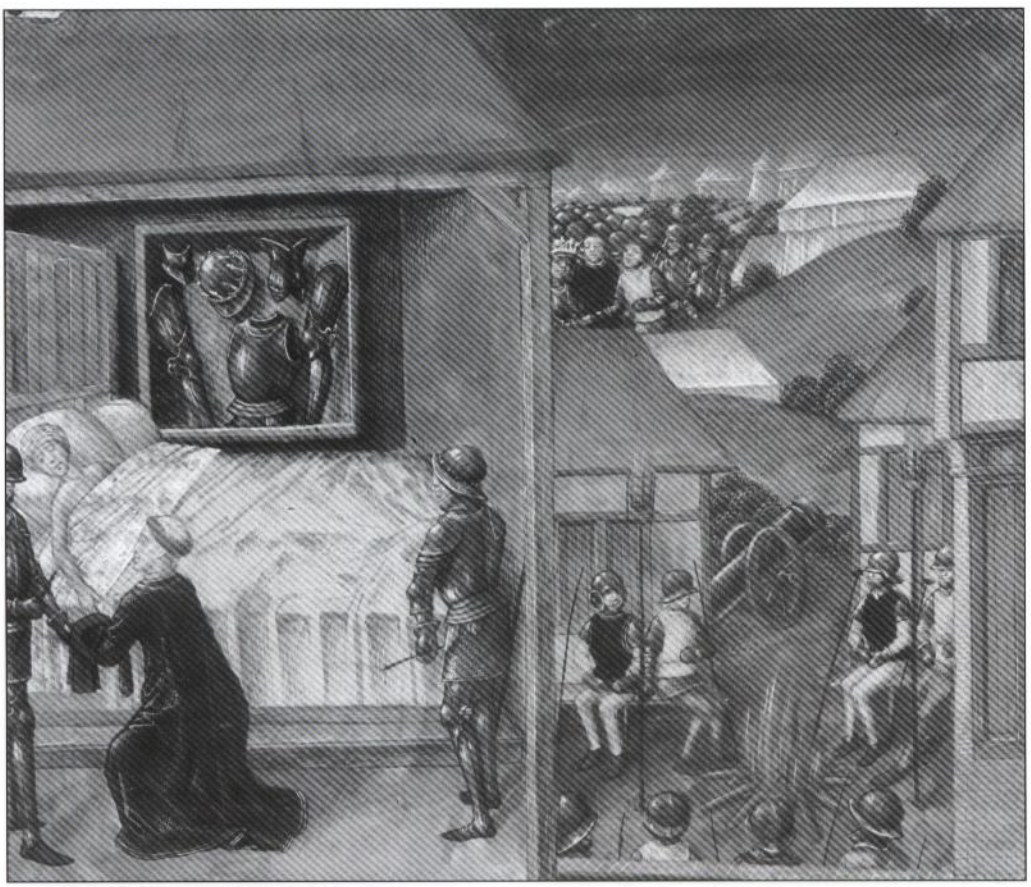
surrender of Bamburgh in 1464 followed its destructive bombardment. Somerset, Lords Moleyns and Roos, and other Lancastrian aristocrats were executed.

Resistance at Harlech and at Mont Orgueil in Jersey persisted. Harlech was impregnable to direct assault and was readily supplied and reinforced from the sea. A succession of commanders failed to capture it before William Lord Herbert (henceforth Earl of Pembroke) succeeded in 1468. Several times Jasper Tudor had brought French reinforcements, which in 1465 penetrated as far as Denbigh, where they were defeated.

After his defeat at Edgecote, Edward IV is arrested in his bed at Olney by Archbishop Neville, whose brother Warwick, Clarence, and their soldiers appear on the right.

The 1469 Campaign

Warwick and the Neville family dominated the early years of the dynasty, but gradually Edward IV asserted his independence. Warwick denounced the king's evil councillors and found an ally in Edward's brother George Duke of Clarence, who wanted to marry Warwick's daughter Isabel. It was to take control of Edward's government that Warwick and Clarence planned a coup d'état in 1469, to be in two parts. A northern uprising was arranged, ostensibly a popular rebellion led by a figurehead called Robin of Redesdale, almost certainly Warwick's northern retinue led by John Conyers, son of Warwick's steward of Middleham. It was to defeat this that Edward abandoned a pilgrimage in East Anglia and called out the Welshmen and West Country men of his favourites, the earls of Pembroke and Devon. Following Clarence's marriage to

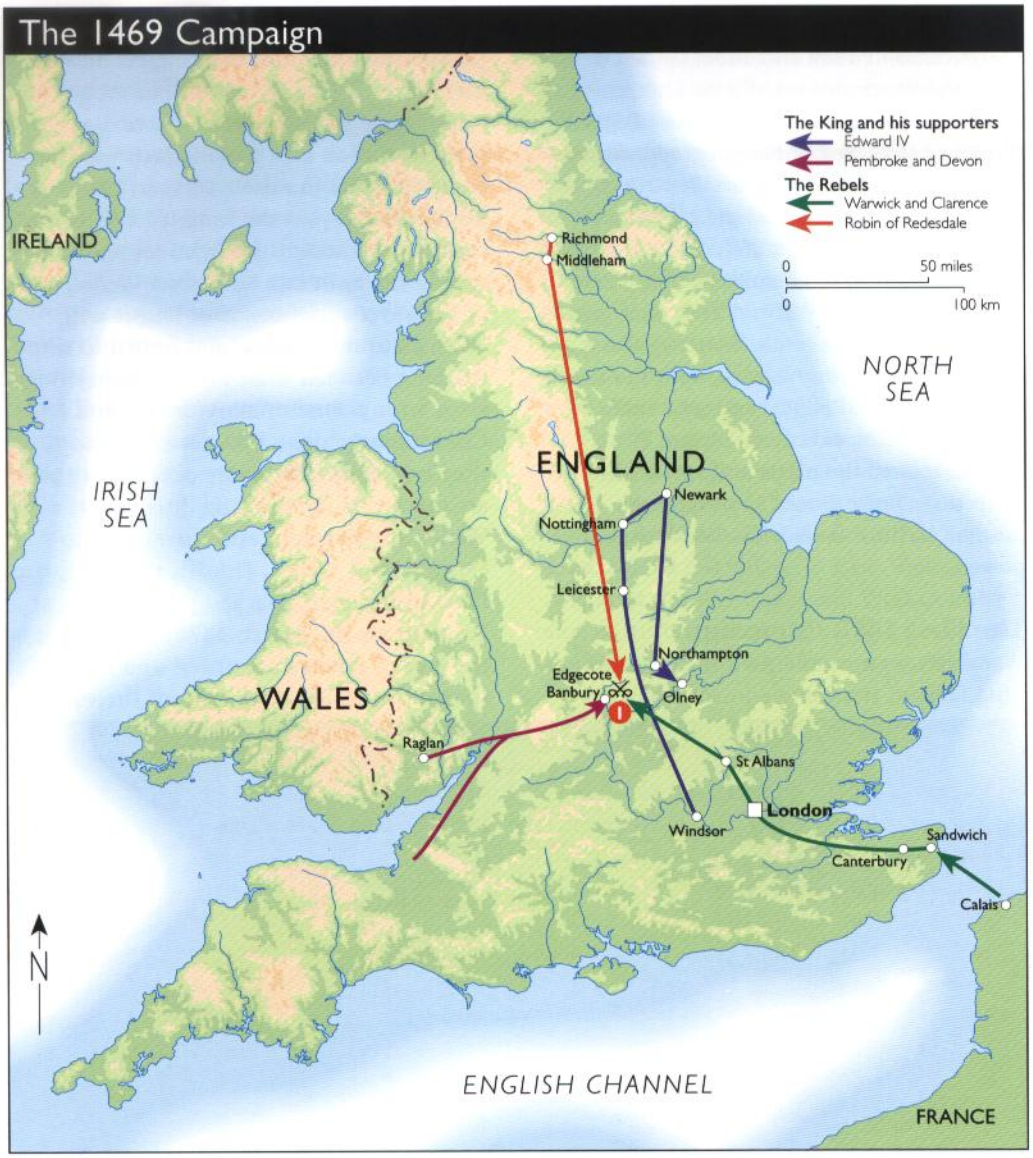


Isabel Neville at Calais, Warwick and Clarence, as in 1459 and 1460, landed in Kent and proceeded rapidly via London to meet the northerners. The battle of Edgecote (26 July 1469), east of Banbury, appears to have happened almost by accident. A division in command had caused Devon and Pembroke to camp separately. The northerners attacked Pembroke first, while Devon's forces and Warwick's advance guard joined in later. The result, however, was a clear-cut victory for Warwick, with the king's three favourites, Rivers, Pembroke and Devon, all being executed. Edward IV himself missed the battle and was arrested in his bed at Olney (Bucks.) by Warwick's brother Archbishop Neville. Warwick took power.

The First 1470 Campaign

Warwick's regime collapsed in the autumn, King Edward resuming control, but a reconciliation between him and Warwick was arranged. Perhaps neither trusted the other. Warwick and Clarence, it appears, exploited disturbances in Lincolnshire arising from rivalries between the principal aristocratic family of Welles and the king's master of the horse, Sir Thomas Burgh of Gainsborough. Hearing of renewed troubles in Lincolnshire, what appeared to be a popular insurrection, the king set off in force from London via Waltham Abbey and Cambridge. Warwick and Clarence, as earnest of their new-found trust, were commissioned to raise a force in the Midlands and join the king later. The 'great captain of Lincolnshire' who fomented rebellion was in fact Sir Robert Welles, son of Lord Welles, who was in league with Warwick and Clarence, and hoped to trap the king between their forces. Three things went wrong. First of all, Warwick and Clarence were unable to raise the troops they hoped for and hence postponed their arrival. Secondly, the king discovered Welles' involvement and threatened to execute Lord Welles. Thirdly, therefore, the Lincolnshiremen attacked prematurely, at Empingham (12 March 1470), perhaps in the face of Edward's artillery, and were routed. In fleeing, they cast off their jerkins so that the battle became known as Losecote Field. The two Welles were executed. Captured documents incriminated Warwick and Clarence, who

Harlech Castle, which the Lancastrians held against allcomers until 1468. The castle was then on the coast and was supplied by sea. (Heritage Image Partnership)

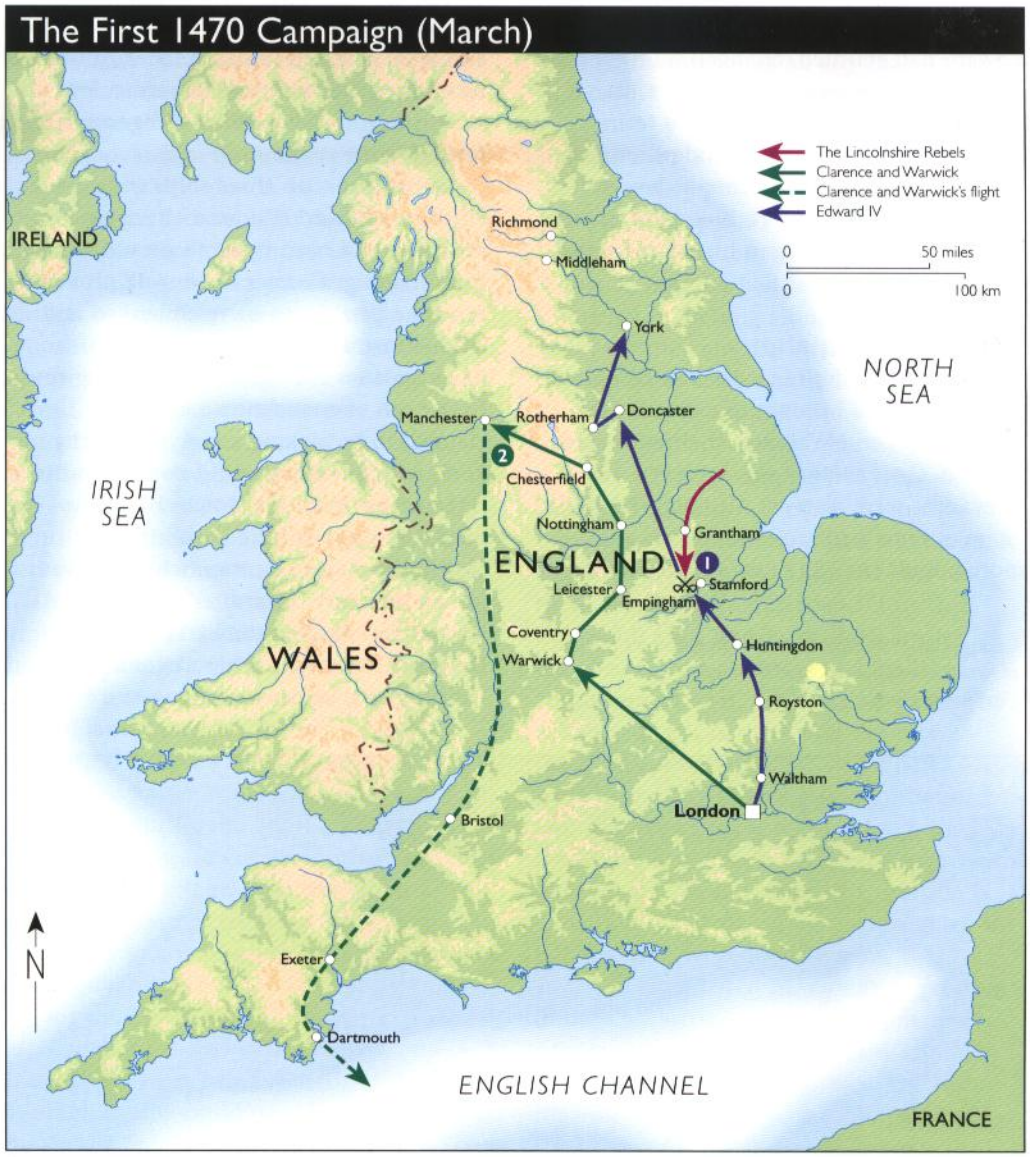


Robin of Redesdale from the North and Warwick and Clarence from Calais defeated Edward IV's forces, under Pembroke and Devon, at Edgecote. Edward himself was absent and was arrested at Olney.

unsuccessfully sought support from Clarence's north Midlands, Warwick's Richmondshire, and Stanley's Lancashire estates, their usual supporters being unwilling to commit treason against the king. Their orderly retreat became a flight into exile.

The Second 1470 Campaign

Edward IV refused to offer terms and the exiles were desperate. Unable to recover by any other means, Warwick and Clarence agreed with Louis XI of France and Queen Margaret at the treaty of Angers on a combined attack designed to replace Henry VI on his throne, with ships and crews being supplied by Louis XI. Warwick, Clarence and the Lancastrians prepared their supporters in England and issued propaganda stressing the rights of Henry VI that was designed to elicit popular support.



Probably preparations had to put back. Northern uprisings, led by Lord FitzHugh in the Richmond area of Yorkshire and by Richard Salkeld at Carlisle, both areas of Warwick's strength, took place in August, around the original date, diverting Edward IV northwards, away from the real point of danger. Edward had anticipated trouble in Kent, although there appear only to have been riots in Southwark led by Warwick's own men. The main attack came in the south-west, an area of Lancastrian strength, with the invaders landing at Plymouth,

1 Edward IV marches north from London to Empingham, where he defeats the Lincolnshire rebels under Sir Robert Welles (Losecote Field) before Warwick and Clarence can join them.
2 Warwick proceeds to Manchester, but fails to recruit, and is pursued southwards to Dartmouth where he flees into exile in France.

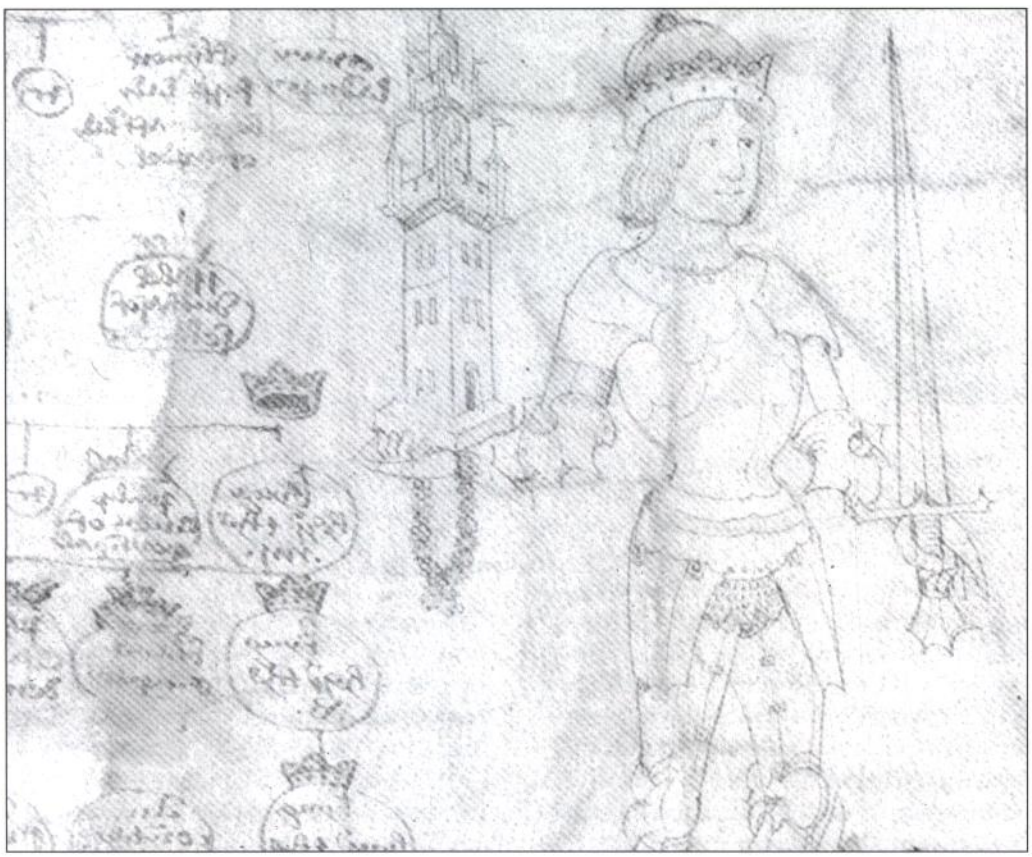
Dartmouth and Exmouth in Devon, and proceeding via Bristol to Coventry, where they were allegedly 60,000 strong. What is certain is that their supporters were numerous whereas Edward attracted hardly any backing. The final straw was when

Warwick's brother Montagu, on whom Edward had counted, changed sides. Edward narrowly evaded capture and embarked on 29 September 1470 from King's Lynn into exile in Flanders, part of the dominions of his brother-in-law Charles the Bold. It was a bloodless victory and King Henry VI began his second reign, his Readeption.

The 1471 Campaign

It had been the desire to defeat a common enemy that had brought together former Lancastrians and Warwick, their conqueror in 1470. Once victory was achieved, old grievances were revived. Although Edward's enemies remained more numerous and more popular in 1471 just as in 1470, they did not combine against Edward's invasion and were defeated in detail. Edward himself recognised his victory to be miraculous and sought to forestall popular indignation in future.

Embarking with three ships from Flushing, Edward IV found effective measures had been made to prevent him from landing. Cromer in Norfolk proved too inhospitable, so he re-embarked and landed instead on 14 March 1471 at Ravenspur on the Humber, where he would have been overwhelmed had he not claimed to be seeking merely his duchy of York, which nobody could doubt was his right, rather than his crown. Hence he passed through hostile Yorkshire to Nottingham and Leicester, where he was joined by many committed adherents. At Newark he rebuffed the Earl of Oxford, Duke of Exeter, and other eastern Lancastrians, before turning west to



George Duke of Clarence. A sixteenth-century portrait of him as constable of Queenborough. (The British Library)

confront Warwick, whose army was much the stronger, but who nevertheless entered Coventry, sheltered behind the city walls, and refused to fight. Warwick expected a decisive advantage in numbers when he was reinforced by his son-in-law Clarence, who had been recruiting in the West Country, but Clarence joined his brother Edward IV. Together they marched to London, where they were admitted without opposition and arrested Henry VI. After meeting up with Montagu's northerners, Oxford, Exeter and the easterners, Warwick approached London with a view to a surprise attack over Easter. Edward, however, was alert, left the City, and drew up his line of battle opposite Warwick's in Hertfordshire, somewhere near Barnet, the precise site being uncertain. Warwick's army was in four divisions, with Oxford on the right facing Lord Hastings, Warwick's brother Montagu in the centre facing Edward, and Exeter on the left against Gloucester, Warwick himself being in reserve. Warwick's bombardment of the Yorkist line during the night had little effect, since Edward's army was closer than Warwick supposed and in dead ground, and the battle of Barnet commenced at dawn on Easter Sunday, 14 April 1471. Both armies advanced into combat but darkness and fog meant that the armies were misaligned, so each was outflanked, Hastings' division being routed, although as this could not be seen along the Yorkist line, morale was unaffected. The front lines may have wheeled and in the consequent reorientation, the divisions of Oxford and Montagu in Warwick's army came to blows. The result, eventually, was a decisive victory for Edward; Warwick and Montagu were slain, Exeter captured, and only Oxford of the principal commanders escaped.

