

# Chapter One:

## Prelude to the Tudors: The Wars of the Roses

### Teacher guidance



This introductory material offers a brief review of the historical event known as the Wars of the Roses and the impact this had on England prior to the reign of Henry VII and the rise of the Tudor dynasty. It will take into account themes such as 'royal authority', 'legitimacy' and 'faction', setting up important concepts and explaining in a foundational way why these are key to an understanding of Henry VII's true importance. This will give students ample opportunity to create glossaries and useful charts. Students should understand who were the Lancastrians and the Yorkists, what the conflicts between them were and the issues facing England leading into the Tudor period.



### Learning objectives



After this chapter you should understand the following:

- what the Wars of the Roses' were and what impact these had on England
- how royal authority declined over the period

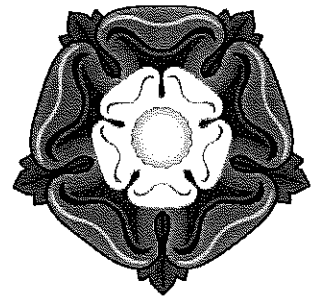
### Key words and phrases



wars of the roses, feudalism, urbanisation, gentry, regency, protector, patronage, client, faction, custom duties, tonnage, poundage, livery, retaining, maintenance, Henry VI, Edward IV, Edward V, Richard III, Elizabeth of York, Elizabeth Woodville

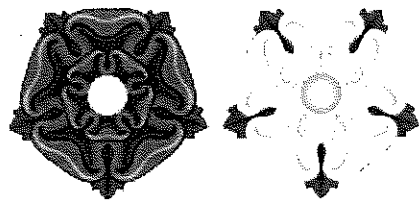
# Pre-Tudor England and the Wars of the Roses

The Tudor dynasty of Henry VII to Elizabeth I (which ruled sixteenth century England, 1485–1603) was founded upon two important ideas – domestic peace and governmental stability – which, in the minds of the people, the country had not had for at least half a century. These ideals were symbolised by the device known now as the ‘Tudor Rose’ (pictured right). A great deal of importance was invested into symbols, devices and banners at the time (largely due to low literacy rates) and this one was meant to show that a terrible episode in English history had finally been resolved, *correctly*, and for the benefit of all. You are probably more familiar with that term – *wars of the roses*, or some variation of it nowadays – in reference to sporting events where a team from Yorkshire plays a team from Lancashire. Historically, the actual counties had nothing to do with it. Instead, it refers to the period in mid to late fifteenth century England (just prior to the Tudor era) in which rival kings from the houses of Lancaster (represented by the red rose) and York (represented by the white rose) struggled to occupy the throne and rule the country for the good of their own families and friends. To understand the rise and impact of Henry Tudor, therefore, we really need to understand the period more fully (if briefly).



## England in the fifteenth century – the negative view

It was believed well into the 1970s that the period of the civil wars was one of almost non-stop bloody warfare, and that as a result of this much of the country lived in squalor, facing violence, hardship, and economic and social decline, as well as disease and death as everyday, normative aspects of life. They were almost blasé about it. Historians described the nobility as corrupt,



violent and decadent (i.e. in a moral decline). In the view of this older generation of historians, Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, brought this terribly violent episode to an end with a victory in the Battle of Bosworth over the despicable Richard III (who had usurped the throne through the murder of the rightful king and his younger brother – and his own nephews, while they were being held helpless prisoners in the Tower of London). As a symbol that the reign of violence was over, that a new world of civilisation was being ushered in and that the ancient families were now united, Henry VII adopted the Tudor rose as the badge of the new dynasty. The defeat of Richard III and the succession of the Tudors is said to mark the turning point between that old barbarous mediaeval world and a new civilised modern age. Between the 1970s and now, however, this rather grim and exaggerated picture has been revised.

Were you to study Shakespeare’s history plays, some existing official documents, some historical records, letters, journals and Tudor propaganda (such as Sir Thomas More’s *History of Richard III*) you would get the impression of what is stated above.



