

# Year 12 History Transition Summer Task:

## TUDORS – MAIN TASK

During the Summer Holidays we would like you to prepare for the start of the Tudor course by reading and taking notes on the Wars of the Roses and the ascension of Henry Tudor. To appreciate the significance of the Tudor Dynasty and how they revolutionised ideas of government, power and religion in England it is vital that you have a grounding in what the country was like in the turbulent years before the Tudors.

### TASK 1:

Please **read the extract** that follows and **take notes**. (We are purposefully not dictating how you do this, as we want you to review this when we begin the course). You might want to think about using the following to lay out your notes:

- Titles / sub-titles
- Diagrams
- Mind-maps
- Bullet points
- Subsections
- Colour

Please bring these to your first lesson of the Autumn Term.

Now that you have made notes, try to respond to the following questions. Brief responses are sufficient.

1. Give a character description of King Henry VI.
2. How did the Battle of St. Albans change the way in which the political battle was carried out in England?
3. What moment results in York and his supporters being forced to take up arms again?
4. What was the decisive battle that first established Edward IV as king?
5. Why was Edward's marriage so destructive to the Yorkist alliance?
6. What circumstances resulted in Warwick choosing to support the Lancastrian side?
7. Why, after the deaths of Henry VI and Prince Edward, did the Lancastrian cause survive?
8. Detail how Richard III became king
9. Detail how Henry VII became king.
10. Why was Perkin Warbeck such a threat to Henry VII?

## *Chapter 2: The Course of the Wars*

### **Prelude to the Wars, 1450–59**

In 1450 England's king was Henry VI, a young man in his late twenties.<sup>1</sup> He was the son of the famous warrior Henry V, a father he had not known for he came to the throne when he was nine months old. He had no memory of being other than king. He had been cosseted and nurtured to step into his father's martial shoes. He had inherited two kingdoms, being crowned King of England in 1429 and King of France in 1431. From the age of 16 in 1437, he had begun to play an active part in the affairs of the kingdom. By 1439 his minority was at an end. It had been a surprisingly harmonious minority: rifts, conflicts and factional rivalry had, of course, occurred, but the leading councillors and nobles, inspired by their dedication to the memory of Henry V whom they had served, had been as one in their determination to hand on to his young heir his inheritance in both kingdoms.

Henry VI was, however, almost the complete opposite of his father. Where Henry V had been the paragon of chivalry, Henry VI eschewed the field of battle. In 1440 when all seemed propitious for him to lead his subjects to war in defence of his father's conquests, he turned instead to the foundation of Eton College.<sup>2</sup> The war in France was henceforth left to his leading subjects. In England he appeared to be content to leave the management of affairs to what was eventually perceived to be an unscrupulous court faction. After ten years of personal rule, before his thirtieth birthday, Henry was faced with the greatest political crisis since the reign of Richard II. Following years of indecision and duplicity, Normandy was lost to France with

scarcely a blow given, in one of the most ignominious campaigns ever conducted by an English army (1449–50). At the height of the crisis, parliamentary anger and popular rebellion shook Henry's regime to its foundations. His principal adviser, William de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk, was impeached, sent into exile, intercepted and murdered.

The year 1450 provided the opportunity for Richard of York, Henry's greatest subject and heir presumptive (for although Henry had married Margaret of Anjou in 1445 he still had no children), to bid for political power. York had been excluded in the previous decade. Removed from the command in Normandy, in 1447 he had been sent off as lieutenant of Ireland. Untainted by the failure of recent policy, he returned to England determined to establish himself as the king's chief minister. He found, however, that the king had turned to none other than Edmund Beaufort, Duke of Somerset, the last and discredited governor of Normandy. Try as he might, York and his allies could not impose themselves on the king. In 1452, having spent a period in voluntary internal exile in his marcher Welsh lordships, York raised an army and sought to force his way into office. At Dartford his army was outfaced by the forces of the court. York submitted and he was allowed to return once more to self-imposed exile.

After York's defeat at Dartford, Somerset and his friends were able to tighten their grip on power and provide more effective government. Henry VI himself appeared to play a more active role in affairs. Whether it was the initiative of the king himself, or the advice of his new minister, he took a personal interest in the suppression of popular rebellion and began to show himself more to his subjects. When in 1452, in answer to an appeal from a group of dissident Gascons, the veteran Earl of Shrewsbury was able to recover Bordeaux and much of Gascony (Gascony had been overrun by the French in 1451), he was able to rally considerable support for his regime. By the summer of 1453 it was beginning to look as though Henry VI's reign was set on a new and more steady course.

In August 1453 two, possibly connected, events occurred which decisively changed the situation. First, Henry heard that Shrewsbury had been defeated and killed at Castillon; secondly, a few days later, he collapsed into a state of what was possibly catatonic schizophrenia: total mental withdrawal from the world. For 15 months or more Henry did not, could not, or would not communicate with a single living soul (later it was to be imagined that he was communicating

exclusively with God). This sudden, unexpected event, for Henry had never previously shown signs of mental instability whatever other shortcomings he may have had, threw the political world into new turmoil.

After several months of uncertainty, and with no sign of recovery, in March 1454 a protectorate was established. Henry's condition was comparable to childhood and the precedent for a minority was to place the government of the kingdom into the hands of a protector and council. Precedent also determined that the protector should be the senior adult male member of the royal family: in 1454 this was Richard of York. And so, in circumstances entirely unpredictable and after four years of apparent failure, York achieved his ambition and more. York's position as protector was strengthened by the recruitment of powerful new allies: the Nevilles father and son, who were the Earls of Salisbury and Warwick. But the Nevilles had become embroiled in a private war in Yorkshire with the Earl of Northumberland and the price of their support was the protector's backing, given under the guise of royal pacification, in securing a victory over their rival. Warwick, too, was in dispute with the Duke of Somerset in south Wales. While York presented himself as peacemaker, his regime was highly partisan. His own enemy, Somerset, found himself not only dismissed, but also committed to the Tower to await trial for treason. In the midst of this Queen Margaret gave birth to a son, Edward. York was no longer heir presumptive and had measurably less cause in future to claim that he should be high in the king's council.

