

access to history

Lancastrians, Yorkists and the Wars of the Roses

1399–1509

ROGER TURVEY

THIRD EDITION



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Dedication

Keith Randell (1943–2002)

The *Access to History* series was conceived and developed by Keith, who created a series to 'cater for students as they are, not as we might wish them to be'. He leaves a living legacy of a series that for over 20 years has provided a trusted, stimulating and well-loved accompaniment to post-16 study. Our aim with these new editions is to continue to offer students the best possible support for their studies.

The first reign of Edward IV 1461–70

The accession of Edward IV seemed to have brought stability and security to England but this was not so in reality. In spite of efforts to consolidate his power, Edward IV struggled to impose his authority on the kingdom. Noble disaffection, laced with jealousy over Edward's promotion, combined to threaten his throne. Nor could he look to those closest to him for support, for his once steadfast allies turned into vengeful enemies. These developments are examined as four themes:

- ◆ Edward IV: consolidation of Yorkist power and the restoration of order
- ◆ Edward IV and the nobility
- ◆ The king and the 'kingmaker': Edward IV and the Earl of Warwick
- ◆ Warwick's rebellion and the restoration of Henry VI 1469–71

KEY DATES

1461	Reign of Edward IV began	1470	Henry VI restored to the throne by Warwick
1464	Edward IV married Elizabeth Woodville		Edward IV and his brother Richard forced into exile in Burgundy
1465	Henry VI captured and imprisoned	1471	Edward IV restored to the throne after victory at the Battle of Barnet, in which Warwick was killed
1468	Edward IV's sister Margaret married Duke Charles of Burgundy		Henry VI murdered, his son Edward, Prince of Wales, killed in Battle of Tewkesbury
1469	Warwick and Clarence rebelled against Edward IV		
	The Battle of Edgecote		

1 Edward IV: consolidation of Yorkist power and the restoration of order

- *How successful was Edward in consolidating his power and restoring law and order?*

The civil war continues: 1461–5

If Edward thought his coronation in June 1461 as Edward IV would bring an end to the civil wars he was sadly mistaken. It took him over three years to eliminate his Lancastrian enemies, who concentrated their power in Northumberland and were sustained by Scottish and French help. A number of

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Lancastrian plots were unearthed, there were invasion scares on the south coast and disturbances occurred in several parts of the kingdom:

- In Wales, the Lancastrians lost a skirmish in the Tywi valley near Dryslwyn but they had better success in the north, where Harlech Castle was besieged but held by them for nearly seven years until it finally fell in 1468.
- In Northumberland, the castles of Alnwick, Bamburgh and Dunstanburgh became the focal point of Lancastrian resistance in the north. These castles were besieged and taken twice by the Yorkists and twice they were recaptured by the Lancastrians.

Early in 1464, Henry VI and Margaret returned to England to rally the substantial support they still enjoyed in the north. Their principal support came from the Percy Earls of Northumberland. It was to Sir Ralph Percy that Henry VI and Margaret marched with a largely French-financed army consisting mainly of Scottish and French **mercenaries**. They were joined by troops raised by Henry Beaufort, Duke of Somerset (son and heir of the king's principal adviser, killed at St Albans in 1455). Edward IV responded by sending a Yorkist army north under the command of Warwick's younger brother, John Neville, Lord Montagu. At Hedgeley Moor, in April 1464, the Lancastrians were soundly beaten with Percy among the casualties. Somerset escaped and offered battle three weeks later at Hexham. This time Montagu made no mistake when he cut the Lancastrians to pieces, captured Somerset and executed him. Margaret and her son escaped and sought refuge in France while her husband went on the run. Henry VI was eventually captured in Lancashire in 1465.

KEY TERM

Mercenaries Professional soldiers who fight for hire and profit.

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Security and consolidation

In order to secure his crown and consolidate his power, Edward IV realised that he had to deal with threats and problems both external and internal.

External

Concerned by the scale of support the Lancastrians had obtained from both Scotland and France, Edward was determined to establish better foreign relations. He successfully negotiated truces with James III of Scotland and Louis XI of France. Edward hoped this would be enough to deny the Lancastrians any aid abroad, be it political, financial or military. The king also opened negotiations with the powerful Duke of Burgundy to exploit trading opportunities and to secure an ally should the French renege on their truce. In an effort to turn the truce with France into something more lasting, Warwick tried to persuade Edward IV to marry the French king's daughter. However, his attempt to cement an Anglo-French alliance through marriage failed when Edward ignored his advice and secretly married Elizabeth Woodville instead. This was a serious miscalculation on Edward's part for it alienated the French. Equally significant was Edward's failure to persuade the influential Hanseatic

League (see page 3), an organisation of German merchants, to agree to his request for trading concessions. These concessions had the potential to increase trade and customs revenue for the king.