## England in the late fifteenth century – positive view

The account above is nowadays held in doubt. For example, on that point of non-stop bloody violence, a simple scan of the battles of any notes show that there was actually very little military activity. Yes, there were clashes of armies, but these were anomalous, short-term events. Look at the box on the right – it shows only 14 battles of any significance over a 32-year period – less than one battle of note every two years. Does that really suggest continuous warfare? Moreover, there were long periods of peace in which the peasantry were actually making some social and economic improvement (suggesting feudalism was in decline), the English economy was strong, trade was on the increase, urbanisation was growing and a new urban class, a middle class of professionals (lawyers, tradesman) – known as the gentry – was emerging.

### Major battles

- St Albans (May 1455)
- Blore Heath (September 1459)
- Ludford Bridge (October 1459)
- Northampton (July 1460)
- Wakefield (December 1460)
- Mortimer’s Cross (February 1461)
- St Albans (February 1461)
- Towton (March 1461)
- Edgecote (July 1469)
- Losecoat Field (March 1470)
- Barnet (April 1471)
- Tewkesbury (May 1471)
- Bosworth Field (August 1485)
- Stoke (June 1487)



Moreover, people were becoming more literate, more interested in the world around them and more concerned for the salvation of their own souls thanks to the rise of humanism and new methods of learning. All of these concepts will be discussed in future chapters, but there is no reason you cannot do a little additional research now. In any case, and perhaps most importantly, there was no rapid succession of kings but rather a fair degree of continuity of rule.

### How then should we interpret the rise of the Tudors?

Taking the positive view on board we are left with the conclusion that there was some level of political stability. So if the period of the mid to late fifteenth century (late mediaeval period) was not all that bad and if, therefore, the reign of Henry VII did not really mark the beginning of some new modern age, why then do historians still attach such importance to these frankly minor events? There is a good reason for doing so. Despite the positives detailed above, the fact of the matter is that the power of the monarchy itself was at a low ebb; perhaps royal authority was at the lowest point it ever had been in terms of respect for the institution by the time Henry VII succeeded. There can be no denying that Henry VI, Edward IV, Edward V and Richard III all gained and lost the throne during this period. If nothing else, this tells us that there was a severe lack of political stability at the *centre* of government (even if government itself carried on). It was a time when the magnates and the nobles exercised authority usually reserved for the crown. After Henry Tudor took the throne in 1485, the situation reversed: there were no more successful rebellions; a ruling dynastic family became secure in its power; noble power was reduced in real terms; and, the government of the day stabilised around the royal household in the capital. In 1603 there was even a peaceful transferral of power to another related dynasty (the Stuarts). The Battle of Bosworth Field does in some ways, therefore, mark an important transition in English history.



#### Task for students

Create a chart with the four kings (Henry VI, Edward IV, Edward V, and Richard III) across the top and aspects of the decline of royal authority down the side. Fill in the chart as you read.



## Decline of royal power in the pre-Tudor period

Over the next few pages we are going to review the reigns of four kings, in brief, with an emphasis on the decline of royal or crown authority, introducing many concepts that you will need to understand over the rest of the Tudor module.

### The decline of royal authority under Henry VI

Historians characterise Henry VI (pictured above right) as totally unsuitable for the role of king. For the most part, however, should we blame him? He succeeded his father when he was only nine months old! For at least a decade or more he was not legally old enough to inherit lands, possessions and titles in his own right. Keep this in mind; the third Tudor king, Edward VI, was also a minor when he succeeded Henry VIII in 1547. By law and tradition, then as now, the decisions of a minor had no force in law. Although he was king, his rule had to be overseen and supervised and his decisions countersigned by adults – either by a regency council or by a regent. As you can well imagine, a minority rule provided an, albeit temporary, opportunity for a person or a group to exercise a great deal of power for good or ill. This is one cause of the decline of royal authority, particularly considering the very important issue of patronage. In this case, the Plantagenet/Lancastrian holdings provided dozens of opportunities for whoever controlled them to place favoured servants into rich or strategic positions at court and across the country. This exercise of power is called **patronage** and this is how power was expressed in the mediaeval world. A good **patron** rewarded good **clients** in expectation of continuous service (possibly in military or administrative terms) in return. If a patron could not give a client better opportunities than someone else it was very unlikely he would have many clients for long. In a political sense – and keep this in mind too – a group of clients is often called a **faction**. The regent or regency council during the minority of a ruler could become, therefore, the focal point of all power and influence in the kingdom for a time as well as all conflicts. This was the situation for many years at the beginning of the reign. The adult Henry, however, raised other issues just as serious.