The process of polarization which took place in 1454 was only hastened by the king's recovery early in 1455. Soon Somerset was released. If not before, now he found that he had a powerful ally in the person of Queen Margaret, whose son's interests had to be defended. York and the Nevilles withdrew from court. In May, rival armies met at St Albans. In a brief skirmish which took place in the king's presence, Somerset, the Earl of Northumberland and Lord Clifford were hacked to death. The king was escorted back to Westminster with his old advisers. Whether because he had been wounded or because he suffered a second mental collapse, Henry once more became incapacitated and the protectorate was restored. But a new and deadly element had now been introduced. Blood had been shed. What had been rivalry for place had been transformed into feud. The new Duke of Somerset sought revenge for the death of his father, Edmund; the new Earl of Northumberland sought

revenge for the death of his. York was removed from his second protectorate early in 1456, although he continued to act as chief minister for several months. But in the autumn of the same year, his friends were removed from office and replaced by men more welcome to the king and queen. The evidence is just too sparse to be able to determine confidently who now took the lead at court. As a result the late 1450s are perhaps the most obscure decade in the whole of the fifteenth century. The king may by now have been little more than a figurehead. His health would seem to have been permanently damaged. And although there is no evidence of a return to his condition of 1453–54, there can be little doubt that eventually, though precisely when is hard to determine, he became incapable of attending to business. It is conventionally considered that the queen emerged as the *de facto* leader of the Yorkists' enemies in 1456, but doubt has now been cast on this assumption. The received notion of a malign prominence owes much to later Yorkist propaganda.<sup>3</sup>

For two years there was an uneasy truce. York and his friends were not totally excluded. A group of peers, under the Duke of Buckingham, may have sought to find some means of reconciliation. The new councillors may have acted at the king's behest, or the queen, acting in a traditional role as peacemaker, may have taken the initiative in an effort to restore harmony. In March 1458 a grandiose 'Loveday' (ritual reconciliation) was staged, at which the sons of the victims of St Albans and the victors publicly made reconciliation and agreed terms of restitution. It proved to be an empty charade, but the effort made, and the king's own shadowy role in the proceedings, suggest that as yet the point of no return had not been reached. It would seem that the principals were only too conscious of the potential dangers, and were desperately seeking to avert a revival of overt conflict which would only be more catastrophic.

That moment came one step nearer in the autumn of 1458. A brawl broke out at court from which the Earl of Warwick had to fight his way clear. There may even have been an attempted assassination. He promptly withdrew to Calais, of which he was captain and where he had the backing of a strong garrison. Immediately following, the chief officers of state were changed again and men more closely associated with the queen took over.<sup>4</sup> During 1459 the Crown, perhaps now on the initiative of the queen, began to take steps to deal with York and the Nevilles once and for all. Plans were laid to condemn the Yorkists for treason at a council meeting in the summer, and preparations

were begun to enforce such a decision by arms. The Yorkist lords knowing fully what was in store, themselves took up arms. While the court gathered its strength in the midlands, based at Coventry, the Yorkist lords planned to gather at Worcester in September. Warwick came over from Calais, while Salisbury marched down from north Yorkshire. Salisbury was intercepted by royal troops at Blore Heath in Staffordshire, but was able to defeat the army led by Lord Audley and press on, if somewhat reduced in numbers, to the rendezvous. At Worcester the three lords not only declared their continuing loyalty to the king, but also their determination to rid him of his evil ministers. Pressed by a superior royal army, they retreated to Ludlow and there, before the town at Ludford, drew up the army for battle. But on the night of 12/13 October, knowing that they were heavily outnumbered and discovering desertion by key elements of the Calais garrison which had accompanied Warwick, the lords decamped and fled; York making his way to Ireland, Warwick and Salisbury to Calais.

### **The First Wars, 1459–71**

If one were to pick any moment when open civil war began, it would be the campaign of 1459.<sup>5</sup> It came after several years of political deterioration and several months of military preparation. It was intended by both sides to be a decisive test of strength, in which no mercy was to be shown to the losers. The battle lines had been clearly drawn. As yet the objective was still domination of the court and removal of all rivals. The court enjoyed overwhelming numerical support among the English nobility and gentry. All but a handful of the peerage rallied to the Crown. The appeal of loyalty to the king was still strong. York and his allies were too easily cast in the role of malcontents. But the Yorkist lords, though heavily outnumbered, had compensatory material and military strength. They were three of the richest and most powerful magnates. Not only could York tap the resources of his Welsh marcher lordships, but Warwick commanded the Calais garrison and had built up a formidable naval power in the Channel, while Salisbury could draw on the military experience and strength of the far north. Militarily the two sides were not as ill-matched as a roll call of peers would suggest.

In October 1459 the Yorkists were proscribed. At a pliant parliament called to meet at Coventry (in Yorkist mythology the Parliament

of Devils), York and his followers were found guilty of treason by attainder and their lands forfeited and occupied by royal officers, or distributed to loyal supporters. They had no other option left but force to reverse these acts. For the time being they were safe in Dublin and Calais. But the Court lost no time in trying to recover Calais. The Duke of Somerset was appointed captain and early in 1460 began a siege of the town. Its defence was under the direction of Salisbury's brother, William, Lord Fauconberg, an immensely experienced veteran of the Hundred Years' War. Warwick was able to slip out of Calais, sail to Dublin and there coordinate invasion plans with the duke. After his return in June, the Calais lords launched an invasion of south-eastern England. Marching via London, where a royal garrison was left bottled up in the Tower, Warwick and the Earl of March (York's eldest son and the future Edward IV) came up against the king's army at Northampton. There, thanks to the timely switch to the Yorkist side by Lord Grey of Ruthin, the royal army was defeated and its leaders – the Duke of Buckingham, the Earl of Shrewsbury and Lord Beaumont – killed, while the king fell into Yorkist hands. Returning in triumph to London the lords installed themselves in office and at court, and sent out writs summoning a parliament to Westminster in October, the principal intended business being the reversal of the attainders passed in 1459.