Internal

Fearful of further fighting, Edward adopted a policy of conciliation. Lancastrians were offered pardons and encouraged to serve the Crown. Henry VI was imprisoned in the Tower of London but was well treated. Lawlessness and disorder were tackled alongside the national debt and the economy. Edward tried to improve the efficiency and authority of the departments of government, particularly in the farthest reaches of the kingdom. Unfortunately, Edward's successes were few. Law and order were restored in some regions, government was improved, mainly by the professionalism of its personnel but its effectiveness remained questionable. The Crown's finances were well on the way to recovery but the **national debt** remained high. Perhaps the most glaring failure was Edward's tendency to over-reward close family and a small circle of noble supporters. This bred resentment, not just among Lancastrians but among some Yorkists, too.

In the final analysis, the fact that Edward was deposed with what appeared to be relative ease in 1469 shows that he had failed not only to restore law and order but also to secure and consolidate his power.

KEY TERM

National debt Money owed by the Crown to members of the English nobility and Continental bankers/financiers. The Crown borrowed the money to help pay for the costs of the court, the royal household and the government.

SOURCE A

Adapted from Dominic Mancini, *The Usurpation of Richard the Third*. Mancini was an Italian visitor living in England in 1482–3. He provided one of the earliest descriptions of the new king, Edward IV.

Edward was of a gentle nature and cheerful aspect: nevertheless should he assume an angry countenance he could appear very terrible to beholders. He was of easy access to his friends and others, even the least notable. Frequently he called to his side complete strangers, when he thought that they had come with the intention of addressing him more closely. He was wont to show himself to those who wished to watch him, and he seized any opportunity that the occasion offered of revealing his fine stature to onlookers. He was so genial in his greeting, that if he saw a newcomer bewildered at his appearance and royal magnificence, he would give him courage to speak by laying a kindly hand upon his shoulder.

He was more favourable than other princes to foreigners, who visited his realm for trade or for some other reason. He very seldom showed munificence, and then only in moderation, still he was very grateful to those from whom he had received a favour. Though not rapacious of other men's goods, he was yet eager for money, and in pursuing it he acquired a reputation for avarice. He adopted this artifice for piling up wealth.

SOURCE QUESTION

Study Source A. Why might Mancini be biased?

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SOURCE QUESTION

Study Source B. What is your impression of Edward IV from this portrait?

SOURCE B



Portrait of Edward IV, c.1470s by an unknown artist.

SUMMARY DIAGRAM

EDWARD IV: CONSOLIDATION OF YORKIST POWER AND THE RESTORATION OF ORDER

Consolidation
of power

Edward IV

Security of
throne

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In 1461 Edward, Duke of York, seized power and was crowned king. He spent the next eight years consolidating Yorkist power, the success of which rested on his ability to restore order after the chaos of the civil wars. An important element in his search for stability and continuity was his relationship with the nobility. Edward knew that some were opposed to him while others were lukewarm in their support. He had either to win them over or to impose restrictions on their political freedom. In an effort to improve England's foreign relations, Edward's sister, Margaret, married Duke Charles of Burgundy. Edward's position was considerably strengthened when Henry VI was captured and imprisoned. To

strengthen his dynasty, Edward married Elizabeth Woodville in order to have a son and heir. This marriage upset Edward IV's relations with his mentor and key adviser Richard, Earl of Warwick. Relations between Edward and Warwick steadily declined until the latter rebelled in 1469. Warwick, in concert with Edward's brother, the Duke of Clarence, defeated Edward, who fled into exile. Henry VI was restored to the throne. However, within a year, Clarence had defected, Edward IV was restored to the throne and Henry VI murdered. Henry VI's death led to the destruction of the Lancastrian movement and many of its followers fled into exile.

Refresher questions

Use these questions to remind yourself of the key material covered in this chapter.

- 1 How did Edward seize the throne?
- 2 What steps did Edward IV take to consolidate his power?
- 3 Why and with what results did Edward IV restore law and order in England?
- 4 What was the nature of Edward IV's relationship with the nobility?
- 5 Why was Edward's marriage with Elizabeth Woodville unpopular?
- 6 Why did Edward's relationship with the Earl of Warwick break down?
- 7 Why did Warwick rebel against Edward IV?
- 8 Why did Warwick restore Henry VI to the throne?
- 9 Why did Clarence join Warwick in opposition to his brother, the king?
- 10 What was the nature of Edward IV's relationship with continental Europe?

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WWW

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Question practice: AQA

Essay questions

- 1 To what extent was Edward IV's failure to consolidate his position as king in the years 1461–9 due to his own mistakes?

EXAM HINT Analyse the alleged mistakes of Edward IV and set these alongside other possible factors. Reach a clear judgement.

- 2 To what extent was the ambition of Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, responsible for instability in England in the years 1461–71?

EXAM HINT You will need to set out the aspects of rule that made for 'instability' and then analyse how far this was due to the Earl of Warwick's ambitions.

- 3 'The most important reason for Edward IV's failure to establish royal authority in the period 1461–70 was the power of the Earl of Warwick.' How far do you agree?

