

RICHARD DUKE OF

YORK



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Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York, was one of the most formidable figures of the 15th century. He was a giant of English politics whose actions helped plunge his country into the bloody Wars of the Roses.

He was an able administrator and a charismatic commander with powerful friends; yet his power, lineage, ambition and fame also ensured he fostered some determined enemies, holding deep-felt enmity that, ultimately, could be resolved only by the sword.

The middle decades of the 15th century were filled with ambitious men and women, nobles and queens, all keen to exert influence over a weak king whilst his kingdom's fortunes at home and abroad were faltering. It was a time of turmoil, but also of opportunity for whoever dared seize it.

Richard was one such man.

From Richard's early years fighting in France to his surprising sally from Sandal Castle on 30 December 1460 this eBook provides an overview of the Duke of York's career and his significant role in igniting the Wars of the Roses.

Detailed articles explain key topics, edited from various History Hit resources. Included in this eBook are articles written for History Hit by Matt Lewis, Wars of the Roses historian and biographer of Richard, Duke of York, as well as features provided by History Hit staff past and present.

You can access all these articles on historyhit.com.

Richard: Duke of York was compiled by Tristan Hughes.

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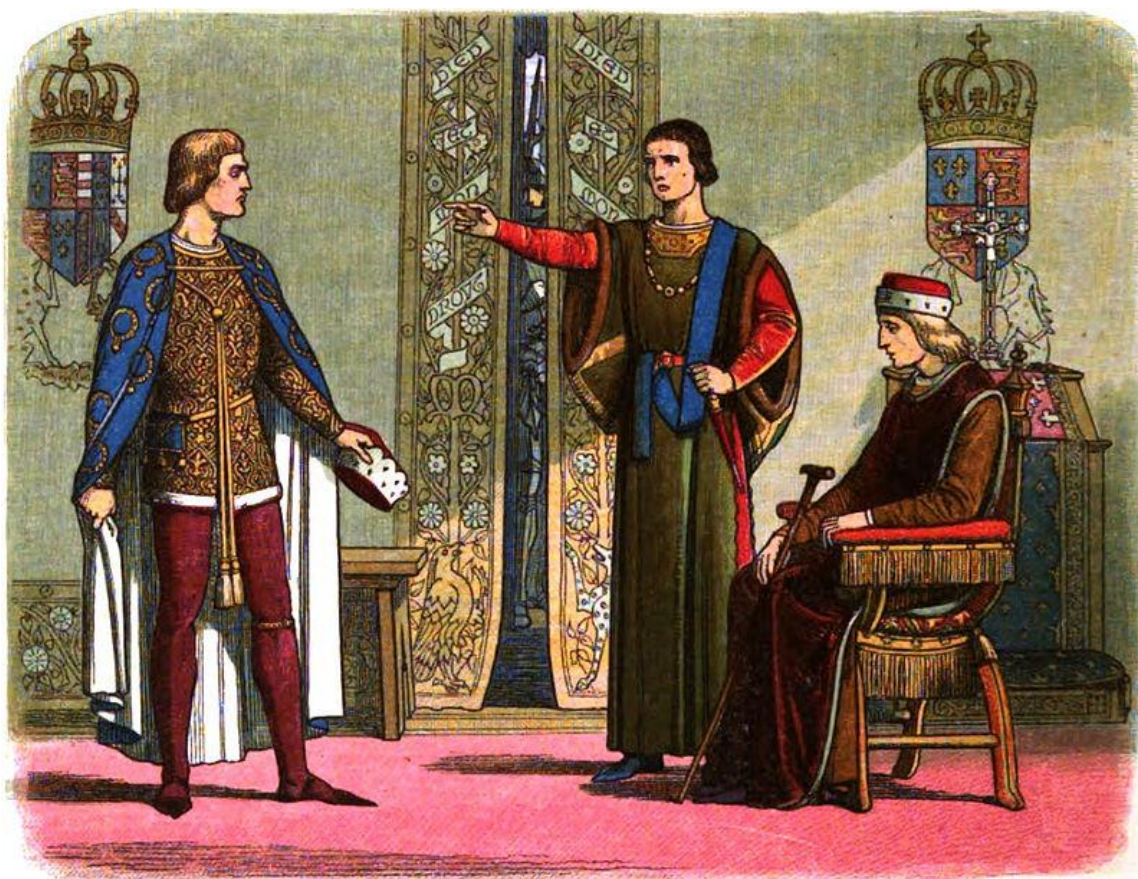
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Henry VI sits while Richard Plantagenet, 3rd Duke of York, and Edmund Beaufort, 2nd Duke of Somerset, have an argument.

The Road to War

The First Battle of St Albans on 22 May 1455 is cited as the date the Wars of the Roses began.

Richard, Duke of York is often considered an ambitious war monger who dragged England into the Wars of the Roses in his relentless pursuit of the crown worn by his second cousin once removed, Henry VI.

The truth is very different

A Man More Sinned Against than Sinning: The Early Life of Richard, 3rd Duke of York

By Ezra Clarke and Matt Lewis

He's often seen as Shakespeare portrayed him - an over-ambitious aggressor who triggered the Wars of the Roses. But the early life of Richard, Duke of York shows a different figure, who survived family tragedy as a child, and was a skilled leader who fell foul of Henry VI's faction-ridden court.