York himself delayed, or was delayed, in returning to England. When he did land, he immediately caused a stir by displaying the royal banner and marching up to London in the manner of king. Timing his arrival to coincide with the gathering of parliament, he strode purposefully into Westminster Hall and laid his hand on the throne. Thus for the first time did York declare his dynastic ambition. His act was not met by acclaim. According to one or two reports, it even surprised his closest associates. There is reason to doubt this, especially as far as the Earl of Warwick is concerned. Whatever the truth of this, not even this parliament, called when the Yorkists were fully in control, would accede to the deposition of Henry VI.<sup>6</sup> Ultimately, a quite unworkable compromise was patched up: Henry was to keep the throne for his lifetime; York was declared his heir in place of his 7-year-old son.

It was one thing to pass such an act; it was quite another to enforce it. Queen Margaret, with her son, was at large, gathering troops in the west country, Wales and the north even before the November 'Accord' was reached. They now had even greater cause to reverse the

decision of Northampton. York and his followers, too, faced an urgent need to suppress her and to recover control of their estates. Thus after parliament went down, York and Salisbury set out in strength for the north, there to confront the queen. They reached Sandal, York's castle near Wakefield, but on the last day of the year were caught foraging. York and his son, the Earl of Rutland, were killed on the field; Salisbury shortly after. Among the victorious Lancastrian leaders were the Duke of Somerset and the Earl of Northumberland. St Albans had been avenged. The Earl of March, now Duke of York, in the meantime had set off to Wales to attempt to gain control there. On 2 February 1461, at Mortimer's Cross, he defeated the Earl of Pembroke and secured that front. However, Queen Margaret was already pushing south with an army whose size and reported lack of discipline spread terror as it approached. On 17 February, at St Albans, it met and defeated Warwick who had marched out from London to face it. With Henry VI back in her hands, the capital now lay at the queen's mercy. But she failed to press home her advantage. As she hesitated, she heard that March, having met with the fleeing Warwick, was now on his way up to challenge her. Faced with this new threat the queen withdrew, leaving March to enter London unopposed on 27 February. Five days later, declaring that Henry VI had forfeited his right by failing to honour the November Accord, Edward IV took possession of the throne. Barely hesitating to raise reinforcements, Edward IV set out in pursuit of the queen's army that had retreated north. Catching up with the Lancastrians in southern Yorkshire, the decisive engagement, which had been threatened since October 1459, finally took place on the field of Towton. After a long and bloody battle, Edward IV emerged victorious. Henry VI, Queen Margaret and Prince Edward, who had been behind the lines in York, escaped to Scotland. Edward IV returned in triumph to London to be crowned.

Henry VI's reign may well have come to an end, but civil war was not over. Lancastrians held strongholds in the far north of England and Wales. Their king and his heir were still at large. Edward IV could not feel completely secure on the throne until all pockets of Lancastrian resistance were crushed and his Lancastrian rivals killed. It was to take him ten years and considerable upheaval to achieve both these ends. Relying on Scottish and French support, Queen Margaret was at first hopeful of an early comeback. Several Lancastrian plots were unearthed in the first years of the reign; disturbances occurred



in several parts of the kingdom; and there were frequent invasion scares in southern England. In Wales the castle of Harlech was garrisoned by Lancastrians until 1468. Far more dangerously, operating from a safe refuge north of the border, Lancastrians were for three years after 1461 a constant threat to Northumberland. The castles of Alnwick, Bamburgh and Dunstanburgh became the focal point of a long-drawn out battle for control. Twice Warwick and his brother John, Lord Montagu, took these castles (September 1461, December 1462). Twice the Lancastrians retook them (October 1462, March/May 1463). It was not until the spring and early summer of 1464 that Lancastrian threats to the far north were finally crushed. Following two victories won by Lord Montagu at Hedgeley Moor and Hexham, the Northumbrian castles were for a third and final time reduced. During all this time Henry VI and Prince Edward remained safely out of Edward's clutches. Henry VI seems to have divided his time between Scotland and Northumberland. Prince Edward was taken to France in 1463. After the final suppression of Northumberland, Henry VI roamed as an exile in northern England, sheltered by loyal servants. In July 1465 he was tracked down and captured. Lodged in the Tower, his life was spared because it would have been both pointless and counterproductive to have killed him. Killing Henry would only have passed the Lancastrian torch to Prince Edward in France; and such a needless death would have been a propaganda gift to his enemies. Henry thus languished a prisoner in the Tower.

After 1465 Edward could perhaps have begun to look forward to more secure and relaxed times. However the clouds of war began to blow up again from another direction. In May 1464, while ostensibly marching north to pacify Northumberland, Edward IV secretly married Elizabeth Woodville at Stony Stratford. The marriage, undertaken at a time when Warwick was in good faith conducting negotiations with France for the king's hand, naturally piqued the earl. But he put on a good face and publicly showed no opposition. The king's marriage was bound, however, to have wider implications, particularly as the new queen came from a prolific English family, had been married before, and had several Lancastrian connections. Regardless of the question of etiquette involved in the king's marriage to a widow of not quite the right birth, it set up political repercussions. Historians have been divided as to the extent to which the Woodvilles, as the queen's relations and friends are conveniently called, were inordinately favoured. They may not have received excessive grants of land,

