

Definition: **Edward III** from *Philip's Encyclopedia*

King of England (1327-77), son and successor of Edward II. For the first three years of his reign, Edward was king only in name: his mother, Isabella, and Roger Mortimer held power. In 1330, Edward mounted a successful coup. The outbreak (1337) of the Hundred Years' War dominated his reign. He led several campaigns to France, won a famous victory at Crécy (1346) and claimed the title King of France - although conquering only Calais. In his old age, Edward the Black Prince and John of Gaunt, governed. His grandson, Richard II, succeeded him.

Summary Article: **Edward III**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

1312–77, king of England (1327–77), son of Edward II and Isabella.

Early Life

He was made earl of Chester in 1320 and duke of Aquitaine in 1325 and accompanied his mother to France in 1325. He returned to England with Isabella and Roger de Mortimer, 1st earl of March, on their expedition of 1326. In 1327, on his father's deposition, he was made king, although the real power was in fact exercised by Isabella and Mortimer. In 1328 he married Philippa of Hainaut, and in 1330 his first son, Edward the Black Prince, was born. In this year the king executed a coup and seized the reins of government, putting Mortimer to death and forcing his mother into retirement.

Reign

Troubles with Scotland and France

Edward, who had gone to Scotland on an unsuccessful expedition in 1327, resented the terms of the Treaty of Northampton (1328), by which he had renounced the Scottish throne, and decided to support Edward de Baliol against the young Scottish king David II. King Edward's victory at Halidon Hill in 1333 did not settle the Scottish question, but trouble with France arose to divide his attention.

The series of wars known as the Hundred Years War, which was to dominate Edward's reign, began in 1337. Disputes over English holdings in France, trouble between the great Flemish weaving cities (allies of the English) and their French overlords, and French aid to the Scots were the chief causes of the war. Edward's assumption of the title of king of France in 1340, based on a claim through his mother, which was first advanced in 1328, was an immediate provocation. Edward took an active part in the war, fighting in the naval victory of Sluis (1340), in the famous battle of Crécy (1346), and in the successful siege of Calais (1346–47). His son, the Black Prince, achieved a popular reputation for his exploits, such as his victory at Poitiers (1356), where he captured the French king, John II. The fighting continued sporadically even after the Treaty of Brétigny (1360), by which Edward was awarded a large ransom for the French king and large concessions of French territory. In 1369, Charles V of France renewed the war, but Edward now took less interest in it. Various factors, among them the poor health of the Black Prince, led to a truce in 1375.

Wars with the Scots, who had been receiving French aid, continued in a desultory manner. In 1346 the English had won a victory at Neville's Cross in England and made a prisoner of David II; in 1356, Edward had gone into Scotland on a harrying expedition known as Burnt Candlemas. Like the French wars,

however, the Scottish wars were inconclusive in Edward's reign.

Domestic Developments

Edward's long reign saw many constitutional developments. Most important of these was the emergence of the Commons as a distinct and increasingly powerful group within Parliament. The king's constant need for money for his wars enabled the Commons to assert their right to consent to all lay taxation and gain other substantial concessions.

Considerable social change was also brought about by the decimation of England's population by visitations of the Black Death (see plague), which struck first in 1348–49 and again in 1362 and 1369. The resulting labor shortage allowed the lower classes to demand higher wages and social advancement and accelerated the breakdown of the system of serfdom. Parliament attempted to curb this development with the Statute of Labourers (1351), which froze wages, but it proved impossible to enforce.

Edward's initially good relations with the church were damaged by the Statute of Provisors (1351) and the Statutes of Praemunire (first issued 1353), which were aimed at reducing papal influence on the English church, and by the king's attempts to get more money from the church. In 1371 the king's clerical councilors were dismissed. By this time Edward was under the influence of his greedy mistress, Alice Perrers, and the political scene became one of rivalry between the court party headed by John of Gaunt and the clerical party led by the Black Prince.

Supported by Alice Perrers, John of Gaunt gained control of the government, but the so-called Good Parliament of 1376 forced the expulsion of Alice Perrers from court, and several of John's supporters were impeached. John once again seized power after the death of the Black Prince. Edward III died soon afterward, and the son of the Black Prince came to the throne as Richard II. Of Edward's seven sons, five figured importantly in history: Edward the Black Prince; Lionel, duke of Clarence; John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster; Edmund of Langley, duke of York; Thomas of Woodstock, duke of Gloucester.

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