Beginnings

Richard had a tumultuous start in life and was already an orphan by the age of 4. His mother, Anne de Mortimer, died soon after his birth in September 1411.

Just a few years later in August 1415 his father Richard, 3rd Earl of Cambridge, was executed for his part in the 'Southampton Plot' to overthrow King Henry V, just days before the King set sail for France on the campaign that would culminate in the great Hundred Years War victory of Agincourt.

To complete the young Richard's family losses his uncle Edward, 2nd Duke of York, died at Agincourt. The child inherited his father's and uncle's titles making him one of the richest and most powerful magnates in the realm.

He *also* had a strong claim to England's throne through both his father and mother, each separately descended from Edward III.

Wardship and marriage

Following his uncle's death in October 1415, 4 year-old Richard became a ward of the crown, and was placed under the guardianship of trusted Lancastrian retainer Roger Waterton.

Waterton also had custody of some of the most famous prisoners taken at the Battle of Agincourt including Marshal Boucicaut, Charles Duke of Orleans, and Arthur, son of the Duke of Brittany.

It is tempting to visualise these men, sat around a fire in the evening, telling an impressionable boy stories of what happens to a country cursed with a weak king, threatened with invasion, and torn apart by warring factions.

In 1423, for the huge sum of £2,000 (around £1.3 million today) the wardship was sold to Ralph Neville, Earl of Westmorland, giving him rights over young Richard's lands, income and future marriage.

It proved to be money well spent as the 13 year-old soon gained another title, Earl of March, when his childless maternal uncle, Roger Mortimer, died of plague in 1425. Income from the Welsh and Marcher lands that went with the Earldom was £3,400 a year - around £2.2 million today.

Neville soon betrothed Richard to his youngest daughter Cecily, and they were married in the late 1420's.

The arrangement benefited all parties. The Nevilles married into one of England's pre-eminent magnate families; the crown absorbed a potential threat (Richard's claim to the throne) into a family of staunch supporters; and Richard increased his links to other powerful aristocrats who'd married into the Neville family.

Richard represented a convergence of inheritances that meant he was perceived as a threat even before he became politically active.

A new King

In November 1429 Richard attended Henry VI's coronation in Westminster Abbey. He was 18. The new monarch was just 7. Henry VI had become King in 1422 as a baby of just 9 months, after his father Henry V's untimely death aged 35 while on campaign in France.

A regency council had been formed to rule on behalf of the infant King, and factions were already forming among key councillors. Henry V's brother Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, was pro-war, while the former King's half uncle, Henry (soon to be Cardinal) Beaufort favoured peace. Richard did his best to remain neutral.

First French campaign

In 1436 Richard, then 24, was sent to France as 'lieutenant-general and governor' because the King desired 'some great prince of our blood' to control English possessions in France.

Richard shrewdly delegated command to a legendary warrior, John, Lord Talbot, known as the 'Terror of the French'. He successfully repelled a French attack on Normandy. Meanwhile, Richard secured rebellious areas and showed diplomatic skills, placating disgruntled Normans.

A year into the campaign, however, Richard faced financial problems and requested a return to England. The Crown had under-funded the campaign, he'd been forced to pay huge costs himself, and a rumbling dispute with the Regency Council began.

Back home

On his return Richard largely avoided politics and sired his first two children, Anne and Henry - the latter named in loyalty to the Lancastrian dynasty, earning him £100 in jewels from King Henry.

Conspicuously Richard wasn't invited to join the Regency Council that convened during this time. It was becoming increasingly obvious that Henry VI, a man

described by Pope Pius II as 'utterly devoid of wit or spirit', had huge shortcomings as a monarch. England was sliding towards crisis.

Return to France

In 1439 Richard's replacement in France died. He was acceptable to both court factions and was sent back in 1441 with a promise of £20,000 a year (around £13 million today) to fund the war. His wife accompanied him.

Over the next 4 years three more children were born: Edward (the future Edward IV); Edmund (who would die at the Battle of Wakefield), and Elizabeth. Richard again put Talbot in charge, but the military exploits were less successful than before.

Back in London, the campaign's failings were attributed to Richard's cautious nature by the Beaufort faction.

Losing the confidence of the Court

Cardinal Beaufort seized the opportunity to promote his own family's interests by securing for his nephew John Beaufort, Earl of Somerset, the prestigious command of 8,000 fresh English troops dispatched to France.

It was a costly expedition at a time when Richard was still owed a fortune by the government. Somerset proved an inept commander who actually caused damage by attacking towns that favoured the English, and scuppered an alliance between England and the Dukes of Brittany and Alencon that Richard had been fostering for almost two years.

The Treaty

England's appetite for war seemed to be waning. In 1444 the Treaty of Tours saw Henry VI give up the hard-won provinces of Anjou and Maine in return for a brief peace and marriage to the landless and penniless Margaret of Anjou (who was distantly related to the King of France).

She would go on to be closely tied to the Beaufort faction, and would increasingly dominate a King troubled by illness and indecision.