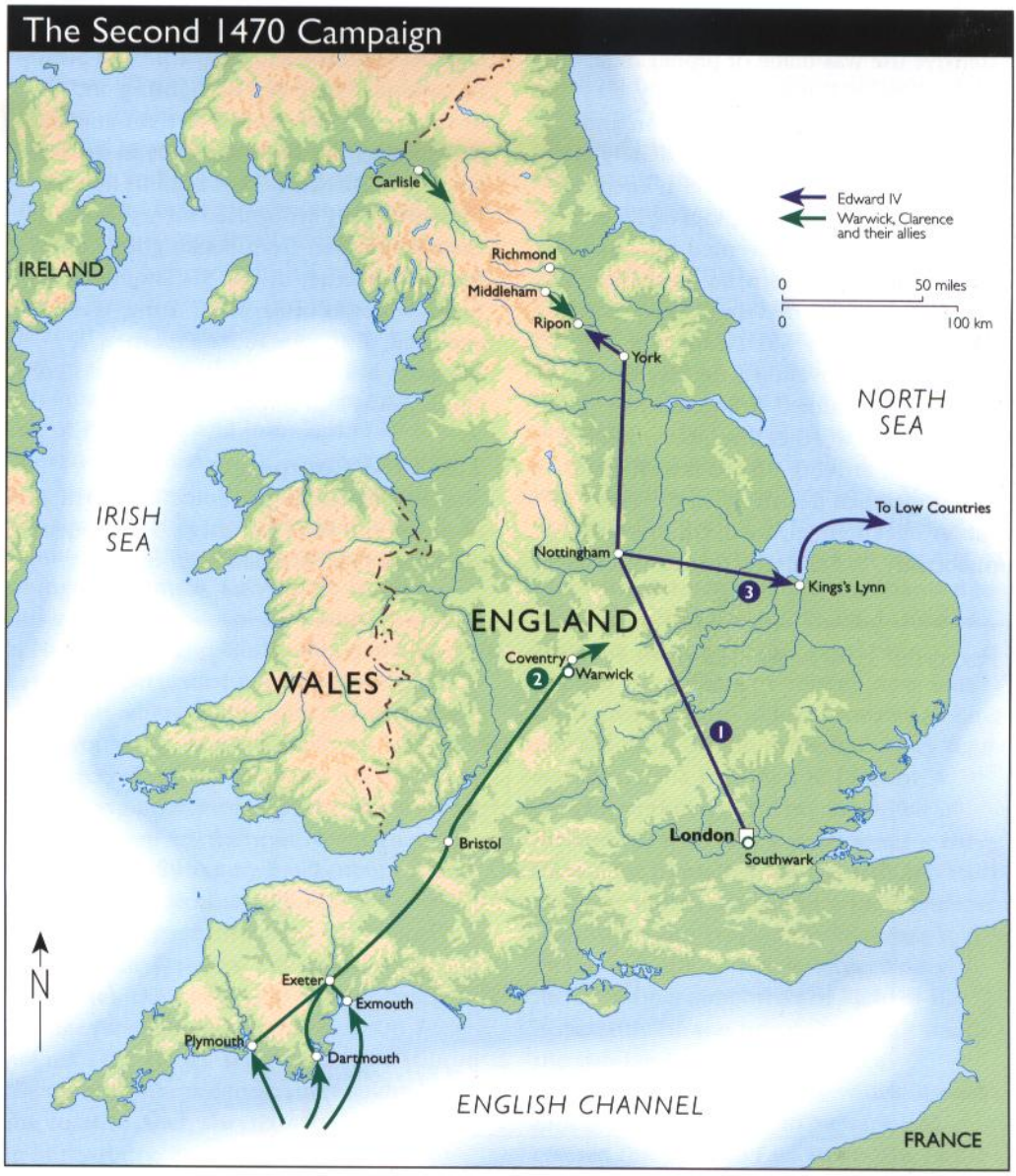
Edward was fortunate that he had to fight only some of his opponents, since the Lancastrians of the South-West and Wales were elsewhere. Somerset and Devon had actually left London almost undefended in order to meet Queen Margaret when she landed at Weymouth. So unhappy had they been with Warwick as an ally that supposedly they even claimed not to be weakened by his defeat, but actually strengthened. Having recruited an army in the West, they proceeded to Bristol en route to join up with Jasper Tudor's Welshmen. No sooner had Edward defeated Warwick, than he had to embark on a new campaign, marching along the Thames valley to intercept the West Country men. He wanted to force a battle, the Lancastrians to avoid it. They feinted towards him, apparently offering battle at Sodbury (Gloucs.), but dashed instead through the Vale of Berkeley to the Severn crossings of Gloucester, which was blocked, and Tewkesbury, whilst Edward pursued them along the Roman road across the Cotswolds via Cirencester. Both armies marched record distances in appalling conditions of heat, dust and no water. The exhausted Lancastrians won the race, reaching Tewkesbury first and might perhaps have crossed the Severn that night and defended the ford, but they chose instead to make their stand on 4 May south of the town. Again the precise position is uncertain. Edward's artillery so troubled the Lancastrians, who had few guns, that Somerset abandoned his defensive position in the Lancastrian centre and somehow advanced undetected to outflank the Yorkist centre. He was repulsed, the rest of the Yorkist army came into combat, and the Lancastrian army was destroyed. The defeated Lancastrians fled across the Bloody Meadow into the town, many taking sanctuary in Tewkesbury Abbey. Queen Margaret was captured, her son killed; Somerset, Lords Wenlock and St John, and the other principal Lancastrians were executed. Although Tudor remained in arms in Wales, Warwick's Middleham connection in the North, and the Bastard of Fauconberg's shipmen near London all realised that Tewkesbury was decisive. Tudor fled abroad; the others submitted. Even long-standing, irreconcilable Lancastrians like Margaret's chancellor Sir

John Fortescue and the future Cardinal Morton made their peace with Edward.

The 1483 Campaign

Richard III made himself king through two almost bloodless coups and overawed London with a northern army. After his coronation he progressed west through the Thames valley, and then via the north Midlands to York, where he wore his crown again, returning to Lincoln by 11 October, when he heard of plotting against him. This extensive conspiracy, traditionally known as Buckingham's Rebellion, was originally meant to restore Edward V to his crown. It consisted of three principal

The execution of Lancastrians after the Battle of Tewkesbury, 1471. King Edward IV (left) looks on. (Geoffrey Wheeler Collection)



elements: Buckingham was to bring his Welshmen from Brecon across the Severn; there were to be uprisings organised by the county establishment in every county of southern England, led by the family of Edward IV's queen, the Marquis of Dorset and the Wydevilles; and Jasper and Henry Tudor, exiles in Brittany, were to land on the south coast. Such an extensive conspiracy was difficult to counteract, but it also proved impossible to co-ordinate, for it seems that the Kentishmen rose

1 Edward IV marches to Ripon to suppress rebellions in Yorkshire and Carlisle.
2 Meantime there were disturbances in Southwark. Warwick, Clarence and the Lancastrians, after landing in the south-west, advance to Coventry.
3 Edward IV marches south to Nottingham, before fleeing via King's Lynn to the Low Countries.

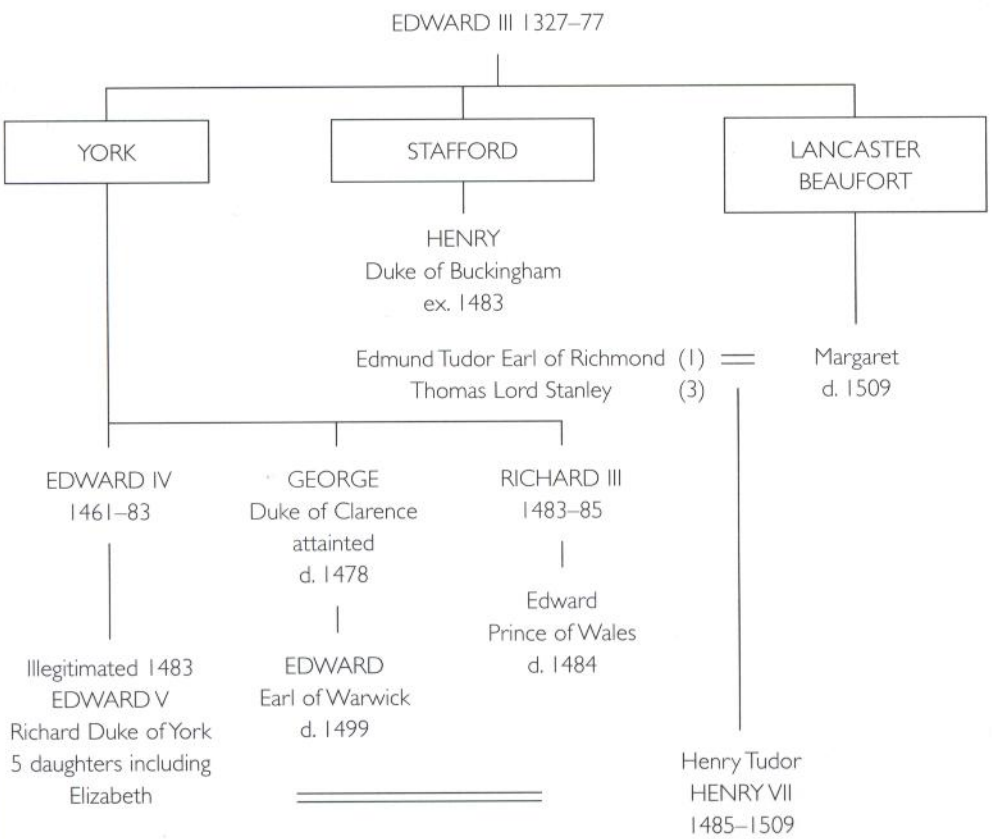
prematurely, at least two months before the Cornish, and were suppressed, thus alerting Richard to what was happening. A combination of decisive countermeasures and skilful manipulation of public opinion

contributed to the failure of the rebellion. Extensive use was made of propaganda; leaks of Edward V's death probably removed the object of the rebellion and the insurgents were abashed. Immediately after Buckingham departed, his Welsh enemies, the Vaughans of Tretower, sacked Brecon Castle. Bad weather prevented the duke from crossing the Severn, so he abandoned his forces and fled to Wem (Salop.), where he was arrested. He was executed at Salisbury on 2 November, the day before revolt was proclaimed at Bodmin in Cornwall. Bad weather also prevented the Tudors from arriving till too late. Richard himself marched decisively to Coventry to counter Buckingham, then, finding this unnecessary, to Salisbury, through Dorset to Cornwall, and then back through Somerset, Berkshire, Hampshire and Surrey to London. There was no fighting and most of the leadership escaped to fight another day, joining the Tudors in exile in Brittany, where on Christmas Day 1483 in Rennes Cathedral they recognised Henry Tudor as their king. Apart from Buckingham, only Richard's brother-in-law, Sir Thomas St Leger, widower of his sister Anne, was executed, although Tudor's mother, Margaret Beaufort, consort of Thomas Lord Stanley, was also implicated.

The 1485 Campaign

Shakespeare wisely presented Bosworth as a re-run of the 1483 campaign. For the past 20 months Richard had been on the

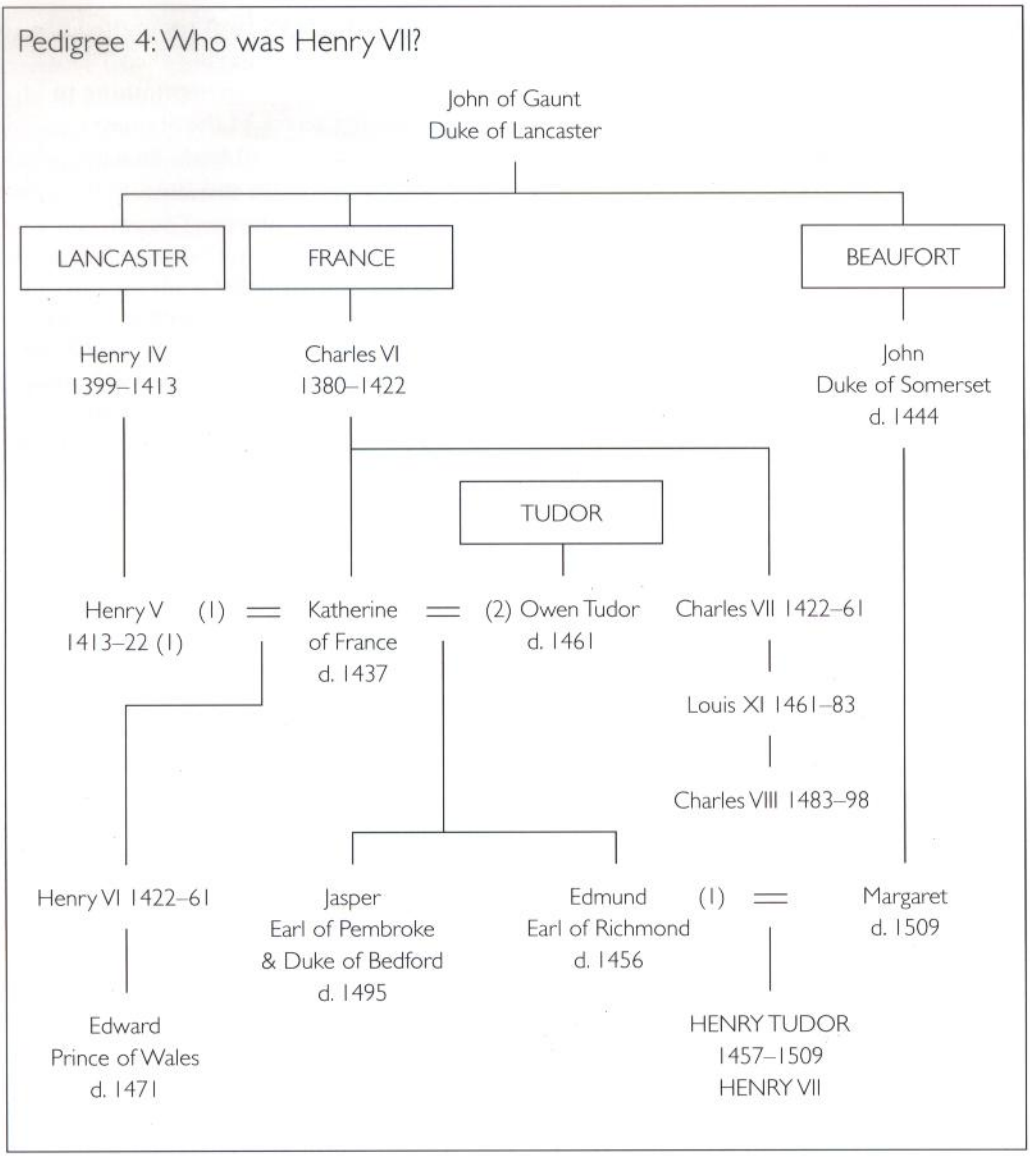
Pedigree 3: Richard III and his Rivals in 1483–85



lookout for an anticipated invasion by the Tudors and the southern exiles from 1483, but he could not afford to maintain his defences continuously. He almost succeeded in negotiating the Tudors into his hands, and the latter long sought financial and military support unavailingly. When Henry Tudor finally embarked in 1485, he brought with him a substantial core of French veterans commanded by Philibert de Chandée, and Scottish troops. Besides the exiles of 1483, he was accompanied by his uncle Jasper Tudor, Earl of Pembroke and John Earl of Oxford, the veteran of Barnet. Undoubtedly some supporters knew of their coming, which was also probably true of his mother, his Stanley stepfather, his stepbrother Lord Strange, and uncle, Sir William Stanley. Other acquaintances of his youth, the earls of Huntingdon and Northumberland, may have been persuaded not to oppose them. Uncertain where on his long coastline the blow would fall, Richard deployed supporters along the whole of it – many of whom were unable to be at the battle – and posted himself centrally, at Nottingham, where he was joined by Brackenbury from London and Northumberland from Yorkshire. Richard distrusted the Tudors' kinsmen, the Stanleys, but needed their manpower, their heir Lord Strange being hostage for their good behaviour. On 7 August 1485 Henry Tudor landed at Milford Haven in Pembrokeshire, and marched up the coast to Aberystwyth, across mid Wales to Shrewsbury, and thence via Coventry towards Leicester. The whole campaign took only a fortnight. Somewhere between Coventry and Leicester, he joined Richard III in the battle later known as Bosworth on 22 August. Bosworth was apparently a smaller battle than many others of the Wars of the Roses, Tudor having little time to recruit and Richard's forces containing few of the peerage; also, both sides wished to fight before the other became stronger. Tudor was on the defensive. Norfolk in Richard's centre attacked, but was repelled, whereas Northumberland, on the wing, held back. Hence Richard committed his reserve prematurely, slaying even Tudor's standard bearer, but leaving nothing to withstand the attack of the Stanleys, who had hitherto held back. Richard was slain in the field, and the Tudor dynasty commenced.