### Key Concepts – Patrons/clients:

In essence, the former is someone who would support your cause, and encourage you financially or with grants of office, and who would represent your interests to those in power. In return, as a client, you would be expected to reciprocate either directly, in your patron's entourage, or in exchange for future favours. Nowadays, we call this 'cronyism' or 'the old boys' network' and say it is a bad thing.

He did not dress or look like a king, preferring simple garments (e.g. boots, gowns and hoods) and often appearing unshaven or unkempt. He was more interested in books (e.g. theology, philosophy, history) than in the arts of war and military leadership. He was pious and prudish, but kind, and maybe even a little too generous, giving his favourites (the Beaufort dukes of Somerset) too much land and too many titles, which proved financially ruinous. He was said to be somewhat indecisive and rather too easily led. This led to domination by factious nobles and to rebellion and civil war while he turned increasingly towards religion and isolation for relief from the pressures of rule. Later in life he became severely mentally unstable. Henry VI also lost the *Hundred Years' War* (or so it was charged) and all the continental gains Henry V had made were lost, as were all those opportunities for his nobles to gain Normandy and Gascony lands and titles. The king had only the Plantagenet/Lancastrian holdings to use to reward his servants (an increasingly small pool from which to draw), consequently increasing royal debt and noble factional dispute (particularly in his own family). Shakespeare's *Henry VI* parts 1–3 portray quite well (if overtly dramatically) the internal English divisions as a result of military defeat, centred on factional disputes and the actual feuds between key noblemen. One of the most serious of these was that between the king's uncle, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester and the king's great-uncle, Henry Cardinal Beaufort (with Joan of Arc below), or that of his other great-uncle, John Beaufort, first Duke of Somerset's dispute with his cousin, Richard Plantagenet (later Duke of York). When Henry was three years old he became a political football in a contest between his two uncles, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, and John, Duke of Bedford, over their shared regency duties and military objectives. The boy king was blamed when England lost the war and its continental possessions; he was blamed for rewarding the wrong royal servants; he was blamed for England's loss of reputation abroad. Is it any surprise that this innocent, even docile, man eventually had a nervous breakdown?

### Parliament

Above we made some rather subjective conclusions (based on personal opinions). Here, let's look at an objective problem (based on fact). A factual indication of weak royal authority is, surprisingly, the number of times Parliament is summoned during a reign. That Henry VI summoned the institution 23 times tells us quite a lot.



### Key Concepts – Parliament:

The highest law in the kingdom was statute law and this was created in Parliament, agreed between the three parts – Crown, Lords and Commons – working together for the common good. Ultimately, the Crown was the senior partner; the king could summon, recess and dismiss Parliament at will.

Nowadays, parliamentary sessions are neither bad nor interesting events, but then it was not the central institution of government it is now. Then it was a necessary inconvenience; to one and all summoning a parliament meant increased financial burdens. The constituents had to support their MP while he lived at or near Westminster (or wherever Parliament might be held) for the duration of the session (and they did not even vote for him) and, generally speaking, parliaments were summoned largely to meet the king's extraordinary financial needs (which translates as new or increased taxation) rather than to address the needs of the nation at large (although, if there was time these could be discussed). You can see, therefore, that Parliament was less than popular. So many parliaments indicate that Henry's reign was financially ruinous. Kings were expected to 'live off their own', paying for the royal households and the justice system out of their own personal funds. Parliament traditionally made some funds available in the form of customs and excise duties and subsidies, while the royal estate provided income in the form of fines, rents and entrance fees. Other traditional sources of income were forestry fines, and mining and fishing licences.