but in one respect, by cornering the upper reaches of the marriage market, they had an important bearing on future developments.<sup>7</sup> Moreover the queen, any queen, was likely to set up a separate and alternative political focal point. It may not have been entirely against Edward's will that a group, known afterwards as the New Yorkists, focusing on the queen's father, Earl Rivers, and Lord Herbert, the new Earl of Pembroke, emerged at court to counterbalance the enormous power and influence of the Nevilles. Whatever the precise cause, and it may be no more than a working-out of an inevitable rift between a king determined to be the master of his own house and a kingmaker naturally reluctant to see his prominent position whittled away, relationships between Warwick and his king began to cool and worsen. The turning point was almost certainly a difference over the policy to be adopted towards France and the Netherlands, where the King of France and the Duke of Burgundy were intense rivals. Warwick had come to favour a pro-French line; the king, supported by the queen's father (his countess was of the house of Luxembourg in the Netherlands) and her friends, came to prefer a Burgundian alliance. In 1468 Edward completed an agreement for the marriage of his sister Margaret with Charles the Bold, the new Duke of Burgundy. Insult was added to injury by the manner in which he allowed the earl to conduct futile negotiations for an alternative match while the Burgundian alliance was also being pursued. Although Warwick still came occasionally to court, by the end of 1468 his hostility to the queen's family and his estrangement from the king were being noticed. Towards the end of 1468 serious Lancastrian plots were uncovered. There was, moreover, growing popular discontent. In these circumstances the breach between Edward IV and Warwick burst into open conflict in the summer of 1469.

Over the next two years, 1469–71, there was re-enacted the same pattern of events as had occurred in the 1450s. A disgruntled mighty subject at first tried to force himself back into influence at court and then, failing that, sought to depose the king. The action moved more rapidly and more bewilderingly, partly because the under-studies of the 1450s were now the leading players; partly because both principals had been on the stage before; and partly because the alternative king was waiting in the wings. Warwick laid his plans well. In July 1469 he slipped across to Calais to celebrate the marriage of his elder daughter, Isabel, to the king's 20-year-old brother, George, Duke of Clarence. This marriage had earlier been vetoed by the king

who, nevertheless, by his backing of ambitious Woodville marriages, had virtually left the earl no alternative for befitting husbands for his two daughters and heiresses other than members of the royal family. Clarence, who was to prove himself an ambitious but weak, vacillating and untrustworthy man, had clearly been suborned by the earl. The Calais marriage was in effect a declaration of opposition. At the same time, the latest of a series of northern risings led by 'Robin of Redesdale' revealed itself to be a rising of Warwick's substantial northern affinity under the leadership of a member of the Conyers family, stalwart and long-serving retainers of the Nevilles. Their force marched south and, having united with Warwick and Clarence, came up against a royal army at Edgecote near Banbury. At this engagement, largely due to dissension in their ranks, the king's men were overwhelmed, and afterwards Earl Rivers and the Earls of Pembroke and Devon were executed. Three days later Warwick took the king prisoner. For two months at the most Warwick sought to rule in the king's name, keeping the king himself under arrest first in Warwick, then at Middleham in north Yorkshire. But a Lancastrian rising by Warwick's kinsman, Sir Humphrey Neville, which threatened Warwick as much as the king, could only be suppressed if the king were at large. Consequently, early in September he was released. Like York before him, Warwick had discovered that it was impossible to rule through a captive king, especially a king in the prime of life.

Edward IV seems for the time being neither to have had the strength nor the inclination to seek retribution against Warwick and his brother. They were welcomed at court, although the king began to take steps to guard against a repetition. When six months later Warwick and Clarence rose again, Edward IV was ready to take swift and decisive action. The earl and duke took advantage of a feud in Lincolnshire to foster a new rising in March 1470. But the king moved promptly and dispersed the rebel force at the ironically named Losecoat Field near Stamford. No sooner had this been accomplished than he heard news that Warwick was raising north Yorkshire and Clarence the west country in a plan to put Clarence himself on the throne. Pressing north, and in strength, Edward secured Yorkshire before turning south in pursuit of Warwick and Clarence, who fled to Devon and took ship at Dartmouth for France. Warwick was totally discredited.

There now followed the most dramatic volte-face in the whole history of these wars. In France Warwick was induced on 22 July to

perform a solemn and public reconciliation with Queen Margaret, which was sealed by a marriage the following month between his younger daughter Anne and Prince Edward. Thus, once more, Warwick became a loyal servant of the house of Lancaster, committed to the restoration of Henry VI. No time was lost mounting, with French help, an invasion of England. Edward IV took full precautions for coastal defence, but Warwick outmanoeuvred him by calling upon his northern retainers to rise once more. In August Edward had no choice but to march north to crush this, the third rebellion of northerners against him in twelve months. He knew all too well how dangerous such a movement could be if left unchecked. The rebellion melted away in front of him and the leaders submitted. But they had done their work. While Edward was still in Yorkshire, Warwick landed in the west country. Learning that many English nobles had declared for Warwick in the name of Henry VI, and discovering that Warwick's brother Montagu had also gone over, Edward, with only his household and a remnant of loyal noblemen with him, realized that he had been outmanoeuvred and isolated. Now himself taking flight, he found ships at King's Lynn and escaped to the Netherlands and the protection of his brother-in-law Charles, Duke of Burgundy.

Thus on 3 October 1470 Henry VI was restored to the throne, the Readeption as contemporary legal documents put it. A broken 50-year-old, he could only have been a caretaker monarch until his son, by all accounts a young man of his grandfather's chivalric mettle, was ready to take his place. The return of the queen and the prince was, however, fatefully delayed both by the queen's excessive caution and, latterly, adverse winds. When the Lancastrian party did finally land in England in April, it was too late. The wheel of fortune had turned once more. For Edward IV, aided by Burgundy who was faced by a Franco-Lancastrian alliance, had already returned to recover his kingdom.