The 1487 Campaign

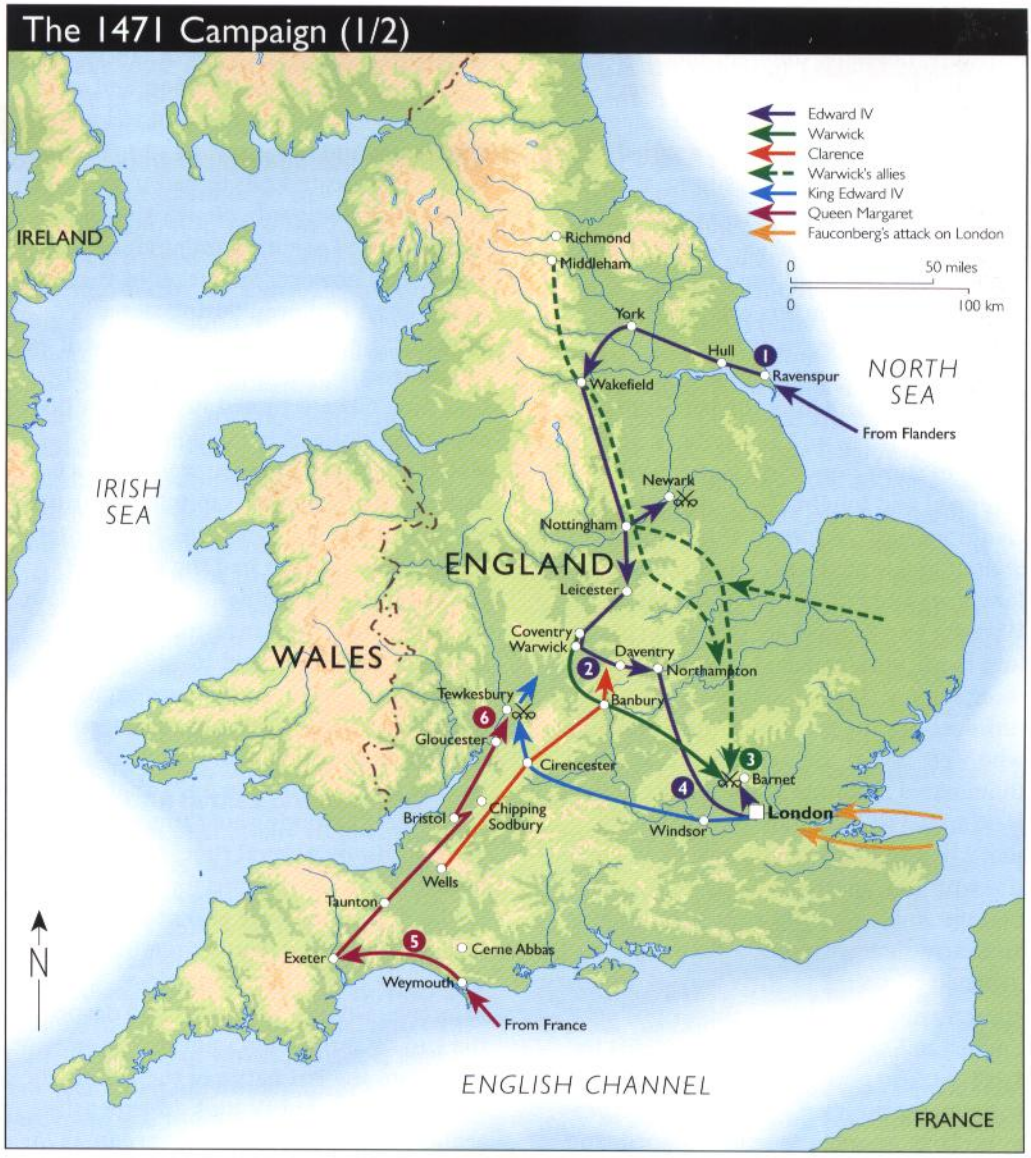
Although Richard left no obvious heir, a series of attempts were made to overthrow Henry, the most formidable in 1487. The figurehead was Lambert Simnel, who pretended to be Clarence's son Edward Earl of Warwick, a prisoner in the Tower. He was recognised and supported by Margaret, Dowager-Duchess of Burgundy, sister of Edward IV and Richard III, who despatched him with German veterans commanded by Martin Swart to Ireland. Richard Duke of York and his son Clarence had been popular lieutenants of Ireland; now Simnel was welcomed and indeed crowned as King Edward VI in Dublin cathedral. A key figure was John de la Pole, Earl of Lincoln, a nephew and perhaps designated heir of Richard III, who may have hoped for the throne for himself. With German and Irish support, Simnel landed on 4 June 1487 in Lancashire and crossed the Pennines to Richmondshire, where he expected to recruit former supporters of Richard III. Apparently he was unsuccessful, although the two Lords Scrope launched a diversionary attack on York whilst Simnel proceeded southwards to Newark and crossed the Trent to East Stoke. The battle of Stoke was fought on 16 June 1487, only twelve days after the landing. Simnel's army was small, little time having been allowed for recruitment and Henry's public display of the real Warwick may have deterred potential sympathisers. The rebels were also mixed in quality, continental veterans being interspersed with ill-equipped and ill-trained Irishmen and at least some Englishmen. Altogether Henry VII's forces must have been larger, with troops from East Anglia under Oxford and the Stanleys' levies from Lancashire and



Cheshire; Northumberland had not yet arrived. Simnel's disadvantages were partly compensated for by surprise, since Henry was unaware that he had crossed the Trent. Initially it was Oxford's vanguard alone marching down the Fosse Way that unexpectedly encountered the rebels in line of battle on a hill. Although outnumbered he attacked, but was forced back on the defensive and was perhaps in danger of being routed. It was only after fighting had commenced, and perhaps just in time to save the situation, that other elements of the royal army arrived and won the day for the king. Lincoln and Swart were killed, Simnel was captured and his pretence exposed.

The reality of combat

The Wars of the Roses were largely fought between armies of infantry. Horses were used to convey troops to the battlefield – hence the speed with which the Kingmaker, for example, travelled – and to



The 1471 Campaign (1)

1 Edward IV lands at Ravenspur and proceeds via York to Coventry, beating the Earl of Oxford near Newark.

2 After Warwick refuses to fight, Edward joins his brother Clarence and enters London.

3/4 After being joined by Montagu's northerners and Oxford's easterners, Warwick advances to Barnet, where he was defeated and killed by Edward IV.

The 1471 Campaign (2)

5 Too late for Barnet, Queen Margaret lands at Weymouth, recruits the West Country Lancastrians, and marches northwards via Bristol to join Jasper Tudor's Welshmen.

6 Confronted by Edward IV from London, they race side by side to Tewkesbury, where Margaret is obliged to fight, and is decisively defeated. Other enemies, Fauconberg's men around London and in Yorkshire, dispersed.

draw the baggage and artillery, but for battle itself the troops dismounted. Overseas expeditions comprised three archers to every man-at-arms, a combatant, genteel or otherwise, who fought hand to hand, which was what the king demanded in his contracts with the captains (indentures of war) and what he therefore

secured. For civil wars, armies were more disparate, raised by different means – household service, indentures or array – by different captains from different categories of men. Equipment must have varied greatly, as must military training, if any, and fighting potential. On occasions the sources report deficiencies, of the commons in 1460 and 1470 and the Irish in 1487, although sheer numbers even of such troops could not be withstood.

There survive contemporary illuminations depicting the battles of Edgecote, Barnet, and Tewkesbury, which ought to show how participants were equipped and fought. They depict them clad from head to foot in shining plate armour and armed with swords, halberds, longbows and crossbows. At Barnet, Warwick and Edward are depicted charging into battle with couched lances as in tournaments. These illuminations, however, are the work of continental artists who were not at the battle, while the two illuminated accounts of the 1471 campaign were added in Burgundy to existing narratives and agree neither with the text nor with one another. No doubt the peerage and gentry did wear such armour and carry such weapons as they are depicted so attired in their brasses, funerary effigies and in heraldic manuscripts; an English roll of Edward IV's campaigns in 1459–61 also portrays them thus. Such equipment, however, was extremely costly as no large arsenals were maintained, and we cannot be sure how typical it was. We know of the padded jackets in which towns clad their contingents, but whether non-townsmen were so well equipped we cannot tell. The unique Bridport muster roll of 1459 suggests that at least half the men lacked any protective equipment and that almost none had a complete suit of armour. Virtually no equipment has been recovered from any battlefield, but the head injuries of fleeing Lancastrians after Towton suggest that they lacked protection, or that it was ineffective. The weapons that commoners used were more probably bills, pole-axes, and longbows than swords, crossbows, handguns, pikes or lances.

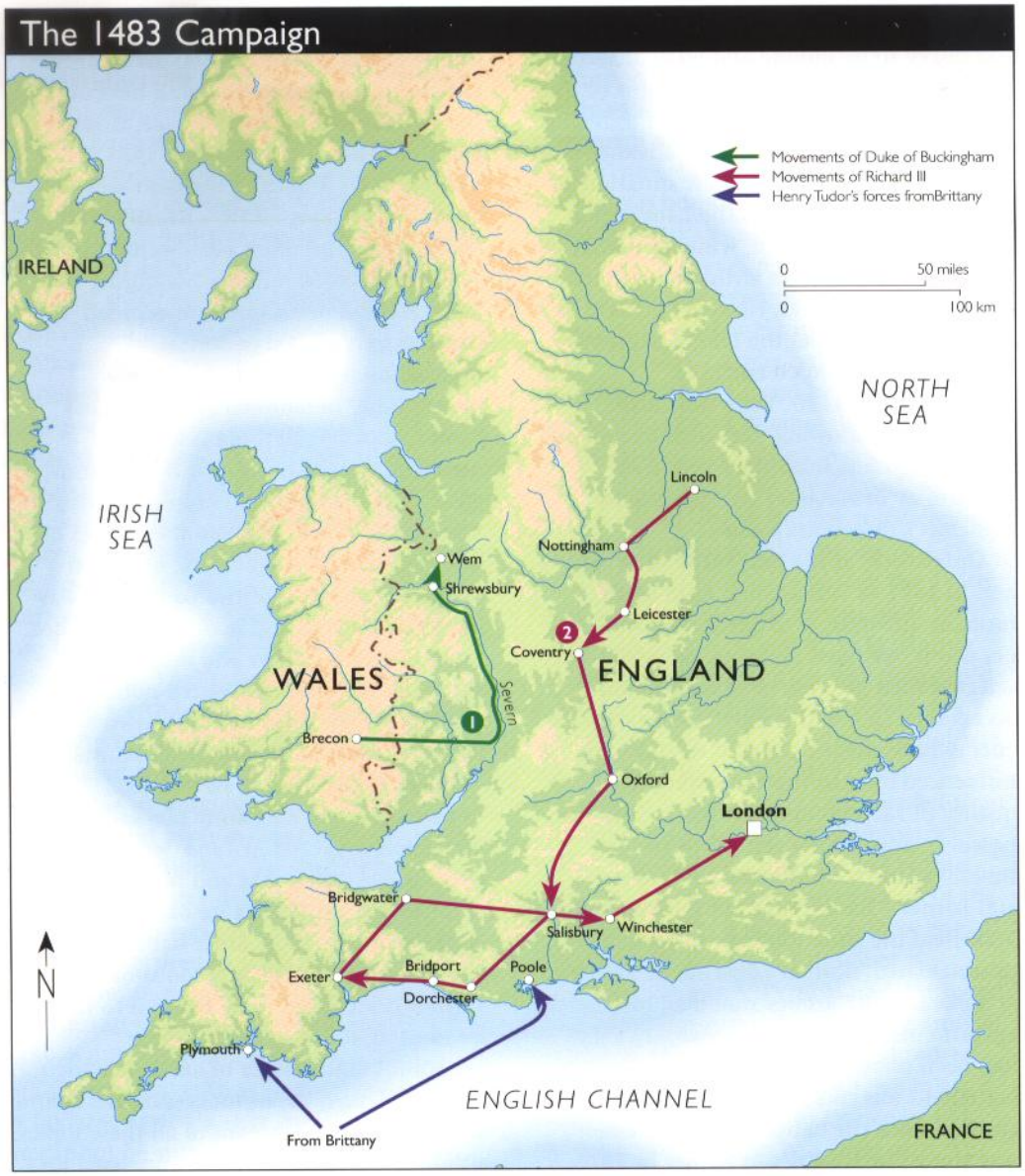
Cannon were more common and were highly valued, having replaced trebuchets, mangonels and other sprung ordnance for sieges. The greatest pieces had names, such as the great bombards 'Newcastle' and 'London' used against Bamburgh in 1464. There were however few sieges in the Wars of the Roses and even during sieges ordnance was sparingly used because it was too destructive – it was only reluctantly that King Edward turned his guns on his own rebel castle of Bamburgh, which he would later have to repair, causing such damage that it quickly capitulated. Artillery was useful also for defending fortifications – the Calais garrison had the use of 135 pieces of various calibres during the 1450s. In 1460, when the Lancastrian lords took refuge in the Tower, and in 1471, during Fauconberg's siege, gunfire was exchanged across the Thames, causing considerable civilian damage and loss of life. So hot was the fire from the City in 1471 that Fauconberg's troops were cannonaded from their positions. Several times Warwick brought guns from Calais for use within England, for they were also of value in the field. In 1453, in a manner reminiscent of the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava, Charles VII's guns had destroyed the Earl of Shrewsbury's advancing army at Châtillon, the last battle of the Hundred Years' War. Edward IV took an expensive artillery train with him to France in 1475; the great nobility also had their own. The Yorkists used cannon to batter the Lancastrian barricades at St Albans in 1455. Warwick rated them particularly highly, taking his own ordnance northwards from Warwick on the Lincolnshire campaign in 1470, which he left at Bristol as he fled southwards and recovered later that year on his return. On at least three occasions, in 1461 at the second battle of St Albans, in 1463 at Alnwick, and in 1471 at Barnet, Warwick took up defensive positions protected with cannon, hoping that his enemies would dash themselves to pieces,

but the tactic failed. Even light pieces were too heavy to be mobile and were unsuited for some of the lightning campaigns of the Wars of the Roses. They were also inflexible to use, needing to be set up in advance and were difficult to adjust to new situations. At Northampton in 1460 the Lancastrian guns were bogged down, while at Barnet in 1471 the Yorkists were virtually unscathed being in dead ground. However Edward IV's cannon helped repel the Lincolnshiremen at the poorly recorded battle of Empingham in 1470. They were also credited the following year with dislodging the Lancastrians from their prepared position at Tewkesbury and provoking Somerset's disastrous assault.

Only twice, at the first battle of St Albans and in 1471 at Tewkesbury, were armies brought unwillingly to battle. On other occasions, we must presume, opposing sides selected their ground, or at least found it acceptable. Generals sought information on enemy movements, collated it, and were influenced by it in their planning. The quality of such preliminary reconnaissance, however, appears uneven, since several times – at the second battle of St Albans and Barnet – flanks were not secured and at Wakefield the situation was completely miscalculated. Both at Edgecote in 1469 and at Stoke in 1487 armies stumbled into battle against enemies of whose proximity they had been unaware. Communication on the battlefield was rudimentary and overall control, once the battle had been joined, was almost impossible. At Barnet in 1471 troops were reduced to acting on heraldic badges, famously mistaking Oxford's star with streamers for York's sun with rays, with disastrous consequences. Apart from throwing up reserves, as in 1485, no commander could restrain victorious troops in one sector of the battle, realign his position to counter the actual threat, or withdraw his army from the field. Victory or rout were the only alternatives, determined either by the original strength and disposition of the opposing forces or the course that the fighting actually took. The winner took all, so that except perhaps briefly in the winter of 1460–61 or around Lancastrian fortresses that still held out, there were no rival areas of rule, frontiers, gains or losses. Only in 1459, 1463, 1470 and 1471 did armies in the field seek to avoid or postpone battle – usually one commander and often both wanted to fight.

Most everyday military life during the Wars of the Roses is quite unrecorded. In contrast to our good historical understanding of the supplying and munitioning of national armies against France, scarcely anything is known regarding wars at home. We do not know to what extent troops were supplied during the Wars of the Roses, supplied themselves or foraged, though the pillaging of Queen Margaret's march southwards in 1461 was long remembered and perhaps exaggerated. Castles, manor houses and monasteries along the way accommodated noblemen and kings – who also had their own luxurious tents; although unsubstantiated, ordinary soldiers might be billeted. Apparently Warwick's army blockading Alnwick bivouacked in 1463, when they were 'grieved with cold and rain'; so did both sides the night before Barnet, Tewkesbury and most other battles. Campaigns were generally too short, it appears, for clothes to be reduced to rags, or for sanitation, living and sleeping conditions, and disease to excite remark, for leave to be granted, or for committed troops to desert. We are ignorant of all these topics, although naval life on ships impressed for service would probably have scarcely differed from normal conditions at sea.

Heralds were responsible for counting and identifying the fallen and may indeed have done so, but none of their records survive. At best the names of only a couple of hundred participants on both sides, dead or surviving, are known for any battle, in some cases much fewer. Apart from the first battle of St Albans, where less than 50 are known to have died, there were surely hundreds and more commonly thousands killed at each of the set-piece battles, and yet we know the

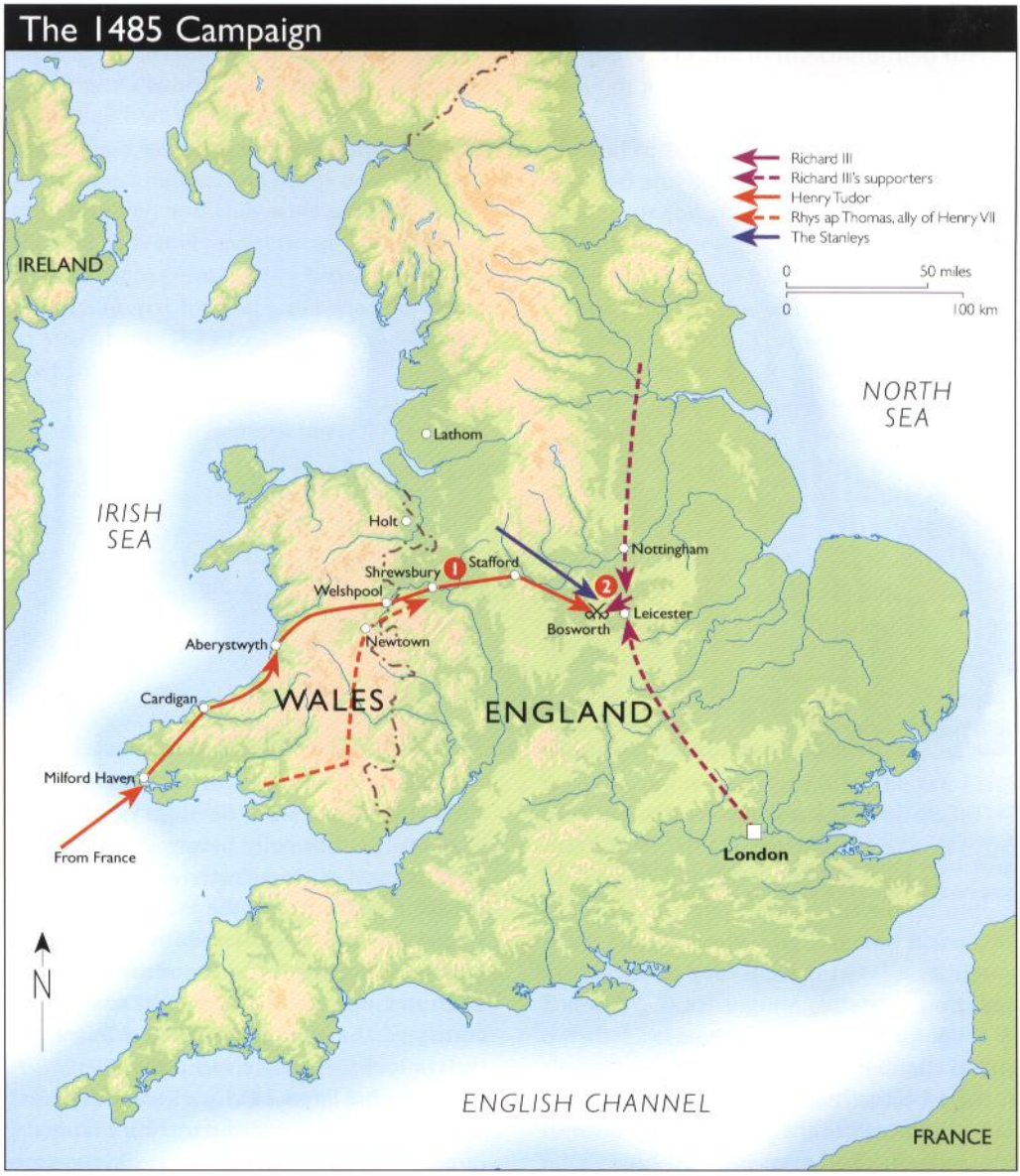


The rebels planned rebellion in Wales, throughout the south, and a landing in the south-west. All failed.

1 Buckingham failed to cross the Severn from Wales and fled to Wem, where he was arrested, and Henry Tudor's ships were dispersed and arrived too late.

2 Richard III advanced decisively from Lincoln, first towards Buckingham, then south-west, and finally to the south-east and prevented the southern rebels from joining forces. They fled in exile to Brittany.

names of only a fraction of them, generally men of birth and lands. Besides the dead, we must suppose that many more were injured, but we know neither of their wounds nor their subsequent lives. The armies lacked even the most rudimentary medical support for those despatched on service abroad. Many casualties curable today must have proved mortal. For the most part, we must deduce, the dead were interred in mass unmarked graves where they fell. Their fate was reported by companions who survived, or was deduced when they did not return, whereas notables were singled out for separate, more honourable burial, even

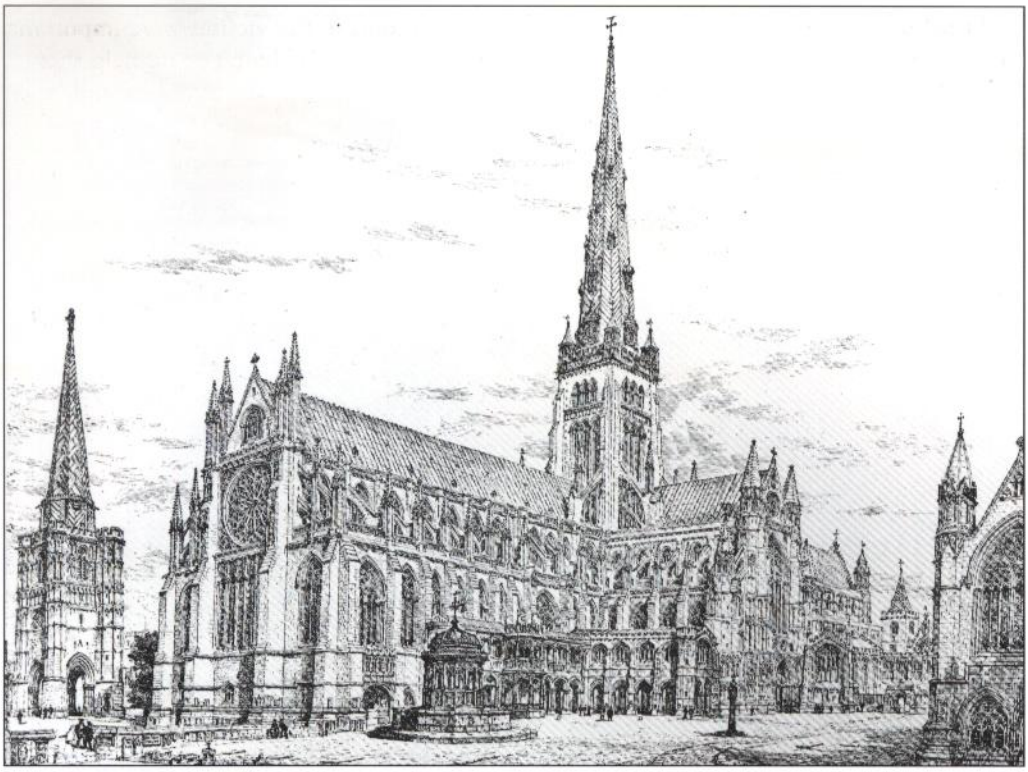


for repatriation to their family mausolea at home.

