

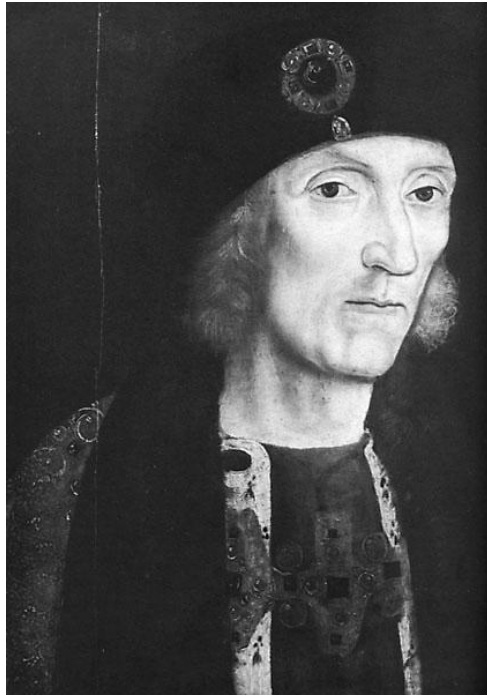
THE FORGOTTEN TUDOR
Henry Tudor, King of England.
1485-1509



A bust of Henry VII by Pietro Torrigiano

THE REIGN OF HENRY VII.

AN INTRODUCTION.



HENRY TUDOR

BORN: 28 JANUARY 1457

SUCCEDED: 22 AUGUST 1485

DIED: 21 APRIL 1509

The battle was over. On a stretch of high ground in the midland heart of the kingdom twenty thousand men had met in fierce, clumsy combat, and the day had ended in the decisive defeat of the stronger army. Its leader, the King, had been killed fighting heroically, and men had seen his naked corpse slung across his horse's back and borne away to an obscure grave. His captains were dead, captured, or in flight, his troops broken and demoralized. But in the victor's army all was rejoicing. In following the claimant to the throne his supporters had chosen the winning side, and when they saw the golden circlet which had fallen from the King's head placed upon their leader's, their lingering doubts fled before the conviction that God had blessed his cause, and they hailed him joyously as their sovereign.

The day was 22 August 1485; the battlefield was to be named after the small neighboring town of Market Bosworth; the fallen King was the third and ablest of English monarchs who bore the name Richard; and the man whom the battle made a king was to be the seventh and perhaps the greatest of those who bore the name Henry.

S.T. Bindoff *Tudor England* PROLOGUE: 1485

The very fact that Henry Tudor became King of England at all is somewhat of a miracle. His claim to the English throne was tenuous at best. His father was Edmund Tudor, a Welshman of Welsh royal lineage, but that was not too important as far as his claim to the English throne went. What was important though was his heritage through his mother, Margaret Beaufort, a descendant of Edward III. This descent from King Edward was through his third son, John of Gaunt. John's third wife, Katherine Swynford had borne him several children as his mistress before he married her. The children born before the marriage were later legitimized, but barred from the succession. Margaret Beaufort was descended from one of the children born before the marriage of John and Katherine.

By 1485 the Wars of the Roses had been raging in England for many years between the Houses of York and Lancaster. The Lancastrian Henry later took for his bride Elizabeth of York thereby uniting the houses.

