

King Edward Plantagenet III King of England



Born: 13 Nov 1312 Windsor, ENG
Married: 24 Jan 1328 Philippa Hainhault
Died: 21 Jun 1377 Surey, ENG
Parents: King Edward II & Isabella Capet

Edward III was 14 when he was crowned King and assumed government in his own right in 1330. In 1337, Edward created the Duchy of Cornwall to provide the heir to the throne with an income independent of the sovereign or the state. An able soldier, and an inspiring leader, Edward founded the Order of the Garter in 1348.

At the beginning of the Hundred Years War in 1337, actual campaigning started when the King invaded France in 1339 and laid claim to the throne of France. Following a sea victory at Sluys in 1340, Edward overran Brittany in 1342 and in 1346 he landed in Normandy, defeating the French King, Philip VI, at the Battle of Crécy and his son Edward (the Black Prince) repeated his success at Poitiers (1356).

By 1360 Edward controlled over a quarter of France. His successes consolidated the support of the nobles, lessened criticism of the taxes, and improved relations with Parliament.

However, under the 1375 Treaty of Bruges the French King, Charles V, reversed most of the English conquests; Calais and a coastal strip near Bordeaux were Edward's only lasting gain.

Failure abroad provoked criticism at home. The Black Death plague outbreaks of 1348-9, 1361-2 and 1369 inflicted severe social dislocation (the King lost a daughter to the plague) and caused deflation; severe laws were introduced to attempt to fix wages and prices.

In 1376, the 'Good Parliament' (which saw the election of the first Speaker to represent the Commons) attacked the high taxes and criticised the King's advisers. The ageing King withdrew to Windsor for the rest of his reign, eventually dying at Sheen Palace, Surrey.

Information from online research at: [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com)

Edward III, King of England (1312-77), one of the most successful medieval warrior kings. He served his apprenticeship in arms by annual expeditions against the Scots in the early 1330s (see [Scots wars of independence](#)), developing an army raised by contracts with magnates and gaining experience in the use of dismounted men-at-arms and [archers](#), tactics which later brought success against France. Claiming that kingdom's crown in 1337, he devoted the next two decades to war. An expedition to the Low Countries (1338-9) was costly and abortive, but in 1340 he won a major victory over a French fleet at Sluys. Then, fighting on several fronts, with competent lieutenants (Lancaster, Warwick, Northampton), his forces achieved notable successes in Gascony, Poitou, and Brittany where Edward campaigned personally in 1342-3. A stunning victory at [Crécy](#) was consolidated in 1347 by the capture of [Calais](#) after a year-long siege. In 1350 there was another naval success off Winchelsea against a Castilian fleet, colourfully described by [Froissart](#). But for much of the 1350s Edward directed affairs from the council chamber, although in 1359-60 he again personally led a large force to France, intent on capturing Rheims and being crowned there. But the siege failed and he was forced to accept terms at Brétigny (1360), agreeing to renounce the French crown. For nine years, war with France was suspended. By the time it recommenced in 1369, Edward was an old man, although he tried to lead his navy in 1372. His last years witnessed the loss of most of his gains before 1360. But at the height of his fame, founder of the Order of the Garter, he was recognized throughout Europe as the pre-eminent chivalric monarch of his day.

Bibliography

- Ormrod, W. M., *The Reign of Edward III: Crown and Political Society in England* (New Haven, 1990).
- Prestwich, M., *The Three Edwards* (London, 1980)

King Edward III (d.1377)

King Edward III's tomb is of Purbeck marble around which are niches which originally contained bronze effigies of Edward and Philippa's children but only six of these (on the south side) remain: Edward the Black Prince; Joan of the Tower; Lionel, Duke of Clarence; Lionel, Duke of York; Mary of Brittany; and William of Hatfield. (see below) Their arms were on enamelled shields at their feet but only four remain. On the base on the ambulatory side (as shown) are enamelled shields with the arms of England and St George. The effigy, around which runs a Latin rhyming inscription, is of gilt-bronze; the face is thought to be based on a death mask but the hair and beard are idealised.