The battlefield was not necessarily the end. The Wars of the Roses were especially costly for the leadership. Kings were often prepared to spare the rank and file, who they saw as blindly following their betters, but deliberately set out to cull the leadership. Their destruction was clearly the objective both at the first battle of St Albans and at Northampton. After Ludford, Wakefield, the second battle of St Albans,

1 Henry Tudor from Brittany invaded Pembrokeshire and proceeded to near Leicester, where he was met by Richard III, the Stanleys and Northumberland.
2 He defeated and killed Richard III at Bosworth.

Towton, Hexham and Tewkesbury defeated leaders were executed, their severed heads and in some cases their quarters being posted on town gates as a warning to others. Vengeance was a natural response. It was the revenge sought by the victims of the first battle of St Albans that Henry VI



Old St Pauls Cathedral London, the site of York's humiliation in 1452 and the Loveday (1458). Note the pulpit in the foreground where Edward V's bastardy was preached in 1483. (The Geoffrey Wheeler Collection)

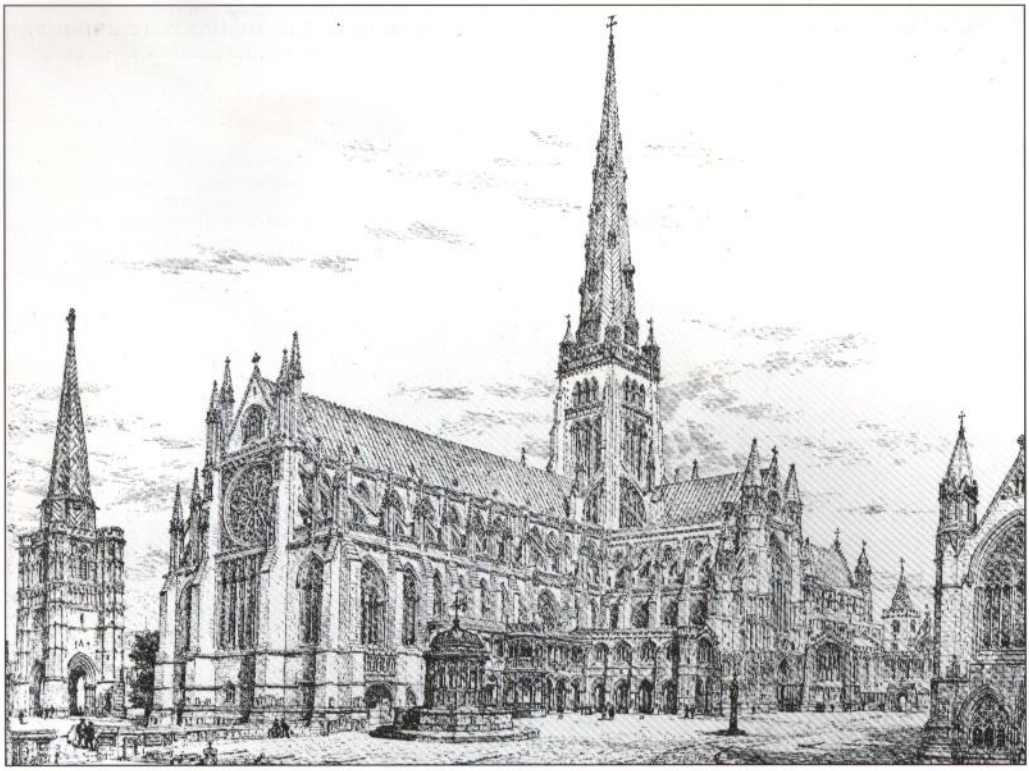
sought to allay at the Loveday at St Paul's; and it was certainly vengeance that Edward IV sought against the slayers of his father at Wakefield, who were attainted as though York had actually been a king. That same Earl of Worcester, 'the Butcher' constable of England, who had even impaled his victims, was also executed and dismembered to popular acclaim, because of 'the disordinate death that he used'. Many such individuals thought at the time that they were on the right side, fighting for the current king. 'Many gentlemen were against it,' we are told, when Henry VII had attainted those who had supported Richard III at Bosworth on the pretence that he, Henry, had become king the day before, but the king insisted. Most so-called traitors believed themselves to be in the right, although some, admittedly, did break their allegiance; 'false, fleeting, perjur'd Clarence' traditionally betrayed both sides.

Kings and other defeated notables on the losing side during the Wars of the Roses were attainted and suffered forfeiture. Treason was regarded as the most shocking of crimes and was considered to have corrupted the blood (attainted) not just of the traitors themselves but their descendants. From 1459 parliaments passed acts of attainder against named individuals, living or dead, in custody or at liberty, and as many as 113 in 1461, whose lands were confiscated and generally granted to new holders. Some potentially liable to attainder, such as Sir William Plumpton in 1461 and those indicted for being at Barnet, were allowed to pay fines instead. Warwick's possessions were allowed to descend to his daughters who had married the king's brothers. Attainders could however be reversed and most were. The 1459 attainders of the Yorkists were reversed wholesale the following year and so too were those of Buckingham's rebels

attainted in 1484. Edward IV annulled most of his attainders, to the advantage of the original culprits or their heirs, normally after they had submitted and earned forgiveness for good service. Henry VII was somewhat tougher: less of his own traitors were forgiven and they were seldom allowed to recover everything. Some families were permanently disinherited; others suffered for years, many of them the 25 years from 1461 to 1486, deprived of their inheritances, with many undesirable repercussions.

Ordinary soldiers were probably buried in mass graves, although only one such example has been found, at Towton Hall. Notables fared better, whether slain in the field or executed afterwards, amongst the victims being Randall Lord Dacre, who lies in Saxton Church, Leo Lord Welles who rests in his family mausoleum at Methley (Yorks.), and the 3rd Earl of Northumberland at York. Such remains were honourably buried, like the victims of Tewkesbury within the abbey church, or were released to their families after a short time. Even the corpse of Richard III, displayed nude and buried like a dog in a ditch, was solemnly reinterred, after a decent pause, by Henry VII at the Leicester Greyfriars. Two such reinterments became legendary. Richard Earl of Salisbury and his second son Sir Thomas Neville, both victims of Wakefield and interred at Pontefract, were removed by his sons to the Salisbury family mausoleum at Bisham Priory in Buckinghamshire in 1463. So elaborate was the ceremonial that it became the model for the funeral of an earl; an heraldic roll of past earls of Salisbury marked the event. Similarly in 1476 Salisbury's leader York and his teenaged son Rutland were removed with just as much pomp to the family mausoleum at Fotheringhay College. Records survive in several versions of the ceremonies, which required much preparation and may have cost as much as staging a parliament. If both undoubtedly served propaganda purposes, they nevertheless demonstrate the sense of loss of the bereaved.

The souls of the victims were important; the prayers of the living could help them through purgatory. It was commonplace for the propertied to give to the Church in life and in their wills, to repay debts material and spiritual, and to endow masses for the good of their souls, often indeed for ever – hence the chantry for the victors of the first battle of St Albans that Henry VI made the victors found within the abbey church. This was the function of the chaplain at the chapel erected on the field of Towton, that has now totally disappeared. It was his own retainers who fell by his side at Barnet that the future Richard III lamented by name and for whom he endowed prayers at Queen's College Cambridge. Aristocrats at least were not forgotten, but were added to family pedigrees, their anniversaries were noted in family service books, monuments erected over their tombs and prayers said for their souls. Lesser men were grouped together in confraternities to share such benefits. Some took care, like the 4th Earl of Northumberland before Bosworth, to make their wills nevertheless, he and many others placing their lands in trust to ensure that their own deaths would not place family wealth, welfare and marriages in the hands of self-interested guardians. Following Northumberland's violent death only four years later, a most pompous funeral was organised on his behalf. Death on the winning side entailed no loss of normal obsequies. Had Northumberland fallen in defeat, however, his possessions would have been forfeit, his prudent planning and pious dispositions set at naught. Yet those slain, executed and attainted on the losing side were denied such provision. The Kingmaker's will, for instance, was never proved and his intended chantry was stillborn; so, too, with his brother Montagu. Both, however, benefited from the prayers of the canons of Bisham Priory, their intended mausoleum, and the many other foundations of which they were hereditary patrons. Also intestate, yet more



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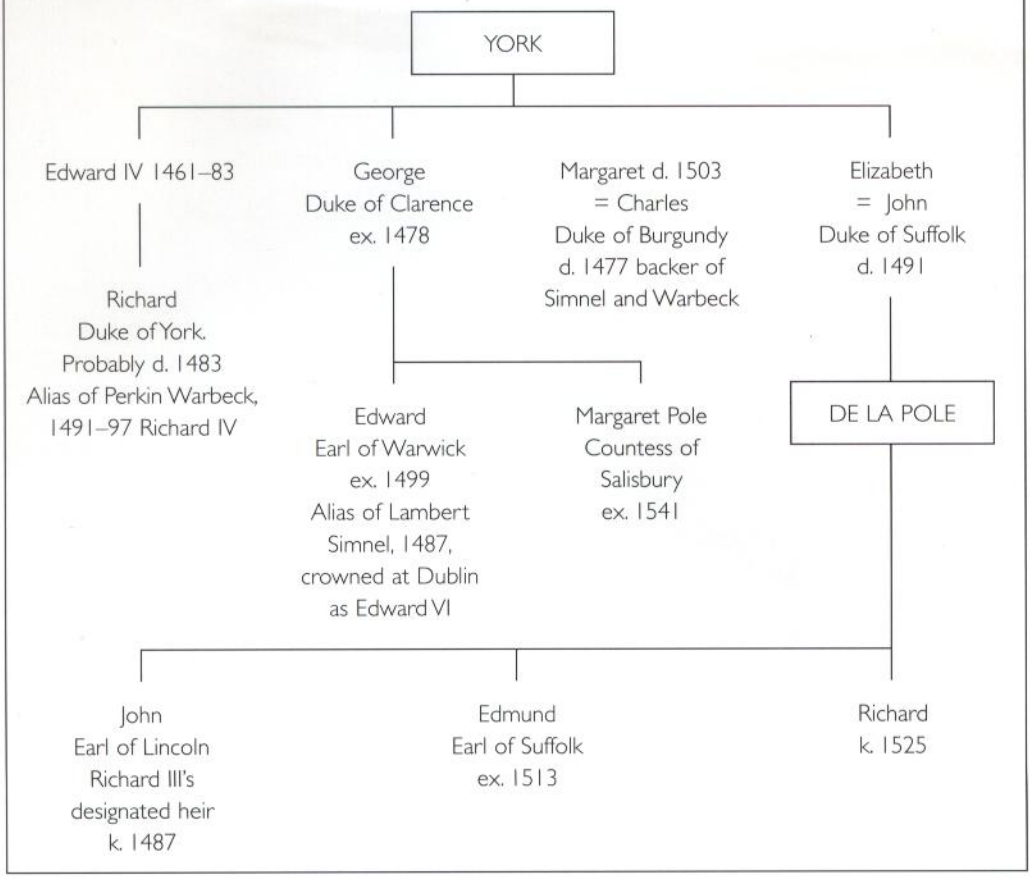
OPPOSITE Edward IV (1461–83): the most successful general of the Wars of the Roses.
(Ann Ronan Picture Library)

ABOVE King Henry VI (right) depicted as a saint from the screen of Ludham church.
(Topham Picturepoint)

Pedigree 5: Dynastic Rivals of Henry VII and Henry VIII



remarkably, were Warwick's two sons-in-law, widowers of his daughters, the dukes of Clarence and Gloucester, later Richard III. Clarence at least was interred at Tewkesbury in the chantry he had planned, but Gloucester lay in none of his three colleges, all of which were aborted. Both brothers were remembered, much more sparingly, in the wills of former dependants. Edward IV and Henry VI were regally interred and were prayed for, ironically together, at St George's Chapel, Windsor.

Nicholas Harpsfield

It is the leaders, not the rank and file, who principally interested the chroniclers of the Wars of the Roses; heroic individual exploits are almost entirely lacking. Like most of the combatants, Nicholas Harpsfield was not a professional soldier, but a civilian, who became embroiled in the conflict. Of Harpsfield Hall in Hertfordshire, the son of an English soldier in Normandy, where he was probably brought up bilingual, he was with York in Ireland in 1460 and thereafter became a clerk of the signet, a career civil servant in the king's own secretariat, an educated man fluent both in Latin and French, and a married man with children.

Presumably in October 1470 Harpsfield was with King Edward when the Lancastrians invaded and the king himself was almost captured, fleeing via King's Lynn to Burgundy, where he was certainly in Edward's company. Presumably he returned in March 1471 and shared in Edward's victories, since on 29 May he wrote in French to Duke Charles the Bold on the king's behalf. There were two enclosures: a copy of the alliance between Henry VI and Louis XI of France against Burgundy, a clear breach of the treaty of Péronne, and a brief *Mémoire* on paper. The *Mémoire* is a short factual account in French of the Barnet and Tewkesbury campaign that Harpsfield had almost certainly penned himself. Many copies were made, some incorporated into French and Flemish chronicles, and two, now at Ghent and Besançon, were illuminated later in the 1470s by Burgundian artists who cannot have been eyewitnesses of the events. These two sets of pictures are commonly used to illustrate the Wars of the Roses and indeed this book. They may authentically record the equipment and tactics current on the continent, but not necessarily English practices – especially the appearance of the ordinary soldiers – and certainly not English terrain; moreover the Besançon artist has embroidered the story contained in the text, perhaps correctly, from other tales current at the time. The *Mémoire* is also the core of a much longer English history, *The Arrival of Edward IV*, probably also by Harpsfield. *The Arrival* is a precise day-to-day account of events between 2 March and 16 May 1471 – eleven weeks – which sets out how, with God's help, Edward had overcome almost overwhelming odds and which looks forward to future peace and tranquillity. Although known only through one copy, it was therefore a propaganda piece and sought to impose an official Yorkist interpretation on what had occurred. No matter who the author was, he was a Yorkist partisan, in his own words 'a servant of the king's, that presently saw in effect a great part of his exploits, and the residue knew by true relation of them that were present at every time'. Where the *Mémoire* is the sparest of narratives, *The Arrival* is a much fuller and more elaborate account, which often tells both sides of the story, recounts events happening simultaneously in different places, and explains them at length.

The story commences with Edward's invasion across the North Sea from Zeeland. Where the *Mémoire* refers briefly to unfavourable weather, *The Arrival* is much more circumstantial. Adverse weather held up Edward's initial departure for nine days and his first landing at Cromer was abortive. Sailing northwards to Ravenspur, there 'fell great storms, winds, and tempests upon the sea' and he was 'in great torment', observes our author – obviously no mariner – as his ships were scattered along the Holderness coast. Coming ashore, he found the country

altogether hostile. How the king's small force was allowed to pass between much larger local levies, to enter York and proceed southwards is elaborately explained in terms of Edward's audacity, his deceit – his claim being only for his duchy of York, not the Crown – and the Percy Earl of Northumberland's role in restraining his retainers. *The Arrival* faithfully reports Edward's dealings with the improbably (but correctly) named Michael of the Sea, the recorder and other emissaries of York, and the disappointing numbers who joined him at this stage. Only once across the Trent did Edward secure numbers enough to confront Warwick who, however, declined to fight. Warwick was disappointed in Clarence, who joined Edward instead, *The Arrival* referring to negotiations and intercession, particularly from the royal ladies, antedating Edward's embarkation and the ceremonial of a reconciliation that all parties needed to endure. *The Arrival* records both Edward's attempts to shame Warwick into battle by parading his army in formation and by occupying his home town of Warwick, and his negotiations, at Clarence's instance though probably insincere, 'to avoid the effusion of Christian blood', which put Warwick further in the wrong. When these tactics failed Edward marched instead to London – *The Arrival* reports at Daventry a miracle of St Anne, 'a good prognostication of good adventure that should befall the king' – and captured the City, the Tower, King Henry VI and Archbishop Neville. When Warwick rushed southwards, hoping to pin Edward against the walls and to surprise him at Easter, the king confronted him near Barnet. Our informant surely shared the noisy night in a hollow, overshot by Warwick's artillery, and actually saw the king beating down those in front of him, then those on either hand, 'so that nothing might stand in the sight of him and the well-assured fellowship that attended truly upon him'. Assuredly he saw little else: his account faithfully records confusion in the fog as the two armies were misaligned and the Lancastrians mistakenly fought one another.

Louis XI of France (1461–83), the architect of the Readeption. (The British Library)

Following thanksgivings at St Paul's, where the bodies of Warwick and his brother were displayed, *The Arrival* records, secondly, the western campaign against Queen Margaret, when the king marched to Bath, but Margaret retreated into Bristol. Thereafter he records some cunning manoeuvring, as each army sought to outfox the other, which culminated in their race for the Severn crossing into Wales at Tewkesbury. Although the Lancastrians marched through dust in the vale, whilst the Yorkists took the easier Roman road across the Cotswolds, their sufferings – his sufferings – marching 30 miles on a very hot day were acute: 'his people might not find, in all the way, horse-meat nor man's meat nor so much as drink for their horses, save in one little brook, wherein was full little relief [because] it was so muddied with the carriages that had passed through it.' We cannot doubt that the author was there. Though the Lancastrians won the race, they were obliged to stand and fight. Again *The Arrival,* best informed on the king's movements, is confused, unable to explain precisely how Somerset in the Lancastrian van managed to attack their flank, but clear enough about its disastrous consequences. He was with the king also as he progressed to Worcester and to Coventry, about news of further northern disturbances, their dissolution, and the to and fro of messages between the king and his northern and London agents.

