

# Edward IV of England

**Edward IV** (28 April 1442 – 9 April 1483) was the King of England from 4 March 1461 to 3 October 1470,<sup>[1][2]</sup> and again from 11 April 1471 until his death. He was the first Yorkist King of England.<sup>[3]</sup> The first half of his rule was marred by the violence associated with the Wars of the Roses, but he overcame the Lancastrian challenge to the throne at Tewkesbury in 1471 to reign in peace until his sudden death. Before becoming king, he was Duke of York,<sup>[4]</sup> Earl of March, Earl of Cambridge and Earl of Ulster.

## Contents

### Reign

- Accession to the throne
- Overthrow
- Restoration
- Later reign and death

### Overview

- Achievements
- The court
- Dynasty

### Marriage and children

### Ancestry

### Successors

### Legitimacy

### Appearance and character

### In fiction

### References

- Notes
- Citations

### External links

## Reign

### Accession to the throne

Edward of York was born at Rouen in France, the second son of Richard, 3rd Duke of York (who had a strong genealogical claim to the throne of England<sup>[a]</sup>), and Cecily Neville.<sup>[5]</sup> He was the eldest of the four sons who survived to adulthood.<sup>[6][7]</sup> He bore the title Earl of March before his father's death and his accession to the throne.

Edward's father Richard, Duke of York, had been heir to King Henry VI (reigned 1422-1461) until the birth of Henry's son Edward in 1453. Richard carried on a factional struggle with the king's Beaufort relatives. He established a dominant position after his victory at the First Battle of St Albans in 1455, in which his chief rival Edmund Beaufort, Duke of Somerset, was killed. However, Henry's Queen, Margaret of Anjou, rebuilt a powerful faction to oppose the Yorkists over the

Edward IV



King of England (more...)

1st Reign	4 March 1461 – 3 October 1470 <sup>[1]</sup>
Coronation	28 June 1461
Predecessor	Henry VI
Successor	Henry VI
2nd Reign	11 April 1471 – 9 April 1483
Predecessor	Henry VI
Successor	Edward V
Born	28 April 1442 <div>Rouen, Normandy</div>
Died	9 April 1483 (aged 40) <div>Westminster, Middlesex, England</div>
Burial	18 April 1483 <div>St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle</div>
Spouse	Elizabeth Woodville (m. 1464)
Issue	Elizabeth of York
<i>Detail</i>	Mary of York
	Cecily of York
	Edward V of England
	Margaret of York
	Richard of Shrewsbury, 1st Duke of York
	Anne of York
	George Plantagenet, 1st Duke of Bedford
	Catherine of York
	Bridget of York

following years. In 1459 Margaret moved against the Duke of York and his principal supporters—his brother-in-law Richard Neville, Earl of Salisbury, and Salisbury's son Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, who rose in revolt.

The Yorkist leaders fled from England after the collapse of their army in the confrontation at Ludford Bridge. The Duke of York took refuge in Ireland, while Edward went with the Nevilles to Calais where Warwick was governor. In 1460 Edward landed in Kent with Salisbury, Warwick and Salisbury's brother William Neville, Lord Fauconberg, raised an army, and occupied London.<sup>[8]</sup> Edward, Warwick and Fauconberg left Salisbury besieging the Tower of London and advanced against the king, who was with an army in the Midlands, and defeated and captured him in the Battle of Northampton. York returned to England and was declared the king's heir by parliament (in the Act of Accord), but Queen Margaret raised a fresh army against him, and he was killed at the Battle of Wakefield on 30 December 1460, along with his second surviving son Edmund, Earl of Rutland, and the Earl of Salisbury.<sup>[7]</sup>

This left Edward, now Duke of York, at the head of the Yorkist faction. He defeated a Lancastrian army at Mortimer's Cross in Herefordshire on 2–3 February 1461. He then united his forces with those of Warwick, whom Margaret's army had defeated at the Second Battle of St Albans (17 February 1461), during which Henry VI had been rescued by his supporters.<sup>[8]</sup> Edward's father had restricted his ambitions to becoming Henry's heir, but Edward now took the more radical step of proclaiming himself king in March 1461.<sup>[8]</sup> He then advanced against the Lancastrians, having his life saved on the battlefield by the Welsh Knight Sir David Ap Mathew. He defeated the Lancastrian army in the exceptionally bloody Battle of Towton in Yorkshire on 29 March 1461.<sup>[9]</sup> Edward had effectively broken the military strength of the Lancastrians, and he returned to London for his coronation. King Edward IV named Sir David Ap Mathew Standard Bearer of England and allowed him to use "Towton" on the Mathew family crest.