The wooden canopy over the tomb may be by *Master Hugh Herland*.



Westminster Abbey Collegiate Church of St Peter Westminster

[http://www.churchmonumentsociety.org/London_Westminster.html#King_Edward_III_\(d.1377\)](http://www.churchmonumentsociety.org/London_Westminster.html#King_Edward_III_(d.1377))

THE PLANTAGENETS

EDWARD III

1327-1377



THE COAT OF ARMS OF EDWARD III

When Edward claimed the French throne in 1337, he quartered the fleurs-de-lys of France with the lions of England on his shield.

ONLY 14 WHEN HE came to the throne, Edward ruled for 50 years, a reign dominated by the 100 Years' War with France. Edward started the war in 1337 to further his claim to the French throne, playing a major role in the early stages and then handing over to his son Edward, the Black Prince. His principal aim was to unite the nobility into a cohesive class of public servants, motivated by chivalry, enriched by the wealth he enabled them to win, and tied to the crown by marriage to one of his many relatives. In this he succeeded magnificently, his reputation abroad enhanced by sound administration and reforms at home.

EDWARD III

- ◆ Born Windsor Castle, 13 Nov 1312, first son of Edward II and Isabella of France.
- ◆ **Acceded** 25 Jan 1327.
- ◆ **Crowned** Westminster Abbey, 1 Feb 1327.
- ◆ **Married** Philippa of Hainault, York, 24 Jan 1328, 13 children.
- ◆ **Died** Surrey, 21 June 1377, aged 64.



THE YOUNG KING

Edward was only 14 when he was crowned (above), and for three years power lay with his mother, Isabella of France, and Roger Mortimer.

REFORM OF THE LAW

Because of his preoccupation with warfare, it is easy to overlook Edward's considerable domestic achievements in legal and parliamentary reforms. In 1352 the Statute of Treason laid down a definition of high treason. Later other new laws made it illegal to raise taxes without the consent of Parliament, which was also given the right to enquire into public abuses. In 1362 English rather than French became the official language used in Parliament and the law courts.



THE PUBLIC POET

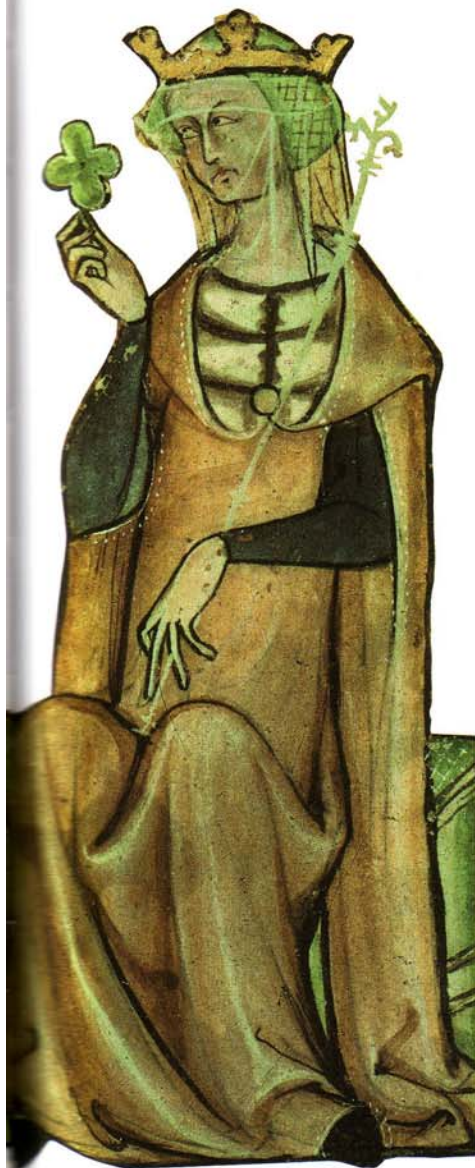
Born about 1340, Geoffrey Chaucer became page to Edward's son Lionel, Duke of Clarence, and was brought into Court. He worked for Edward in a variety of capacities, eventually becoming Comptroller of Customs for London in 1374. Chaucer began to write poetry in the early 1360s, and wrote his most famous work, *The Canterbury Tales*, between 1387-98.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER (right)