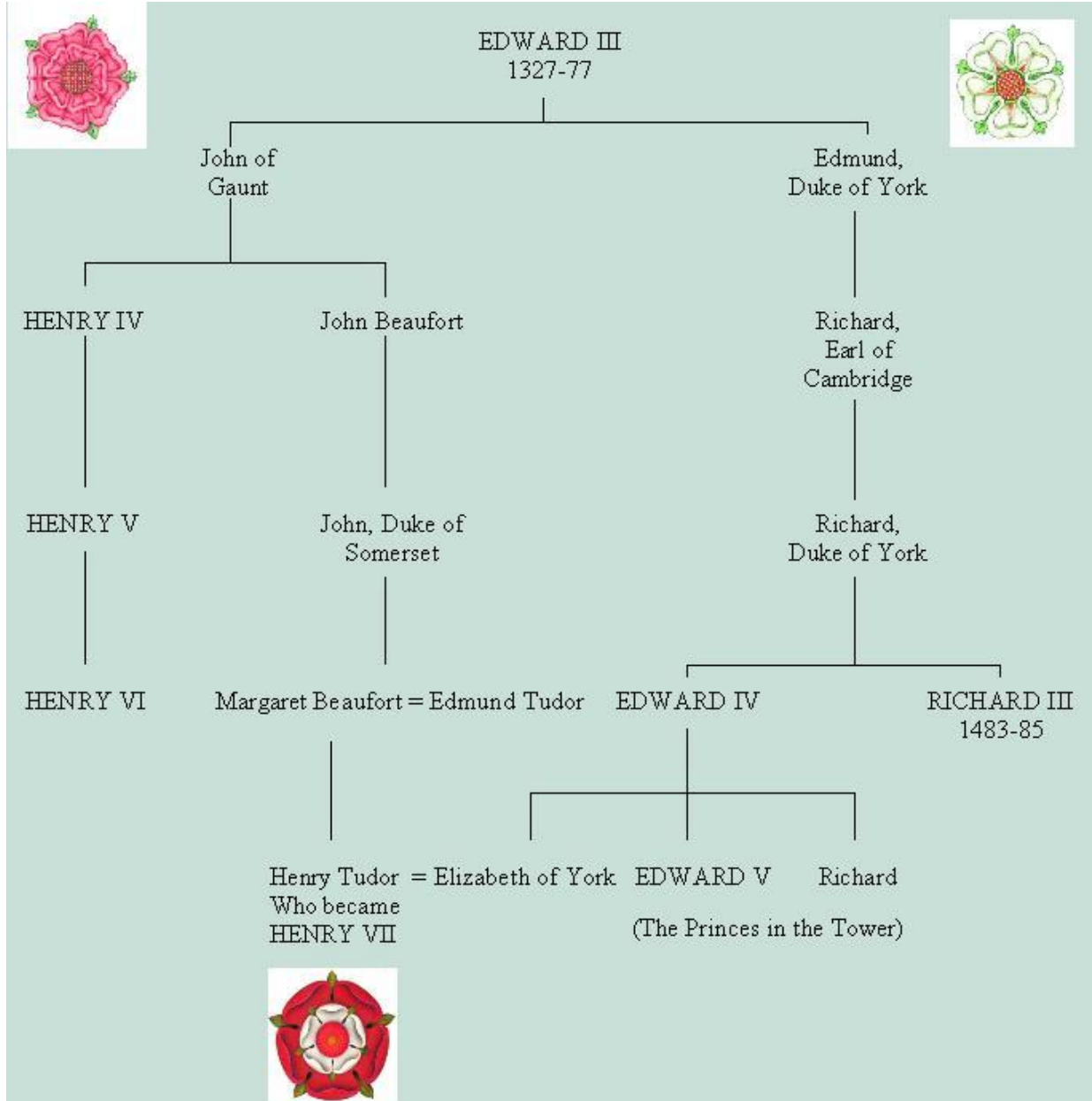
The real matter was decided on the battlefield, at the Battle of Bosworth Field. It was here that Henry and his forces met with Richard III and Henry won the crown. (see quotation above) It was truly through the defeat of Richard and the 'right of conquest' that Henry claimed the throne. It was solidified however, by his marriage to Elizabeth of York, the eldest child of the late King Edward IV.

The main problem facing Henry was restoring faith and strength in the monarchy. He also had to deal with other claimants, with some of them having a far stronger claim than his own. To deal with this, Henry strengthened the government and his own power, at the expense of the nobles. Henry also had to deal with a treasury that was nearly bankrupt. The English monarchy had never been one of the wealthiest of Europe and even more so after the War of the Roses. Through his monetary strategy, Henry managed to steadily accumulate wealth during his reign, so that by the time he died, he left a considerable fortune to his son, Henry VIII.

It could be debated whether or not Henry VII was a great king, but he was clearly a successful king. He had several goals that he had accomplished by the end of his reign. He had established a new dynasty after 30 years of struggle, he had strengthened the judicial system as well as the treasury and had successfully denied all the other claimants to his throne. The monarchy that he left to his son was a fairly secure one and most definitely a wealthy one.

Henry had seven children by Elizabeth of York, four of whom survived infancy: Arthur, who died shortly after his marriage to Catherine of Aragon (a point of some importance during "The Divorce"), Henry, Margaret and Mary.

Henry Tudor's Family Tree.



What was Henry VII like?

His body was slender but well built and strong; his height above the average. His appearance was remarkably attractive and his face was cheerful, especially when speaking; his eyes were small and blue, his teeth few, poor and blackish; his hair was thin and white; his complexion sallow. His spirit was distinguished, wise and prudent; his mind was brave and resolute and never, even at moments of the greatest danger, deserted him. He had a most pertinacious memory. Withal he was not devoid of scholarship. In government he was shrewd and prudent, so that no one dared to get the better of him through deceit or guile. He was gracious and kind and was as attentive to his visitors as he was easy of access. His hospitality was splendidly generous; he was fond of having foreigners at his court and he freely conferred favours of them. But those of his subjects who were indebted to him and who did not pay him due honour or who were generous only with promises, he treated with harsh severity. He well knew how to maintain his royal majesty and all which appertains to kingship at every time and in every place. He was most fortunate in war, although he was constitutionally more inclined to peace than to war. He cherished justice above all things; as a result he vigorously punished violence, manslaughter and every other kind of wickedness whatsoever. Consequently he was greatly regretted on that account by all his subjects, who had been able to conduct their lives peaceably, far removed from the assaults and evil doing of scoundrels. He was the most ardent supporter of our faith, and daily participated with great piety in religious services. To those whom he considered to be worthy priests, he often secretly gave alms so that they should pray for his salvation. He was particularly fond of those Franciscan friars whom they call Observants, for whom he founded many convents, so that with his help their rule should continually flourish in his kingdom, but all these virtues were obscured latterly only by avarice, from which...he suffered. This avarice is surely a bad enough vice in a private individual, whom it forever torments; in a monarch indeed it may be considered the worst vice, since it is harmful to everyone, and distorts those qualities of trustfulness, justice and integrity by which the state must be governed.