Edward IV's recovery of the throne in March–May 1471 was a remarkable feat of arms, achieved, as his own official and chivalrically inspired account willingly admitted, against all the odds. He landed at Ravenspur in Holderness accompanied by only a few men – his brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester, Anthony Woodville, the new Earl Rivers and William, Lord Hastings, included. Claiming, as Henry IV had before him, that he was returning solely to recover his duchy, he was admitted reluctantly to the city of York. He moved west to his lordship of Wakefield where he had hoped to raise troops, but found

little enthusiasm. Yet he was able to leave Yorkshire unmolested, partly because of the studied neutrality of Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, whom a year earlier he had restored, and partly because of the inability of Lord Montagu to raise troops to resist him. In the midlands he received much-needed support from followers of Lord Hastings. Pressing on towards Coventry, he sought an engagement with the Earl of Warwick. The decisive moment occurred when his brother George, Duke of Clarence, at the head of a force raised in the south-west, threw in his lot with Edward. The Yorkists, unable to force Warwick into battle, then marched up to London, which opened its gates. Warwick had followed and, finally, the two armies came to blows in thick fog at Barnet on Easter Sunday, 14 April. In a more than usually confused battle Edward was victorious: Warwick and Montagu lay dead on the field.

There was, however, no time for the victor to rest, for Edward received news of the landing at Weymouth of Queen Margaret, Prince Edward and an army. The Lancastrians, having heard of Warwick's defeat, sought to reach the comparative safety of Wales. But Edward, after a forced march, intercepted them at Tewkesbury before they could cross the Severn. And there on 4 May the Lancastrians, too, were defeated; the Duke of Somerset, the Earl of Devon and, most significantly, Prince Edward being killed either in the field or shortly afterwards. Secondary risings in the north and Kent having been suppressed, Edward was able to return in triumph to London on 21 May. On the self same night Henry VI was put to death, almost certainly on the orders of Edward IV himself. Edward IV had recovered his throne through a combination of his own boldness and decisiveness, his enemies' indecision and a generous slice of luck.

The first wars ended on the night that Henry VI was murdered. Since the moment Richard of York publicly advanced his claim to the throne in the autumn of 1460, there had been two rival dynasties claiming to rule England. There had been open warfare from 1459 to 1464, if only sporadically after Towton in March 1461. It had resurfaced again in 1469. Throughout the first reign of Edward IV, while Prince Edward remained at large in France, the potential for renewed dynastic conflict, realized in 1470, had always existed. Only after his death, and in its wake, that of the unfortunate Henry VI, was this threat removed. It took the Yorkists ten and a half years to destroy the Lancastrian dynasty.

## The Second Wars, 1483–87

After 1471 Edward IV was secure on the throne. By all reasonable prediction the Wars of the Roses, the wars between Lancaster and York, should have been over. Yet they were not. In 1483, on the death of Edward IV, England was plunged once more into turmoil. There had been few indications that this would be the case. Admittedly, it had taken Edward IV two more years fully to suppress all opposition. In 1473 there were landings in both the south-west and north-east by diehard Lancastrians, but thereafter there were no further signs of Lancastrian resistance or rebellion. Nor is this surprising. After the death of the childless Prince Edward, the only remaining claimants to the Lancastrian title were either distant geographically, in the person of King John II of Portugal, or feeble dynastically (through the female Beaufort line), in the person of Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond. Only a tiny rump of diehards, including the Earl of Oxford, Lord Clifford, and the Courtenay claimant to the earldom of Devon besides Henry Tudor's uncle Jasper, Earl of Pembroke, clung to his remote chance of succession. Mainstream opinion concluded that rightly or wrongly, the Yorkist dynasty was established. Many old Lancastrians who had opted for exile with Queen Margaret or stood out in rebellion in the 1460s now returned to England and royal service, prominent among them being John Morton, who became Bishop of Ely, Sir John Fortescue, the eminent lawyer, and Sir Richard Tunstall. Edward IV did not totally dismiss the threat of Tudor as a pretender in exile in Brittany. From time to time, in a somewhat desultory manner, he sought to persuade the Duke of Brittany to hand him over. By 1482, moreover, there were signs that through the good offices of his mother, Margaret Beaufort, now married to Thomas, Lord Stanley, Richmond was ready to reconcile himself with the Yorkist regime.<sup>8</sup>

After 1471 Edward IV ruled with firmness and authority, if not high-handedly. Until 1475 he was preoccupied with forming a triple alliance with Brittany and Burgundy in order to mount an invasion of France. It is not clear whether he was inspired to emulate the feats of Henry V or was more pragmatically motivated by a desire to unite a divided realm against a common foe: to make outward war to secure inward peace. After the invasion ended ingloriously, but profitably, at Picquigny, where Louis XI bought Edward off, the king seems to have had no further ambition save to enjoy his state. The only major event to ruffle the calm was the arrest, trial and death of the incorrigible

Duke of Clarence in 1477–78. Clarence may well not have been guilty of treason, but after 1470 he had never again been fully trusted by his brother, and by his folly brought his judicial murder upon himself. From 1478, the king appeared to be presiding over a harmonious court and country. In his last years a moderately successful war with Scotland was offset by a *débâcle* in foreign policy, which left him isolated and without the French pension that had been paid since 1475. When he died after a short illness at the early age of 42, the talking point was whether England would be drawn once more into a continental war.

Within three months of Edward IV's death, the kingdom had once more been thrown into confusion. The applecart was upset not by an exiled pretender, but by a member of the king's own family – Richard, Duke of Gloucester. Gloucester was a man who had won universal respect for his probity and loyalty to his brother, as well as his piety, courage and chivalric zeal. His qualities stood out in stark contrast to his fickle and untrustworthy brother Clarence. Nor was his high reputation entirely without foundation. Having assumed the mantle of the Earl of Warwick in northern England (he married his younger daughter Anne, widowed by the death of Prince Edward), he had with considerable skill both secured the loyalty of the region to the regime and brought a measure of good government and local concord which had not been known for two decades. The last person anyone expected to be a threat to the peaceful succession of the 12-year-old Edward V was his paternal uncle Richard.