Lancastrian resistance continued in the north, but posed no serious threat to the new regime and was finally extinguished by Warwick's brother John Neville in the Battle of Hexham in 1464.<sup>[10]</sup> Henry VI had escaped into the Pennines,<sup>[11]</sup> where he spent a year in hiding, but was finally caught and imprisoned in the Tower of London.<sup>[10]</sup> Queen Margaret fled abroad with the young Prince Edward and many of their leading supporters. Edward IV had deposed Henry VI, but there was little point in killing the ex-king as long as Henry's son remained alive, since this would merely have transferred the Lancastrian claim from a captive king to one who was at liberty.

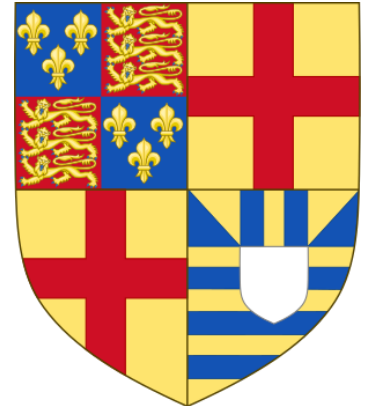
Even at the age of nineteen, Edward exhibited remarkable military acumen. He also had a notable physique and was described as handsome and affable. His height is estimated at 6 feet 4.5 inches (1.943 m), making him the tallest among all English, Scottish, and British monarchs to date.<sup>[12]</sup>

## Overthrow

Most of England's leading families had remained loyal to Henry VI or remained uncommitted in the recent conflict. The new regime, therefore, relied heavily on the support of the Nevilles, who held vast estates and had been so instrumental in bringing Edward to the throne. However, the king increasingly became estranged from their leader the Earl of Warwick, due primarily to his marriage. Warwick, acting on Edward's behalf, made preliminary arrangements with King Louis XI of France for Edward to marry either Louis' daughter Anne or his sister-in-law Bona of Savoy.<sup>[13]</sup> He was humiliated and enraged to discover that, while he was negotiating, Edward had secretly married Elizabeth Woodville, the widow of John Grey of Groby, on 1 May 1464.<sup>[14]</sup>

Edward's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville has been criticised as an impulsive action that did not add anything to the security of England or the York dynasty. A horrified Privy Council told him with unusual frankness, when he announced the marriage to them, "that he must know that she was no wife for a prince such as himself, for she was not the daughter of a duke or earl... but a simple knight."<sup>[15]</sup> Christine Carpenter argues against the idea that it had any political motivation, and that Edward's creation of a strong Yorkist nobility meant that he did not need the relatively

<b>House</b>	York
<b>Father</b>	Richard of York, 3rd Duke of York
<b>Mother</b>	Cecily Neville
<b>Religion</b>	Roman Catholic
<b>Signature</b>	



Arms of Edward, 4th Duke of York, before he became King Edward IV



Rose Noble coin of Edward IV, minted in 1464

"lightweight connections" of the Woodvilles,<sup>[16]</sup> whereas Wilkinson described the marriage as both a "love match, and also a cold and calculated political move".<sup>[17]</sup> J. R. Lander suggested in 1980 that the King was merely "infatuated," echoing P. M. Kendall's view that he was acting out of lust.<sup>[18]</sup>



Edward IV's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville, from the illuminated manuscript *Anciennes Chroniques d'Angleterre*, by Jean de Wavrin. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

Elizabeth's mother was Jacquetta of Luxembourg, widow of Henry VI's uncle John of Lancaster, Duke of Bedford, but her father was Richard Woodville, 1st Earl Rivers, a newly created baron. When Elizabeth's marriage to Edward IV became known in October 1464, Elizabeth's twelve unmarried siblings became very desirable matrimonial catches. Catherine Woodville married Henry Stafford, grandson and heir to the Duke of Buckingham; Anne Woodville became the wife of William, Viscount Bouchier, eldest son and heir of the Earl of Essex; Eleanor Woodville married Anthony Grey, son and heir of the Earl of Kent.<sup>[19]</sup>

The abrupt rise of the Woodville family created animosity among the nobility of England, above all in the case of Warwick. The offence caused by the circumstances of the marriage itself was magnified as the Woodvilles opposed policies favoured by Warwick and successfully exploited their influence with the king to defeat him.<sup>[20]</sup> Over time, Warwick became progressively more alienated from King Edward, and his intentions turned toward treason. In the autumn of 1467, Warwick withdrew from the court to his Yorkshire estates.<sup>[21]</sup> He covertly instigated a rebellion against the king with the aid of Edward's disaffected younger brother George, Duke of Clarence.<sup>[22]</sup>