*From Polydore Vergil, **The Anglia Historia, 1485-1537***

What problems did Henry VII face when he became king?

In many European countries at this time, the power of kings and queens was growing. In England the power of the king been weakened by the War of the Roses. When Henry VII became king he needed to make himself a strong and powerful ruler but he faced problems:

- Henry had become king by being victorious in battle and killing his rival Richard III. Richard's Yorkist supporters were still at large and could band together to fight Henry and attempt to replace him.
- The treasury (the king's money supply) was virtually empty following expensive wars with France and then the War of the Roses.
- The court was split into factions (groups) and this had led to war between the Houses of York and Lancaster.
- Some nobles had become too powerful could not be trusted.
- Large private armies of "retainers" which had been recruited by the nobles during the war were now pillaging the countryside.
- France and Scotland were potential enemies and the power of Spain was growing rapidly.
- There had been a complete breakdown of law and order throughout the kingdom.
- There were Yorkist rebellions against his rule in 1486, led by Viscount Lovell, in 1487 by Lambert Simnel and again in 1497, led by Perkin Warbeck.

These bullet points have not been set down in any particular order. In your exercise book re-write these bullet points but set them out in an order of priority. Which problems do you think he would he need to deal with first? Which problems would you expect to cause Henry the greatest headache?

So how did Henry VII solve these problems?

- Henry VII married Elizabeth of York.
- A peace treaty with France and marriage alliances with Scotland and Spain avoided expensive foreign wars.
- To strengthen law and order, Justices of the Peace were given new powers to arrest suspects and try them for many crimes except treason.
- The keeping of a private army was forbidden. The only individual that could now raise an army was the king.
- Rebels were confronted and dealt with most severely. Their lands were confiscated and leaders were executed.
- Henry organized an efficient system of finance to collect money from customs duties, forced loans and land revenues.

Now match each of these solutions with a problem and write these into your exercise book.

Now let us look at what Henry did in a little more detail.

Dealing with the Yorkists, a powerful nobility and solving the money problem.

One of Henry's first acts was to issue a pardon to all those Yorkist noblemen that fought against him at the Battle of Bosworth. There was a condition attached – each nobleman had to swear an oath of loyalty to Henry in return. By doing this, Henry hoped that potential future enemies would become his supporters instead. He also arranged to marry Elizabeth of York, the daughter of the Yorkist king Edward IV. This was a clever move because some Yorkists were angered because Richard III had seized the throne from the young king Edward V, a fellow Yorkist. Young Edward and his brother disappeared and they were presumed murdered by Richard or his supporters. Elizabeth was the sister of these unfortunate boys.



Elizabeth of York

By marrying Elizabeth he hoped to bring the two warring Houses together. As a symbol of this new unity, Henry produced a badge for the new royal house of Tudor by combining the red rose of Lancaster with the white rose of York. It became known as the “Tudor Rose”.



The Tudor Rose. A symbol of power and unity.

Henry also outlawed the power of the nobility to raise armies themselves. This removed some of the nobility’s power because they lost their military strength. But this did not stop some Yorkist nobles from plotting against him. There were three rebellions against Henry’s authority, but all failed (we’ll learn more about these later). One measure of his success in uniting Lancaster and York was that the last rebellion in 1497 got very little support from any of the English nobility.

Henry also created a new special court that was designed to put on trial those members of the nobility that broke the law. It was known as The Court of Star Chamber. It got its name from the stars that were painted on the ceiling of the room where the court met. This court was different. The Judge would be the king himself! There would be no jury. Henry himself would hear the evidence and decide a verdict. As often as not, the punishments that Henry gave to guilty nobles were huge fines rather than imprisonment or death. A noble’s land and estates could be confiscated by the king. By issuing fines Henry gained much needed income and by making the nobility poorer, he weakened their power. The Court of Star Chamber was used by every monarch until 1641 when it was abolished.

Henry also made the nobility give him sums of money – Henry called them ‘loans’ or ‘gifts’ – and the nobility *had* to pay them. Henry never repaid these loans. A poorer nobility meant a wealthier monarchy. Henry was not only attempting to solve his money problems but at the same time he was reclaiming some of the power that had shifted to the nobility during the War of the Roses.

To keep close control of his finances, Henry created a very efficient system of tax collection, run by men who had a talent for administration. Henry took a close personal interest in the running of this part of government. One set of account books from 1504 to 1508 still exist today and it shows that Henry read and signed every page.



Henry VII's signature as it appears in royal account books.

Henry was anxious to keep England out of wars. Wars were expensive and after thirty years of civil war, England needed peace and stability to recover. To secure peace abroad, Henry used his children to make political marriages. His eldest son, Arthur, was married to Catherine of Aragon, a Spanish Princess in 1501 when Henry signed the treaty of Medina Del Campo with Spain. Arthur died five months later, but Henry was anxious to keep the Spanish alliance alive so Catherine remained in England and later married Henry's second son, the future Henry VIII. Henry married his eldest daughter, Margaret, to King James IV of Scotland. This brought about a period of much needed peace between the two rival nations.

