

the way that Henry V had used a French invasion to win the support of the nobility in 1415. Victory against France would make Edward's position unassailable.

Although Edward favoured an alliance with Burgundy against France, Warwick thought the opposite and he was engaged for long months in negotiations with the French. When Edward plumped for the Burgundian alliance, Warwick felt humiliated and isolated. The rising power of the queen's father, **Earl Rivers**, further inflamed Warwick and the feeling that his political fortunes were on the wane was made clearer to him when his brother, **George Neville**, the Archbishop of York, was dismissed from his position as Chancellor.

Warwick withdrew from court at this point, but in the next year Edward seemed to be going out of his way to conciliate the disgruntled earl. Warwick was granted the **wardship** of Francis, Lord Lovell and the king installed his youngest brother, Richard, in Warwick's household at Middleham in Yorkshire.

The rebellion of 1469

By 1469, Warwick had decided on rebellion. His plan seemed to be to build up a coalition of forces so powerful that Edward would agree to do the earl's bidding. The scheme, in fact, seemed to be similar to the Duke of York's hopes of ruling through Henry VI and it was equally doomed to failure. At first, all went well.

- Warwick encouraged a rising in Yorkshire led by his steward, Sir John Conyers, who used the name of Robin of Redesdale to encourage popular support – nothing like a Robin to rally the peasants! These forces then marched south and Edward, taken by surprise, left London to meet the threat with only limited forces.
- These forces were overwhelmed at Edgecote and the king himself was captured at Olney by none other than the ex-Chancellor, George Neville, Warwick's brother. Suddenly, Edward IV was a helpless captive, in the hands of his former foremost ally.
- At the same time, Warwick pulled off his masterstroke. He had persuaded Edward's younger brother and heir, George, Duke of Clarence, to join the plot and now, in defiance of Edward's wishes, married young George to

KEY PEOPLE

Earl Rivers, Richard Woodville (1416–69)

was the father of Elizabeth Woodville. In 1466 Edward IV appointed him Treasurer of England and created him Earl Rivers. A year later, he became Constable of England. These moves alienated Warwick.

George Neville (1433–76)

Warwick's younger brother, who was made Bishop of Exeter at the age of 23. He was moved (the technical term is translated) to the Archbishopric of York in 1465 where the celebratory feasting accounted for (among other things) 330 tuns of beer, 80 fat oxen, 3000 geese and four porpoises!

KEY TERM

Wardship This refers to the medieval custom whereby the heir of a great landowner was placed under the protection of the king (became his ward) if he was still a child when he inherited a large estate. This allowed the king to control the child's income, estates and marriage, and could therefore be very profitable. The king could sell the wardship on to another nobleman if he wished.

KEY TERM

Regicide The murder of a monarch or king, from the Latin word *rex*, meaning 'king'. Edward II and Edward III had been murdered by medieval people, though the murder of an anointed monarch was a terrible crime – in fact, the worst anyone could commit. So, during Edward IV's first reign (1461–6) it is clear that no one was prepared to murder the English king. Instead, Edward IV imprisoned Henry VI as a prisoner in the Tower of London. Edward VI's readoption as king in 1470 brought Edward's regicide. King Henry VI was murdered in the Tower of London when Edward regained the throne.

KEY PERSON

Henry Percy, fourth Earl of Northumberland (1446–89)

Became a major player when his father was fighting against Edward IV at Towton in 1461. He was imprisoned by Edward IV and released and restored to earldom in 1470, in a design to undermine the Neville family's control in the north. He became Richard III's Gloucester's retainer, with him in the Scottish campaigns (1480–3) assisted his usurpation of the throne in 1483. However, the earl felt that he was not sufficiently rewarded and refused to fight for Richard III at Bosworth. He served Edward VII loyally but was later murdered by an angry

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Warwick (1433–76)

Warwick's younger brother, Richard Neville, made Bishop of Exeter at the age of 23. He was a knight (the technical term translated) to the Prince of York in 1460. He celebrated the victory counted for (among others) 330 tuns of beer, 1,300 geese and 100 oxen!

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his own elder daughter and heir, Isobel Neville.

Warwick took the pair to Calais and even had a papal legate on hand to grant a special license for the marriage of two cousins.