The Arrival recounts here, from outside, the Bastard of Fauconberg's uprising, which is the first-hand focus of the third section. Considerable duplication is best explained by Harpsfield's presence with the king and the composition by someone in London of the final section up to 21 May, when the king was ceremonially received in London and knighted the mayor, recorder and aldermen 'with other worshipful of the City of London' who had distinguished themselves against the bastard. It is likely that the

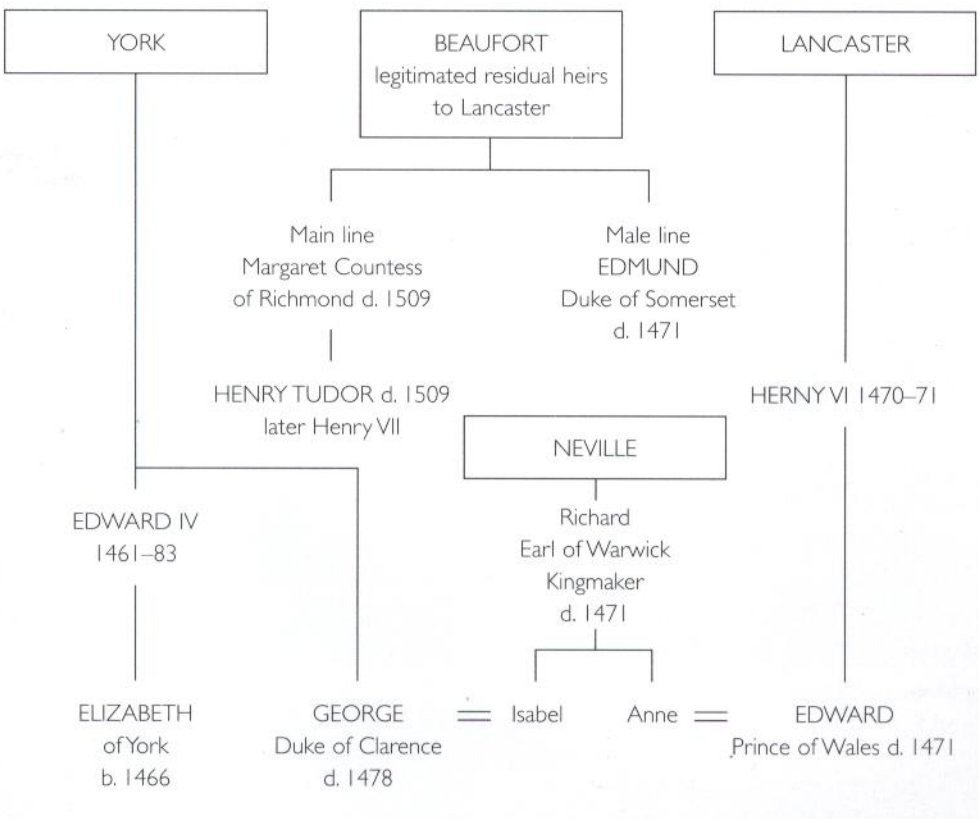
Charles the Bold, duke of Burgundy, who helped Edward IV recover his throne, and his duchess Margaret of York, who backed both Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck against Henry VII. (Heritage Image Partnership)

author accompanied the king on suppression duty to Kent, to Canterbury on 26 May, for he was explicitly not with Richard Duke of Gloucester at Sandwich that day.

Probably a southerner, the author of *The Arrival* is as unfamiliar with Yorkshire as the Cotswolds, while his account lacks the insight into terrain and tactics and the technical jargon of a military commander or a professional soldier and the interest in individuals, their feats of arms, coats of arms and casualties appropriate to a herald. Vivid though *The Arrival* is,

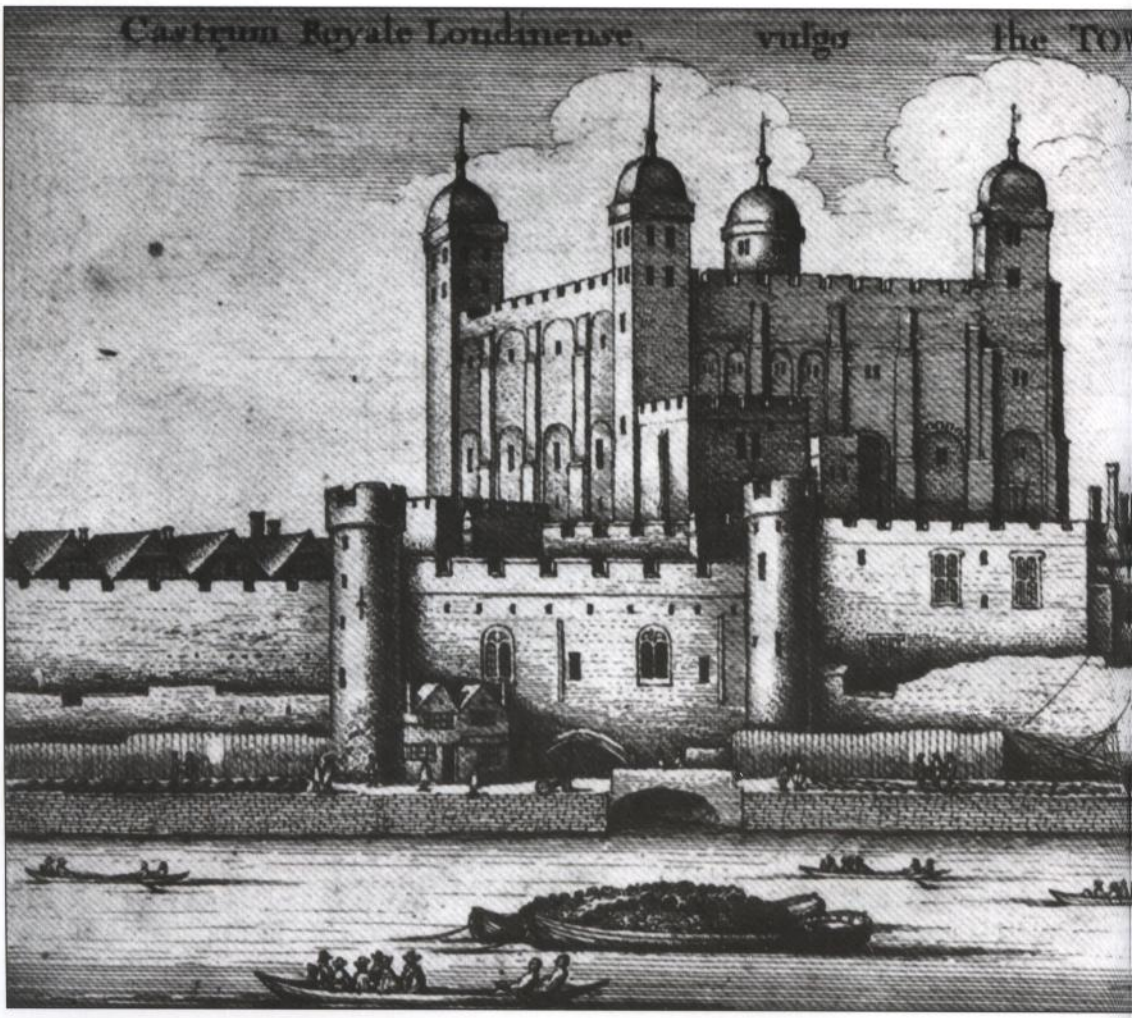
historians have found it hard to convert his narrative into concrete accounts either of the two battlefields or the course of the two battles. It is the version of a layman, a combatant in an inferior role, who tells us nothing about his own exploits, yet witnessed those of the king at first hand and knew little of what else happened on the battlefield; perhaps the king did not either. We learn of Gloucester's wound at Barnet from other sources. Our author was evidently on the central staff, *au fait* with calculations, comings, goings and negotiations alike, being particularly well informed on the political dimensions, on strategy and on morale. On occasion also he launders the story in the Yorkist interest, both versions claiming improbably that Henry VI died a natural death 'of pure displeasure and melancholy'. He seems also to have departed from the truth in his anxiety to reconcile the king's pardon to those taking sanctuary in Tewkesbury Abbey with their subsequent executions. If he was indeed Harpsfield, his authorial achievement did him little good for, having slain one of his own colleagues in 1471, he pleaded benefit of clergy to save his life, suffered brief imprisonment, disgrace and dismissal, and in mid-1474 had to seek employment abroad. But he was forgiven, returning as chancellor of the exchequer and lived out his last years, till about 1489, in secure employment and relative prosperity surrounded by a growing family. Harpsfield's legacy is the most complete and vivid account of any of the Wars of the Roses.

Pedigree 6: The Dynastic Contestants in 1469–71



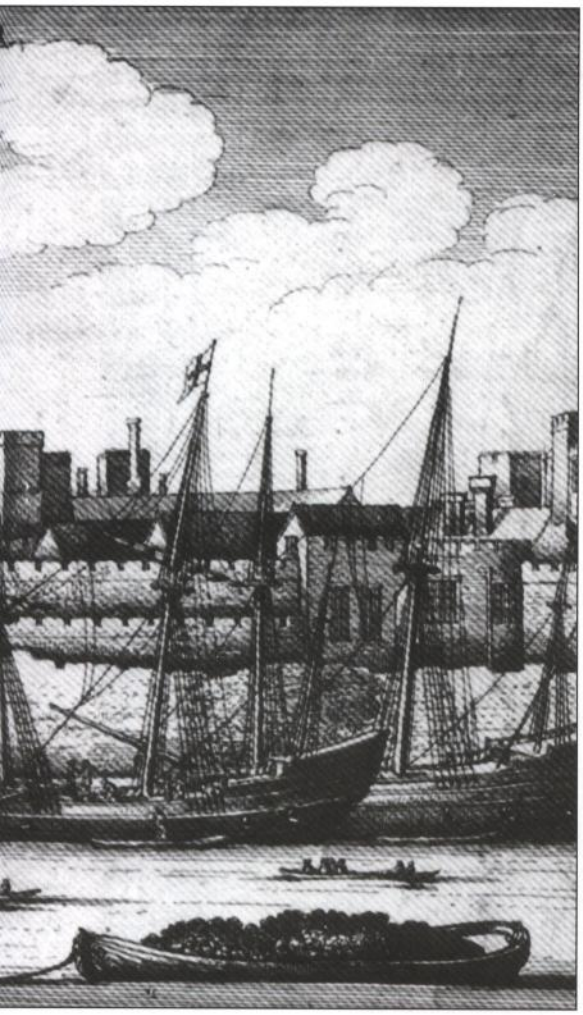
Life goes on

The Wars of the Roses were superimposed on a peaceful realm. In 1460 and 1470 the issues drew large numbers into the conflict, but these years were exceptional for the actual fighting was brief and peripheral with most people in the shires not being directly involved. There were no chevauchées, no scorched-earth policies or large-scale devastations, and no armies lingered for long in hostile territory or lived off the land. It was a cause for remark, and compensation, that the passage of Henry VII's army in 1485 lost an abbot his crops at Merevale (Warw.). Foreign invasion, the threat of foreign invasion, and Warwick's piratical attacks on foreign shipping in the Channel both in 1459–60 and in 1470–71 disrupted trade and annoyed foreign merchants, as their complaints and judicial inquiries revealed. Surely they also disrupted



trade within England and especially cloth manufacture, but we know scarcely anything of that. The Wars of the Roses appear to have done little economic damage to the realm – the 'Great Slump' began before the wars started and ended before their final phase.

Most combatants, whether individually retained or arrayed en bloc, were expected to provide their own horses and/or equipment. There was little if any standardisation and the quality of protection and weaponry was probably both variable and poor. Town contingents were clad not in armour, but in padded leather jerkins supplied by the corporation, which also paid them. Participants generally expected to be paid, but campaigns were far too brief to enrich anybody. Indeed it is rarely apparent whether expectations of payment were actually fulfilled, although we know of pay and expenses to some tenants from the West Midlands paid by the Duke of Buckingham in 1450 and 1453, before the wars proper commenced. Governments hired ships and mariners for seaward defence, and recruited and fed armies against Northumbrian rebels in 1461–64. Invaders paid any foreign mercenaries, in Warwick's case in 1471 and in Henry Tudor's in 1485, out of loans that they had promised to repay. Warwick's mariners in 1459–61 and 1470–71 reimbursed themselves from the profits of piracy. Victorious invaders expected to be properly rewarded: perhaps by being restored to their own property; maybe through grants of forfeitures; occasionally by ransoming their captives; certainly from pillage. There are no sources of information for the collection of weapons and armour, the looting of baggage, and the stripping of corpses, perhaps by bystanders as much as combatants, and not all of it at the time – over five centuries the plough has turned up much that had been trodden in long before metal detecting began. It seems unlikely that the slain or vanquished or their dependants were ever paid, for the defeated had nobody to whom to turn for payment and had good reason to conceal their identities – they wished to avoid the penalties of treason. Some were executed later, principally the ringleaders, as after Tewkesbury in 1471; others suffered forfeiture, being attainted or (like those at Barnet, 1471) indicted, again mainly those with worthwhile property. Some bought themselves out of forfeiture, such as Sir William Plumpton in 1461, or compounded with the recipient of their lands, as miscellaneous East Anglians did with Richard Duke of Gloucester in 1471; and others were fined, as at Ludford in 1459, the



The Tower of London somewhat later, showing maritime traffic on the Thames. (AKG, Berlin)

communities of most Kentish hundreds in 1471 and all the West Country in 1497.

Mid-fifteenth-century Englishmen were strongly opposed to direct taxation and parliaments voted it only for campaigns against France. Several times, in 1489 and 1497, such taxes provoked serious regional insurrections. The principal campaigns were too sudden and short for taxes to be voted and raised in time to affect the results – even the king was expected to 'live of his own', off his regular income from the customs and his estates, which barely sufficed for his everyday needs. Henry VI was hopelessly impecunious, but Edward IV, towards the end of his life, accumulated enough money to finance two years of Scottish war and to complete the siege of Berwick, hitherto beyond his means, although, despite appearances, this completely exhausted his reserves. At first flush with cash, Richard III was soon reduced to disreputable revenue-raising expedients. It was only Henry VII in his last years who accumulated sufficient reserves to subsidise his continental allies.

The wars were generally fought on credit. Kings borrowed money from their subjects, both private individuals and livery companies, sometimes with an element of compulsion. In 1460–61 Henry VI's Yorkist regime borrowed £11,000 from the city corporation, over £1,500 from at least three London livery companies, and more than £7,000 from ministers and officials, besides such sums that individual Yorkists (notably Warwick) were able to raise. Several times in 1461–64 Edward IV wrote to the London alderman Sir Thomas Cook (and doubtless others) informing him of the desperate threat posed by his northern rebels and urging him to raise loans to finance resistance; on other occasions commissioners were supplied with lists of the well-to-do with suggestions how much they should be asked to lend. Such loans were to be paid back later, perhaps from future grants of parliamentary or ecclesiastical taxes. Noble leaders similarly had access to a little cash, jewels and other treasure, which they pledged for loans – the ducal coronet of Edward IV's brother Clarence, first pledged in 1470, was still on loan at his execution in 1478. Fleets, garrisons and royal armies were paid their first instalment in advance, the rest in arrears – perhaps far in arrears; those recruited for civil wars were paid, if at all, later. Where munitions and foodstuffs were supplied, they were commonly requisitioned against future payment. How far the principal armies lived off the land is hard to tell, although that was certainly the reputation at the time of Queen Margaret's northerners in 1461.

Veterans of the Hundred Years' War had been long serving, their average age was obviously high, many were killed in the final actions, while others may have retired and died during the 1450s. However, a number were involved in the first stage of the Wars of the Roses (and we seldom know the identities of the rank and file), there must have been less in the second stage, and they had surely died out by 1483. There were some professional soldiers in mid-fifteenth-century England: the garrison of Calais, up to 1,000 strong, and some border castles; the archers despatched in droves to afforce the armies of Burgundy and Brittany; and those who joined in the Nevilles' lengthy reduction of the Lancastrian north. The rest were occasional soldiers, recruited for short-term purposes or for campaigns that lasted only for a few weeks. That the Towton fugitives ranged from youth to old age, possessed physiques both imposing and undersized, and showed signs of hard manual labour suggests that they constituted a cross-section of conscripted males rather than the products of selection for military service. If it is reasonable to suppose their military activities disrupted normal family and economic life, it is almost impossible to find any evidence for it. Rents and farms were paid, accounts rendered and audits completed, apparently unimpaired. One factor may have been that agriculturists were generally under-employed, campaigns occurred at slack

times, and recruiters like Lord Howard appear to have sampled available manpower rather than calling up everyone indiscriminately. It is easier to show that contemporaries feared the approach of armies, especially Queen Margaret's northerners in 1461, anticipating in advance or alleging in arrears, pillage, rapine, and sacrilege, than to find concrete evidence for it. John Rous did not find the sojourn of Edward IV's army in 1471 at nearby Warwick worthy of note in either his histories of the earldom or the kingdom. There is no evidence that famine or any other disasters resulted from the wars.

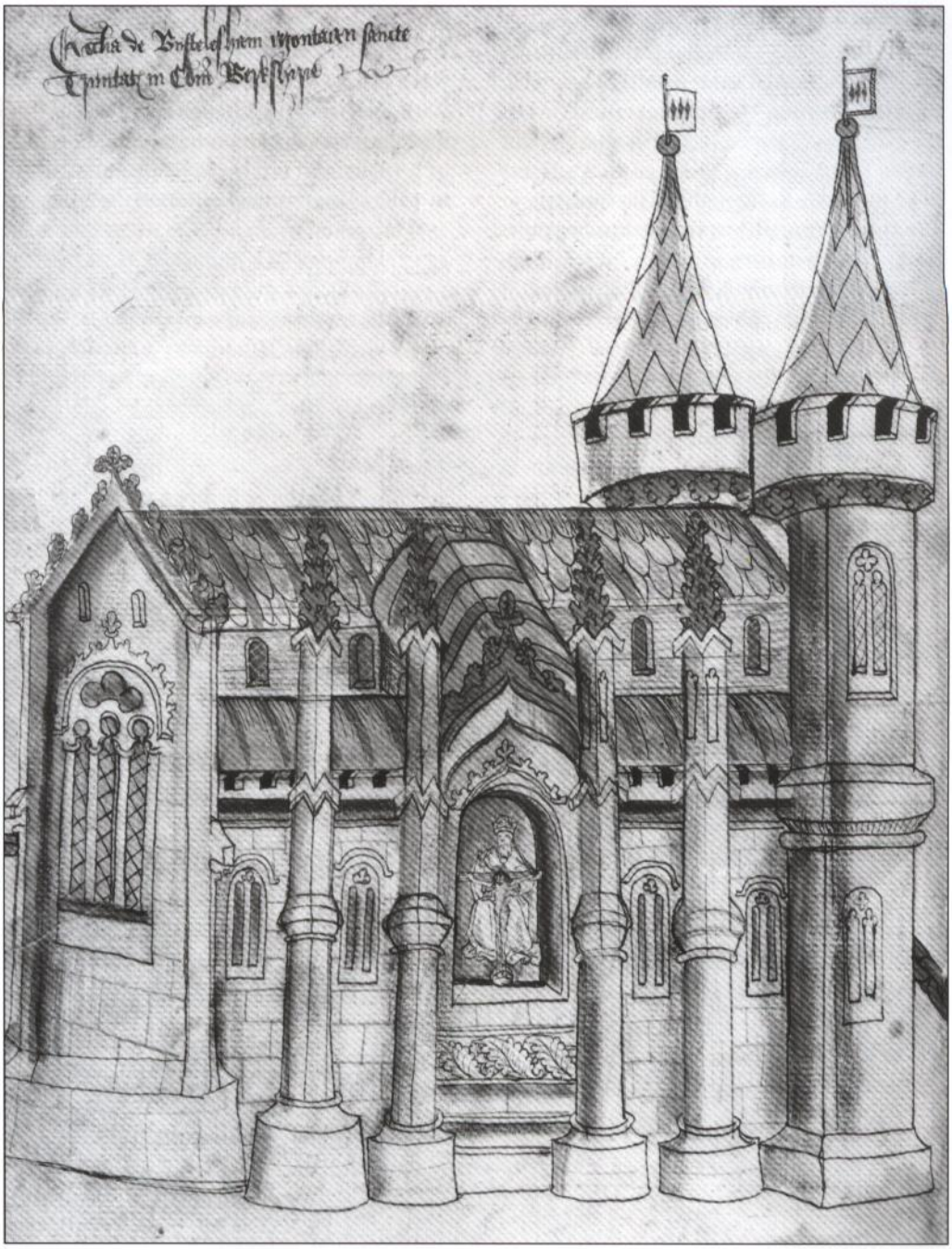
There were exceptions. Cannon were used in the street-fighting at St Albans in 1455; whilst Ludlow (1459) and Tewkesbury (1471) may have been pillaged by the victors, York itself was occupied in 1489. The most northerly borders were a land of war, where English and Scottish clans raided across the border whatever the official relationship of the parent kingdoms. Ricardian rebels apparently lurked in Furness or Cumbria until 1487 or later. Much more seriously, Lancastrian resistance continued after Towton on both sides of the Pennines and although resistance in Cumbria ceased later in 1461, the coastal castles of Alnwick, Bamburgh, Dunstanburgh and Warkworth several times fell to the Lancastrians, supported by Scotsmen and Frenchmen overland and across the sea. They probably enjoyed significant popular sympathy since they included Sir Ralph Percy, the leading adult Percy, and Sir Ralph Grey of Chillingham, and although they are unlikely to have done any deliberate damage, they had to support themselves somehow. Yorkist countermeasures proved irresistible, several

Tewkesbury Abbey, where many defeated Lancastrians took sanctuary, from which some were lured to execution, and where Prince Edward of Lancaster and others were buried. (Heritage Image Partnership)

times reducing the rebels to order, but were sparing; Warwick himself opposed too large an effort that could not be supplied or munitioned. Sieges were short because castle stores were insufficient for long ones, although several times, it appears, garrisons were starved out. King Edward was angered in 1464 because he was obliged to use artillery to devastating effect against castles that he wanted to recover intact.