Henry used these years of peace to sign trading treaties with other European countries. It was said that Henry was "a king that loved wealth, he could not endure to have trade sick." Keeping England out of wars meant that trade would continue to grow without the setbacks caused by wars. The treaty of Medina del Campo with Spain not only arranged a marriage but it was also a trading agreement between the two countries. Henry signed a trade treaty with the Netherlands that benefited English wool merchants.

In the later years of his reign Henry did plan for war. He planned to go to war against France. He called Parliament and they agreed to allow him to raise taxes to pay for an army. Henry did this and then negotiated with the French who gave him a large sum of money to keep his army at home and not to fight.

As a measure of Henry's success, when he died he left his son a huge fortune and a very stable system of government. No one challenged his son when he became king. The

nobility supported his son. Ultimately, Henry VII did increase the power and wealth of the crown, but he was threatened by rebellion.

Dealing with Rebellions (a brief summary)

1487.

In 1487, Irish lords who supported the Yorkists claimed that they had found the Earl of Warwick, the nephew of the late Yorkist king Edward IV. In fact, the twelve year old boy that they crowned King of England in Dublin was a youth called Lambert Simnel, the son of an Oxford tradesman.

The real Earl of Warwick was being held captive in the Tower of London by Henry VII but this did not stop some people from believing in the impostor. An army of Yorkist supporters and foreign troops landed in England in 1487. They were led by Lord Lovell, a Yorkist who had fought for Richard III at Bosworth and had not taken up Henry VII's offer of a pardon.

This was a serious crisis for Henry. He gathered royal forces together and met the rebels head on at a fierce battle at Stoke in June, 1487. Lambert Simnel was captured and brought to London. Simnel admitted that he was not the Earl of Warwick and Henry realized that the boy had been the puppet of ambitious Yorkist lords. Henry pardoned the boy and set him to work in the royal kitchens. Simnel remained in Royal service for the rest of his life becoming Henry VII's falconer.

What about the leader, Lovell? He was seen fleeing from the battlefield of Stoke. He was never seen or heard of again. It is possible that Henry's men caught up with him and killed him. Lovell lived in Minster Lovell Hall, not so far away from St. Hugh's. There is a legend that states that after Stoke, Lovell returned to his house and hid in a secret cellar where he starved to death. In 1708 a skeleton was found in a secret chamber of the house. Was this the body of Lord Lovell? We will never know.

A handwritten signature in black ink, written in a cursive style. The signature reads "Francis, Lord Lovell". The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent flourish at the end of the word "Lovell".

The signature of Francis, Lord Lovell, Yorkist leader of Simnel's rebellion.

1496.

Another challenge to Henry's throne came from Perkin Warbeck, the son of a customs' officer from Tournai in Belgium. Warbeck was said to have looked very similar to Richard, Duke of York, the younger of the two princes that disappeared from the Tower of London. He spent some time in Ireland where Yorkist lords loudly announced that he was the missing Prince.

Warbeck became a thorn in Henry's side as he commuted between Ireland and Scotland in an attempt to whip up support. King James IV of Scotland really believed that Warbeck was the Duke of York. He allowed Warbeck to marry his cousin, and helped him when he led an unsuccessful invasion of England in 1496.

That same year a rebellion in Cornwall against Henry's heavy taxation gave Warbeck another opportunity. He slipped into England and joined the rebels. They too decided that this impostor was the missing prince. The rebels decided to capture Exeter, but failed. Warbeck's army then began to melt away and he took refuge in Beaulieu Abbey in Hampshire. He surrendered to the Henry's army and went to see the king clothed, as one version of the story goes, "in gold".

Their meeting was described by Raimondo de Soncine, ambassador from Milan:

The young man was brought into the royal presence, where many nobles of the realm were assembled, some of whom had been companions of Richard, Duke of York. He kneeled down and asked for mercy. The king...then spoke as follows: We have heard you call yourself Richard, Son of King Edward. In this place are some who were companions of that lord....see if you recognize them. The young man answered that he knew none of them, he was not Richard....



Perkin Warbeck.

Warbeck was imprisoned for two years. Then, when more Yorkist rebellions broke out, he was put to death.

Having executed one impostor, Henry ordered the execution of the real Earl of Warwick the same year. After these executions, relations between England and Scotland improved. In 1503, James IV married Henry's daughter, Margaret. It was their descendants who ruled England and Scotland as the Stuart kings and queens from 1603.

Now that you have read these short summaries of the rebellions that threatened Henry VII, read the more detailed explanations that follow and for each of these rebellions fill in the "Tudor Rebellion Fact Sheet". This will help you in future revision as rebellions feature heavily in Tudor history.

Lambert Simnel (*circa 1477 – circa 1534*) was a child pretender to the throne of England. Together with Perkin Warbeck, he was one of two impostors who threatened the rule of Henry VII of England (reigned 1485 – 1509) during the last decade of the 15th century.

Lambert Simnel was born in about 1477. Different sources have different claims of his parentage from a baker and tradesman to organ builder. At the age of about ten, he was taken as a pupil by an Oxford-trained priest named Roger Simon (or Richard or Symonds) who apparently decided to become a kingmaker. He tutored the boy in courtly manners and contemporaries described the boy as handsome.