Margaret spent her early youth in at a castle in the Rhone Valley and at a palace in Naples. She received a good education and was probably tutored by Antoine de la Salle, a famous writer and tournament judge of the era.

When she came to England, she furthered her love of learning by helping to establish Queen's College, Cambridge.

Homecoming

Later in 1444 Richard returned to England amidst rumours (probably stirred by enemies at court) of misuse of funds on the Normandy campaign. Richard tried to remain neutral in the politics of the court and maintained good relations with the King and most of the Council.

However, Margaret and the Beauforts seem to have regarded him as a threat from early on. They would become Richard's implacable enemies steadily forcing him into a position where open rebellion became more and more likely. Perhaps even inevitable.



Richard, Duke of York.

Why Did the Early Years of Henry VI's Reign Prove So Disastrous?

By James Carson and Matt Lewis

York retained his position as lieutenant-general of France until 1445 when he was surprised to find himself replaced with Edmund Beaufort, Duke of Somerset.

It was the beginning of a bitter personal feud between the dukes. By now York was owed more than £38,000 by the crown, equivalent to over £31 million in today's money.

Willingly or otherwise, York also became associated with Henry VI's last remaining uncle Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, who began to name York first amongst those he believed were being unfairly excluded from power.

In 1447 Humphrey fell victim to his nephew's paranoia. Henry became convinced his fifty-six-year-old childless uncle meant to steal his throne. Humphrey was arrested and suffered a stroke, dying in custody a few days later.

Humphrey had been the face of a popular desire to pursue war with France and his death caused his supporters to turn to York. For the first time opposition to the increasingly unpopular government of Henry VI had a focus outside the House of Lancaster.

At this stage York probably was not dreaming of stealing Henry's crown, but Henry's weak and vacillating rule meant that the court became a cesspit of intrigue and jockeying for influence.

Tension grew in September 1447 however, when York was dismissed and sent to Ireland, long the graveyard of ambitious men.

Embittered York made an immediate claim for his salary and expenses – which was bad news for the cash strapped treasury. The young Margaret created further problems, siding so strongly with Suffolk and Somerset that rumours began to abound that she was romantically attached to them.

Margaret was fifteen years old when she was crowned queen consort at Westminster Abbey. She was described as beautiful, passionate, proud and strong-willed.

In August 1449 a frail truce in France broke down; King Charles VII invaded Normandy on three fronts. Against a woefully funded garrison and an inexperienced leader in Somerset, French forces inexorably drove the English out of northern France. It culminated in a devastating defeat for the English at the Battle of Formigny, where four thousand English soldiers were killed.

For his role in the catastrophe Suffolk was hauled before the House of Commons and put on trial for treason. But before he reached judgement Henry intervened on the side of his favourite dropping the charges of treason but banishing him on secondary charges.

Widespread discontent

It was not a popular decision – only serving to undermine Henry's power base. It was also in vain. Suffolk was murdered as his ship sailed in the English Channel – possibly on York's orders.

By late Spring of 1450 the people of Kent broke into open rebellion. Led by a figure named Jack Cade this popular uprising reflected the schism at court. Cade used an alias 'John Mortimer', York's uncle and one of the sources of his royal claim.

3,000 armed men marched to Blackheath to air their grievances. Unlike Richard II, who dealt with the earlier Peasant's Revolt largely through negotiation, Henry woefully mismanaged the situation alienating the protesters by resorting to violence. Cade inflicted an embarrassing defeat on the Royalists through an ambush at Sevenoaks.

Although Cade was later defeated and killed, Henry had showed himself to be weak and indecisive. It was one thing to be humiliated in France, quite another in Kent. He then compounded matters further by appointing Somerset Constable of England.

The man who lost France was now to try and keep England. Sensing weakness, York returned from Ireland in September. It was time to settle his debts.

Rumours abounded that York had been behind Cade's uprising, but his return may well have been born of a sense of duty.

As the senior nobleman and heir presumptive to the king his responsibility was to help keep law and order, but he was viewed with ever-increasing suspicion and excluded from power.

The return of the Duke

He sent a series of open letters to the King expressing his loyalty but stating he wished to punish traitors – namely Somerset and John Kemp, the Archbishop of York. In reply Henry sent instructions to arrest York, but he instead arrived in London with an armed force of four thousand men on 29 September.

He forced his way into King Henry's presence demanding reform and the ridding of certain advisers. Henry agreed to a compromise – there would be changes but they would be agreed by a new council which would include York. But York still did not have wide support among English nobles and the King despised him for his vendetta against Somerset.

He was essentially exiled from the court, but by 1452 York launched another bid for power. It seems possible that he wanted to establish himself as the heir to the childless Henry and rid himself of Somerset, his cousin and rival claimant. He determined to bring Somerset to trial by using force if necessary and marched to Dartford. Henry responded by moving a larger host to Blackheath.

Outfoxed

England teetered on the edge of war. It was avoided, or postponed, by York's loss of nerve. He feared defeat against the king's powerful forces and suggested a rapprochement with the king as long as Somerset was arrested. The king agreed.

York rode to Blackheath but found the hated Somerset was in the King's tent. It was a trick, and York was now essentially a prisoner.