Events on Edward IV's death were to show that the harmony within the Yorkist court was more apparent than real. Resentments and feuds ran beneath the surface that only the king's imposing presence had been able to contain. Lord Hastings and the queen's son by her first marriage, Thomas Grey, Marquis of Dorset were rivals. A tense atmosphere quickly formed as the major politicians manoeuvred for initial advantage during the new king's minority. The queen may have sought to establish herself as regent. If so, this was promptly stopped by the majority of the council, which preferred to follow constitutional precedent and to accept Richard of Gloucester as Protector. His office of Protector would only have lasted until the king was crowned; as the king was 12 this could take place immediately. Thereafter, the Duke could have expected to preside over the council until the king, like Henry VI, could begin to exercise his own authority when he reached his sixteenth birthday in November 1487. While coming up to London

three weeks after Edward IV's death, however, and before a council could formally agree to his role, the duke took matters into his own hands. At Stony Stratford at dawn on 30 April, with the assistance of a new-found ally, Henry, Duke of Buckingham, he arrested Earl Rivers, Sir Richard Grey, the queen's younger son by her first marriage, and Thomas Vaughan, the chamberlain of the new king's household, and took forcible possession of the young king's person. By this *coup d'état* Gloucester secured the protectorate and, more to the point, possession of the person of the king; but he also made an implacable enemy out of Earl Rivers and set himself on a course which, if not already intended, led inexorably to taking the throne for himself.<sup>9</sup>

First reactions to this coup revealed that the queen immediately feared that the lives of herself and her younger son were in danger, for she hurriedly retreated to sanctuary in Westminster Abbey. Gloucester was duly made Protector and set in motion the arrangements for the coronation and the calling of the new king's first parliament. Neither event was to take place. In a frantic two weeks in the middle of June, Gloucester seized and executed without trial William, Lord Hastings, who had until that moment publicly supported him; ordered the execution of Earl Rivers and his associates; arrested Lord Stanley and the two most influential clerical councillors, John Morton, Bishop of Ely and Thomas Rotherham, Archbishop of York; browbeat the queen mother to surrender herself and her younger son from sanctuary; cancelled the parliament; and on 22 June formally claimed the throne for himself on the grounds of the bastardy of Edward V and his brother.<sup>10</sup> There was no resistance. 'Elected' by a body of London citizens and would-be members of parliament who had already come up to Westminster, he took the throne on 26 June. On 6 July, in solemn state, he was crowned.

It was, with the element of surprise on his side, comparatively easy for Richard III to take the throne. It was more difficult to hold. By his act he had split the Yorkist establishment in two. He had powerful and committed support in the north (which included the northern Earls of Northumberland and Westmorland) and the Duke of Buckingham on his side. He won over John, Lord Howard (by granting him his claim to the duchy of Norfolk), his nephew John de la Pole, Earl of Lincoln and heir to the duchy of Suffolk, and several lesser Yorkist peers. His base of support was not too narrow. But against him were ranged all those who had leant towards the Woodvilles and most of Edward IV's ex-household men. Although taken off-guard in June,



these men regrouped and in late September raised most of the southern counties with the objective of restoring Edward V. The rising probably sealed the deposed king's fate (if he were still alive), for it quickly became clear to the rebels that he and his brother were dead. In their place, they turned to the exiled Henry Tudor, who overnight found his prospects transformed. Henry sailed to England; but arrived to find the rising crushed and turned back to Brittany. Henry, Duke of Buckingham, in an almost inexplicable volte-face, threw in his lot with the rebels, was quickly captured and summarily executed. He had been liberally rewarded by Richard III and could hardly complain that he had been cold-shouldered. He might simply have misjudged the situation and believed he was joining the winning side. He might even have imagined that he had an opportunity to make himself king, for he, too, had a claim through his great grandmother, the daughter of Edward III's youngest son, Thomas of Woodstock. Buckingham's early defection was a shattering blow to Richard's confidence, probably more disheartening than the risings of disgruntled members of his brother's disbanded household and friends of the Woodvilles, which he may well have expected.

After October 1483 Richard had fewer supporters on whom he could rely. Lord Stanley, because of his wife's proven complicity in the risings of the autumn of 1483, and despite his publicly displayed loyalty during the crisis, could not be fully trusted. The king fell back more overtly on the support of his trusted ducal following, predominantly northern in character, many of whom were given rewards and key offices in the dissident south. This no doubt solved a short-term problem of security, but the evident unpopularity of his 'plantation' only exacerbated his longer-term standing. A steady trickle of defections continued to his enemies abroad. Henry Tudor presented himself as a rallying point for old Yorkists by his solemn oath to marry Edward IV's eldest surviving child, Princess Elizabeth, and rule jointly with her (the second part he did not fulfil). Richard III's morale was further damaged by the death of his only son, the newly created Prince of Wales, in the spring of 1484. At the same time, he had to take the unusual step of issuing public statements reiterating his title to the throne and ordering the local authorities to quash false rumours about it. Richard wisely tried to rebuild his bridges with the Queen Dowager, Elizabeth Woodville, and won a minor victory when she finally agreed to leave sanctuary and, with her daughters, join the Court. Early in 1485, however, after the death of

his queen, rumours quickly spread that he poisoned her. A growing desperation is indicated by his plan to marry Elizabeth of York himself, a scheme which would no doubt have scotched Henry Tudor. But this foundered on the rock of the intransigence of his principal councillors, especially William Catesby and Sir Richard Ratcliffe, who well knew that such a marriage would have been accompanied by a general Woodville restoration, and a loss of their own privileged position and hold on forfeited lands. The king was forced to take the unprecedented and humiliating step of publicly announcing at the Guildhall in London that there was no truth in the rumour that he was intending to marry his niece.