The main part of the king's army (without Edward) was defeated at the Battle of Edgecote Moor on 26 July 1469,<sup>[23]</sup> and Edward was subsequently captured at Olney. Warwick then attempted to rule in Edward's name, but the nobility, many of whom owed their preferments to the king, were restive. A local rebellion arose in the north, and it became increasingly clear that Warwick was unable to rule through the King.<sup>[24]</sup> He was forced to release Edward on 10 September 1469.<sup>[25]</sup>

At this point, Edward did not seek to destroy either Warwick or Clarence but sought reconciliation instead.<sup>[26]</sup> Nevertheless, a private feud broke out in Lincolnshire between Sir Thomas Burgh of Gainsborough and Lord Welles. A few months later in March 1470, Warwick and Clarence chose this opportunity to rebel against Edward IV again.<sup>[27]</sup> The Lincolnshire Rebellion against King Edward IV was defeated, and Warwick was forced to flee to France on 1 May 1470.<sup>[28]</sup> There he made an alliance with the Lancastrian Queen Margaret of Anjou.

Louis XI had just come to the throne of France with the death of his father King Charles VII on 25 July 1461.<sup>[29]</sup> He had been looking for a way to trouble Edward IV by reinvigorating the Lancastrian claim to the throne of England.<sup>[22]</sup> Warwick made an accord with Louis XI and Queen Margaret in which he agreed to restore Henry VI in return for French support for a military invasion of England. Warwick's invasion fleet set sail from France for England on 9 September 1470.<sup>[30]</sup> This time, Edward IV was forced to flee to Flanders when he learned that Warwick's brother John Neville, 1st Marquess of Montagu, had also switched to the Lancastrian side, making Edward's military position untenable.<sup>[31]</sup>

## Restoration

Henry VI was briefly restored to the throne in 1470 in an event known as the Redeption of Henry VI, and Edward took refuge in Flanders, part of Burgundy, accompanied by his younger brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester (later King Richard III of England). The Duke of Burgundy had been Edward's brother-in-law since the marriage of Edward's sister Margaret of York to Charles, Duke of Burgundy, on 3 July 1468. The French declared war on Burgundy, despite the fact that Charles was initially unwilling to help Edward. This prompted Charles to give his aid to Edward, and from Burgundy he raised an army to win back his kingdom.

Edward returned to England with a relatively small force and avoided capture. The city of York opened its gates to him only after he promised that he had just come to reclaim his dukedom, as Henry Bolingbroke had done seventy years earlier. The first to join him were Sir James Harrington<sup>[32]</sup> and William Parr, who brought 600 men-at-arms to Edward at Doncaster.<sup>[33]</sup> As he marched southwards he began to gather support, including Clarence (who had realised that his fortunes would be better off as brother to a king than under Henry VI). Edward entered London unopposed, where he took Henry VI prisoner. Edward and his brothers then defeated Warwick at the Battle of Barnet in which Warwick died. With Warwick dead, Edward eliminated the remaining Lancastrian resistance at the Battle of Tewkesbury in 1471. A Lancastrian heir, Edward of Westminster, Prince of Wales, was killed on the battlefield. Henry VI died a few days later, on the night that Edward re-entered London. One contemporary chronicle claimed that Henry's death was due to "melancholy," but it is widely suspected that Edward ordered Henry's murder to remove the Lancastrian opposition completely.<sup>[34]</sup>



Edward's younger brothers George, Duke of Clarence, and Richard, Duke of Gloucester (later King Richard III of England), were married to Isabel Neville and Anne Neville. Both were daughters of Warwick by Anne Beauchamp and rival heirs to the considerable inheritance of their still-living mother, leading to a dispute between the brothers.<sup>[35]</sup> In 1478 George was eventually found guilty of plotting against Edward, imprisoned in the Tower of London, and privately executed on 18 February 1478. According to a long-standing tradition, he was "drowned in a butt of Malmsey wine".

## Later reign and death

Edward did not face any further rebellions after his restoration, as the Lancastrian line had virtually been extinguished.<sup>[36]</sup>

In 1475, Edward declared war on France, landing at Calais in June. However, his ally Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, failed to provide any significant military assistance, which led Edward to undertake negotiations with the French. He came to terms with the Treaty of Picquigny, which provided him with an immediate payment of 75,000 crowns and a yearly pension of 50,000 crowns, thus allowing him to "recoup his finances."<sup>[37]</sup> He also backed an attempt by Alexander Stewart, 1st Duke of Albany, brother of King James III of Scotland, to take the Scottish throne in 1482. Gloucester led an invasion of Scotland that resulted in the capture of Edinburgh and the king of Scots himself, but Albany reneged on his agreement with Edward. Gloucester decided to withdraw from his position of strength in Edinburgh. He however took Berwick-upon-Tweed.