He was taken to Saint Paul's Cathedral where he had to swear a solemn oath that he would not raise an armed force against the King. Civil War had been avoided. For now.

What Were the Incidents of King Henry VI's Illness?

By Tristan Hughes

In August 1453 the 31-year old English king Henry VI suddenly suffered an extreme episode of mental illness causing him to descend into a state of complete withdrawal. For over a year he proved unresponsive to anything – even the news that his wife had given birth to their only son failed to stir a reaction:

“No Doctor or medicine had power to cure that illness.”

Henry's breakdown, combined with the birth of his son, created a power vacuum in the kingdom; significant figures such as Richard, Duke of York, and the Queen, Margaret of Anjou, battled for control in the king's absence.

But what caused King Henry's 'madness'? As no eyewitness accounts of the exact nature of Henry's illness survive several theories have been proposed.

The trigger

On 17 July 1453 the final nail in the English coffin that was to become the end of the Hundred Years War was struck when French forces won a decisive victory against an English army at Castillon in Gascony.

The French victory was highly-significant: both John Talbot, the English commander, and his son were killed and English control of Bordeaux and Aquitaine was eliminated. Only the vital port of Calais remained in Henry's hands.

News of this decisive defeat presumably hit Henry particularly hard.

Talbot, a fierce warrior and commander known by his contemporaries as the 'English Achilles', was one of Henry's closest allies and his greatest military leader. Prior to

the clash at Castillon he had even started to reverse English fortunes in the region – perhaps in hindsight a forlorn hope.

Furthermore, the irrevocable loss of Aquitaine was also highly-significant: the region had been an English possession for nearly 300 years, since Henry II married Eleanor of Aquitaine in 1154. Losing this territory was thus particularly humiliating for an English monarch – sparking further resentment of the Lancastrian dynasty at home.

*Henry VI was the son of King Henry V and Catherine of Valois,
daughter of the French king Charles VI.*

Downfall

Henry's reign had overseen the downfall of English dominance in France, undoing much of his forebears' achievements.

The successes achieved during the reign of his father and during the early years of his regency – when English victories at Agincourt and Verneuil allowed the nation to reach the zenith of its power on the European mainland – had become a distant memory.

When news of the disaster at Castillon reached Henry in August the same year, it seems very likely it contributed heavily to the king's sudden, sharp mental deterioration.

What did Henry suffer from?

Although the Castillon debacle appears the most likely trigger for Henry's mental breakdown, what precise affliction he actually suffered from is less certain.

Some have suggested Henry suffered from hysteria. Yet the king's unresponsiveness to anything – even to news of his new-born son – seems to refute this. Hysteria rarely induces a passive stupor.

Others have put forward the possibility that Henry suffered a depressive or melancholic illness; news of the defeat at Castillon perhaps proved the last straw after a long line of catastrophic calamities in his foreign policy.

Yet perhaps the most plausible explanation of the condition Henry suffered was hereditary catatonic schizophrenia.

Henry's family tree

Some of Henry's forebears had suffered from mental instability, particularly on his mother's side.

Henry's great grandmother was described as mentally fragile, while his mother Catherine of Valois also appears to have suffered from an illness that caused her to become mentally unstable and ultimately die young.

Yet the most prominent relation who displayed symptoms was Henry's grandfather King Charles VI of France, nicknamed 'the Mad'.

During his reign Charles suffered from several prolonged periods of illness, becoming completely oblivious to matters of state, believing he was made of glass and denying that he had either a wife or children.

It has been suggested Charles suffered from a form of either schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or encephalitis.

Did Henry VI inherit catatonic schizophrenia?

The symptoms of Henry's prolonged period of withdrawal were very different to those of his grandfather; his vibrant early life makes it seem less likely that he inherited his insanity from Charles.

However, Henry may have inherited a disposition to schizophrenia. His complete unresponsiveness to events during his mental breakdown, combined with his relatively full recovery, suggests he suffered an episode of catatonic schizophrenia that was triggered by the traumatic news of Castillon.

Episodes of catatonic schizophrenia – during which people are unable to speak, respond or even move – usually do not last for as prolonged a period as Henry's did. Yet scholars have countered this argument by suggesting the English king may have suffered two or more attacks close together.

Henry's long and passive stupor therefore seems to suggest he suffered at least two catatonic schizophrenic episodes, inherited from his maternal family line and triggered by the news of the disastrous defeat at Castillon.

The similarities between Henry VI and Philip Arrhidæus III, the man who was crowned king in the aftermath of Alexander the Great's death, are staggering.

Both suffered from mental impairments that hindered their ability to rule effectively; both were easily controlled by more powerful, ambitious figures. Both oversaw the descent of their kingdom from its zenith into a bloody civil war; both were later murdered; both were the last of their royal dynasties to assume the kingship.



King Henry VI.

The Wars of the Roses

On Christmas Day 1454, the King was declared healthy again. His recovery would prove more disastrous than his illness. He quickly set about undoing many of York's appointments.

When Henry tried to move to the Midlands in 1455 York gathered an army and marched south. Despite writing letters each day explaining where he was and that he meant Henry no harm, York received no response.