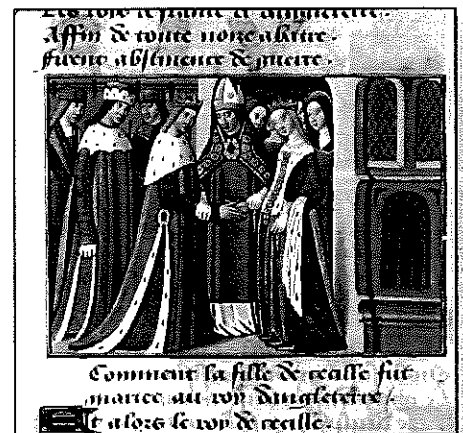
### Key Concepts – Customs duties:

The king collected import duties on wine (tonnage) and other goods (poundage). In times of financial emergency, Parliament could grant additional taxation in the form of subsidies (tenths and fifteenths, – that is, a tenth (a tax on moveable goods in the borough) and a fifteenth (a tax on moveable goods in the shires) – or could make the king loans.

Obviously these financial matters required a dedication to detail that most kings, and certainly Henry VI, were unwilling to devote and, really, the account books rarely balanced except, perhaps, in peacetime, and even then provided the king was prudent. Henry, as noted, was not prudent – he used royal properties as a means of rewarding his favourites with pensions, grants, annuities or incomes, or in order to create a basis for a new title (which would need appropriate financial support to maintain appropriate dignity). Consider, however, the obvious problem. Could the king reward his officers out of his own properties and wealth and then really expect to be reimbursed with public funds through Parliament? Is this not guaranteed to anger MPs, commons and magnates alike? Give a title or parcel of property to one magnate and another could not have it. It seems that as soon as he got hold of new lands the king (or his council) just as quickly alienated them (awarded them out). Obviously this practice was all the worse as Henry was a minor for so long (14 years).

### Other points of decline for royal authority

The king's personal life was also a source of decline. On the right is a tapestry of his marriage to Margaret of Anjou. She was not popular. She was French (the traditional enemy) and poor (she had no dowry). The marriage also insulted Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York, who was trying to arrange a different marriage for the king. Moreover, MPs knew it would be costly, necessitating the financing of a royal household specifically for the queen. If this were not enough, the marriage also introduced a serious culture clash. The French were already importing Renaissance ideas and manners from Italy while the English were still warlike and barbarous by comparison. Margaret took it upon herself to try to influence Henry away from English norms towards French norms where, for instance, the king told the people how much tax they were going to pay rather than allow them to vote upon it in unruly parliaments!



### Quick Review

If you are keeping a chart, you should now have four concepts listed – relations with the magnates/nobles/aristocracy, personal finances, relation with Parliament and royal marriages.



Obviously, this brief overview does not tell us everything that happened under Henry VI, but it is quite a lot to take in nonetheless. The war with France was lost; the king showed favouritism towards only a small fraction of his magnates (e.g. the Beauforts) while seemingly disenfranchising others (e.g. the Yorkists) through negligent distribution of lands and titles. There were divisions among the magnates, a clearly non-advantageous marriage and a failure to maintain law and order to acceptable standards. And just as there seemed to be some financial recovery on the horizon (as the Duke of York regained favour and expressed himself well in terms of influence within the government) the king had his breakdown, leaving him unable to speak or function. Meanwhile, the Duke of York and his faction went from strength to strength, the nobles were divided, and the queen tried to rule on her own, all of which led eventually to actual conflict.

### Key Concepts – Mental illness:

At the time psychological illnesses were simply not understood and were dismissed as divine curses or satanic influences to be sneered at rather than treated (even had there been someone to treat them). Modern opinion is that Henry VI either suffered a serious and self-induced amnesia or that he suffered catatonic schizophrenia.

## The decline of royal authority under Edward IV

A king could lose the support of the political nation and thus weaken the power of the Crown in a number of ways and, although historians consider Edward IV (below right) a much better king than Henry VI, he made many of the same mistakes. By not capturing and killing Margaret and Prince Edward (while holding Henry VI in the tower), Edward lost the throne for two years and, when Henry VI was killed, the queen and prince remained free to travel between Lancastrian strongholds. Where Henry VI had placed too much power in the hands of the Beaufort family rather than establishing a