Edward's health began to fail, and he became subject to an increasing number of ailments. He fell fatally ill at Easter 1483, but survived long enough to add some codicils to his will, the most important being to name his brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester as Protector after his death. He died on 9 April 1483 and was buried in St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle. He was succeeded by his twelve-year-old son Edward V of England (who was never crowned) and then by his brother Richard.

It is not known what actually caused Edward's death. Pneumonia and typhoid have both been conjectured, as well as poison. Some attributed his death to an unhealthy lifestyle, as he had become stout and inactive in the years before his death.<sup>[38]</sup>

## Overview

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### Achievements

Edward was an extremely capable and daring military commander. He crushed the House of Lancaster in a series of spectacular military victories. He was a popular and very able king, despite his occasional (if serious) political setbacks—usually at the hands of his great Machiavellian rival Louis XI of France. He did lack foresight and was at times cursed by bad judgement, but he possessed an uncanny understanding of his most useful subjects, and many who served him remained loyal until his death.<sup>[39]</sup>

Domestically, Edward's reign saw the restoration of law and order in England; indeed, his royal motto was *modus et ordo*, or "method and order". The latter days of Henry VI's government had been marked by a general breakdown in law and order, as well as a sizeable increase in both piracy and banditry. Edward was also a shrewd and successful businessman and merchant, heavily investing in several corporations within the City of London.<sup>[39][40]</sup> He also made the Duchy of Lancaster property of the crown, which it still is today. During the reign of Henry, there had been corruption in the exchequer. Edward made his household gain more control over finances and even investigated old records to see that payments had been made. Documents of the exchequer show him sending letters threatening officials if they did not pay money. His properties earned large amounts of money for the crown.

### The court



Illuminated miniature of Edward IV (left) watching the beheading of Edmund Beaufort, 4th Duke of Somerset at Tewkesbury, 1471. Ghent University Library, Belgium.



Coat of arms of Edward IV, from one of the British Library's royal manuscripts

The court of Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville was described by a visitor from Europe as "the most splendid ... in all Christendom".<sup>[41]</sup> Edward spent large amounts on expensive status symbols to show off his power and wealth as legitimate monarch of England. His collecting habits show that he was not only a good soldier and administrator, but had an eye for fashionable style and an interest in scholarship, particularly history. He acquired fine clothes, jewels, and furnishings, as well as a collection of beautifully illuminated historical and literary manuscripts, many of which were made specially for him by craftsmen in Bruges.<sup>[42][43]</sup> The contents of these works tell us something of his interests; they focus on the lives of great rulers (including Julius Caesar),<sup>[44]</sup> historical chronicles,<sup>[45]</sup> and instructional and religious works.<sup>[46]</sup> These were books for both entertainment and instruction.

It is not known where or how Edward's library was stored, but it is recorded that he transferred volumes from the Great Wardrobe to Eltham Palace and that he had a yeoman "to kepe the king's bookes".<sup>[47][48]</sup> More than forty of his books survive intact from the 15th century, which suggests that they were carefully stored together.<sup>[49]</sup> Today they form the foundation of the Royal Collection of manuscripts at the British Library.

## Dynasty

Ultimately, Edward's dynasty survived him by little more than two years, despite his military and administrative genius. Edward was one of the few male members of his dynasty to die of natural causes. Both his father and brother were killed at the Battle of Wakefield, while his grandfather and another brother were executed for treason. His two sons were imprisoned and disappeared (presumed killed) within a year of Edward's death. The king's youngest brother Richard (later Richard III) was famously killed in battle against Henry Tudor at Bosworth Field. This was the end of the reign of the House of York and of the Plantagenet family, which ruled for the longest period of any dynasty in English history. Henry Tudor, soon after taking the throne as Henry VII, married Edward's eldest daughter Elizabeth of York, who was at that point the family heiress, thus forestalling any claims by Yorkist sympathizers that Edward's heirs had a better right to the throne. Through her, the Plantagenet family and the House of York continue in the line of English and British sovereigns.

## Marriage and children

Edward IV had ten children by Elizabeth Woodville, seven of whom survived him. They were declared illegitimate by Parliament in 1484 in an act known as Titulus Regius (King's Title), clearing the way for Richard III to become King.<sup>[50]</sup> This act was later repealed by Henry VII, thus (re-)legitimising Edward and Elizabeth's children.