He reached Henry at St Albans, with the king's army inside the town and the gates barred. York had around 6,000 men and the king's army only numbered about 2,000, but most of the nobility were firmly on Henry's side.

At 7 o'clock on the morning of 22 May York's army arrayed on Key Fields outside St Albans. A parlay failed and hostilities began just after 11 o'clock.

10 Facts About the First Battle of St Albans

By Emma Irving

On 22 May 1455, troops supporting the rival houses of Lancaster and York advanced on St Albans.

Troops commanded by Richard, Duke of York, resoundingly defeated a Lancastrian royal army commanded by the Duke of Somerset, who was killed in the fighting. King Henry VI was captured, leading to a subsequent parliament appointing Richard of York Lord Protector.

It was the day that launched a bloody civil war that would last more than 3 decades: the Wars of the Roses.

Here are ten facts about the battle:

1. The battle between the Duke of York and the Duke of Somerset began long before 1455

When Henry VI had suffered a mental breakdown, Somerset had tried to become Lord Protector. However, York was given the appointment to govern England as Lord Protector and First Councillor of the realm due to his considerable popularity.

York used this position to move against his chief rival, and Somerset was imprisoned. When Henry recovered, Somerset was released and restored to his former position of power.

Having reconvened the court by mid-April 1455, Henry and a select council of nobles decided to hold a great council at Leicester. York and his allies anticipated that Somerset would bring charges against them at this assembly, so they gathered an armed retinue and marched to stop the royal party from reaching Leicester, intercepting them at St Albans.

2. There were initial attempts at negotiations

For several hours before the battle, heralds moved back and forth between the two commanders, with the Duke of York demanding that the Duke of Somerset – who was responsible for military failures in France and was York's longtime rival – be handed over for execution. In an act of surprisingly decisive kingmanship, Henry refused.

3. Despite eventually losing, the Lancastrians were well prepared for battle

The 2,000 strong army under the command of the Duke of Somerset arrived in St Albans first and set about organising its defences, which resulted in some initial heavy casualties for the larger Yorkist force.

4. The Lancastrians assumed the negotiations would be peacefully resolved

Despairing of a peaceful solution and after many hours of talks Richard decided to attack. The bulk of Henry's forces were surprised, having expected a peaceful resolution similar to the one at Blackheath in 1452. However, the two Yorkist frontal assaults made no headway and initially resulted in heavy casualties among their men.

5. A surprise attack paved the way for Yorkist victory

It was a small force led by the Earl of Warwick that marked the turning point in the battle. They picked their way through small back lanes and rear gardens, then burst into the town's market square where the Lancastrian forces were relaxing and chatting. Warwick quickly ordered his men to charge the main body of Henry's army, who were being held there in reserve. The Lancastrian defenders, realizing they were outflanked, abandoned their barricades and fled the town.

6. The Duke of Somerset sought refuge at the Castle Inn

Knowing full well that York would never let him live, when the battle began to turn in Yorkist favour Somerset sought refuge at the Castle Inn. When Yorkists surrounded the building Somerset decided to fight his way out. He valiantly charged onto the main street and over the bodies of his defenders, killing four men before eventually being struck down.

In Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part 2* York says the following:

So, lie thou there;-

For, underneath an alehouse' paltry sign,

The Castle in Saint Albans, Somerset

Hath made the wizard famous in his death

7. Longbowmen were responsible for capturing the King

Warwick's longbowmen rained arrows onto Henry's bodyguard, killing Buckingham and several other influential Lancastrian nobles and wounding the king. Henry was later escorted back to London by York and Warwick.

8. The Battle of St Albans led to the Earl of Warwick's lasting fame

The sudden attack and bravery displayed by the 27-year-old launched his illustrious military career and would help earn him the nickname 'The Kingmaker'.

9. The King's capture resulted in York becoming Protector of England

With the King captured, the battle paved the way for York to be appointed as Protector of England by Parliament a few months later.

10. Shakespeare's historic play *Henry VI, Part 2* ends with the conclusion of this battle

In it, Margaret of Anjou persuades the distraught King to flee the battlefield and head to London. The play ends with York, Edward, Richard, Warwick and Salisbury setting out in pursuit of Henry, Margaret and Clifford.

How Did King Henry VI Attempt to Reconcile the Warring Roses?

By Laura McMillen

The 'Loveday' of 1458 was a symbolic reconciliation between warring factions of the English nobility.

A solemn procession on 24 March 1458 marked the culmination of King Henry VI's personal attempt to prevent civil war following the outbreak of the Wars of the Roses in 1455.

Despite the public display of unity this effort – instigated by a peace-loving 'simple-minded' monarch – was ineffective. The Lords' rivalries ran deep; within a few months petty violence had broken out and within the year York and Lancaster faced each other at the Battle of Blore Heath.

Growing factionalism

English politics had become increasingly factional throughout Henry VI's reign.

His 'catatonic' illness in 1453, which effectively left the government leaderless, exacerbated tension. Richard Plantagenet the Duke of York, the king's cousin, himself with a claim to the throne, was appointed Lord Protector and First Councillor of the Realm.

When the King returned to health in 1454 the protectorship of York and his powerful Neville family allies ended, but partisanship within government did not.