The failure to find powerful men to marry his two daughters had been another cause of friction between Warwick and the queen's family. With all those brothers and sisters of marriageable age, the Woodville family had dominated the marriage market. The earls of Arundel, Essex and Kent had married their heirs to Woodville wives, while Katherine Woodville had got the biggest prize of all when she won the Duke of Buckingham, much to Warwick's disappointment. All of this meant that the only great men left for Warwick's daughters were Edward IV's brothers, George and Richard, but Edward had forbidden any such marriages, fearing that where one brother had already been won over, another might follow.

Warwick's problems grow

Although his daughter, Isobel, was now married to George, Duke of Clarence, Warwick's problem was that he could not really justify the deposition or murder of the king. Though Clarence might have aspirations of taking the Crown for himself, his claim would clearly be inferior to that of his older brother. So, instead of **regicide**, Warwick issued the usual Yorkist propaganda about the evil advisers surrounding the king and hoped that Edward would be so shocked at the sudden turn of events that he would submit to the earl's direction. Sadly for Warwick, Edward was not Henry VI. Attempts were made at reconciliation but Warwick was clearly in trouble. There had been popular protests at the imprisonment of the king and, in March 1470, **Henry Percy, fourth Earl of Northumberland** – the Nevilles' main enemy in the north – was released from prison and restored to his earldom of Northumberland. The man who had to make way for him was another of Warwick's brothers, John Neville. Although he was compensated with land and titles in the south-west, it meant that Neville control of the north was at an end.

Edward now raised fresh forces to put down the remains of the Lincolnshire rising and declared Warwick and Clarence traitors. Their forces melted away and they fled in disarray.

Refused entry in Calais, the rebels took the fateful decision of seeking asylum in France. Now Edward's support for Burgundy and talk of a French invasion seriously undermined his position. **Louis XI** welcomed the rebels and prepared to help them in their struggle against the king.

Warwick's invasion of 1470

Louis' masterstroke was to bring together those long-time enemies Warwick and Margaret of Anjou. Warwick, realising that Clarence's claim to the throne, would never be strong enough to replace Edward, now reverted to his ancient allegiance to Henry VI, who, of course, was still alive and unwell in the Tower of London. Warwick pledged that he would restore Henry to the throne, but such was Margaret's hostility to the earl that she refused to lead an expedition into England until Henry had been restored. At the same time, she was seriously upset, since the price of Warwick's help was the betrothal of her son, Edward of Lancaster, to Warwick's daughter, **Anne Neville**.

Warwick's plan to get rid of Edward IV worked rather better than he could have hoped for. By stirring up yet another rising in the north of England, Warwick ensured that Edward was in that region when he landed with his own forces in Devon. Now allied to die-hard Lancastrians such as the Earl of Oxford, Warwick found he had rather more support than a year previously and many gentry came over to support the attempt to put Henry VI back on the throne. At the same time, support for Edward petered out and he decided to flee abroad rather than risk capture in England.

Edward's invasion of 1471

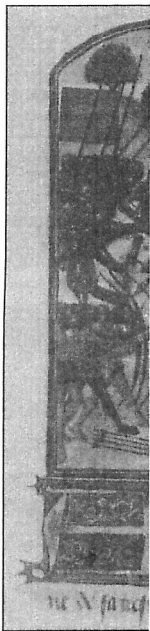
Luckily for Edward, his exile in Flanders (home of his sister, Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy) was short-lived.

- Finding help in the Low Countries, ruled as they were by his ally and brother-in-law, Charles the Bold, Edward was able to fit out an expeditionary force, which landed in Yorkshire in 1471.
- Edward's chances of success in regaining his throne seemed slim. He had a few ships and about 1000 men,

KEY PEOPLE

Louis XI (1423–83) King of France from 1461–83. Known as the universal spider for his skill at political intrigue and devious behaviour, Louis did much to re-establish the power of the French monarchy. He was captured by Charles the Bold of Burgundy in 1468, hence his hostility to Burgundy and Burgundy's ally, Edward IV.

Anne Neville (1456–85) Betrothed to Edward of Lancaster (son of Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou), who naturally enough still styled himself Prince of Wales. After his death at the Battle of Tewkesbury in 1471, she was married to Edward IV's younger brother, Richard, who later became Richard III. She was only briefly queen of England and died in 1485, just months before her husband's death at the Battle of Bosworth. It was rumoured that Richard had her poisoned in order to marry his niece, Elizabeth of York. Her only son, Edward of Middleham, died in 1484.