- Elizabeth of York, queen consort to Henry VII of England (11 February 1466 – 11 February 1503).
- Mary of York (11 August 1467 – 23 May 1482).
- Cecily of York (20 March 1469 – 24 August 1507); married first John Welles, 1st Viscount Welles and second Thomas Kyme or Keme.
- Edward V of England (4 November 1470 – c. 1483); briefly succeeded his father, as King Edward V of England. Was the elder of the Princes in the Tower.
- Margaret of York (10 April 1472 – 11 December 1472).
- Richard of Shrewsbury, 1st Duke of York (17 August 1473 – c. 1483). Was the younger of the Princes in the Tower.
- Anne of York (2 November 1475 – 23 November 1511); married Thomas Howard (later 3rd Duke of Norfolk).
- George Plantagenet, 1st Duke of Bedford (March 1477 – March 1479).
- Catherine of York (14 August 1479 – 15 November 1527); married William Courtenay, 1st Earl of Devon.
- Bridget of York (10 November 1480 – 1517); became a nun.

Edward had numerous mistresses. These included, Elizabeth Shore, also called Jane Shore,<sup>[51]</sup> Lady Eleanor Talbot and Elizabeth Lucy Wayte.

Edward IV reportedly had several illegitimate children:

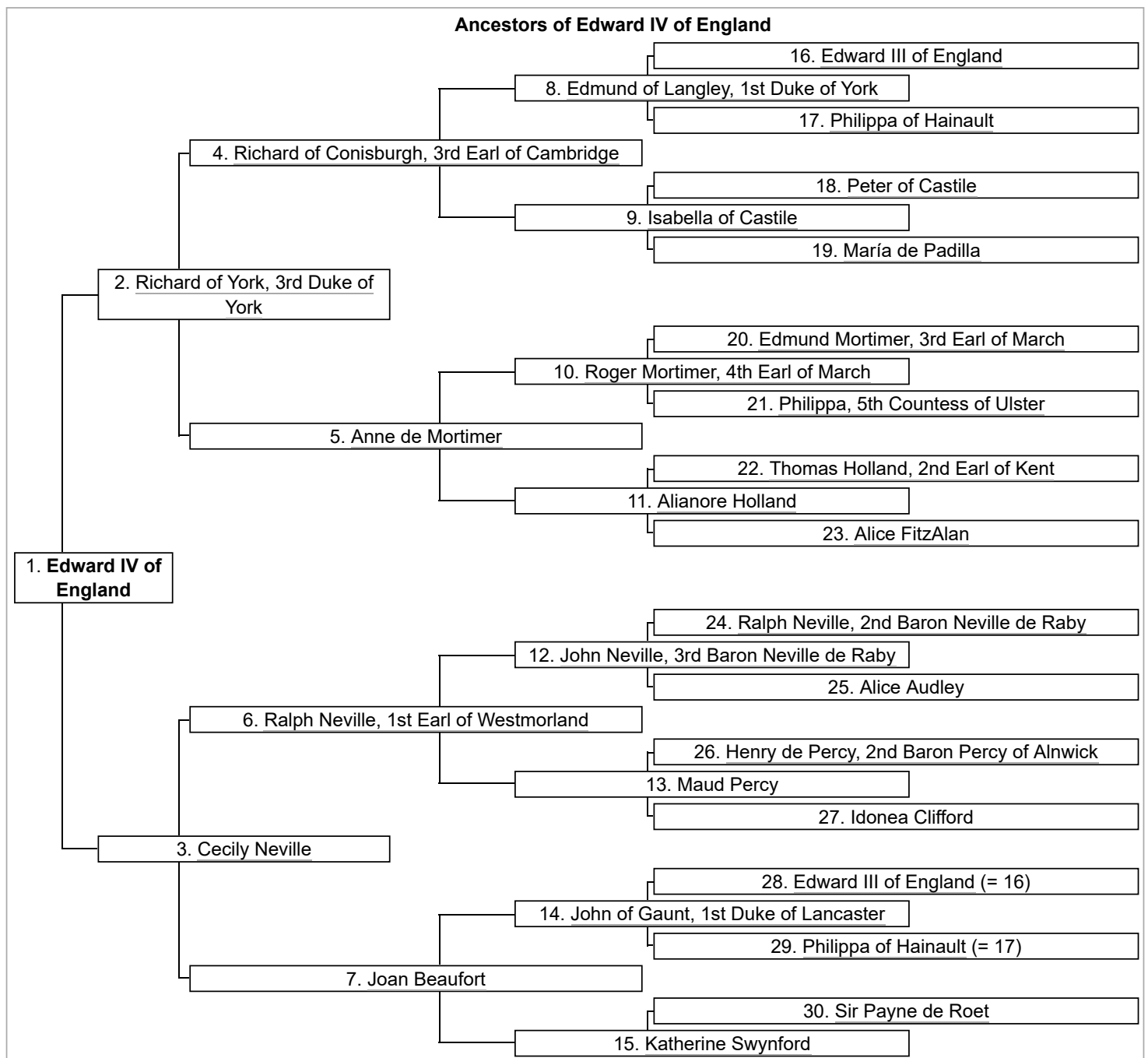
- By Elizabeth Lucy Wayte (or Elizabeth Waite), daughter of Thomas Wayte of Southampton:<sup>[52]</sup>
  1. Elizabeth Plantagenet (born circa 1464), married before 1478 Thomas Lumley,<sup>[53][54][55]</sup> son of George Lumley, Baron Lumley.<sup>[56][57]</sup>