York, increasingly excluded from the exercise of royal power, questioned Henry VI's ability to perform royal duties due to his infamously gentle nature and persistent illness.

In May 1455, possibly fearing an ambush by his enemies under the Duke of Somerset's command, he led an army against the King's Lancastrian army and staged a bloody surprise attack at the First Battle of St Albans.

The personal enemies of York and the Nevilles – the Duke of Somerset, the Earl of Northumberland, and Lord Clifford – perished.

Relatively minor in military terms, the insurgency was important politically: the King had been captured and after escorting him back to London York was appointed Protector of England by parliament a few months later.

Aftermath of the First Battle of St Albans

York's victory at St. Albans hadn't brought him any permanent increase in power.

His Second Protectorate was short-lived and Henry VI ended it early in 1456. By then his male heir, Prince Edward, had survived infancy and his wife, Margaret of Anjou, emerged as a major player in the Lancastrian revival.

By 1458, Henry's government urgently needed to deal with the unfinished problem that the Battle of St Albans had created: younger magnates craved revenge on the Yorkist lords who had killed their fathers.

Noblemen of both parties recruited large retinues of armed followers. The ever-present threat of a power grab by their French neighbours also loomed large. Henry wanted to bring the Yorkists back into the fold.

The King's attempt at reconciliation

Taking the initiative, the Loveday – a common form of arbitration in medieval England, more often used for local matters – was intended to be Henry's personal contribution to a lasting peace.

The English peerage was summoned to a great council in London in January 1458. To prevent a violent outbreak between the gathered retinues concerned city officials maintained an armed watch.

The Yorkists were lodged within the city walls and the Lancastrian Lords remained outside. Despite these precautions, Northumberland, Clifford, and Egremont tried unsuccessfully to ambush York and Salisbury as they rode from London to nearby Westminster.

The King mediated over long and acrimonious discussions. These deliberations were carried out through intermediaries. In the mornings Henry's councillors met the Yorkists in the City, at the Blackfriars; in the afternoons, they met the Lancastrian lords at the Whitefriars on Fleet Street.

The settlement eventually accepted by all parties called for York to pay Somerset 5,000 marks, for Warwick to pay Clifford 1,000 marks and for Salisbury to forgo fines previously levied for hostile actions against the Nevilles.

The Yorkists were also to endow the abbey at St Albans with £45 per year for masses to be sung in perpetuity for the souls of the battle dead. The only reciprocal undertaking by a Lancastrian was Egremont's payment of a 4,000 mark bond to maintain peace with the Neville family for ten years.

Blame for St Albans had been placed squarely on the Yorkist Lords.

Symbolic significance of pomp and ceremony

The agreement was announced on 24 March, sealed on the same day with a solemn procession to St Paul's Cathedral for a mass.

Members of the two factions went hand in hand. Queen Margaret was partnered with York, and other adversaries were paired off accordingly, the sons and heirs of noblemen killed at St Albans with the men responsible for their fathers' deaths.

The procession was also important as a public relations campaign meant to reassure Londoners that war, which had disrupted trade and daily life in the capital, was over.

A ballad composed to commemorate the event described the public display of political affection:

At Paul's in London, with great renown,

On our Ladyday in Lent, this peace was wrought.

The King, the Queen, with Lords many one ...

Went in procession ...

In sight of all the commonality,

In token that love was in heart and thought

Religious symbolism, such as the start point of Westminster Abbey and the timing of the event on Lady's day, which marks the Virgin Mary's receipt of the news she would bear child, highlighted the mood of reconciliation.

Short-lived stability

The Loveday proved to be only a temporary triumph; the war it was intended to prevent was merely deferred. It had failed to resolve the key political issue of the day- the exclusion of York and the Nevilles from government.

Henry VI retreated politically once again and Queen Margaret took the helm.

Less than two months after the short-lived peace accord, the Earl of Warwick directly flouted the law by engaging in casual piracy around Calais, where he had been virtually exiled by the Queen. He was summoned to London and the visit descended into a brawl. Following a close escape and retreat to Calais, Warwick refused orders to return.

Margaret officially accused the Earl of Warwick, the Duke of York, and other Yorkist nobility of treason in October 1459, decrying the duke's "most diabolical unkindness and wretched envy."

Each side blaming each other for the outbreak of violence, they prepared for war.

The Lancastrians were initially better prepared and Yorkist leaders were forced into exile after abandoning their armies at Ludford Bridge. They returned from a short exile and captured Henry VI at Northampton 10 July 1460.

By the end of that year, Richard Duke of York found himself marching north to deal with Margaret of Anjou and several prominent nobles who opposed the Act of

Accord, which displaced young Prince Edward and named York heir to the throne. In the ensuing Battle of Wakefield, the Duke of York was killed and his army destroyed.

Within two years of the Loveday procession, most of the participants would be dead. The Wars of the Roses would rage on for nearly three more decades.



Richard claims the Throne of England for the House of York. Autumn 1460.

A Queen's Vengeance: How Significant Was the Battle of Wakefield?