Originally Simon intended to present Simnel as Richard of York, son of Edward IV. However, when he heard rumours that Edward, Earl of Warwick had died during his imprisonment in the Tower of London, he changed his mind. The real Edward was a boy of about the same age who was a genuine claimant to the throne because he was the son of George, Duke of Clarence.

Simon spread a rumor that Edward had actually fled from the tower and was under his guardianship. He gained some support from the House of York. He took Simnel to Ireland where there was still support of Yorkists and presented him to the Earl of Kildare. The Earl was willing to support the story and invade England to overthrow King Henry. On May 24, 1487 Simnel was crowned in Christchurch Cathedral, Dublin as "King Edward VI". He was approximately ten years of age. The Earl of Kildare collected an army of Irish soldiers under the command of Thomas Geraldine.

When Henry Tudor heard about the matter, he also knew that he had the real Edward of Warwick still imprisoned in the Tower. On February 2, 1487 he presented the real Edward in public in an attempt to prove that the young pretender was an impostor. Henry also declared a general pardon of all offenses, including treason against himself, on the condition that offenders submit to him.

John de la Pole, Earl of Lincoln and designated successor to late King Richard III of England, joined the conspiracy against the king and fled to Flanders. There he claimed

that he had taken part in young Warwick's escape. There he also met Lord Lovell who had supported a failed Yorkist uprising in 1486. Margaret of Burgundy collected 2000 Flemish mercenaries and shipped them to Ireland under the command of Martin Schwarz. They arrived in Ireland on May 5. Henry was informed of this and began to gather troops.

Simnel's supporters — mainly composed of Flemish and Irish troops — landed on Piel Island in the Furness area of Lancashire on June 5, 1487 and were joined with some English supporters. However, most local nobles with the exception of Thomas Broughton did not join them. They clashed with Henry's army on June 16 at the Battle of Stoke Field and were defeated. The Earl of Kildare was captured, and the Earl of Lincoln and Sir Thomas Broughton were killed. Lord Lovell went missing and there were rumors that he had escaped and hidden to avoid retribution. Simon avoided execution due to his priestly status but was imprisoned for life.

Henry VII pardoned young Simnel (possibly because he had been mostly a puppet in the hands of adults) and gave him a job in the royal kitchen. When he grew older, he became a royal falconer. He died in about 1534.

Perkin Warbeck

The great pretender

In 1491, a young man appeared in the courts of Europe with an explosive claim – that he was none other than Richard, duke of York, the younger of the two ‘princes in the Tower’. He had survived, escaped to Europe and gone into hiding. Now he emerged to claim his rightful place on the English throne. That young man later became known as Perkin Warbeck.

The princes in the Tower

The story begins much earlier, with one of the great mysteries of British history – the disappearance in sinister circumstances of two young boys. The 12-year-old prince of Wales was staying at Ludlow Castle in Shropshire when, on 9 April 1483, news came of his father's sudden death and the boy became king as Edward V. His father's brother – Richard, duke of Gloucester – immediately assumed the regency as ‘protector of the realm’ until Edward came of age, and also took on the care of the latter's younger brother, the 10-year-old Richard, duke of York.

However, the new regime began quite sinisterly. Gloucester intercepted Edward's entourage as it travelled to London, killed the young king's supporters, and escorted him to London and then to the Tower. There, on 16 June, he was joined by his brother Prince Richard.

On 25 June, Parliament declared the two boys illegitimate. A priest, Robert Stillington, had presented evidence that Edward IV contracted to marry Lady Eleanor Talbot before marrying Elizabeth Woodville, which made his marriage to Elizabeth, the boys' mother,

invalid. At Parliament's invitation, Gloucester took the throne as Richard III. His other brothers, Edmund and George, duke of Clarence, had both died before Edward IV, leaving Gloucester next in line for the throne.

The two boys were last seen playing in the grounds of the Tower at around the time their uncle had them declared illegitimate. It has been presumed that they were murdered on his orders, but to this day, five centuries later, nobody knows for sure.

Enter Richard Plantagenet

Eight years later, in 1491, the apprentice of Pregoner Meno, a Breton merchant, arrived in the city of Cork in Ireland, modelling the silks that his master was selling. The locals first insisted that the good-looking 17-year-old with the princely manner must be Edward, the earl of Warwick, son of the duke of Clarence.

The young man denied that he was Warwick, claiming instead to be Richard Plantagenet, duke of York, the younger of the two princes that Richard III was believed to have slain. He then told how he had been spirited out of the Tower after his brother had been murdered and hidden on the Continent – a story plausible enough to be accepted by those who wanted to believe it. (The new pretender also reportedly resembled Edward IV, which led to speculation that he could have been Edward's illegitimate son.) The Cork townsfolk managed to persuade him to embark on a conspiracy against Henry VII, who had defeated Richard III at Bosworth Field in 1485.

Lambert Simnel

This was not the first time that a Richard of York had seemingly risen from the dead. In 1487, the 10-year-old Lambert Simnel had (under the direction of the priest Roger Simon) impersonated, first, Richard of York and then Edward, earl of Warwick, son of the duke of Clarence. However, the latter was actually still alive and living in the Tower. Henry VII ordered that the real Edward be paraded through London, thus showing Simnel to be the impostor he was.