Presentation miniature of *Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers*, one of the first printed books in the English language, translated by Anthony Woodville and printed by William Caxton. The miniature depicts Woodville presenting the book to Edward IV, accompanied by his wife Elizabeth Woodville, his son Edward, Prince of Wales, and his brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester. Lambeth Palace Library.

- 2. Arthur Plantagenet, 1st Viscount Lisle (1460s/1470s – 3 March 1542). Arthur married Elizabeth Grey and Honor Grenville. With Grey, he had three daughters, Frances Plantagenet, Elizabeth Plantagenet and Bridget Plantagenet.
- By unknown mothers:
  - 1. Grace Plantagenet. She is known to have been present at the funeral of Elizabeth Woodville in 1492.<sup>[58][59]</sup>
  - 2. Mary Plantagenet, married Henry Harman of Ellam, son of Thomas and Elizabeth Harman and widower of a certain Agnes.<sup>[60]</sup>
  - 3. Isabel Mylbery (born circa 1470) married John Tuchet, son of John Tuchet, 6th Baron Audley.<sup>[61]</sup>

## Ancestry



## Successors

Edward IV's eldest son was invested with the title of Prince of Wales at the age of seven months. At the age of three, he was sent by his father to Ludlow Castle as nominal head of the Council of Wales and the Marches, a body that had originally been set up to help the future Edward V of England in his duties as Prince of Wales. The prince was accompanied to Ludlow by his mother and by his uncle, Anthony Woodville, 2nd

Earl Rivers, who carried out many of the administrative duties associated with the presidency of the Council. The king visited his son occasionally at Ludlow.<sup>[62]</sup> It is clear that he intended this experience of government to prepare his son for the throne.

Although his son was quickly barred from the throne and replaced by Richard of Gloucester, Edward IV's daughter Elizabeth of York later became the Queen consort of Henry VII of England. The grounds for Titulus Regius, passed to justify the accession of Richard of Gloucester, were that Edward had been contracted to marry another woman prior to his marriage to Elizabeth Woodville. Lady Eleanor Butler (a young widow, daughter of John Talbot, 1st Earl of Shrewsbury) and Edward were alleged to have been precontracted; both parties were dead by this time, but a clergyman (named only by Philippe de Commines as Robert Stillington, Bishop of Bath and Wells), claimed to have carried out the ceremony.<sup>[63]</sup> The declaration was repealed shortly after Henry VII assumed the throne, as it illegitimized Elizabeth of York, who was to be his queen.

The final fate of Edward IV's legitimate sons, Edward V and Richard, Duke of York, is unknown. Speculation on the subject has given rise to the "Princes in the Tower" mystery.

## Legitimacy



Edward IV c.1520, posthumous portrait from original c. 1470–75

Questions about Edward's paternity were raised during his own reign (for example by Richard Neville, 16th Earl of Warwick,<sup>[b]</sup> in 1469, and repeated by George shortly before his execution in 1478),<sup>[c]</sup> and again by Richard of Gloucester's supporters in the brief reign of Edward V.<sup>[d]</sup> This was a period in which illegitimacy was viewed as sinful and a bar to public life; accordingly, it was a frequent accusation levelled against public figures by their enemies. Edward was not the only one to be accused of illegitimacy in the 15th century: Charles VII of France, Edward of Westminster (son of Henry VI of England), and Joanna "La Beltraneja" of Castile also had this accusation slung at them by enemies seeking to disinherit them – of the three, only Joanna "La Beltraneja" of Castile was probably illegitimate. Thus, for centuries historians viewed the story as no more than propaganda designed to discredit Edward and his heirs. In recent years, the question has been given real consideration; however, there is limited evidence that Richard of York was not the biological father of Edward IV, and that which might exist is subjective and open to interpretation.<sup>[64]</sup>