more broad-based network of aristocratic and magnate families across the shires, Edward IV invested too much in the Neville earls of Warwick. Where Henry VI had made an unpopular marriage with Margaret of Anjou, Edward did likewise with Elizabeth Woodville (below left), a widow five years his senior with two sons already). She was not French but, almost as bad, she was from a relatively young gentry family. The marriage was considered a slap in the face to all other magnate families, therefore, particularly to the Nevilles, as it created another noble family supported by gifts of lands, titles and positions consequently denied to them, raising the spectre of factional dispute. Most problematic, perhaps, is that this marriage took place in secret while the Earl of Warwick was in negotiation with the French for a marriage settlement which would have given the king Normandy and Guienne and a military alliance in dowry payments. Historians have made the point that Elizabeth had a large family (two sons, five brothers, seven sisters) who would all now be prime marriage candidates for European aristocrats and royals. Edward may have overcome all these issues had his political goals been more well-defined. Sadly, they were not.

## Problems of the reign of Edward IV

A serious problem for the Crown was extending royal authority into the furthest reaches of the kingdom, into Wales and into the north under the legal and administrative control of the Marcher Lords.

### Key Concepts – Marcher or Border Lords:

These oversaw three boundary positions, one on the Welsh border and two on the Scottish borders.

In other words, in these key regions the king's authority depended on local power. The Prince of Wales was sent to Ludlow in the heart of the Welsh Marches and his council slowly began the process of consolidation there, but the north proved more difficult (particularly due to the continual threat from Scotland). The real problem was that defence of the region had been detailed to the great northern magnates, which meant that local fighting men often favoured their own noble over the distant king. Here, Edward's policy was short-sighted. He used Henry Percy (Earl of Northumberland) as Lieutenant, and the Duke of Gloucester (later Richard III) as warden of the West March. He set Richard up with a vast concentration of estates and offices with a separate council and the previous holdings of the Nevilles at his disposal. Although these were good officers, like Henry VI before him, Edward did little to establish a personal following among the major magnate families himself – unlike his brother Richard – and did nothing at all to stem the growth of certain families – such as the Woodvilles – which created tension. Indeed, no legal checks were ever placed on the magnates – no limits to their retaining armed followers, nothing was done to control livery or maintenance. The power of the aristocracy went unchecked.

## Positive aspects of the reign

Edward had a good relation with the parliamentarian classes, summoning the institution only six times in 23 years, requesting additional taxation only when there was a threat of war. He also had a better foreign policy than Henry VI. Through peace and negotiation he collected money (i.e. a pension) from the king of France which had the knock-on effect of better trade relations (which meant he could collect more import duties and custom revenues) with both France and Burgundy (the traditional partner of the English wool trade). He avoided foreign entanglements (except where he had no choice, as in beating back Scottish raiding parties) and exploited existing Crown economic opportunities where he could (as with *wardships* and *attainders*).

Edward died in August 1483, leaving many positives in his wake (e.g. solvency), but he failed the first duty of any king by not securing his dynasty.

## Key Concepts

**Livery:** This is the uniform or sign worn in either a military or non-military context, denoting a relationship with another person or corporate body (a great magnate or episcopal establishment), often by using elements of that person's or body's heraldry (e.g. a personal emblem perhaps). Wearing of the livery indicates in a clear and visible way personal allegiance.

**Maintenance** is the practice of controlling, by whatever means, juries – meaning that litigation (justice) could be stalled or influenced.

**Wardship** is the right of the crown to govern the person and oversee or administrate the estates of a person under legal age who is the heir to one of his landowners; under a feudal system, this would mean just about everyone under the king.

**Attainder** is a bill passed in Parliament indicating a treason charge (without the need for a court hearing). It usually meant the forfeiture of lands and titles to the Crown and could carry a death sentence.



## The decline of royal authority under Edward V (left)

The weaknesses of the monarchy could not be better illustrated than by the violence that followed Edward IV's unexpected death in 1483. England was at war with France and Scotland; his heir was only 12 (and so a minor); and there were questions over the late king's will. Did he actually name his brother, Richard Plantagenet, the Duke of Gloucester, as **Protector** (i.e. regent) of the realm? The Woodvilles certainly disputed it. Recall that they were a much-hated gentry family only recently ennobled. Gloucester knew that to allow them to control the Crown during the minority would be a disaster for the realm and he set his mind on an immediate coronation and on his own position as Protector. Between 6 April and 26 June, however, the world turned upside down, with Gloucester becoming Richard III.