The City of London was always an important objective, with its inhabitants having a big say in its fate, whether the prudent corporation or the mob, who overrode official decisions. Insurgents from Warwick to Richard III courted them both, with both parties admitting the Yorkist rebels in 1459 and again in 1460, when Henry VI's Lancastrian lords retired to the Tower where they were joined by sympathisers who forced their way through the Yorkist cordons. Quite what form the blockade took is uncertain, however the Lancastrians used artillery which caused damage and deaths within the City and enraged the mob, who failed to honour the terms on which the Tower was surrendered and lynched Lord Scales. Substantial financial backing was offered to the Yorkist regime. Faced by Margaret's victorious army in February 1461 and unwilling to let her in, the corporation temporised, but the mob hijacked a convoy of supplies destined for her; by contrast Edward IV was admitted without difficulty. There was no serious damage either in 1469, when Warwick passed through London on the Edgecote campaign, or in 1470, when diversionary rioting coinciding with his invasion was confined to Southwark; or in 1471, when Warwick had counted on the City being held against Edward IV, although Archbishop Neville was obliged to admit him peacefully. The corporation backed King Edward, but the populace were divided and were not unsympathetic to the shipmen and Kentishmen of the Bastard of Fauconberg when they invested the City after Tewkesbury. Based on the south side of the river, the Bastard relocated his ordnance from his ships to the waterside, when he bombarded the riverside of the City until forced back by counter-fire, whereupon he set light to London bridge, destroying 60 houses, without forcing an entry that way. Two detachments crossed the river, attacked and burnt the eastern gates of Aldgate and Bishopsgate, 'where they shot guns and arrows into the city and did much harm and hurt'. At one point, so *The Arrival* reports, fires were burning in three places. No admittance was secured, however, the assailants being driven off with heavy losses by counter-fire and sallies. Damage and civilian casualties evidently occurred both within the City and in its southern and eastern suburbs; plotters even planned to fire the City in 1483.

We know almost none of them by name, nor indeed the rank and file that fought the battles. If the heralds counted the dead, as they were meant to do, we generally lack the figures – neither they nor the authorities were interested in individuals who lacked property. Parliamentary acts of attainder seldom included the small fry; even such lesser victims as Gawen Lampleugh and Dr Ralph Mackerel in 1461 were gentry or clerics of substance; so too were those identified by a Cornish commission in 1483. Only after Barnet (1471) did a commission of inquiry make indictments; the individuals named, who included yeomen and labourers as well as earls and gentry, came predominantly from Hertfordshire and Essex – a minority of men who were known to a local jury, rather than the northerners and midlanders, who must have numbered many thousands. If ever recorded, the dead disappeared silently from their local records, although we do have, for 1471 and 1497, substantial lists of those fined. Whereas many combatants wisely secured pardons, such pardons, regrettably, are an imperfect record of treason for they include men guilty of other crimes or no crime at all. For most of the vanquished who escaped with their lives, a modest financial penalty, a fine or the purchase of a pardon was the sum of their



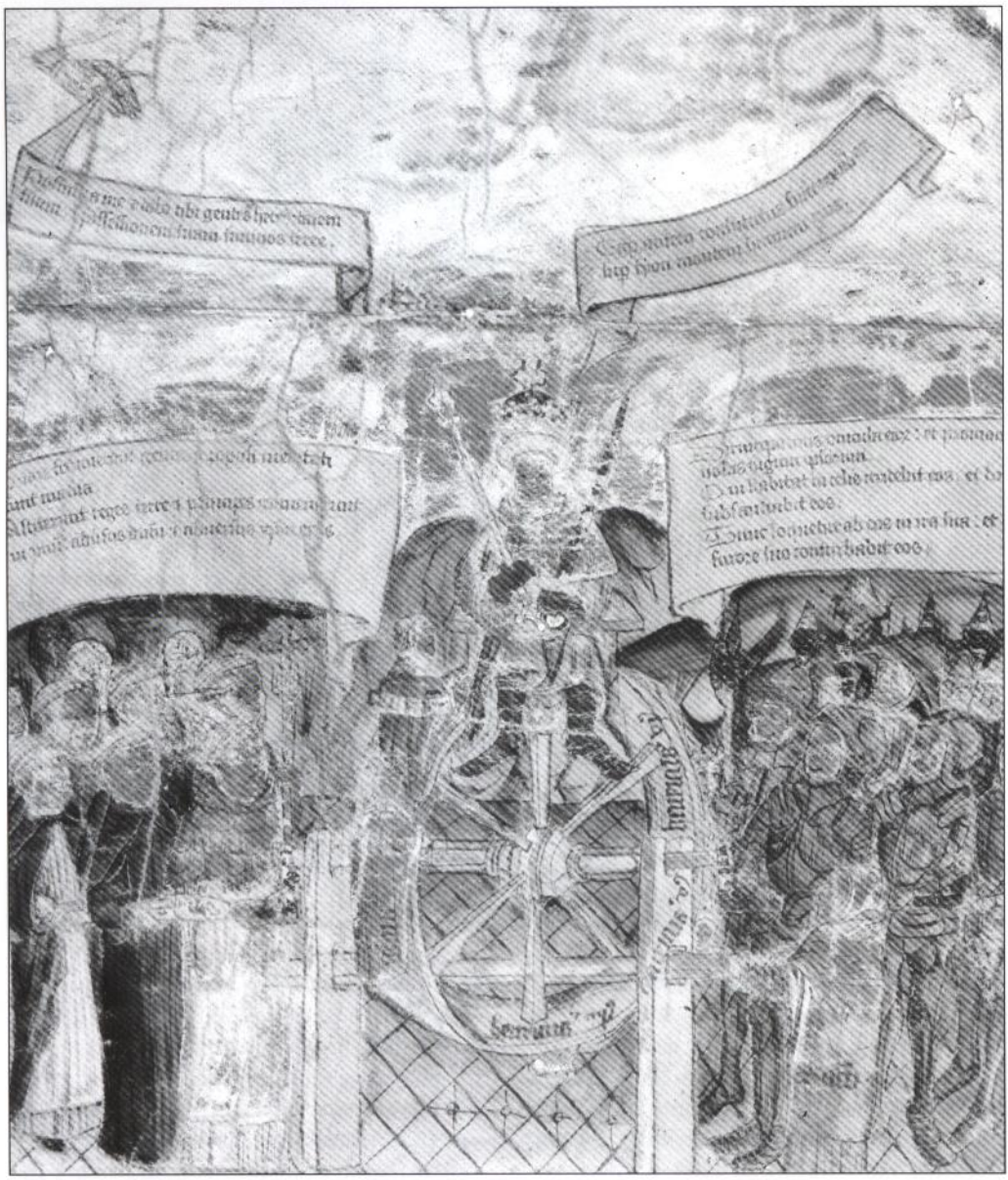
Bisham Priory, mausoleum of the earls of Salisbury, where Warwick the Kingmaker and his parents were buried. (The British Library)

punishment; others escaped detection altogether. Even peers and county gentry were not fully recorded.

It is the nobility and gentry about whom we know most and who were probably the most politically committed. In 1459, during the 1460s, in 1471–74, in 1484–85, and after 1485 some high-born men refused to accept defeat and continued their resistance, often in exile abroad – hence the

invasions of 1460, 1470, 1471, 1483 and 1485. During the 1460s the Lancastrian royal family moved from country to country, wherever they were received, until the king was captured in 1465 and Margaret settled in Bar, where a group of Lancastrians lived modestly as her father's pensioners. The Duke of Exeter was reduced to begging in the Low Countries and John Butler, titular Earl of Ormond, fled to Portugal. Jasper Tudor Earl of Pembroke lived in exile from 1461 to 1485, except during the Readeption – from 1471 in Brittany as he was a prince of the blood royal of France. With few exceptions, the leaders of Buckingham's Rebellion in 1483 took refuge in Brittany and returned with Henry Tudor in 1485. Kings of England used diplomacy

Edward IV on a Wheel of Fortune from a roll recording the extrordinary upsets of 1459–61, which were to be repeated in 1469–71. (The British Library)



to deprive exiles of refuges and to have them handed over, although they were always able to leave first.

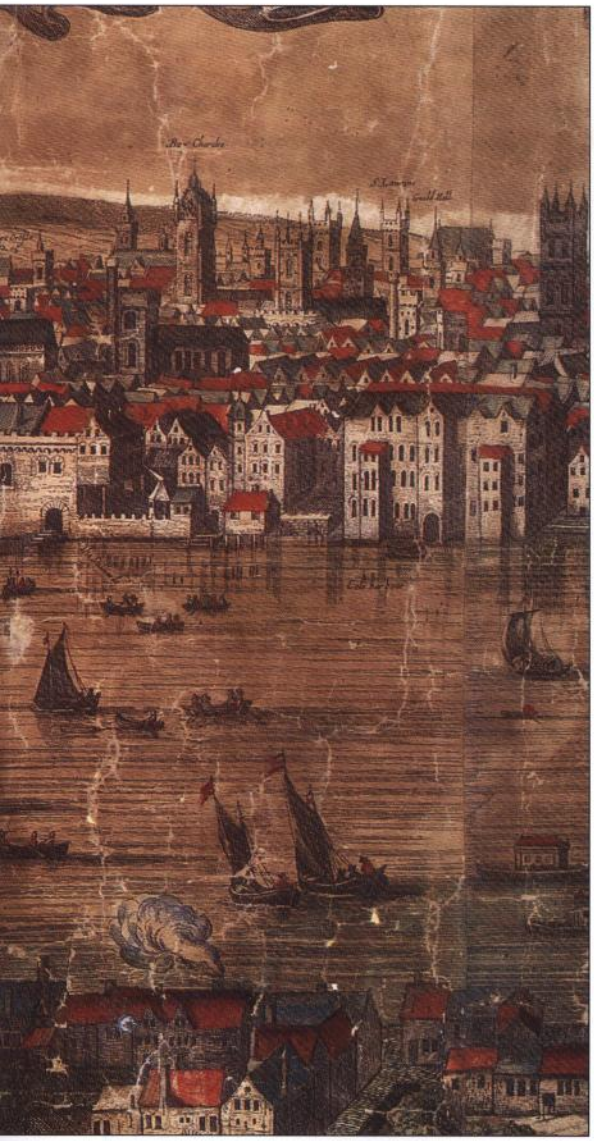
Death left widows, orphans and other bereaved relatives. It was the houses of York at Fotheringhay College and Neville at Bisham Priory who staged the greatest memorial services – the reinterments of Richard Duke of York in 1476 and of Richard Earl of Salisbury in 1463 and their sons – which paraded bereavement in the most elaborate, ceremonial and costly manner. Penetrating the personal emotion, in these and all the other cases, is almost impossible, though emotional effects there must have been. The aristocracy were men of property, whose deaths needed recording if their heirs were to inherit and whose possessions were attractive to the Crown, making them most likely to suffer forfeiture. Acts of attainder corrupted the blood of those attainted, depriving them and their heirs of their inheritances and their widows of their dowers, and seized all their moveable goods into the king's hands. Wills were not executed so that the whole family's estate, homes, income, chattels and prospects were taken away or destroyed. They lost the means to maintain their lifestyle and standing, to finance the education and prime the careers of younger sons, or marry off their portion-less daughters who became ineligible marital matches. A decade of exile left unmarried the last three male Beauforts, nominally dukes of Somerset and marquises of Dorset. Katherine Neville, widow of Oliver Dudley who was slain at Edgecote in 1469, was thrown on the bounty of her mother Elizabeth Lady Latimer (d. 1480). Frideswide Hungerford, for whom a portion of £200 was originally allocated, had to enter a nunnery instead. Family property was most commonly granted to others.

Yet this is to paint too black a picture. The mass forfeitures of 1459 and 1484 were reversed the following year. If widows lost their dowers, a third of their husband's lands, they kept their jointures (the lands jointly settled on a bride and bridegroom to safeguard them and any offspring in the event of his premature death). Twenty-one widowed peeresses, women of birth, connections and property, remarried other men of property; gentlewomen did so too. Dowers from earlier generations were unaffected; for example, those of the elder dowager-countess of Northumberland, dating back to 1414 and 1455. Any inheritances descending from other ancestors, to widows as heiresses or to sons as heirs, were also untouched. The fourth earl of Northumberland was assured of his mother's Poynings barony, and even Henry Tudor, though deprived of his father's earldom of Richmond, could count eventually on inheriting from his mother Margaret Beaufort. Whatever the law, public opinion regarded inheritance as a sacred right, not lightly to be laid aside. The important had powerful connections and heirs, like Henry Tudor, could be made even more attractive if restored to their rights, as prospective fathers-in-law demanded. Fathers seeking suitable husbands for their daughters often had potential sons-in-law restored to their patrimonies, while recipients of royal bounty preferred sometimes to settle for certain compensation than risk losing all in competition for royal favour, so that most attainders were eventually reversed. The disaster of forfeiture was most often temporary, although the suffering in between – perhaps 24 years long, as with the Courtenay Earls of Devon – was no less painful for the victims. Moreover recognition and fulfilment of legal entitlements was not always easily achieved.

Public opinion was managed during the Wars of the Roses, relying not on mass communication as today or in the days of print, but on word of mouth and communications duplicated no faster than a man could write. Mass distribution of a message depended on a horde of scribes writing at once, or long pre-preparation, and much propaganda survives, generally in single copies, the remainder being lost. Much more, on other topics at other times,

may be deduced but does not survive being genuinely ephemeral, relevant only to the moment of composition, which soon passed. Mere possession of such propaganda of defeated rebels could be dangerous.

Victors celebrated their victories by formal processions, services of thanksgiving, and through parliamentary confirmations of their points of view, which impressed on observers the rightness and triumph of their cause and which were reported back to local communities. Yorkist victories were commonly celebrated in verse, while in 1470 and 1471, apparently uniquely, Edward IV commissioned official accounts of his successes and distributed them, both for domestic and foreign consumption, illustrated versions being commissioned for his continental allies. Earlier a Yorkist roll had depicted the stages from 1459 to 1461 of the Yorkist revolution. The official channels of the state – royal proclamations read at county courts and markets and thanksgiving services in churches – were to reinforce the status quo and to denounce offenders. Richard III used such means to

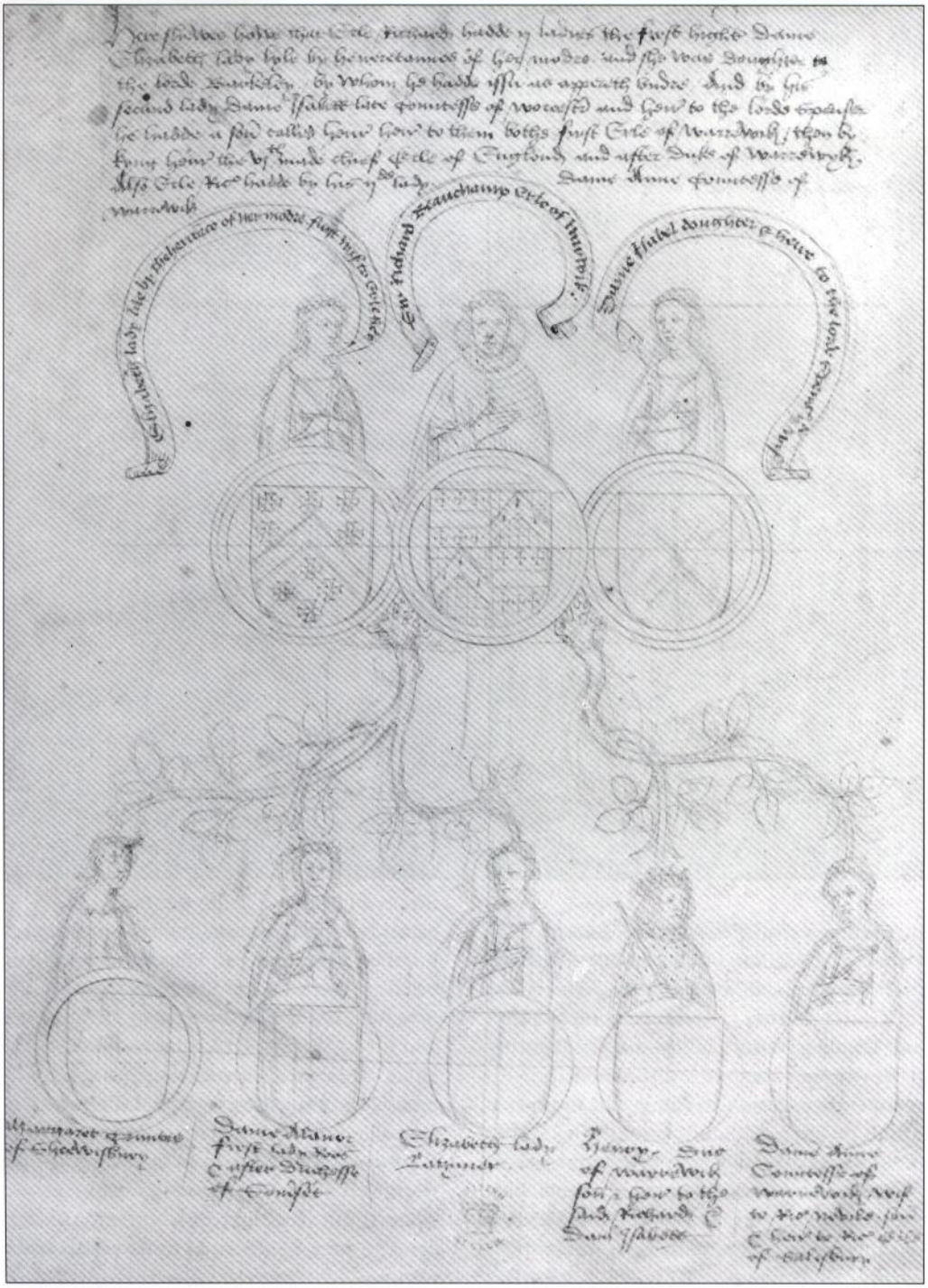


Old St Paul's, the Tower and the City from across the Thames. Although postmedieval, this is essentially the view that confronted the Bastard of Fauconberg in 1471. (AKG, Berlin)

discredit his rival Henry Tudor, son of Edmund Tudor, son of Owen Tudor, bastard on both sides. Outlawries, attainders and forfeitures, formal executions, quarterings, and the distribution and posting of body parts were used to destroy opponents, remove them from the scene, and to warn others of the penalties of insurgency. Acts of attainder and judicial indictments are partisan documents that presented the prosecution's point of view, the machinery of order and oppression being in the government's hands.

Inevitably, however, the government was conservative and defensive, the initiative resting with its attackers, to whom it reacted but slowly. The crisis of 1450 was marked by formal manifestos against the government, both local and national in scope, by scurrilous verse, prophecies and rumours, that connected credible charges, wild accusations and associations, and identified recipients by nicknames and coats of arms which, we must suppose, were generally recognised. The cause for reform, first voiced in 1450, was repeatedly revived in rebel manifestoes, both in prose and verse, which were read aloud, posted on market crosses and church doors, and in 1470 read from the pulpits of Lincolnshire. Seldom can we tell whether a surviving poem or manifesto, most commonly a copy, was unique or one of many, or how effective in imparting its message it was. That ostensibly skilful propagandist Warwick the Kingmaker penned manifestos propounding carefully targeted and inflammatory messages – when the people turned out in force, historians can only suppose the message had hit home. The future Richard III similarly combined his popular assertions of loyalty and call for reform with underhand character assassination, his mother, brother, nephews, nieces and in-laws being tainted with bastardy, sexual immorality and sorcery. Rumours, innuendo and disinformation can be traced back to him Richard's foes, in turn, charged him with tyranny, infanticide and incest, against which he had no effective defence. Governments certainly believed in the efficacy of such methods. Spreaders of rumours were denounced; local authorities were instructed by Richard III to tear down rebel propaganda unread; Collingbourne, author of an infamous couplet, even paid for his composition with his life.