The claims were based on Edward's appearance and the circumstances surrounding his overseas birth. During his own lifetime, it was noted that Edward showed little resemblance to his father. Unlike his father, he was well over six feet tall, an exceptional height for the age; but notably, his younger brother George was also tall and fair (and said to bear a marked resemblance to Edward), whilst their sister Margaret stood five feet eleven inches, remarkable for a medieval woman (observers of her wedding to Charles the Bold of Burgundy remarked that the bride towered over the groom – she had to lean down to receive his kiss).<sup>[65]</sup>

Dominic Mancini claimed that when Edward's mother, Cecily Neville, found out about Edward's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville in 1464, she flew into a rage and threatened to declare him a bastard. However, this episode is not reported by contemporary sources, which instead condemn the pair for making an unequal and inappropriate marriage in dubious circumstances.<sup>[66]</sup>

Prior to his succession, on 22 June 1483, Richard III declared that Edward V was illegitimate, and three days later the matter was addressed by parliament. In Titulus Regius (the text of which is believed to come word-for-word from the petition presented by Henry Stafford, 2nd Duke of Buckingham, to the assembly which met on 25 June 1483, to decide on the future of the monarchy), Richard III is described as "the undoubted son and heir" of Richard Plantagenet, 3rd Duke of York, and "born in this land" – an oblique reference to his brother's birth at Rouen and baptism in circumstances that could have been considered questionable. There is no confirmation for the view – as fictionalised in William Shakespeare's Richard III (Act 3, Scene 5) – that Richard made any claims about his brother's legitimacy, as his claim was based on the supposed illegitimacy of Edward IV's children. According to Polydore Vergil, Duchess Cecily, "being falsely accused of adultery, complained afterwards in sundry places to right many noble men, whereof some yet live, of that great injury which her son Richard had done her." If she had indeed complained – as would befit a high-ranking lady of renowned piety, as she had been regarded – these petitions may have had some effect: the allegations were dropped and never again pursued.

Edward was born on 28 April 1442. No contemporary evidence refers to him as being born prematurely. Accordingly, counting back nine months from birth would date his conception to late July 1441. A Channel 4 television documentary in 2004 examined records in the archives of Rouen Cathedral that indicated that from 14 July to 21 August 1441 Richard, Duke of York, was away on campaign at Pontoise, several days'



march from Rouen (where Cecily of York was based), and that prayers were being offered at the cathedral for his safety. The programme also drew attention to the fact that the christening celebration of Edmund, Earl of Rutland, the second son of Richard and Cecily, was a lavish affair at the cathedral, whereas the christening of Edward, the firstborn, was low key, and in a side chapel. The programme concluded that Edward was not "Britain's Real Monarch". However, there is no strong reason to suggest Edward could not be premature: premature birth would not necessarily be mentioned in contemporary sources, and prematurely-born children could survive the perilous years of early childhood (Edward's grandson, Arthur, Prince of Wales, was at least 1 month premature and lived to the age of 15, longer than several siblings); high infant mortality meant baptisms were often performed quickly, Cecily had already had children who had died young, and if Edward was indeed premature, there would be good cause for a hurried baptism. Richard, Duke of York, would have had every right, even a duty, to challenge the child's paternity if it was in doubt; refusing to do so, and allowing a child he knew was not his to remain his heir and an heir to the English throne was tantamount to treason. On the other hand, Richard, whose father had been executed by the Lancastrians and whose own status under their regime was never beyond question, owed his security in large part to Cecily's powerful family, as the House of York would owe for decades to come; thus it would have been rash, if not to say dangerous, to cast suspicion on his wife's fidelity and then or later on his eldest son's legitimacy. If the low-key nature of the ceremony was meant publicly to indicate the child's illegitimacy, Richard would furthermore have been exposing himself as a cuckold at a point when his interest was in presenting himself as a strong leader. In the event he acknowledged Edward and raised him as his heir, and nothing in their interactions suggests Edward was other than well-loved and cherished.

Even if Edward IV was illegitimate, he could in any case claim the crown from Henry VI by right of conquest. He also had a direct (albeit legally barred) blood-claim to the throne through his mother Cecily, who was a great-granddaughter of Edward III through John of Gaunt and his illegitimate daughter (Cecily's mother) Joan Beaufort, Countess of Westmorland. Although this claim is via an illegitimate line, it is the same as the claim of Henry Tudor, who dislodged the House of York from the throne in 1485. It is also disputed that the line was in fact illegitimate, as John of Gaunt Duke of Lancaster married his mistress Katherine Swynford, who was the mother of the Beauforts, after the death of his second wife Costanza of Castile. The Beauforts were thus 'legitimised' and acknowledged as such by Richard II, though with the proviso as noted above that they would be barred from succession to the crown.