## What happened?

The final copy of Edward IV's will had been lost, which left the door open for a royal council (stuffed with Woodvilles and their clients) to make alterations and counter-proposals for the king's minority, making Gloucester President of the Council rather than Protector (a less powerful post).

As Anthony Woodville escorted the young king from Ludlow to London, Gloucester left York. Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham (a Gloucester client, pictured right) intercepted Woodville and dismissed his escort when Gloucester caught up to them. He and Buckingham carried on towards London.

Suspiciously, by the time the king arrived in London (4 May) his mother and brother had gained sanctuary at Westminster Abbey and his Woodville uncles Sir Richard and Sir Edward had fled the realm. On 10 May the council appointed Gloucester as Protector of the Realm, giving him all the powers of a king until the 22 June coronation date of Edward V. The duke ruled the realm conscientiously and well. Was the threat of all these Woodvilles emerging again after the coronation enough to drive Gloucester to seize the Crown for himself?

In fact, the reason he did so is clear – it was a question of legitimacy. In a sermon at court on 22 June 1483 the preacher declared that Edward IV had not been the legitimate son of Richard, Duke of York (which turned out to be true) so legally he should never have been king and, consequently, his sons were not eligible. George Plantagenet, Duke of Clarence (Gloucester's elder brother) had been attainted in 1478 as a traitor so neither he nor his children were legitimate either. This left only Gloucester as the legitimate heir of Richard Plantagenet, third Duke of York. In short order, 24 June saw Buckingham address the London city officials before making a similar address to the great council on Gloucester's behalf at St Paul's. Princes Edward and Richard were moved to the Tower (for safe keeping – see case study). The choice was stark: an illegitimate boy under the thumb of the hated Woodvilles or a legitimate, seasoned politician and soldier, a war hero, as king? On 26 June 1483, Gloucester succeeded as Richard III.



## What happened to the princes in the Tower?

Well, that is a vexed question. It is also one of the greatest historical mysteries and you could search websites and history books for the next few months and find no definitive answers. Some historians are sure that Richard III had them executed; others are sure that Henry VII had them executed; others are sure that Buckingham had them executed. What is known for sure is that, after 20 June (when the king had need of the royal apartments for his own use) the two princes' appearances in public grew less and less frequent until, one day, they appeared no more. We should take note of one or two issues, however. At the time, Henry Tudor, the so-called last Lancastrian, was clearly in exile in Brittany. So, unless the princes were alive up to late 1485, he could not have done it (and what authority did he have in 1483 to order it?). Yes, Buckingham was Constable of England and he had unrestricted access to the Tower (but only in times of war, rebellion or foreign invasions). The Constable of the Tower was Sir Robert Brackenbury. Yes, he was a loyal supporter of Richard III but this only stands to reason. Who would appoint someone without proven loyalties to guard royal prisoners, and to keep the royal treasury as well as the royal armoury? No one was allowed entry to the Tower at night. The most important question of all is, after all these years, why would two bastard boys with zero political influence even merit the trouble? Although there was no proof of his guilt in the matter, for whatever reason, it seems to have been generally accepted (and reported) that Richard had ordered their deaths.



Paul M Kendall, *Richard the Third* (2004), pp. 465–96 deals with the question of the princes' murder in a most thorough fashion, considering all the suspects, motives and opportunities.