The wars excited much public comment. The call for reform was a recurrent theme, from 1450 to 1497, often influential, and sometimes decisive in bringing the people into politics as they protested against the government of the day – against almost every government, at fault or not, whom they blamed for their misfortunes and for its



failures. They sought punishment of those responsible, vengeance on the king's evil councillors, and at times, in 1450 and in 1469, carried out the sentences themselves. They did not protest against the wars as such – coups d'états and rebellions were the means to secure reform – and those opposed to such demands could turn out for the status quo. In 1469, it appears, Warwick's regime was brought down by passive resistance – a refusal to fight against Lancastrian rebels – and it was presumably to overcome such obstruction that at least twice Richard III was obliged publicly to defend his actions. Sometimes people refused, delayed taxes or declined to make the loans that governments demanded.

Politics was dangerous. Following the murder of royal ministers in 1450, the Lords were anxious to avoid taking on responsibility in 1453–54, when the king was mad. They were fearful of Parliament, which might hold them to account, of the king should he recover and disapprove of their actions, and of the people, who might take direct action – Lord Cromwell, remembering an early attempt on his life, wanted a safe conduct to and from the royal council. They all furnished themselves with excuses – maladies, other duties, youth or age – to absent themselves from key decisions. Whilst some missed major conflicts because they were legitimately engaged elsewhere, the absences of others cannot be so explained – they did not, after all, want to be killed or suffer forfeiture. Many served in France in 1475 – as on previous and subsequent occasions – only in return for royal guarantees for their dependants. As mortality mounted and more families were ruined, so they became more circumspect. Avoid politics because it is dangerous, Lord Mountjoy urged his son in 1485. Less peers fought at Bosworth than on any previous campaign – no more than a quarter of the peerage. If peers could avoid involvement, how much easier it was for the gentry. In 1459 and 1470 retainers would not fight or turn out for rebels against the king, because it was treasonable. Henry Vernon in 1471 was not alone in letting down his lords and hazarding their good lordship and fees. Yet it was difficult to take this line for there was an overriding obligation of allegiance to the king, and peers were national figures – they and the gentry were leaders of their communities, royal officials, and obliged to take the lead; not to do so was bound to damage their local standing. Kings did not employ those they did not trust, and having cut off their royal bounty, promoted instead and depended on their rivals. Occasionally such penalties can be observed in action.

Earl Richard Beauchamp (d.1439), his two countesses, and his children. Note the coats of arms that distinguished them, their lineage, and adherents from others. (The British Library)

Female victims

Aristocratic ladies are the best documented. Although none actually suffered violent deaths in the wars themselves, Isabel Duchess of Clarence, who lost her first baby at sea off Calais, is unlikely to have been the only one to miscarry. Ladies were quite frequently bereaved as most of the leaders of the Wars of the Roses suffered violent deaths. The three Neville sisters, Cecily, Anne, and Eleanor were war widows; others suffered more than once. Katherine Neville lost her first husband William Lord Harrington at the second battle of St Albans in 1461 and her second, William Lord Hastings, to execution in 1483. Elizabeth Hopton's second husband John Earl of Worcester was executed in 1470 and her third, Sir William Stanley, in 1495. The elder Eleanor Countess of Northumberland (d. 1474) lost her husband (1455), brother and two brothers-in-law, and four sons in 1460, 1461 and 1464; her sons were the husband and brothers-in-law of the younger Countess Eleanor (d. 1484). Cecily Duchess of York outlived all her sons – Edmund, George, and Richard died violently, together with her husband, brother, two brothers-in-law, four grandsons, a son-in-law, and numerous nephews and cousins. The husbands of 44 peeresses and an unknown number of gentry were slain. We cannot know about most of the younger sons who perished.

Only three ladies were attainted of treason in person: Alice Countess of Salisbury in 1459, Henry VI's consort Queen Margaret of Anjou in 1461, and in 1484 Henry Tudor's mother, Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby. The latter was most generously treated of all, since Richard III left her at liberty and transferred her property to her husband, Thomas Lord Stanley. Others took sanctuary – Edward IV's queen, Elizabeth, did so twice, in 1470–71, when she gave birth to Edward V in Westminster Abbey, and in 1483–84. Anne Countess of Warwick took sanctuary at Beaulieu Abbey in 1471 on hearing of her husband's death at Barnet and stayed there for two years.

Widows of traitors normally lost their dowers, but were allowed their own inheritances, if any, especially if their husbands' deaths entitled them to their jointures. Bereft of her husband's estates, Margaret Dowager-Duchess of Norfolk lived out her last few years on her jointure at her family home of Stoke Neyland (Suff.). Occasionally ladies were even more favourably treated – Katherine Lady Hastings in 1483 secured her dower as well and Henry VII agreed not to penalise Anne Viscountess Lovell for her husband's treasons. Edward IV's favourite sister, Anne Duchess of Exeter, who was estranged from her husband Duke Henry, secured custody of his whole estate, other forfeitures, and settled them on her second husband; obviously she was a unique case. Worst placed of all were those ladies whose menfolk had not actually been killed, but who were carrying on resistance to the current regime. Husbands, sons, grandsons, brothers and brothers-in-law could all cause this kind of blight, with the ladies finding themselves in limbo, unable to secure the jointures that took effect on their husbands' deaths. They were regarded as a potential fifth column, suspected of offering financial and other aid to the recalcitrant husbands, sons and grandsons. Three courses of action were commonly taken by the government against such women. They and their property – dower, jointure, inheritance and chattels – were taken into custody, they were doled out only limited sums of money for their upkeep, and were consigned to monasteries or other reliable households.

Thus in 1462 the king's chief butler, John Lord Wenlock was appointed keeper and governor of both Eleanor and Anne, wives of the two attainted, but surviving, Lancastrian traitors, Lord Moleyns and Sir Edmund Hampden, and their children and estates. In Eleanor's case, so the patent runs, Wenlock was 'to appoint and remove all servants, and to levy all rents and issues, and expend them on the sustenance of the said Eleanor and her children and six servants in her company and two servants in the company of her children and other reasonable expenses and to account to the king for the surplus'. Eight servants were very few for a baroness, yet poor Anne Hampden was allowed only four. Wenlock was also appointed governor of Eleanor Countess of Wiltshire, with power to appoint and remove her servants and officers, even though her husband was dead; his brothers, however, fought on. Similarly in 1485 Elizabeth Countess of Surrey was subjected to Lord Fitzwalter, who discharged her servants for disrespect to the new king; she was at least allowed to remain in her family home. Even the queen mother, Edward IV's queen, Elizabeth, was confined to the nunnery of Bermondsey Abbey, deprived of her dower, and sparingly pensioned by Henry VII on the pretext of plotting with his foes. Custody was granted in the 1460s over 'the old lady Roos' – the warrant did not even dignify her with her forename to distinguish Marjorie from her daughter-in-law Eleanor and granddaughter-in-law Philippa, all also ladies Roos. She was a mere commodity, to be confined and perhaps treated harshly.

Such ladies could be pressurised in many other ways. Anne Neville, widow of Henry VI's son Prince Edward, was concealed by her brother-in-law George Duke of Clarence, who wanted to prevent her remarrying, and allegedly even employed her in his kitchens. Ladies Elizabeth Grey and Eleanor Butler, widows respectively of Sir John Grey and Sir Thomas Boteler, slain at the second battle of St Albans and at Northampton respectively, could not at first secure their jointures; Lady Margaret Lucy, widow of Sir William Lucy of Richard's Castle, slain at Northampton, could not obtain her dower. Forced to petition the king, he demanded (and apparently secured) sexual favours; Elizabeth, uniquely, emerged his queen. Eleanor may have been promised the same – Edward IV's precontract – but it failed to materialise. Fear for second husbands, the Lancastrians Sir Oliver Manningham and Sir Gervase Clifton, who were again exposed to treason charges, was used to induce the war widows Eleanor Lady Hungerford and Marjorie Lady Willoughby to surrender their own inheritances which were not actually liable to forfeiture to protect their husbands. Warwick the Kingmaker's widow Anne Beauchamp was actually the rightful heir of most of their estates. Following his death at Barnet, she petitioned the king and Parliament repeatedly for her rights, to no avail, since Edward intended it for his brothers, husbands of her daughters; an act in 1474 divided the estate as though she was naturally dead. Both daughters and sons-in-law had died by 1485, when the countess piteously petitioned Parliament again, this time the king advancing her some lands for life, in return for her disinheritance of her grandchildren. Her rights were not in doubt. Yet they perhaps were lucky to have something to bargain with. Margaret, wife of the attainted and irreconcilable Earl of Oxford, forfeited her dower, was not entitled during his lifetime to her jointure, and was no heiress. Reduced to charity, she supposedly worked as a seamstress, until in 1482, after eleven years, she was granted a royal annuity of £100.

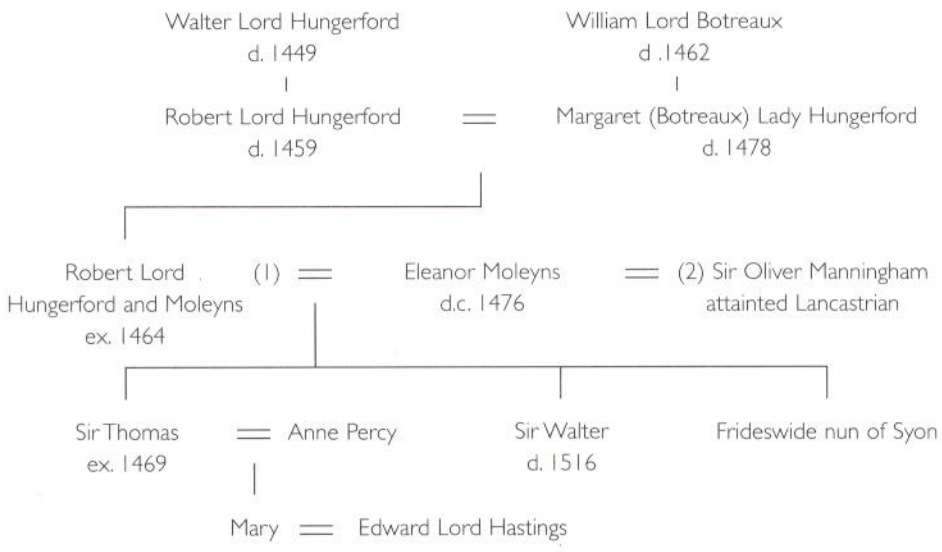
A particularly vivid example is that of Elizabeth Howard, Dowager-Countess of Oxford, who suffered twice. When her husband Earl John and eldest son Aubrey were executed in 1462, she was arrested, confined and dispossessed, albeit temporarily. In consideration of her 'humble, good and faithful disposition', she was released and restored to her jointure, inheritance and even her dower. Her daughter-in-law recovered her jointure and

her second son John de Vere was restored as earl. However he and her younger sons took the wrong side in 1469–71 and also suffered forfeiture. Elizabeth's dower from an earlier earl, jointure and inheritance should have been safe this time. Since Earl John continued resistance, she was consigned first to Stratford nunnery, actually a favourite stopping-off point, and then to Richard Duke of Gloucester, to whom King Edward had given 'her keeping and rule'.

The story opens with his arrival at Stratford Abbey, the seizure of the keys to her coffers by his chamberlain, and her removal to his lodging at Stepney, where he demanded that she give up to him her inheritance, to which he had no legal right. At first she refused, but the pressure was increased on herself and her trustees; several observers saw her tears and lamentations. Though in her sixties, she was made to walk to his house at Walbrook in the City and there gave way. Gloucester's key ploy was to threaten her that 'he would send her to Middleham (Yorks.) there to be kept. Wherefore the said lady, considering her great age, the great journey and the great cold which then was of frost and snow, thought that she could not endure to be conveyed thither without great jeopardy of her life, and also sore fearing how she should be there entreated.' She gave way, she explained to a trustee, only 'for great fear and for the salvation of my life for if I make not the said estates and releases I am threatened to be had in the north country where I am sure I should not live long and for the lengthening of my life this I do'. Frivolous though her fears may appear to northerners, she did indeed die soon after, perhaps the same year. Gloucester secured her estates, to which he had no other right and which he used to endow his colleges or sold. Following his defeat and death, and the victory among others at Bosworth of Oxford, the latter overturned all these transactions with the help of surviving ducal retainers and the countess' trustees; it is to their testimony that we are indebted.

Margaret Lady Hungerford (d. 1478) in contrast was a formidable dowager who saved at least some of her inheritance and provided for her own soul in spite of almost overwhelming difficulties. The Hungerford

Pedigree 7: Victims of Civil War: The Hungerford Women



inheritance had already been mortgaged to repay the ransom of her son, Robert Lord Moleyns, before he took the Lancastrian side in and after 1461. He was executed in 1464 and his son Thomas in 1469. Three times Margaret was arrested, once by the sheriff of Wiltshire, and twice consigned to custody: first in 1463 to Amesbury Abbey (Wilts.), where she lost £1,000-worth of chattels in a fire and had to contribute £200 towards the rebuilding of the guesthouse where she had not wished to be; and secondly, in 1470, first to the much younger (and uncongenial) Elizabeth Duchess of Norfolk, and then (for a payment of £200) to Syon Abbey (Middx.), of which she was an enthusiastic supporter. She had to fight off Edward IV himself, such powerful Yorkist peers as Lord Dynham (price £100 a year), the king's brother Gloucester and his chamberlain Hastings, and also her (younger) mother-in-law Margaret, now remarried to the master of the horse. For nearly twenty years she repeatedly petitioned Parliament, the king and council and played off her creditors, the king's grantees and her own family, who had different and contradictory interests. Some outlying properties did indeed have to be sold off, others had reluctantly to be settled on her infant granddaughter, Mary Hastings, but some were saved for her second son, Walter Hungerford, and parts were used to endow her own splendid chantry in Salisbury Cathedral and her father-in-law's hospital at Heytesbury (Wilts.). Mary, who would surely not have inherited had her father not been prematurely killed, was the beneficiary – or rather her husband Edward Lord Hastings and his family were. Frideswide Hungerford, Margaret's granddaughter and Mary's aunt, lost her marriage portion, never married, and was consigned to a convent. It is likely that many other women lost their expectations due to the violent deaths of their fathers and brothers.

Margaret's 'writing annexed to her will' is a highly partisan and contentious autobiographical account of her sufferings that was designed to persuade future generations that what she had done she did not 'by folly, nor by cause of any excess or indiscreet liberality, but only by necessity and misadventure that hath happened in this season of trouble'. She did not want 'mine heirs to have any occasion to grudge, for that I leave not to them so great an inheritance as I might'. Her fear was that her heirs would overturn her sales of land, made in good faith, and her religious foundations, to the eternal damage of her soul. The determined, devious and sustained machinations of this septuagenarian have to be recovered from other sources. Where her daughter-in-law Eleanor, Moleyns' actual wife, wriggled out of her obligations, Margaret repeatedly sacrificed her current comfort for her future soul and salvaged a substantial estate for the Hungerford male line. Her example reminds us how often fifteenth-century women, though nominally subordinate to their menfolk, proved capable survivors, managers and even politicians.

Decisive victories

Wars only occur because contending parties cannot agree and fundamental differences cannot be settled peacefully. Plenty of efforts were made during the Wars of the Roses to prevent conflict – by threatening dire consequences, by detecting and suppressing plots, and by imprisoning and executing plotters. Attempts were made to avert conflict also by discussions, concessions, mediation and forgiveness for former offences, notably late in the 1450s and 1460s, but war nevertheless followed because the opponents of the ruling regime wanted more than was or perhaps could be conceded. York in 1459 and Warwick in 1469 wanted to rule and both, in the years following, were after the Crown. It was they who rejected any compromise. The Yorkists in 1459 and Warwick in 1470 dashed aside royal offers made from a position of strength that would have relegated them to secondary roles. Similarly the compromise that York achieved after Northampton – the *Accord* of 1460 – proved unacceptable to his opponents and merely precipitated further conflict. None of the wars ended with treaties, because treaties require negotiated agreements that were never forthcoming. Each stage of the wars ended in complete victory for one side, complete defeat and destruction for the other – there were no stalemates.

There could only be one king. Rival kings could not negotiate and divide the spoils, because one must surrender his crown and accept the superiority of the other. No consideration was ever given to dividing the kingdom of England. Once a king, always a king, contemporaries believed. A king might lose his kingdom, but could not lose his crown, resign or abdicate. Unlike today, he remained a king, not an ex-king. All the kings discussed here came to believe their legitimacy, however dubious their claims may appear to us: if not kings of right (*de jure*), they were clearly kings in fact (*de facto*), God's representatives on earth, and hence entitled to the allegiance of their subjects. Claiming the Crown raised the stakes and ruled out the withdrawal, submission and compromise that had been possible before taking this fateful step. Four times York as duke submitted to King Henry VI. Contenders might claim to be willing to compromise, to settle for the dukedoms to which they were undoubtedly entitled, as Henry IV did in 1399 and Edward IV in 1471. Such conciliatory gestures were popular, enlisted support from supporters anxious not to commit treason and disarmed opposition, but they were unusual and were not genuine. Edward IV was never willing to give up his crown, his offer to make do with his duchy of York being a ploy to get him through the hazards of Yorkshire in 1471. Moreover promises of forgiveness, restitution and favour were of doubtful sincerity – was not the king merely biding his time for revenge? Not always, it appears, but often enough – witness the executions of the Bastard of Fauconberg in 1471 and Clarence in 1478. No wonder Warwick in 1471 refused to turn his coat again.

Perhaps Henry VI could have been allowed to die naturally in the Tower and his queen and son fester in exile, like other former kings and pretenders, but his representatives would have continued to plot and hope for the opportunity to be useful to rival powers, like the one that actually arrived in 1470. The ousted Lancastrians in the 1460s, however, are the exception. Diplomatic efforts might force exiles to change refuges, but only in 1506 did they actually deliver a pretender into the

English cavalry and archers attack in combination. (Topham Picturepoint)

hands of the ruling king. Dynastic rivalries could normally be resolved only through shedding blood, with the claimant needing to raise an army to overturn the incumbent monarch, who, in turn, needed to destroy his rival. Sieges, occupation of territory, and constitutional opposition did not serve these purposes. Both sides therefore had an interest in battles, preferably surprises that took the other unawares, but also formal engagements, in which the other party was destroyed, on the field or afterwards. This was actually what the Wars of the Roses delivered: decisive victories and therefore decisive defeats. If Richard III was the only king to fall on the field, Henry VI, his son, and Edward V died violently, and so indeed did most of the principal commanders: two dukes of York, two of Buckingham, three of Somerset, one of Clarence, and many other earls, viscounts and barons. The Wars of the Roses were especially destructive of the leadership, who were deliberately singled out in battle and executed afterwards. There were no negotiated treaties and could be none because the winner took all and the loser lost all. Only lesser men could escape notice, avoid punishment or secure acceptable terms.

No radical changes resulted from any of these wars although each one included a dynastic revolution. The Lancastrian dynasty was toppled in 1461 and again in 1471, the Yorkists in 1470 and again in 1483; only the Tudor dynasty precariously survived. A new dynasty entailed a new king, a change in the personnel of government, and an initial struggle for internal and international recognition, but little more. The principles for which the wars were supposedly fought made little practical difference once victory had been attained, with politics, government, the economy and society remaining essentially unchanged. Admittedly from 1450 onwards York and Warwick called for reform, but the reforms they sought had largely been achieved by 1459, let alone 1469. That the people were still discontented was largely because of the economic depression which no government had caused and none could control. Such reforms, moreover, were about making politics and government work better, by weeding out what was perceived as corruption and abuse, and not about radical upheavals. At first the reformers deplored their humiliation in the Hundred Years' War, blamed the government, and wished to reverse their defeat, but both Edward IV and Henry VII had to postpone for years their invasions of France which, predictably, achieved nothing against Europe's greatest power. The England of the Wars of the Roses was economically and militarily weaker than that of Henry V; France, no longer divided, was much stronger. Warwick appears to have recognised this, preferring to ally with a strong France against Burgundy rather than vice-versa, a potentially unpopular policy that he chose wisely not to foreground and which no king could openly acknowledge until the mid-sixteenth century. Fundamental differences on foreign policy were certainly an ingredient in Warwick's rebellions of 1469–71, and crucially secured him French support for Henry VI's Readeption in 1470, but also, fatally, secured Burgundian backing for Edward IV's riposte. Moral reform directed against the Wydevilles was proclaimed by Richard III, without obvious results, and was achieved, so Tudor propagandists claimed, by Richard's own destruction.