EXAM HINT Analyse several reasons, including the power of the Earl of Warwick, and reach an overall judgement. Ideally this can be outlined in the opening paragraph, with the rest of the arguments flowing from this.

Source analysis questions

- 1 With reference to Sources 1 and 2 (page 101), and your understanding of the historical context, which of these two sources is more valuable in explaining why there was a change of monarchy in 1461?

EXAM HINT Analyse the content and evaluate the provenance of each of the sources, but also include a substantial element of comparison, either as you go along or at the end, in order to argue which is more valuable in your opinion.

- 2 With reference to Sources 1–3 (page 101), and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to a historian studying the Yorkist seizure of the throne in 1461.

EXAM HINT Analyse the content and evaluate the provenance of each of the three sources in turn, including reference to the tone where relevant. There is no need for an overall comparison.

Question practice: OCR

Essay questions

- 1 'Clarence posed more of a threat to Edward IV than Warwick.' How far do you agree?

EXAM HINT This question requires you to consider the threat posed by Clarence and compare it with that posed by Warwick. You might consider issues such as their claim to the throne, support at home and from overseas and their aims. For each issue discussed compare the two and reach a judgement as to who posed the greater threat before reaching an overall judgement as to the greater threat.

- 2 To what extent was Edward IV's failure to consolidate his position as king in the years 1461–9 due to his own mistakes?

EXAM HINT This requires you to reach a judgement as to 'how far' it was due to his own mistakes, considering a range of issues as to why he failed to consolidate his position, such as the power of the nobility, the ambition of Warwick, the role of Margaret and foreign affairs.

- 3 'The most important reason for Edward IV's failure to establish royal authority in the period 1461–70 was the power of the Earl of Warwick.' How far do you agree?

EXAM HINT This requires you to compare the role of Warwick in Edward's failure to establish royal authority in the given period with a range of other factors, such as the Lancastrian threat or foreign issues. You would need to reach a judgement as to the role of each factor and compare their importance with that of Warwick's power.

Question practice: Pearson Edexcel

Essay questions

- 1 'It was the weakness of Henry VI as king that explains the successful usurpation of the throne by Edward IV in 1461.' Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.

EXAM HINT This is a causation question. The fact in the question is that Edward IV usurped the throne in 1461 but what were the causes of Henry's weakness? What were other factors that might have contributed.

- 2 To what extent was Edward IV's failure to consolidate his position as king in the years 1461–9 due to his own mistakes?

EXAM HINT For this causation question, you are weighing up the importance of Edward IV's mistakes as a factor in causing his failure to consolidate his position as king 1461–9 against any other factors that you think played a role.

- 3 To what extent was the ambition of Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, responsible for instability in England in the years 1461–71?

EXAM HINT Weigh up the main factor – the ambition of Neville – in relation to other factors that caused instability and make a judgement on Richard Neville's relative importance.

- 4** 'The most important reason for Edward IV's failure to establish royal authority in the period 1461–70 was the power of the Earl of Warwick.' How far do you agree?

EXAM HINT This is a causal question with the focus on the power of the Earl of Warwick in causing Edward IV's failure to establish royal authority within the given time frame. With causal questions, the crucial thing to consider is how far the key factor led to the outcome set out in the question (in this case Edward's failure). How can you link the power of the Earl of Warwick to Edward's failure directly in your essay and what does this mean in terms of its relative significance in comparison to other factors that played a role?

SOURCE 1

From 'Whethamstead's Register' of 1459, recorded by John Whethamstead, abbot of St Albans Abbey.

When Richard of York returned from Ireland there were varied and contrary rumours amongst the people about his return. Some said that his arrival was peaceful and that he intended nothing else but the restoration of harmony among the quarrelling lords of the realm, bringing peace to the kingdom, and reforming it, by his authority. Yet others, including those who were older and wiser, suspected that he meant to act against the king for the royal crown and claim it for himself by title of hereditary right.

SOURCE 2

From 'Gregory's Chronicle' of 1461. William Gregory was mayor of London.

The King was removed from London against his will and the Duke of York declared himself king. The Queen fled to Wales but was attacked and robbed by her own servant showing how lawless times had become. From then on she travelled about in secret, fearing for her own life and for that of her son the prince. The Lords sent forged orders, supposedly from the King, demanding that she hand herself over, for they claimed that she was the reason for the opposition to their plans and that she was more intelligent than the King. The Queen, having knowledge of this, sent for help from the Earl of Somerset and the Earl of Devon urging them to come as quickly as they could with their armies. Some of the lords that came to her aid did so more out of expectation of reward than loyalty to her position.

SOURCE 3

From the 'London Chronicle' written by Matthew Gough, 1461.

On Thursday 26 February 1461 the earl of March and the earl of Warwick came to London with a great army and, on the Sunday afterwards, they gathered their army in St John's field and there were read certain articles and points in which King Harry VI had offended against the realm. Then it was demanded of the people whether Harry was worthy to reign still and the people cried 'Nay'. Then they were asked if they would have the earl of March as king and they cried 'Yea'.

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THIRD EDITION

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