### The decline of royal authority under Richard III (right)

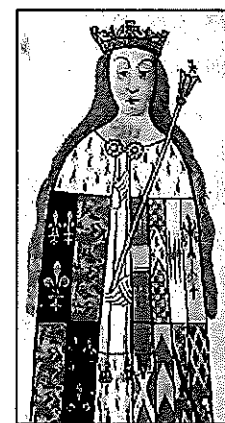
Richard's reign (the shortest of any English crowned king) started off well. He found important titles for his supporters, shoring up support in the regions through three Lords Lieutenant – Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland for the North; John Howard, Duke of Norfolk for the East and Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham for the West and Wales. The rights of the Church were upheld, the king showed actual concern for the welfare of his people, protecting commoners against oppression and extortion through Parliament, and he strengthened the courts of law. Moreover, the king went on progress (moving the court around the country) presenting himself in person, hearing local complaints and redirecting funds to local projects (e.g. road repairs, bridge repairs). Richard III was said to have 'the common touch' and was viewed by many as economically prudent and honest. Historians are left speculating over why, with everything going so well, Buckingham suddenly led a revolt against him? The most suspicious coincidence is that Buckingham's aunt, Margaret, Lady Stanley, was also the mother of the exiled Henry Tudor. Edward IV had promised his daughter Elizabeth to Henry in marriage. Would Henry show Buckingham great favour if he could make this happen? Queen Elizabeth, still in sanctuary, approved and circulated the idea among the late king's clients and retainers, raising loans to bring Henry back to England. Buckingham's rising started on 18 October 1483. It failed because it required perfect timing, perfect coordination and perfect weather, but got none of this. He ended up executed. The rebel lords and magnates he did recruit joined Tudor in exile, and Richard began to make mistakes which harmed crown authority.



- He took the lands, titles and powers of the rebellious magnates (all southerners) through parliamentary attainders (95 in all were passed) and gave them to his supporters (all northerners) and then planted them throughout the southern shires as sheriffs, justices of the peace and under-sheriffs, which made it look like an occupation force, exacerbating local resentments.
- He promoted Thomas, Lord Stanley (a royal client) as Constable but, despite the king's orders, he did not keep his wife isolated in the North (he may have wanted to keep on good terms with her son, Tudor).
- He refused to negotiate a deal with the Duke of Brittany to hand Tudor over.
- He gave English privateers (i.e. pirates) free rein to harass French shipping (which left Scottish, German, Burgundian, Breton and Castilian ships vulnerable).



The Duke of Brittany allowed Tudor to establish a court-in-exile at Rennes Cathedral, where he was recognised as king. Richard III, as the saying goes, 'burned his bridges' with foreign powers, threatening war and invasion (unsuccessfully). In April 1484, the worst possible event took place: the king's only son and heir died, leaving the Yorkists without an obvious succession. All the while Tudor's court-in-exile was attracting positive attention from France, Scotland and disgruntled southern English magnates.



Pay close attention to the succession issue. Henry VIII will face a similar problem 50 years later in the 1530s. Richard and his wife Anne (of the Neville family) had produced only the one child, but Richard had two bastard sons of his own. It was thought perhaps there was a problem with Anne and, with the dynasty at stake, it was thought perhaps a different wife was in order. Conveniently, Anne (top right) died on 16 March 1485 (of tuberculosis). Rumours of poison abounded and some said the king had already killed the princes in the Tower, so why not the queen too? Nothing was ever proven. For a new queen Richard turned to his own niece, Elizabeth of York (right), which seemed calculated to do the most damage to the Tudor cause (she could not marry Henry Tudor if she was already married). The last Lancastrian would be denied remnant Yorkist support through his wife. Would you have objected to the idea? Richard's northern magnate supporters (very conservative and Catholic men) certainly did, and the damage was done. Complaints all around him, and Tudor threatening invasion, Richard's stress levels expressed themselves in paranoia and suspected mental derangement. Tudor landed a small army near Milford Haven on 7 August 1485 (an issue we will take up in the next chapter).

## Talking points, class discussions, quizzes and key reading

### Class discussion



1. What is the basis of royal power in this period?
2. What are the qualities and virtues of a strong king?
3. Why might we consider a reign weak if the king summons many parliaments?
4. What do you think is the key issue in explaining the decline of Richard III's power (e.g. Henry Tudor's court-in-exile or Buckingham's betrayal or lack of an heir)?

### Quick quiz



1. What are the beginning and end years of the Tudor period?
2. Where were princes Edward and Richard held?
3. What does the Tudor rose symbolise?
4. How does an underage king undermine royal authority?
5. How long was Henry VI a minor?
6. The Beauforts were to Henry VI as the ..... were to Edward IV
7. Margaret of Anjou was to Henry VI as ..... was to Edward IV
8. What is the first duty of a king?

### Key reading



If you would like to review and read about the actual battles, these books come highly recommended – J Gillingham, *The Wars of the Roses* (1988), A Goodman *The Wars of the Roses: military activity and English society* (1990) and Michael Hicks, *The Wars of the Roses 1455–1485* (2003).

