

Philip Capet IV

King of France



Born: 28 May 1268 Fontainebleu, FR

Married: Jeanne De Navarre

Died: 29 Sep 1314 Fontainebleu, FR

Parents: Philippe Capet III King of France & Isabelle De Jaimez

Philip IV (April-June 1268 – November 29, 1314), called **the Fair** (French: *le Bel*), son and successor of Philip III, reigned as King of France from 1285 until his death. He was the husband of Joan I of Navarre, by virtue of which he was King of Navarre (as **Philip I**) and Count of Champagne from 1284 to 1305. The nickname Philip "the Fair" comes from his handsome appearance; it had nothing to do with his actions as King.

Youth

A member of the House of Capet, Philip was born at the Palace of Fontainebleau at Seine-et-Marne, the son of King Philip III and Isabella of Aragon. Philip was nicknamed *the Fair (le Bel)* because of his handsome appearance, but his inflexible personality gained him other epithets, from friend and foe alike. His fierce opponent Bernard Saisset, bishop of Pamiers, said of him, "He is neither man nor beast. This is a statue"^[1]

His education was guided by Guillaume d'Ercuis the almoner of his father.

As prince, just before his father's death, he negotiated the safe passage of the royal family out of Aragon after the unsuccessful Aragonese Crusade.

Consolidation of the royal demesne

As a king, Philip was determined to strengthen the monarchy at any cost. He relied, more than any of his predecessors, on a professional bureaucracy of legalists. Because to the public he kept aloof and left specific policies, especially unpopular ones, to his ministers, he was called a "useless owl" by his contemporaries. His reign marks the French transition from a charismatic monarchy – which could all but collapse in an incompetent reign – to a bureaucratic kingdom, a move towards modernity.

Philip married queen Joan of Navarre (1271–1305) on August 16, 1284. The primary administrative benefit of this was the inheritance of Joan in Champagne and Brie, which were adjacent to the royal demesne in Ile-de-France and became thus

effectively united to the king's own lands, forming an expansive area. During the reigns of Joan herself, and her three sons (1284–1328), these lands belonged to the person of the king; but by 1328 they had become so entrenched in the royal domain that king Philip VI of France (who was not an heir of Joan) switched lands with the then rightful heiress, Joan II of Navarre, with the effect that Champagne and Brie remained part of the royal demesne and Joan received compensation with lands in western Normandy.

The Kingdom of Navarre in the Pyrenees was not so important to contemporary interests of the French crown. It remained in personal union 1284–1329, after which it went its separate way. Philippe gained Lyon for France in 1312.

War With the English

As Duke of Aquitaine, the English king Edward I was a vassal to Philip, and had to pay him homage. Following the Fall of Acre in 1291 however, the former allies started to show dissent.^[2]

In 1293, following a naval incident between the Normans and the English, Philip summoned Edward to the French court, but the latter, busy with trouble in Scotland, refused to appear. Philip used this pretext to strip Edward of all his possessions in France, thereby initiating hostilities with England.^[2]

The outbreak of hostilities with England in 1294 was the inevitable result of the competitive expansionist monarchies, triggered by a secret Franco-Scottish pact of mutual assistance against Edward I, who was Philip's brother-in-law, having married Philip's sister Marguerite; inconclusive campaigns for the control of Gascony to the southwest of France were fought in 1294–98 and 1300–03. Philippe gained Guienne but was forced to return it. No major war had been fought in Europe since the 'teens, and in the interim the nature of warfare had changed: it had become more professional, technologically more advanced and much more expensive. The search for income to cover military expenditures set its stamp on Philip's reign and his contemporary reputation. Pursuant to the terms of the Treaty of Paris (1303), the marriage of Philip's daughter Isabella to the Prince of Wales, heir of Philip's enemy, celebrated at Boulogne, 25 January 1308, was meant to seal a peace; instead it would produce an eventual English claimant to the French throne itself, and the Hundred Years War.

The drive for income

In the shorter term, Philip arrested Jews so he could seize their assets to accommodate the inflated costs of modern warfare: he expelled them from his French territories on July 22, 1306 (see The Great Exile of 1306). His financial victims included Lombard bankers and rich abbots. He was condemned by his enemies in the Catholic Church^[3] for his spendthrift lifestyle. He debased the coinage. When he also levied taxes on the French clergy of one half their annual income, he caused an uproar within the Roman Catholic Church and the papacy, prompting Pope Boniface VIII to issue the Bull *Clericis laicos*, forbidding the transference of any church property to the French Crown and prompting a drawn-out diplomatic battle with the King. In order to condemn the pope, Philip convoked an assembly of bishops, nobles and grand bourgeois of Paris, a precursor to the Etats Généraux that appeared for the first time during his reign, a measure of the professionalism and order that his ministers were introducing into government. Philip emerged victorious, after having sent his agent William Nogaret to arrest Boniface at Anagni, when the French archbishop Bertrand de Goth was elected pope as Clement V and the official seat of the papacy moved to Avignon, an enclave surrounded by French territories, commencing the captive Avignon Papacy.