Richard's problems might have been eased if a plot to seize Richmond in Brittany had succeeded. But in the autumn of 1484 Richmond escaped to France, where he found his plans for organizing an invasion of England given full support. By the summer of 1485 active preparations for war were under way. Early in August, with 3000 French troops, Richmond set sail. Landing at Milford Haven on 7 August, he took a roundabout route through Wales and, gathering support as he marched, finally on 22 August came face to face with the king near Market Bosworth in Leicestershire. The king himself might well have welcomed the opportunity to deal a final blow to the alliance of excluded Yorkists and diehard Lancastrians who opposed him. A decisive victory could well have established him securely on the throne and enabled him to make a fresh start. What precisely decided the battle in Richmond's favour is not entirely clear. He was outnumbered on the field, but had the support of Lord Stanley and his brother William at the critical moment. Yet the king was anticipating this treachery. It is possible that Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, who commanded one unit of the royal army, refused to engage; or, alternatively, the forces might have been so arrayed that it was impossible for him to join the fray. In the event, an impetuous charge by Richard at his rival's standard in the hope of deciding the issue quickly gave the opportunity for his enemies to close in for the kill. When the battle was over, Henry Tudor had emerged the improbable victor and the wearer of the crown.

As with his predecessors, it took Henry VII a long time to secure his throne. Although he presented himself as the unifier and healer of old wounds, there were many who refused to accept the change of regime. Ricardian sympathy was strong in the north and there were others, more intransigent than the northerners, who refused

to accept Henry VII and plotted, with the tireless backing of Edward IV's sister, Margaret of York, Dowager Duchess of Burgundy, for the restoration of a Yorkist monarchy. There was a rising in the spring of 1486, which quickly fizzled out, but several of those involved preferred to take to the Cumbrian fells before submitting in the autumn. A more serious challenge came in 1487 behind the name of the impostor Lambert Simnel, who claimed to be Edward, Earl of Warwick, the son of George, Duke of Clarence, held by the king in the Tower. This rising, which again received substantial support in north-east England, was crushed on the field of Stoke, near Newark in Nottinghamshire. More trouble occurred in the north in 1489, when the Earl of Northumberland was killed in a tax riot, partly it was said because he was blamed for betraying Richard III.<sup>11</sup>

Three years later another impostor emerged, Perkin Warbeck, who claimed to be the younger of the two princes who had disappeared in 1483. Supported by Margaret of York, and exploited by the Scots, the would-be Richard IV remained on the scene, a thorn in Henry VII's side, for several years. In 1495 he attempted a landing in the south-east, and when repelled made his way first to Ireland and then to Scotland. There he received the support of James IV, who, in 1496, backed a tentative invasion of northern England which signally failed to receive local support. Henry retaliated in strength, but a planned attack on Scotland in 1497 was halted by a rebellion in the west country, which came perilously close to success before the rebels were dispersed at Blackheath. Warbeck meanwhile was packed off to Cornwall where he, and a small party, vainly tried to rally the west countrymen. He was eventually captured in Somerset. He was at first treated leniently by the king, who had exposed him as an imposter. But in 1499, having been incarcerated in the Tower, a plot for him to escape along with the Earl of Warwick, and for them to join a rebellion in Suffolk, was unearthed. This sealed both their fates. Found guilty of treason they were both executed.<sup>12</sup>

Even then, Henry faced further intrigue and plots in the name of the house of York. In 1501 Edmund, Earl of Suffolk, Edward IV's nephew tried, to start a rebellion, but fled abroad where he was sheltered by the Emperor Maximilian. He returned to England, and imprisonment in 1506. He was executed by Henry VIII in 1513. However, his younger brother Richard remained abroad, protected by foreign powers, eventually France, who used him as a pawn in international relations. Thus were the flickering hopes of the remnant of

the house of York kept alive until the childless Richard met his death in the service of France on the field of Pavia in 1525.<sup>13</sup>

It is easy in hindsight for historians to dismiss these impostors and intrigues as trivial, but Henry VII himself, and after him Henry VIII, did not. They knew only too well how a twist of fortune could turn an apparently hopeless cause into a triumphal victory. Throughout his reign Henry VII felt himself insecure on the throne. To some extent this was self-induced. He was intensely suspicious and distrustful, perhaps as a result of his experience as an exile before 1485. He controlled his court and household by the principle of divide and rule. He particularly distrusted those whose service he was constrained to accept, because they had switched sides in 1485. Thus it has been suggested that the defections of Sir William Stanley and Lord Fitzwalter in 1492 were self-fulfilling prophecies, brought about by his own treatment of them. Spies were everywhere. After 1495 he retreated into an inner sanctum of his privy chamber from which he ruled through servants in whom he had absolute trust. Moreover the death of his queen and his first and third sons in quick succession in 1501–3, left only an 11-year-old boy to carry the hopes of his dynasty. As his own health deteriorated after 1503, and he was more than once thought close to death, the uncanny resemblance to the circumstances that brought him to throne were plain for all to see. The underlying paranoia of his regime largely explains the tyranny of its final years. The house of Tudor appeared little more established on the throne towards the end of Henry's reign than at its beginning.<sup>14</sup>

Ultimately, it was to become apparent that Henry VII had indeed succeeded in restoring dynastic stability, and even monarchical authority. This was not obvious until after the unchallenged succession of Henry VIII, fortuitously on the eve of his eighteenth birthday. Even that was not left to chance by his father's councillors.<sup>15</sup> The indefinable quality of general credibility and natural acceptance as the unquestioned dynasty – achieved by Henry V after Agincourt and by Edward IV after Tewkesbury – came slowly to the Tudors. If in retrospect the battle of Bosworth, confirmed by the result at Stoke, came to be seen as decisive, to contemporaries it had seemed that the Wars of the Roses had taken considerably longer to come to an end. Thus they left their mark as much on the house of Tudor as they did on the houses of Lancaster and York.