Traditionally Bosworth has been seen as the last battle of the Wars of the Roses, where the incumbent king, the wicked Richard III, was confronted by the blameless Henry Tudor and met his end, losing his life and ending his dynasty. It was high drama, the culmination of the Wars of the Roses, in which the first Tudor was crowned on the field of battle with his vanquished predecessor's crown, retrieved – in Shakespeare's play – from the thorn bush from which it dangled. Richard left no heirs, dynastic or political, no son and nobody to continue whatever cause he stood for. Reconciliation followed, as Henry VII, the first Tudor king, heir of Lancaster wed Elizabeth of York, uniting the red rose and the white. That Bosworth was the end was already the message that was passed on and amplified, at maximum volume by Shakespeare, and

became one of the historical commonplaces for five centuries of the English. Yet much of this is Tudor propaganda; indeed we possess no authentic eyewitness account of the battle and historians differ substantially even on where it took place. It was not a trial of strength on the massive scale or savagery of Towton or Barnet and it seems likely that there were less contestants than in any of the other key battles. If Richard was unusually unsuccessful in mobilising loyal Englishmen, although some certainly were on their way from guarding the wrong coasts, it seems unlikely that Henry attracted many recruits or any popular support, relying instead on a small core of hardened French and Scottish veterans. The battle was hard fought between parts of the two armies and was decided, apparently, by Stanley's late intervention. Had Henry perished, as Richard intended, who could have carried forward his cause? Had

Lady Margaret Beaufort (d1509, mother of Henry VII.) (Topham Picturepoint)

Richard survived, would the battle have been decisive? Would Richard not have fought on another day? Whatever might have been, the Tudor victory was less decisive than Tudor propagandists declared. Less than two years later the battle of Stoke was another small-scale conflict on which the fate of the kingdom hung and subsequent conspirators, Perkin Warbeck and Edmund de la Pole, destabilised the new regime. That Bosworth marked the last defeat and replacement of a current king, as the Tudors declared, was only confirmed in retrospect after subsequent insurrections failed, earlier kings, in 1461, 1470 and 1471, having also claimed to have brought the wars to an end.

Victory was God's gift. The first action of every victor, after the first battle of St Albans, Northampton and the rest, was to hold a service of thanksgiving featuring the 'Te Deum'. Though doubtless sincere, such actions secured the approval of the Church and sought to deter further resistance – God's verdict should not be disobeyed. The result was widely published – officially proclaimed, popularised in verse and song, and occasionally transmitted in official histories to foreign powers. In 1455, 1460, 1469 and 1483, when coups and battles did not initially change the monarch, insurgents were careful to present themselves in the most public manner as loyal subjects ridding their king of evil councillors. The victors summoned Parliament to confirm their protectorates in 1455, 1460, 1469 and 1483, to confirm their accessions and changes of dynasty in 1461, 1470, 1471, 1484 and 1485, and to attaint their predecessors and their adherents. Commoners might be fined and lesser aristocrats allowed to compound for their lands. The forfeited estates of the principal losers were distributed initially amongst the partisans of the victors, thus creating a vested interest in their continued rule. Usurpers presented themselves as rightful, legitimate monarchs, bringers of peace, tranquillity and order. A Lancastrian myth anticipated the Yorkist myth that preceded the myth of Richard III in his *Titulus Regius*, which were all superseded by the Tudor myth.

Civil war is divisive. Victories and usurpations were achieved by active partisans over equally committed opponents, most people, whatever their opinions, standing aside. Edward IV, famously, was elected king by a tiny, unrepresentative faction; to remain the figurehead of such a faction, still more one becoming progressively narrower, was fatal – Warwick in 1469 and Richard III being the most striking examples. All usurpers wished, however, for more general acceptance, to secure support from the uncommitted and former foes, and allowed surviving enemies or more commonly their heirs to recover their estates in return for proven loyalty and service. Edward IV and Henry VII went through all these stages, but the Readeption government of 1470–71 and Richard III in 1483–85 were not allowed the time.

Return to normality

The Wars of the Roses had no perceptible effect on the population or labour force. If the population of England and Wales at this time was no more than two million, the proportion of combatants even in 1461 was a mere fraction of one per cent, although we have very few reliable indications of army strengths. For Towton in 1461, perhaps the largest and most closely contested battle, it was estimated, probably reliably, that 28,000 people were slain, with others being drowned in the River Cock and cut down in flight. The battle was the culmination of a thorough mobilisation over several months of both sides from all over the kingdom; heaps of bodies supposedly impeded soldiers as they fought. Casualties were likely to have been around 50 per cent overall – an astonishing proportion – rather less presumably for the Yorkists and rather more for the Lancastrians, most of whose leaders were slain. Barnet in 1471, perhaps the next largest battle and the next most hard fought, drew on only a proportion of the forces of the Readeption, which were nevertheless more numerous than those of Edward IV. All other conflicts seem likely to have attracted fewer combatants, recruited not nationwide, but from particular areas, and often in haste. Once coherence was lost, armies were massacred. Moreover casualties were not confined to the battlefield for defeated armies took flight, those at Empingham (Losecote Field) in 1470 notoriously throwing off their jackets so they could run more quickly. They also probably discarded their helmets, the most likely explanation for the head injuries of all the fugitives of 1461 interred in the mass grave at Towton Hall. Fugitives from Northampton in 1460, Towton and Tewkesbury were drowned in the rivers Nene, Cock and Wharffe, Avon and Severn.

Later on Edward IV and Henry VII spared the commons, who had been led astray by their leaders, so they thought, but a point was made of eliminating the leadership – particularly at St Albans in 1460, where a Yorkist chronicler reveals that 'when the said lords were dead, the battle was ceased'. Winning commanders had important captives executed after Wakefield (1460), the second battle of St Albans and Towton (1461), Hexham and Bamburgh (1464), Edgecote (1469), Empingham (1470) and Tewkesbury (1471); Salisbury was lynched after Wakefield, as were Devon and Pembroke after Edgecote; yet other supposed conspirators were executed in 1462, 1468–69, 1471, 1478, 1483, 1486 and on other occasions.

The standards by which the wars were judged were those of the international code of chivalry and those of the English law of treason. The chivalric code allowed those who resisted to be put to the sword, massacres after battles therefore being permitted. Defeat was honourable. Aristocratic captives in the Hundred Years' War were commonly spared and put to ransom. Although ransoms occasionally occurred during the Wars of the Roses, those vanquished were commonly regarded as traitors and deserving of death; some of those who killed Richard Duke of York, not yet a king, were even regarded in this light. Henry VII notoriously dated his reign from the day before Bosworth, so that he could attaint Richard III's supporters. It was on this basis that aristocratic captives were summarily tried by the court of chivalry, such as the Earl of Oxford, condemned to death by the Earl of Worcester in 1462, Worcester himself by Oxford's son in 1470, and the victims of Tewkesbury by Richard Duke of Gloucester in 1471. Some of the latter had been fetched out of sanctuary, perhaps with promises of security that were broken; the

Staffords were also removed from sanctuary at Culham (Berks.) on the anachronistic grounds that it did not cover treason and were executed in 1486. Whether slain on the field of Tewkesbury or murdered immediately after at King Edward's command after an exchange of insults, Prince Edward of Lancaster could not have been allowed to live. Following his capture with Bamburgh Castle in 1464, the perjured traitor Sir Ralph Grey, who deserved death under the laws both of chivalry and treason, was degraded from knighthood – his arms were reversed and his spurs hacked from his heels by a master cook, to maximise the dishonour – before he was executed. Conspirators were more commonly tried and condemned by commissions of oyer and terminer, which at least sometimes acquitted defendants or convicted them on lesser charges. On at least two occasions acts of attainder were followed by the condemnation of the accused by a steward specially appointed for the occasion – Warwick in 1461 and Buckingham in 1478 – when the king's own brother was sentenced. Not always were such formalities observed after battles, nor by the angry commons, and several times kings simply eliminated enemies. In 1483 there was no trial for Lord Hastings and only a semblance of one for Earl Rivers.

No satisfactory estimates of total casualties over 30 years can be attempted.

Thousands of casualties, particularly those from the same area, ought surely to have had significant economic effects, as the wars occurred at a time of much reduced and perhaps declining population in which buoyant wages indicate a labour shortage. When focused in particular areas, such as Yorkshire which suffered disproportionately from mortality at Towton, casualties from warfare ought to have impacted noticeably on the local economy, yet they cannot be shown to have done so. No surviving manorial accounts or court rolls show the vacant tenancies, deaths or heriots (death duties) that one would expect to find. Productivity was low, so economies in labour enforced by war mortality could be sustained without severe disruption. Towns supplied only small contingents a dozen or two strong made up of those who could best be spared.

There could no legal remedy against kings or against others too powerful to be brought to trial. The sons of Somerset and Northumberland, slain at the first battle of St Albans, wanted revenge, but were persuaded to settle for less. Pillage and the other offences against civilians of contemporary soldiery were not easily attributed to the offenders. Casualties of war and in flight, executions for plotting and after battle were legal and legitimate by the standards of the time. Twenty-first century notions of war crimes did not yet exist, but there were actions that were generally regarded as unacceptable, high on the list being Richard III's elimination of Hastings. The nearest parallel to our modern understanding of a war criminal was John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester, the highly cultured early Renaissance humanist, who supposedly added impaling from the 'law of Padua' to the hanging, drawing and quartering to which traitors were normally exposed.

The Wars of the Roses were a side-show to military developments in Western Europe. The military formations, weapons and tactics that Henry V had deployed to such effect were now obsolete. There was no place even for the territorial conquests, step-by-step siege warfare, and attrition of the Hundred Years' War. Nobody took a defensive stand, garrisoning and munitioning towns in lieu of battle, and nobody took a systematic approach to the occupation of territory. There was no English equivalent to such continental developments as the French standing army or its component units, the French lance or Spanish tercio; English infantrymen were not re-equipped with Swiss pikes or handguns. Cannon were deployed abroad to such shattering effect that old-fashioned castles were rendered obsolete and the bastion was devised to counter siege artillery. Yet almost all these developments passed the English by, although new infantry weapons were employed by handgunners of the Burgundian Seigneur de la Barde in 1461, the French veterans of Philibert de Chandée in 1485 and the Dutch professionals of Martin Swart in 1487. Even the armies that Edward IV

and Henry VII launched against France still combined archers and men-at-arms recruited in companies of irregular size by indentures, with individual captains, in the old way. Not that archers were valueless – that they were still appreciated on the continent is shown by Breton and Burgundian requests for them when threatened by the French. It was probably only on the Scottish border that castles were maintained and rebuilt, Gloucester's work at Carlisle allowing for defensive ordnance, but genuinely modern fortifications, such as the string of self-contained castles along the south coast from Deal to St Mawr had to wait until the reign of Henry VIII.

The English were most conscious of the potential of gunpowder, employing cannon both to attack and defend the Tower in 1460, the City in 1471 and in battle at Northampton (1460), Barnet and Tewkesbury (1471). Warwick had his own cannon and his own gunner from the early 1460s and Gloucester in the early 1480s; Edward IV enhanced his ordnance train for his invasion of France in 1475. The defensive tactics of the Hundred Years' War, in which the French were encouraged to attack mixed formations of archers and men-at-arms, were adapted in the Wars of the Roses by the addition of cannon, without emulating the successes of the English at Agincourt or the French at Châtillon. Cannon encouraged static defensive thinking, to which Warwick was especially inclined, proved unusable in the wet conditions at Northampton (1460), and could not be readily adapted to threats from different directions in 1461 or to unfavourable ground in 1471. Presumably it was the lighter and more mobile cannon that were used alongside bowmen at the start of battles. At Tewkesbury such barrages forced the losing sides to attack from pre-prepared positions and abandon the advantages of defence. Indeed virtually all the battles of the Wars of the Roses were won by the side attacking, not by the defenders, even when the latter had chosen the ground and entrenched themselves. Whether equivalent results could have been achieved against the best continental armies, however, is unlikely; small contingents of continental professionals carried disproportionate weight both at Bosworth and Stoke. If Edward IV and Warwick were able to carry the experience of 1459–61 to 1469–71, the king repeating his successes and the earl his failures, there seems to have been little if any development between them or continuity between these conflicts and those of the 1480s. The Wars of the Roses were a military backwater irrelevant to the mainstream of military advance.

The Wars demonstrated England's weakness against foreign attack for although the sea and contrary winds were useful shields, the Channel was easily and quickly crossed with little preparation and expense. Naval defences were of limited value, and no invaders were ever intercepted, so it was possible to land almost anywhere, without resort to ports or regard to coastal castles, most of which were in decay, ungarrisoned and unmunitioned. Once ashore, invading armies could march freely wherever they chose, unimpeded by fortifications or walled towns and with little account for physical barriers such as rivers and hills, and often with domestic support. The forces that could be raised against foreign invaders were unlikely to be equal in numbers or equipment, and governments could be toppled militarily with extraordinary ease. The Wars of the Roses revealed how weak England was to external and internal threats.

The first strategic lesson therefore, which the Tudors took to heart, was that invasions must be prevented at all costs. Whilst the navy, fortifications, the militia and armaments could be and were to be improved, the key was prevention by appropriate diplomatic means – fortunately England's principal enemies up till 1588 always focused their military attention elsewhere. Secondly, internal and external foes must be divided, in particular by denying exiles refuge abroad and ideally by securing their extradition; this was nothing new and was practised by both Henry VI in 1459–60 and Edward IV thereafter, but Henry VII made it work. Thirdly, English military commanders at Calais, in Ireland, and on the northern marches must be

prevented from turning royal resources against the government. And fourthly, domestic dissent must be prevented from escalating, by a mixture of conciliation, deterrent and propaganda, so that Englishmen learnt to regard resistance and rebellion as wrong. Of the four, the last three objectives were actually achieved.

Politically the Wars of the Roses were civil disagreements within England rather than international conflicts between states. Whilst England can be perceived as one of the venues in the struggle between France and Burgundy, few Europeans participated and the wars had no decisive effect on the main contest. Admittedly the Burgundians helped the Yorkist war effort in a small way in 1461; Frenchmen and Scots made major contributions to the unsuccessful Lancastrian resistance of the 1460s; the French in 1470, Burgundians in 1471 and French again in 1485 helped overthrow English governments; and the French in 1483 and the Burgundians in 1487 backed invasions that failed. Such activities need to be measured against their strategic objectives. From a continental angle, the intentions were twofold. Firstly, to prevent English intervention on the other side by fomenting instability at home. This objective was repeatedly achieved, even the smallest raids serving this purpose, like those of Jasper Tudor in Wales in the 1460s and Oxford in 1472–74. Secondly, they were designed to secure English intervention against the rival state. This objective involved replacing the existing government with one more sympathetic and securing the latter's armed intervention on the continent. It was achieved most obviously in 1471, when Warwick launched an assault on Burgundy as agreed the previous summer with King Louis XI; unfortunately his participation was terminated by the resultant Burgundian support for Edward IV that ended the Readeption. Twice Edward IV had planned invasions of France, in the 1460s and early 1470s; only the latter happened and was prematurely curtailed. So was the Etaples campaign of 1492 of Henry VII, who indeed campaigned against the French, who had made him king. The English completely failed to prevent both Louis XI's war against Burgundy after Charles the Bold's death in 1477 that resulted in the French conquest of Artois and Picardy and Charles VIII's acquisition by marriage of Brittany, even though these annexations placed the whole of the Channel coastline facing England in French hands. Diplomacy, especially the treaties of Picquigny (1475) and Etaples (1492), was more effective in neutralising the English than military intervention. In his latter years Henry VII preferred (and was able at last to afford) to subsidise foreign allies rather than to fight himself.

The Wars of the Roses had no permanent impact on England's foreign relations abroad. Defeat in the Hundred Years' War signalled the changing standing between France and England, France resuming its place as the leading European power – its proper place, when measured in terms of resources – and England reverting to the second rank, where it remained for two centuries until the 1650s. Successive English monarchs, from Edward IV and the first two Tudors to the first two Stuarts, carried little weight when intervening on the continent and achieved scarcely anything when they did; they were genuinely marginal and their invasions could safely be ignored.

The Wars of the Roses also had no significant impact on the distribution of power within England, nor were the opposite parties constant or consistent. Except at certain points, it is not possible to discern clear geographical zones or social classes associated with either side, each attracting cross-sections of supporters from all the social orders that varied with the different regimes. Richard Duke of York may have triumphed in 1460 because of popular support, just as Henry VI did in 1470, but the commons did not prevail over the aristocracy or any other social class. The north that backed Queen Margaret in 1460–61 and continued resistance in the 1460s did not include the Richmondshire levies of the Nevilles of Middleham and subsequently Richard Duke of Gloucester. Most of the major families that suffered forfeiture were in due course restored. Henry

VII did not stand for any clear political creed except hostility to Richard III and it is not clear what his opponents stood for; nor did he seek to destroy the great nobility. If he failed to replace the greatest families that had died out or suffered forfeiture, which may indeed have changed the balance of landholding and power both nationally and in the longer term in several regions, this was more because his younger sons failed to found any lasting noble house. What an overmighty subject Henry Duke of York might have been had he not acceded as King Henry VIII!

Each of the Wars ended with a clearcut victory that destroyed both the leadership of the losing side and deprived the survivors of the resources to continue. By these criteria, the battles of Towton in 1461, Barnet and Tewkesbury in 1471, and even Bosworth in 1485 looked decisive. Recalcitrant Lancastrians in the North, Harlech and Jersey in 1461–68, the Earl of Oxford at St Osyth's (Essex) and Mount St Michael (Corn.) in 1472–74, and erstwhile Ricardians in Furness and Richmondshire, were persisting irrationally with forlorn causes. Inevitably their resistance was stubbed out and many of them were slain. The ruling regimes that surmounted such obstacles looked progressively more secure, so that peace looked permanent and almost all parties operated as though it was. Battles were decisive, however, only for as long as the defeated party secured no new accretion of strength, English or foreign, or for as long as the victorious regime maintained its unity. The Yorkist victors of 1461 and 1471 both divided against themselves a decade later and each then attracted foreign backing that enabled the former victors to be displaced. Outside support was forthcoming for dynastic rivals to Henry VII; what they never secured, however, was substantial adherence within England, especially amongst the great nobility.

What made it so easy to displace kings, dynasties and governments during the Wars of the Roses was the financial and military weakness of the Crown, the full participation of the commons in violent politics, and the intervention of foreign powers. These made insurrection almost respectable, whilst dynastic differences made the choice of king, to whom overriding allegiances were due, ultimately almost a matter of opinion. Henry VII benefited from the end of the Great Slump, which restored the financial and military initiative to the Crown at the same time as the greatest noble houses were in abeyance. Economic well-being may also have removed the political discontent of the commons, who were no longer responsive to reforming platforms. Perhaps the reforming propaganda was misdirected – there was still plenty of mileage in complaints against unjust taxation, which brought out tens of thousands of Yorkshiremen in 1489 and Cornishmen in 1497, but which was never transmuted into a national movement. After 1494 the focus of the rival great powers was Italy and neither France nor Burgundy, the Dowager-Duchess Margaret apart, embroiled themselves in English politics. A final, more intangible factor is that insurrection and treason ceased to be respectable. Perhaps deterred by the penalties and much reduced chances of success, the nobility stopped resorting to force. At some point the concepts of order and non-resistance, so important in restraining insubordination and insurrection from the mid-sixteenth century on, prevailed over individuals' sense of grievance.

It used to be argued that the Wars of the Roses had a finite end, the battle of Bosworth in 1485, and that later conspiracies were different. That is what the Tudors and their propagandists wanted their contemporaries and hence us to think, but it is not tenable today. Actually the conspiracies petered out. Plots became progressively less dangerous, attracted diminishing support and were more effectively countered, until new divisions, arising from the Reformation, supplanted them on the national and international agenda. If Richard de la Pole died at Pavia in 1525, the White Rose of York had ceased to pose a genuine threat a decade or more before. Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I and Elizabeth I had to contend with other kinds of insurrections and rivals.

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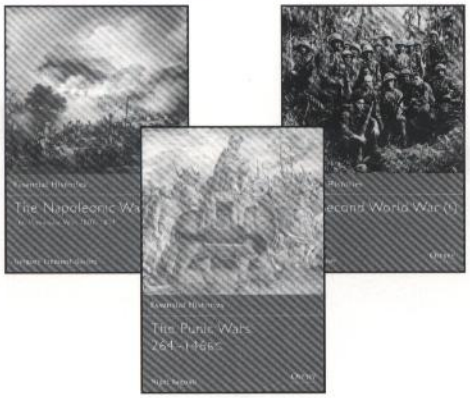

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