However, despite the fact that there had been a rising against the king on Simnel's behalf and the boy had actually been crowned in Ireland as 'Edward VI', Henry pardoned him, recognising that he had been simply a puppet. Simnel was employed by the king – first, as a servant in the royal kitchen, then as a royal falconer – for the rest of his life.

Support in Europe

It is hardly surprising that, when the new 'Richard' was 'recognised' in Cork, his welcome in Ireland was less than that given to Simnel. He began a long migration around the courts of Europe in search of support.

Although ignored by Isabella of Spain, he was received as Richard of York by Charles VIII of France – then at war with Henry VII – who gave him a guard of honour. However, when the conflict ended, Charles had to ask the pretender to leave.

‘Richard’ then travelled to Malines (now Mechlin, Belgium) where he was taken in by the woman who would become his most important supporter: the formidable Margaret, Edward IV’s exiled sister, widow of Charles the Bold, duke of Burgundy. Anxious to rid the throne of the hated Henry VII and return the House of York to power, she acknowledged him as her nephew, declaring that his detailed recollections of life at the English court and birthmarks on his body were proof of his true origins. In return, ‘Richard’ promised that all the lands she had lost in England would be restored to her once he gained the throne.

Her support for the potential usurper did not go unremarked by Henry. He sent protests to Philip of Austria, under whose protection Margaret operated, but the 15-year-old archduke said that she could do as she liked on her own lands. In 1493, ‘Richard’ also attended the funeral of Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III at the invitation of the former’s son Maximilian I.

The enemies within

It wasn't just foreign support that Henry Tudor had to fear; the pretender attracted followers in England, too. Henry VII's chamberlain Sir William Stanley said that, if the young man was really the prince, he would not fight against him (thus demonstrating that some Yorkists had not given up hope of the princes being still alive). Sir Robert Clifford had witnessed the compact made between ‘Richard’ and Margaret in 1494 and almost immediately informed Henry of it, as well as of Stanley’s supposed duplicity. Stanley was arrested and executed even though there was no proof that he was involved in any conspiracy with the pretender.

This reaction is perhaps understandable, if not forgivable. England had barely recovered from the deep wounds inflicted by the Wars of the Roses – the vicious feud between the Houses of York and Lancaster as to who should rule England. Henry Tudor may have defeated Richard III on Bosworth Field, but his vow to bring peace to the country with a rule of iron was neither easily achieved nor popular. Deep divisions remained in the country, and the House of York was down but not defeated. Disaffected Yorkists now rallied round ‘Richard’ and threatened the Tudor dynasty before it had even started.

Moreover, the young man’s appeal went beyond those who stood to gain politically from his success. All those who had lamented the shedding of the innocent blood of the princes now dared to hope that one of them had been spared, risen like a King Arthur to save them from harsh Tudor rule. There had been pretenders before, of course, but none so plausible and charismatic. To his detractors, this was all that ‘Richard’ amounted to – a pretender, albeit a superlative one.

Henry pressed his extensive spy network into action to find evidence of a conspiracy among his enemies to restore the House of York – with this ‘puppet prince’, whom he dismissively called ‘the *garçon*’, at the centre.

First ‘invasion’

‘Richard’ made his first attempt to invade England with the help of both Margaret of Burgundy and Maximilian I, who fitted out the expedition. The latter bragged to the Venetian ambassador that the ‘duke of York’, as he called him, would very soon conquer England and then would turn against the king of France.

The pretender’s small force landed near Deal in Kent on 3 July 1495, hoping for a show of popular support. However, despite the fact that Henry had still not succeeded in securely establishing his authority over England, the ‘invasion’ was routed and 150 of the pretender’s troops were killed.

‘Richard’ abandoned the venture without even disembarking and made for Ireland. There, with the support of the earl of Desmond, he besieged Waterford, but when the town resisted, just as it had against Lambert Simnel, he was again forced to withdraw, this time to Scotland.

At the Scottish court

High and mighty king, your grace, and these your nobles here present may be pleased benignly to bow your ears to hear the tragedy of a young man that by right ought to hold in his hand the ball of a kingdom, but by fortune is made himself a ball, tossed from misery to misery and from place to place.

Perkin Warbeck to James IV of Scotland, according to Francis Bacon in his biography *Henry VII* (1638)

‘Richard’ was well received in Scotland, and proceeded to exploit the natural antipathy between the Scottish and the English to mount a strategy for Henry’s overthrow. He also married (in what appears to have been a love match) Lady Katharine Gordon – granddaughter of the earl of Caithness and a cousin of the king James IV – and was granted a monthly pension of £112, an indication that James accepted his claim to the English throne.

The Scottish invasion in support of the pretender in September 1496 was a fiasco. Some 1,400 men of various nationalities crossed into England, but it simply resembled a typical border raid, with ravaging, burning and killing. No public backing for ‘Richard’ materialised in Northumberland, and after three days, the Scots withdrew without even meeting the English in battle. The episode simply gave Henry an excuse to raise taxes for defence. As for ‘Richard’, he begged James to be more merciful to ‘his’ subjects, sick of the cruelty and the devastation carried out by his ally.