In Flanders

He suffered a major embarrassment when an army of 2,500 noble men-at-arms (Knights and Squires) and 4,000 infantry he sent to suppress an uprising in Flanders was defeated in the Battle of the Golden Spurs near Kortrijk on 11 July 1302. Philip

reacted with energy to the humiliation and personally defeated the Flemings at Mons-en-Pévèle two years later. Finally, in 1305, Philip forced the Flemish to accept a harsh peace treaty after his success at the battle of Mons-en-Pévèle; the peace exacted heavy reparations and humiliating penalties, and added the rich cloth cities of Lille and Douai, sites of major cloth fairs, to the royal territory. Béthune, first of the Flemish cities to yield, was granted to Mahaut, Countess of Artois, whose two daughters, to secure her fidelity, were married to Philip's two sons.

Suppression of the Knights Templar

Philip was hugely in debt to the Knights Templar, a monastic military order who had been acting as bankers for some two hundred years. As the popularity of the Crusades had decreased, support for the Order had waned, and Philip used a disgruntled complaint against the Order as an excuse to disband the entire organization, so as to free himself from his debts. On Friday, October 13, 1307, hundreds of Knights Templar in France were simultaneously arrested by agents of Philip the Fair, to be later tortured into admitting heresy in the Order.^[4] The Knights Templar were supposedly answerable only to the Pope, but Philip used his influence over Clement V, who was largely his pawn, to disband the organization. Pope Clement did attempt to hold proper trials, but Philip used the previously forced confessions to have many Templars burned at the stake before they could mount a proper defense.

In 1314, Philip had the last Grand Master of the Templars, Jacques de Molay, burnt at the stake in Paris. According to legend, de Molay cursed both Philip and Clement V from the flames, saying that he would summon them before God's Tribunal within a year;^[citation needed] as it turned out, both King and Pope died within the next year. The throne passed rapidly through Philip's sons, who also died relatively young, and without producing male heirs. By 1328, his line was extinguished, and the throne had passed to the House of Valois.

Expulsion of the Jews

While King Edward ordered the Jews to leave England in 1290, Philip the Fair expelled the Jews from France in 1306, ostensibly for oppressive money-lending policies. With the Jews gone, Philip appointed royal guardians to collect the loans made by the Jews and the money quite legally passed to the Crown. The scheme did not work well. The Jews were good businessmen who kept their customers happy, while the king's collectors were less than tolerated. Finally, in 1315, because of the "clamour of the people", the Jews were invited back with an offer of 12 years of guaranteed residence, free from government interference. In 1322, the Jews were expelled again by the King's successor, who did not honour his commitment.^[5]

Tour de Nesle affair

In 1314, the daughters-in-law of Philip IV were accused of adultery, and their alleged lovers tortured, flayed and executed in what has come to be known as the *Tour de Nesle Affair* (French: *Affaire de la tour de Nesle*).

Crusades and diplomacy with Mongols

Philip had various contacts with the Mongol power in the Middle East, including reception of the embassy of the Turkic/Mongol monk Rabban Bar Sauma.^[6] Bar Sauma presented an offer of a Franco-Mongol alliance with Arghun of the Mongol Ilkhanate in Baghdad. Arghun was seeking to join forces between the Mongols and the Europeans, against their common enemy the Muslim Mamluks. In return, Arghun offered to return Jerusalem to the Christians, once it was recaptured from the Muslims. Philip seemingly responded positively to the request of the embassy, by sending one of his noblemen, Gobert de Helleville, to accompany Bar Sauma back to Mongol lands.^[7]

There was further correspondence between Arghun and Philip in 1288 and 1289,^[8] outlining potential military cooperation. However, Philip never actually pursued such military plans

In April 1305, the new Mongol ruler Oljeitu sent letters to Philip,^[9] the Pope, and Edward I of England. He again offered a military collaboration between the Christian nations of Europe and the Mongols against the Mamluks. European nations attempted another Crusade, but were delayed, and it never took place.

In April 4, 1312, another Crusade was promulgated at the Council of Vienne. In 1313, Philip "took the cross", making the vow to go on a Crusade in the Levant, thus responding to Pope Clement V's call. He was however warned against leaving by Enguerrand de Marigny^[10] and died soon after in a hunting accident.

Death

Philip IV's rule signaled the decline of the papacy's power from its near complete authority. His palace located on the Île de la Cité is represented today by surviving sections of the Conciergerie. He suffered a cerebral ictus during a hunt at Pont-Sainte-Maxence (Forest of Halatte) and died a few weeks later in Fontainebleau, where he was born. He is buried in Saint Denis Basilica. He was succeeded by his son Louis X.