By Tristan Hughes

1460. England is on the brink of turmoil. Despite Henry VI's best efforts to avoid future bloodshed following the First Battle of St Albans and to reconcile warring nobles, civil disorder had increased.

By the Autumn one figure could tolerate the *stasis* no longer. Forced into a political corner Richard, Duke of York believed that the only solution to the current crisis was for him to finally cross his Rubicon and put forward his own, better, claim to the Throne of England.

And so in Autumn 1460 Richard rode into Parliament, put his hand on Henry VI's throne and stated that he was claiming the Throne for the House of York.

Richard, himself a grandson of the great warrior king Edward III, believed that this was his only option to alleviate the current political *stasis*.

The word 'stasis' derives from ancient Greek and literally translates as 'a standing still'. It can be used to describe a period of civil strife.

Triggering civil war

But it proved an unwise move. Claiming the Throne was a drastic step and this shocked even York's own supporters for several reasons.

The first was the 'unconventional' route York had chosen to make this proclamation. York's supporters had already warned him that he could not yet make this claim for the kingship – in their eyes Richard first needed to assume clear control over Henry's government.

The second shock was such a direct attack on Henry VI himself. This was a time when the Church dominated secular life: when people considered a king to be God's anointed – chosen to rule by God. Defying a king was defying God's appointment.

This dilemma was only increased by the fact that Henry's father and predecessor had been Henry V. Deposing this much-loved legendary warlord's son was far from popular. York could not simply hope to topple a king with such strong religious and secular links.

Henry VI also had time on his side. Richard did have a better claim to the throne, but by 1460 Lancastrian rule was embedded within English society. Ever since Henry Bolingbroke had forced Richard II to abdicate in 1399 a Lancastrian monarch had ruled the country. Changing a dynasty that had ruled for several (medieval) generations was far from popular.

York's attempt to claim the Throne of England shocked friend and foe alike. In the Parliamentary settlement that followed – the Act of Accord - an agreement was reached. Henry VI would remain as king, but Richard and his heirs were named Henry's successors. The Lancastrian dynasty were pushed, well and truly, down the line of succession; the Yorkists were back in the royal picture.

The agreement polarised England like never before. Furious at seeing her son cut out from the succession, Queen Margaret of Anjou started recruiting troops. It was the trigger for civil war.

Trouble in Yorkshire

Two months later Richard headed north. Civil disturbances had broken out on his Yorkshire estates and Henry VI's heir marched with a small force to quell this unrest.

After an arduous journey on 21 December 1460 Richard and his army reached Sandal Castle, a strong Yorkist bastion near Wakefield.

There they remained for over a week, spending Christmas within the stronghold. But while Richard and his men were resting within the Castle a large approaching enemy force was spotted.

It was a Lancastrian army loyal to Henry VI's queen, Margaret of Anjou. From the Lancastrian stronghold, Pontefract Castle, this force had marched to catch Richard and his army by surprise as they recuperated behind the walls of Sandal Castle.

Lancastrian 'ambush'

Vengeance-seeking commanders dominated the top tier of the Lancastrian army. Two prominent generals had lost fathers at the First Battle of St Albans and now sought revenge against Richard and his family. First there was Henry Beaufort, commander of the Lancastrian army and the son of York's fallen arch-enemy Edmund Beaufort, Duke of Somerset.

Second there was John Clifford, one of Henry's senior subordinates. Like his commander-in-chief, John's father had also perished during the First Battle of St Albans.

Despite being outnumbered Richard decided to fight. Why he decided to leave the safety of Sandal's defences with an outnumbered force to fight a pitched battle remains a mystery. Several theories have been touted: miscalculation, too few provisions to withstand a siege or some element of Lancastrian deception are all candidates for the explanation. The truth, however, remains unclear. What we do know is that York gathered his men and sallied out for battle on Wakefield Green, below the stronghold.

The Battle of Wakefield: 30 December 1460

The fight did not last long. As soon as York's army descended onto the plain, the Lancastrian forces closed in from all sides. Chronicler Edward Hall described Richard and his men becoming trapped - 'like a fish in a net'.

Quickly surrounded Richard's army was annihilated. The Duke himself was killed during the fighting: wounded and unhorsed before his enemies dealt him the death blow.

He was not the only prominent figure to meet his end. The Earl of Rutland, Richard's 17 year old son, also died. As he tried to escape over Wakefield Bridge the young nobleman had been overtaken, captured and killed – probably by John Clifford in revenge for his father's death at St Albans 5 years earlier.

The Earl of Salisbury was another prominent Yorkist casualty of Wakefield. Like Rutland he was captured after the main battle. Although the Lancastrian nobles might have been prepared to allow Salisbury to ransom himself due to his substantial

wealth, he was dragged out of Pontefract Castle and beheaded by local commoners – to whom he had been a harsh overlord.

There is no accurate record of the number of casualties but it is thought that the Lancastrians lost around 200 men, while the Yorkist dead numbered around 700 to 2,500.

Aftermath

Margaret of Anjou was determined to send a strong message to the Yorkists after the Lancastrian victory at Wakefield. The Queen ordered the heads of York, Rutland and Salisbury to be impaled on spikes and displayed over Micklegate Bar, the western gate through the York city walls.