Now an embarrassment to the Scottish king, in July 1497 'Richard' embarked with his wife from Ayr, to Ireland once more. Landing at Cork, he discovered that he had lost his supporters there, and soon realised that he had to leave or risk being taken prisoner. A rebellion in Cornwall two months earlier against Henry's tax increases had encouraged the young man to expect support there, so that's where he and Katharine now sailed.

'Richard IV'

On 12 September, 'Richard' arrived near Land's End with just 120 men in two ships. This final invasion was by far his most successful – enticed by a proclamation that he would put a stop to the extortionate taxes, his force had grown to 3,000 by the time it reached Exeter. Led by a council that included a debt-ridden textile merchant, a tailor and a scrivener (scribe), his supporters declared him 'Richard IV' on Bodmin Moor. They, however, were unarmed, and when Exeter resisted, the rebels were forced to move on. When Henry's army reached them, the pretender realised that there was no hope and fled for the coast. He took refuge in Beaulieu Abbey in Hampshire, where he surrendered.

The leaders of the pretender's forces were hanged and the rest of his followers were fined heavily: in Somerset, Dorset, Wiltshire and Hampshire – counties not seriously involved in the rebellion – the fines totalled an enormous £13,000. 'Richard' himself was imprisoned – first, at Taunton in Somerset, then in London, where he was 'paraded through the streets on horseback amid much hooting and derision of the citizens'.

Henry sent for Lady Katharine, whom the pretender had left at St Michael's Mount in Cornwall. Received with all the deference due to her rank, she refused to abandon her husband. Henry told her: 'Most noble lady, I grieve too, and it pains me very much, second only to the slaughter of so many of my subjects, that you have been deceived by such a sorry fellow.' Katharine became the companion of the queen, and was given an allowance, which she continued to receive even after Henry's death.

Escape, the Tower and execution

Surprisingly, Henry treated 'Richard' more like a royal guest than a prisoner at Westminster. In June 1498, exploiting Henry's hospitality, the pretender escaped, but was recaptured within hours after he had taken sanctuary at the priory of Sheen (in what is now south London). The prior begged the king to spare the escapee's life, a wish that was granted. However, 'Richard' was put into stocks and exhibited – first, at Westminster, then at Cheapside – and was finally (and ironically) consigned to the Tower, from which he had supposedly been rescued as a child.

Early in 1499, yet another false Warwick appeared as a pretender to the throne. Although the plot was quickly suppressed, it may have convinced the king that it would be wise to dispose of the real Edward, earl of Warwick, as well as the other, longer-lived impostor.

'Richard' and Warwick were placed in neighbouring cells, and one of the former's erstwhile supporters was appointed gaoler. The two young men (Edward was just 24 and

‘Richard’ only about a year older) began to talk and, it was said, to plan. An informer gave away their plot: to burn down the Tower, escape to Flanders and place Warwick on the throne.

The false pretender and the true pretender along with several others, including the gaoler, were found guilty of treason. On 23 November, the supposed commoner ‘Richard’ was drawn on a hurdle from the Tower to Tyburn, where he read out a ‘confession’ and was hanged. His co-conspirator Edward, the last Plantagenet, was beheaded on Tower Hill six days later.

The tale of Perkin Warbeck

Henry's problem was that he could not prove that ‘Richard’ was *not* the prince – he had no dead body that he could produce to expose the lie. So he had to try to prove that the young man was actually somebody else. He sent his spies to the Continent to try to find the truth, and in the end, he came up with the story of Perkin Warbeck.

Henry had learned about this quite early on – as early as July 1493, according to the historian James Gairdner – but did nothing with it until he captured Perkin in 1497. At Taunton on 5 October, Henry himself managed to get the pretender to ‘confess’ that he was actually the Flemish boatman's son Perkin Warbeck (or Pierquin Wesbecque or Piers Osbeck) of Tournai, born in about 1474. According to the confession, he had made his way to Portugal where, perhaps with the help of powerful individuals, he was transformed into Richard of York.

How this could have happened is still in dispute. In his 1638 biography of Henry VII, Francis Bacon wrote:

[Margaret of Burgundy] informed him of all the circumstances and particulars that concerned the person of Richard, duke of York, which he was to act; describing unto him the personages, lineaments, and features of the king and queen, his pretended parents, and of his brother and sisters and divers others that were nearest him in childhood, together with all passages, some secret, some common that were fit for a child's memory, until the death of King Edward. Then she added the particulars of the time from the king's death until he and his brother were committed to the Tower, as well during the time he was abroad as while he was in sanctuary.

However, according to historian James Gardiner in 1899, ‘*he had not, as commonly supposed, received an elaborate training from Margaret ... for he had (im)personated the second son of Edward IV long before he visited her court.*’

‘Victim of his own deceit’?

Although the original document has disappeared, copies of Perkin Warbeck’s confession were distributed all around Europe. Their real purpose? To establish Henry's own right of

succession, which remained quite shaky. If Perkin's story was not true, it had to seem so, and Perkin's confession on the scaffold was all that Henry needed.