THE BLACK PRINCE

Edward III's eldest son, also called Edward, was known as the Black Prince because of the colour of his armour. He was born in 1330 and won his spurs at the Battle of Crécy in 1346. The victor of Poitiers in 1356, he became the most feared military commander in Europe, but while fighting in Spain, he caught an infection that slowly debilitated him and he predeceased his father by one year, in 1376.



FATHER AND SON
Edward III and the Black Prince (above) were both able military commanders, winning several battles in the 100 Years' War.

THE HEROIC KING

Tall, handsome, with gold-red hair and penetrating eyes, Edward was a flamboyant, affable and generous man. He excelled in all the knightly arts, loved hunting and falconry, and was astute in choosing advisers whose loyalty he always kept: in his long reign, Edward never had to deal with a rebellion, and was much loved by his people, who thought him immortal. His wife, Philippa of Hainault, was a tallish, comely woman to whom Edward was devoted. She was a wise counsellor, perhaps the wisest he had, and was much respected.

EDWARD AND PHILIPPA (left)



THE SHIP OF STATE

In the 1340s Edward III introduced a gold coinage on which he was depicted as commander of the ship of state (above). The ship evoked memories of his great naval victory over the French at Sluys in 1340 during the 100 Years' War, while his shield included the arms of France in recognition of his claim to the French throne.

EVENTS OF THE REIGN 1327 – 1377

- ◆ 1327 Edward III accedes to the throne after his father, Edward II, is deposed.
- ◆ 1328 Edward marries Philippa of Hainault.
- ◆ 1330 Edward takes power after three years of government by his mother, Isabella of France, and her lover, Roger Mortimer. Isabella is retired from public life with a yearly pension and Mortimer is tried and executed.
- ◆ 1332 Parliament is divided into two houses – Lords and Commons – for the first time.
- ◆ 1333 Defeat of Scottish army at Halidon Hill.
- ◆ 1337 Start of 100 Years' War – lasts intermittently until 1453.
- ◆ 1340 French navy defeated at the Battle of Sluys.
- ◆ 1346 David II of Scotland invades England but is defeated at Neville's Cross and captured.
- ◆ 1346 English defeat French at the Battle of Crécy.
- ◆ 1347 Edward besieges and captures Calais.
- ◆ 1348 Edward founds Order of the Garter.
- ◆ 1348-50 Black Death kills one-third of the English population, including Edward's daughter Joan.
- ◆ 1351 Statute of Labourers fixes prices and wages at pre-Black Death levels.
- ◆ 1351 Statute of Provisors forbids Englishmen from accepting Papal benefices, thereby confirming the King's power over ecclesiastical appointments.
- ◆ 1352 Statute of Treason defines nature of high treason and limits treason to seven offences.
- ◆ 1356 Black Prince defeats French at Poitiers.
- ◆ 1357 David II released from captivity and returns to Scotland.
- ◆ 1362 William Langland writes *Piers Plowman*.
- ◆ 1362 English instead of French used in Parliament and law courts.
- ◆ 1366 Statute of Kilkenny enforces writ of English law in Ireland and forbids Englishmen to speak Gaelic.
- ◆ 1369 Death of Philippa of Hainault, aged 56.
- ◆ 1376 Parliament gains right to investigate public abuses and impeach offenders; the first impeachment is of Alice Perrers, Edward's mistress, and two lords.
- ◆ 1376 Death of Black Prince.
- ◆ 1377 Edward III dies of a stroke at Sheen Palace, Surrey.