The Battle

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- many of them Flemish mercenaries. Surely such a force could not conquer the kingdom. The speed of his return, however, caught Warwick unawares and meant that, although Henry VI had been proclaimed king again, his wife's forces had not yet arrived from France.
- Following the tradition of Henry Bolingbroke (who eventually became Henry IV), Edward claimed that he was merely returning to reclaim his duchy of York. Although he gained only limited support, none of the nobility, most notably the Earl of Northumberland, seemed prepared to fight against him – that task would be left to Warwick 'the turncoat'.
 - Deserted by Clarence, who was now reconciled with his brother, Warwick's forces were not strong enough to prevent Edward's troops from entering London. There, Edward regained control of Henry VI for the last time and set out to hunt down Warwick. The two armies met at Barnet, just outside London, and Warwick's forces were decisively beaten.

Warwick was killed and thus ended one of the most extraordinary careers in English politics. He deserved his title of Kingmaker, since he had made Edward IV king and remade Henry VI. As a turncoat and political maverick, however, Warwick was the exception, not the rule. Some great men, such as the Earl of Oxford, were the opposite of Warwick. They remained actively loyal to one side or the other. Most peers merely became cautious and apolitical. Faced with renewed fighting, they now did all they could to avoid being caught up in political instability, with its attendant risks of death and forfeiture.



The Battle of Tewkesbury, 1471.

The last battle: Tewkesbury, 1471

Meanwhile, Edward raised troops once more to deal with the threat in the West Country where Margaret of Anjou and her son, Edward, Prince of Wales, had now landed. Able to face his two main opponents in separate conflicts, Edward had the good fortune to win again at the Battle of Tewkesbury on 4 May 1471. The Lancastrian forces were decisively beaten and, more significant for the future, Edward, Prince of

Wales was killed in the aftermath of the battle. While he lived, he would always be a threat to Edward, especially as he had recently reached manhood (he was seventeen at the time of his death). With his heir dead, Henry VI was doomed as well. As soon as Edward returned to London, Henry was killed, but the story was put round that he had died 'of pure melancholy' when he heard of his son's demise.

Political stability and instability 1459–71

For Edward IV, Richard III and Henry VII, it was important to put round propaganda to exaggerate the violence, chaos and evil in their predecessor's time. In that way, these three usurpers (they all took the throne by violence rather than inheritance) could justify their assumption of power as a way of bringing the 'body politic' back to its proper order. The blessings of their new regimes would be in sharp distinction to the troubled times they inherited. Also, in an age of personal monarchy, where the power of the Crown was clearly linked to the personality of the king, it was useful to blame your predecessor directly for the evils of the day.

Historians have often endorsed the black picture of the so-called Wars of the Roses.

- They have seen the period as representing the complete breakdown of law and order as overmighty subjects (the nobility) and undermighty kings (Henry VI, Edward IV and Richard III) slugged it out for control of the kingdom.
- Some historians have gone so far as to claim that the entire social fabric was torn apart in the dark days of the fifteenth century as the old **feudal system** based on law and service broke down and was replaced by an illegitimate system – 'bastard feudalism' – where power relationships were based on money.
- Added to this was the idea that political instability was made much worse by the return of thousands of English soldiers to England after defeat in the **Hundred Years' War** against France. Flavour this mix with the

KEY TERMS

Body politic Refers to the nation or society. This term was commonly used in this period.

Feudal system A term used to describe the political and social system of the day. It centred on the ceremony of homage, whereby a fighting man swore to serve his lord and the lord offered his 'man' protection. As the king was the greatest lord, the system should provide a clearly defined power structure, which offered political stability and the ability to raise armies in case of foreign invasion. The system is thought to have been introduced by the Normans after 1066, but some historians think that there are elements of the system in Anglo-Saxon times.

KEY EVENT

Hundred Years' War (1346–1453) A series of battles between England and France, starting with Crécy and ending in 1453, when the English were defeated at the Battle of Castillon in southern France.

KEY SOUR

Paston Letters The family, based in Norfolk, was a powerful, ambitious and upwardly mobile gentry family, whose letters (1100 items in all) of which 100 have survived. They illustrate the uncertainties and corruption of the time and how their message can easily be exaggerated. The Pastons recently forced their way into the ranks of the gentry and were involved in a number of acrimonious legal disputes. John Paston seems to have been an abrasive character who made enemies. The conflicts that the Paston Letters portray may have been typical of the period.

KEY THEMES

Political alliances In this period, it was the focus of alliances between the York and the Neville (symbolised by Richard York's marriage to Cecily Neville) that caused much trouble. Here were two powerful families, whose combined might was sufficient to challenge the kingdom and who could challenge and sometimes defeat the forces ranged against them.