Both Polydore Vergil (writing in the 1530s) and Francis Bacon (published a century later) suggest that, by this stage, the pretender had played the role for so long that he scarcely knew what was true. Vergil, Henry's historian, wrote that 'having twisted falsehood into truth and truth into falsehood, [Warbeck] fell at last from the scaffold, a victim of his own deceit.' Francis Bacon summed up Warbeck's life: 'What he feigned, he believed.'

Later writers looked back on the story of Perkin Warbeck with surprising sympathy. In 1634, the playwright John Ford, writing under a Stuart monarch, resurrected the pretender as a tragic hero in *The Chronicle Historie of Perkin Warbeck*. And in *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck: A romance*, published in 1830, Mary Shelley treated him generously.

When the man we know as Perkin Warbeck was proclaiming himself the rightful heir to the throne, England was exhausted by war and weary of dynastic struggles. Henry VII offered peace and prosperity. However, many in England and, especially, abroad were prepared to keep up the pretence of a living Richard, duke of York, even if they knew the truth. Abroad the pretender was certainly taken seriously and quite a few people believed that there was a chance that he was who he said he was. On balance, it is likely that he was an impostor, but there is no final proof one way or the other.

TUDOR REBELLION FACT SHEET.

WHAT is the rebellion known as:

Lambert Simnel's Rebellion

WHEN did it happen?

1487

WHERE did it happen?

Began in Ireland and ended in the Midlands at the Battle of Stoke.

WHO was the leader of the rebellion:

Francis Lord Lovell and the Earl of Kildare led the soldiers. Robert Simon was a priest that tutored Simnel.

WHO was monarch at this time?

Henry VII.

WHY did the rebellion take place/ WHAT caused the rebellion?

Simon claimed that Simnel was the Earl of Warwick (the boy with a better claim to the throne than Henry).

Yorkist attempt to get power.

WHAT were the main events:

Simon took Simnel to Ireland where he was crowned as Edward VI in Dublin.

Foreign mercenaries joined Kildare and sailed to England.

Lovell joined them.

Henry showed the REAL Warwick in public to show that Simnel was an imposter.

Henry took troops north to meet the enemy.

Battle at Stoke on 17th June.

Henry victorious.

Simnel captured. Kildare killed. Lovell fled.

Simnel pardoned. Given job in royal kitchen.

WAS the rebellion a success or a failure?

Failure.

WHY did it succeed or fail?

Henry exposed Simnel as a fraud by showing real Warwick.

Little English support for the rebellion. Relied on Irish and mercenary soldiers.

Henry met the rebellion with a crushing display of force.

WHAT were the consequences of the rebellion?

TUDOR REBELLION FACT SHEET.

WHAT is the rebellion known as:
Perkin Warbeck's Rebellion.

WHEN did it happen?

WHERE did it happen?

WHO was the leader of the rebellion:

WHO was monarch at this time?

WHY did the rebellion take place/ WHAT caused the rebellion?

WHAT were the main events:

WAS the rebellion a success or a failure?

WHY did it succeed or fail?

WHAT were the consequences of the rebellion?

[Empty box]

How successful was Henry VII in strengthening royal power? Explain your answer.

Together we will plan this essay in class. You will perhaps begin to write a response in class using the notes you make and the information in this section to help you.

Epilogue

Henry VII was respected but not loved. His skill in finance and his efficiency gave him a high reputation at home and abroad. He was certainly less blood thirsty than his fellow European monarchs; Lambert Simnel would have certainly been executed had he rebelled against any other king of the time. Even his carefully calculated marriage turned out well. By all accounts, Henry was a loving husband who grieved when Elizabeth died in 1503.

Some called Henry a miser. This is not fair. Although he kept a tight rein on all aspects of finance, Henry had the Tudor knack of “playing the king”, and if this meant spending money then he was ready to do it. His clothes were always very fine and he even dressed his dogs with silken collars. He ate expensively; “perch in jelly dipped”, “peacocks in hackle” and castles “made of jelly”. He gambled ; on January 8th, 1492, he lost £5.00 while playing cards. On June 4th, he lost twelve shillings “at butts with his crossbow.” June 30th was a bad day for Henry when he lost a further £40.00 at cards... again! He employed musicians and dancers. One young lady danced for the king on August 25th, 1493. She must have been very good because Henry gave her £30.00! “Pechie, the fool” who entertained that king earlier that year was only given six shillings.

Sadly, Henry’s cold and calculating personality endures through history. He was a cunning and secretive man who kept notes on which people to reward and which to distrust. When he died on 21st April, 1509, Londoners celebrated by burning bonfires and dancing in the streets. The miser king was dead and his athletic, handsome and charismatic son would succeed him. The fact that this happened without challenge is Henry VII’s lasting legacy. He had taken a kingdom that had suffered after thirty years of warfare and brought it peace and stability.

In 2000 the Sunday Times newspaper ran an article which tried to discover which English King or Queen was the wealthiest in history by taking their wealth and converting it to what would be its modern equivalent. Guess who came top of the list? Henry VII.

The effigy of Henry VII that was carved before his death in 1509. When the king died, this wooden likeness was placed on a jointed wooden mannequin which was then clothed in the robes of state and paraded through the streets of London to announce his death. It is probably a very good likeness. You can see it on display at Westminster Abbey.