Richard's head had a paper crown as a mark of derision, and a sign that said:

Let York overlook the town of York.

The Battle of Wakefield is said to be the source of a popular mnemonic:

'Richard of York Gave Battle in Vain' stands for the sequence of hues commonly described as making up a rainbow: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet.

Richard, Duke of York, was dead. But Lancastrian celebrations would prove short-lived. York's legacy lived on.

The following year Richard's son and successor Edward would win a decisive victory at the Battle of Mortimer's Cross. Marching down to London, he was crowned King Edward IV, later going on to win his most famous victory: the bloody Battle of Towton.

Richard may have died without laying hands on the kingship, but he paved the way for his son to fulfil this aim and secure the English Throne for the House of York.

A few hundred yards from the gatehouse to Sandal Castle, there stands a Victorian monument on the site where traditionally the Duke was said to have been killed.

It replaces an older monument set up by Edward IV to the memory of his father, which was destroyed by Parliamentary forces during the Civil War.



The ruins of Sandal Castle at Wakefield West Yorkshire. The scene of the Battle of Wakefield on 30 December 1460 where Richard Plantagenet Duke of York fell.

Who Was Richard Neville and What Was His Role in the Wars of the Roses?

By Emma Irving

Lancaster and York. For much of the 15th century, the two armies were locked in a fierce struggle for control of the English throne. Kings were murdered and deposed. Armies marched on London. Old noble names were ruined while rising dynasties seized power and lands.

And at the centre of this struggle for power was Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick – the man who would come to be known as ‘the Kingmaker’.

Having seized the crown for the Yorkist king Edward IV in 1461, he later restored to power the deposed Lancastrian monarch Henry VI.

Gaining power

The son of Richard Neville, 5th earl of Salisbury, the younger Richard Neville married Anne, daughter of the Earl of Warwick. When her brother’s daughter died in 1449, Anne brought her husband the title and chief share of the Warwick estates.

He therefore became the premier earl, and in both power and position excelled his father.

Richard, Duke of York, was his uncle, so when in 1453 York became Protector and Salisbury was made Chancellor it was obvious that the young Earl of Warwick should be one of the council. Warwick and his father then took up arms in York’s support when Henry VI recovered in 1455.

Their victory at the Battle of St Albans was due to the fierce energy with which Warwick assaulted and broke the Lancastrian centre.

He was rewarded with the very important office of Captain of Calais. Even when York was displaced at home, Warwick retained this post and in 1457 he was also made admiral.

Warwick the Kingmaker was a 15th-century celebrity: a military hero, self-publicist and populist.

Making Edward of York into King Edward IV

Warwick crossed from Calais to England in 1460 with Salisbury and Edward of York, defeating and then capturing Henry VI at Northampton. York and Parliament agreed to let Henry keep his crown, probably under the influence of Warwick.

But York and Salisbury were defeated and slain at the Battle of Wakefield while Warwick was in charge of London. The Lancastrians won a second victory at St Albans in February 1461.

But in his plans to rectify the situation Warwick showed highly impressive skill and leadership.

He met Edward of York in Oxfordshire, brought him in triumph to London, had him proclaimed King Edward IV, and within a month of his defeat at St Albans was marching north in pursuit of the Lancastrians.

The victory at Towton may have been down to Edward's leadership rather than to Warwick's, but the new king was the creation of the powerful young Earl.

Who is in charge of England?

For 4 years the government was in the hands of Warwick and his friends. Warwick was determining foreign policy on the basis of an alliance with France. His brother John, Lord Montagu, defeated the Lancastrians in skirmishes in the north. His third brother, George, became Archbishop of York.

But in 1464 the king secretly married Elizabeth Woodville, an unsuitable match which also undercut Warwick's pledge that Edward would marry a French match.

In 1466 Edward made Rivers, the Queen's father, treasurer, and then frustrated an intended marriage between Warwick's daughter Isabel and George of Clarence, the king's own brother.

Warwick returned from France in 1467 to find Edward, under Woodville's influence, had committed himself to a Burgundian alliance.

Revenge

In 1469 Warwick went to Calais where Isabel and Clarence were married without the king knowing. He also stirred up rebellion in Yorkshire and, when Edward was drawn north, Warwick invaded England.

The King, outmarched and outnumbered, yielded to become prisoner, while Rivers and his son – the Queen's father and brother – were executed.

But in March 1470 Edward gathered an army of his own, and Warwick fled with Clarence to France. There, under the instrumentality of Louis XI, he was reconciled with Margaret of Anjou and agreed to marry his second daughter to her son.

Lancastrian restoration

In September Warwick and Lancastrian forces arrived at Dartmouth. Edward fled, and for 6 months Warwick ruled England as Lieutenant for Henry VI, who was restored from prison in the Tower to a nominal throne.

But Clarence was unhappy about the return of Lancastrians to the throne. He started to betray Warwick and when in March 1471 Edward landed at Ravenspur, Clarence found an opportunity to join him. Warwick was finally outmanoeuvred, and at Barnet on 14 April he was defeated and slain.

Warwick's only children were his 2 daughters, the younger of which, Anne, was married to Richard of Gloucester, the future Richard III.