## Appearance and character

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Edward was said to be an extremely good-looking man. Philippe de Commines, who saw him on several occasions, thought the King handsomer than any prince he knew – "I don't remember ever having seen a man more handsome than he was when monsieur de Warwick made him flee England."<sup>[67]</sup> Commines also described him as "a man so vigorous and handsome that he might have been made for the pleasures of the flesh".<sup>[68]</sup> Edward's impressive physique and height (approximately 6 feet 4 inches (193 centimeters)); in his armour he was 6 feet 7 inches (201 centimeters)) were set off by splendid clothes, whereas Henry VI was well known for wearing dull, drab garments.<sup>[69]</sup>

When Parliament met at Westminster on 12 November 1461, the Speaker, Sir James Strangways – who had fought by the side of Edward's father, the Duke of York, at the Battle of Wakefield and survived – referred to "the beauty of person that it hath pleased Almighty God to send you" and "the wisdom that, by his grace, accompanies it". He also praised Edward's "noble and worthy merits, princely and knightly courage, and the blessed and noble disposition and dedication of your said highness to the common weal and government of your said realm."<sup>[70][71]</sup>

## In fiction

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## References

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### Notes

- York was a direct descendant of Edmund of Langley, 1st Duke of York, the fourth surviving son of Edward III. The House of Lancaster descended from John of Gaunt, the third surviving son of Edward III, and, as such, had a superior claim over the House of York. However, Richard Plantagenet's mother was Anne de Mortimer, the most senior descendant of Edward III's second surviving son Lionel of Antwerp. Lionel had been the eldest son of Edward III to leave a surviving line of descent; by modern standards, his line had an indisputably superior claim over that of his younger brother John of Gaunt. By medieval standards, this was by no means so certain; nonetheless, it allowed Richard and then Edward a good title to the throne.
- An analysis of Warwick's assertion, including the assertion itself plus details on whether it is plausible, is set out on [this webpage \(http://www.omenhistory.about.com/od/medbritishwomen/ss/Birth-Controversies-and-the-Wars-of-the-Roses\\_5.htm\)](http://www.omenhistory.about.com/od/medbritishwomen/ss/Birth-Controversies-and-the-Wars-of-the-Roses_5.htm), accessed 2 April 2014.
- George Plantagenet's accusation, including the assertion itself plus details on whether it is plausible, is set out on [this webpage \(http://www.omenhistory.about.com/od/medbritishwomen/ss/Birth-Controversies-and-the-Wars-of-the-Roses\\_5.htm\)](http://www.omenhistory.about.com/od/medbritishwomen/ss/Birth-Controversies-and-the-Wars-of-the-Roses_5.htm), accessed 2 April 2014.



- d. The claim by Richard of Gloucester, including Gloucester's claim plus details on whether it is plausible, is set out on [this webpage \(http://womenshistory.about.com/od/medbritishwomen/ss/Birth-Controversies-and-the-Wars-of-the-Roses\\_5.htm\)](http://womenshistory.about.com/od/medbritishwomen/ss/Birth-Controversies-and-the-Wars-of-the-Roses_5.htm), accessed 2 April 2014.

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- [British Library Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts \(http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/searchSimple.asp\)](http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/searchSimple.asp) (SEARCH: Keyword *Edward IV*, Start year *1470*, End year *1480* for details and images of Edward IV's manuscripts).

<p>Edward IV of England  <b>House of York</b>            Cadet branch of the <b>House of Plantagenet</b>  <b>Born:</b> 28 April 1442 <b>Died:</b> 9 April 1483</p>		
<b>Regnal titles</b>		
Preceded by <b>Henry VI</b>	<b>King of England</b> <b>Lord of Ireland</b> 1461–1470	Succeeded by <b>Henry VI</b>
	<b>King of England</b> <b>Lord of Ireland</b> 1471–1483	Succeeded by <b>Edward V</b>
<b>Peerage of England</b>		
Preceded by <b>Richard Plantagenet</b>	<b>Duke of York</b> <b>Earl of Cambridge</b> <b>Earl of March</b> 1460–1461	<b>Merged in Crown</b>
<b>Peerage of Ireland</b>		
Preceded by <b>Richard Plantagenet</b>	<b>Earl of Ulster</b> 1460–1461	<b>Merged in Crown</b>
<b>Titles in pretence</b>		
Preceded by <b>Henry of Lancaster</b>	<p>— <b>TITULAR</b> —  <b>King of England</b>  <b>Lord of Ireland</b>  <i>Yorkist claimant</i>            1470–1471            Reason for succession failure:  <u>Lancastrian</u>  <u>readeption</u></p>	Succeeded by <b>Henry of Lancaster</b>

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