# Year 12 History Transition Summer Task:

## TUDORS – EXTENSION VIDEO

### The Wars of the Roses – A Bloody Crown

An **optional** watch. A documentary covering the key events of the Wars of the Roses.

[https://hinchingsbrookemy.sharepoint.com/:v:/g/personal/ciw\\_hinchbk\\_cambs\\_sch\\_uk/EeZUP4zF2cFH1B730n4kStEBCStuudWeQMtM2WJsDygO-g?e=DthMDu](https://hinchingsbrookemy.sharepoint.com/:v:/g/personal/ciw_hinchbk_cambs_sch_uk/EeZUP4zF2cFH1B730n4kStEBCStuudWeQMtM2WJsDygO-g?e=DthMDu)



Scan this QR Code and log in with your Hinchingsbrooke School Account Details.

This documentary can also be found online.

# Year 12 History Transition Summer Task:

## TUDORS – EXTENSION READING

### Henry VII – The Early Years

The following **optional** extension reading considers the life of Henry VII before his arrival in England and victory at the Battle of Bosworth. As you read, take notes on the following issues:

How would you describe Henry VII's childhood years (Up to 14)?

Why was Edward IV so keen to have Henry sent back to England?

Why do you think Francis of Brittany was willing to shelter Henry? What did he get out of this situation? How could it benefit him in the future?

Why did so many people unite around Henry's claim to the throne?

How confident do you feel Henry Tudor would have been when he arrived on English soil in 1485?

# Henry VII – The Early Years

C N Trueman "Henry VII – The Early Years"

Henry VII was born in Pembroke Castle, Wales, on January 28<sup>th</sup>, 1457. Henry was the only child of Edmund Tudor, Earl of Richmond, and Margaret Beaufort. Edmund died three months before Henry was born (fighting the Duke of York who was trying to win control of West Wales) and his mother Margaret was only fourteen when she gave birth to the future king. Henry took his father's title when he was born – Henry of Richmond – and he spent the bulk of his early years at Pembroke Castle. However, in 1461, the castle was seized by Lord Herbert following the defeat of Henry VI.



The new king was Edward IV and because of Henry's age, the king became his feudal lord. In 1462, Edward sold the guardianship of Henry to Lord Herbert for £1000. The Duke of Gloucester, the king's brother, was given the over-lordship of the Richmond lands. During this time of his life, Henry saw little of his mother. In 1464, Margaret remarried. Henry stayed at Pembroke Castle and was brought up in the Herbert's household. His circumstances changed in 1469 when Lambert was executed to be followed a year later by Henry VI retaking the throne. In 1471 both Henry VI and his only son, Prince Edward, died. Suddenly aged just fourteen, Henry became the main Lancastrian claimant to the throne. This put him in a very vulnerable position and Jasper Tudor, Earl of Pembroke, recognised this and had him sent to France for his own safety.

Henry spent the next fourteen years in exile. His host was Francis II, Duke of Brittany. Edward IV referred to Henry as "the imp" and "the only one left of Henry VI's brood". Edward offered a substantial reward for the capture of Henry, but Francis stood by his guest. To ensure that Edward's wrath was kept in check, Francis also said that he would guard Henry and Jasper Tudor (also in Normandy) so that they could not escape and return to England. Francis sent back their English servants and replaced them with Breton servants.

Francis was playing a dangerous game. Brittany was an independent French duchy then and if England and France joined forces against him, his duchy would not have had a chance of surviving. By 1475, France, led by Louis XI, and England had developed better relations and Edward tried to persuade Francis that he was hoping Henry might marry one of his daughters. Henry became convinced that if he was handed over to the English his life would be in serious

danger. However, the whole scenario was putting Francis in danger. It was resolved when Henry, on a journey to be handed over to the English, developed a fever which halted any movement. During this time Henry was taken into 'sanctuary' along with Jasper. Edward made no further effort to get Henry sent to England.

In 1483, Edward IV suddenly died. He was succeeded by his brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester who proclaimed himself king. Edward's two sons, the Princes in the Tower, were effectively denied the right to succeed their father. The political climate in England became very unsettled. Richard had his supporters, but he also had his enemies who now saw Henry as the rightful king of England. Edward IV's widow, Elizabeth Woodville, was drawn into this. She wanted Henry to marry her surviving daughter, also Elizabeth, which should, in theory, have gained Henry the support of Lancastrians and Yorkists. Henry set out to land a force in England- but he lacked one vital piece of information. He did not know how much actual support he had. Therefore, on Christmas day 1483, Henry made a public declaration at Rennes Cathedral that if he won the throne from Richard III, he would marry Elizabeth of York and make her his queen. In this way he would unite both houses that had been at war for decades

To take control of the situation, Richard put great pressure on Brittany to hand over Henry. Francis was old and ill, and his advisors felt sufficiently vulnerable that they went along with Richard's wish. An English refugee, John Morton, Bishop of Ely, warned Henry of what was happening, and Henry escaped to France disguised as a servant.

Henry went to live in Paris. He gathered around him a court of English discontents who were becoming more and more concerned about the actions of Richard III. It was these men who would serve Henry after he became king. Henry was made aware that Richard had devised a plan to scupper his move to unite the feuding Lancastrian and York families. He would marry Elizabeth of York. Such a move would at the least weaken Henry's position, but it also meant that for Henry time was of the essence. Those who had gone to Paris – Bishop Moreton, the Earl of Oxford and Richard Fox – all told Henry that he could rely on the support of the English people. More significant, the Earl of Oxford had the necessary military expertise to make such a venture a success. On August 7th, 1485, Henry and his army landed at Milford Haven in Wales.