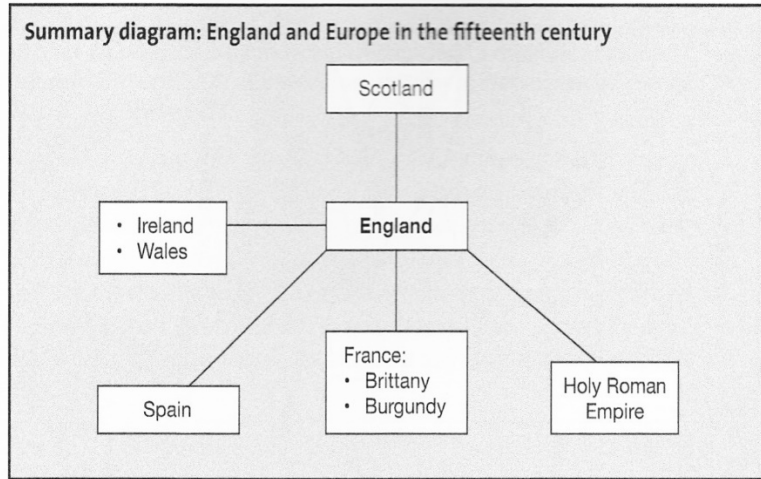


Summary diagram: England and Europe in the fifteenth century



3 The deposition of Richard II

► *Why was Richard II forced to abdicate?*

Richard II

By the fifteenth century, monarchy had acquired an almost mystical quality. To their subjects, kings were not like ordinary men and claimed God-given power to govern and make laws. This **divine right** to rule enabled the monarch to command the respect of the people, who were constantly reminded of the Crown's privileged status by the Church. The monarchy's strength lay in the combination of traditional respect for its authority and power to dispense patronage and reward. People were expected to abide by the law and for those who disturbed the '**king's peace**' there was arrest by the Crown's officers, trial in the royal courts of justice and punishment by fine, imprisonment or death.

The power of monarchy was such that even a boy of fourteen was able to project sufficient authority and confidence to disperse a violent mob. When the peasants rebelled in 1381 and stormed London, the boy-king, Richard II, acted courageously and decisively in confronting the rebel leaders, Wat Tyler and John Ball. Richard's impressive display of God-given royal authority led to the collapse of the Peasants' Revolt but it also convinced the young king that he was a strong and capable leader. Youthful confidence evolved into adolescent arrogance, which conspired to produce in adulthood a cruel tyrant. Richard was to find that the power of monarchy was only as strong as the support it received from the nobility.

Richard II had ruled England for over twenty years when, in 1399, he was **usurped** from the throne. His rule had been autocratic and despotic and by

KEY TERMS

Divine right Belief that monarchs were chosen by God to rule the kingdom and that their word was law. To challenge their right to rule was the same as challenging God's.

King's peace The idea that, as the king was appointed by God, his law was the highest authority which brought order and protection to the people.

Usurpation The seizure of the throne without authority or in opposition to the rightful line of succession.

1399 many in the nobility had turned against him. By promoting some noble favourites at the expense of others, some of whom were stripped of their titles and exiled, Richard contributed to a growing sense of discontent and resentment. Chief among the exiled nobility was Richard's cousin, Henry Bolingbroke, Duke of Hereford (1397) and Earl of Derby (1377), who had a distant claim to the throne. Denied his inheritance, the Duchy of Lancaster, Bolingbroke returned from exile and gathered enough support to win the crown from Richard.

The deposition of Richard II

English kingship was, in part, a religious office. Through his anointment at his coronation, Richard II received God's blessing allied to divine power. As king, Richard was expected to set an example of piety and to protect the Christian faith and Church. However, Richard's increasingly autocratic rule alienated some senior clerics in the Church, who claimed that the king had betrayed the principles of kingship by ignoring the promises he had made in his coronation oath. The Church abandoned Richard to his fate and although its senior clerics were divided over the rights and wrongs of his usurpation, none was prepared to support him.

In the summer of 1399 King Richard surrendered to Henry Bolingbroke at Flint Castle. Outnumbered by the enemy, the king had no choice but to negotiate with Henry Bolingbroke, who offered him generous terms. In return for restoring Bolingbroke to his Lancastrian inheritance and for surrendering selected members of the royal council for trial, Richard would be released and free to continue his rule. Persuaded by the Archbishop of Canterbury to accept the terms, Richard surrendered to Bolingbroke and accompanied him to London. However, Bolingbroke had no intention of keeping faith with the king, whom he deposed and imprisoned in the Tower of London. Richard was later removed to Pontefract Castle, where he died in captivity in February 1400 (see Source C). Although some of the nobility were opposed to Richard's deposition, they did nothing to stop it.

SOURCE C

Adapted from an entry in Walsingham's *Chronica Maiora* dated February 1400.

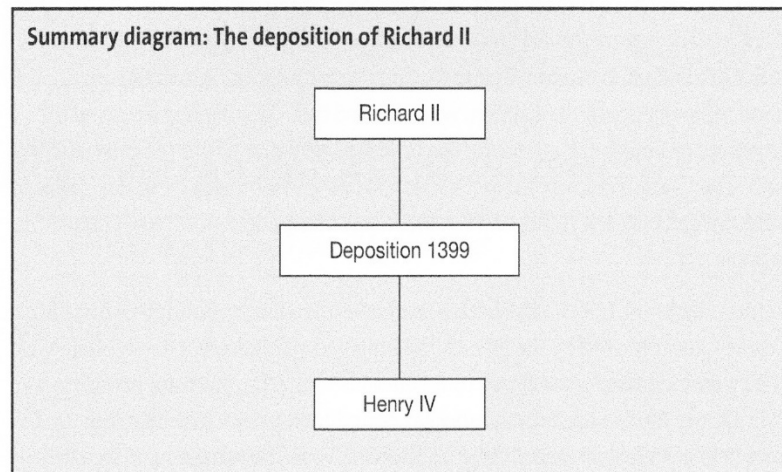
Richard, the former king was distraught. He killed himself by voluntary starvation it is said, ending his days at the castle of Pontefract, on 14 February. His body was displayed at the more populous places that lay on the road from the castle to London, wherever they stopped for the night. After the last rites had been said at St Paul's cathedral in London, it was ordained that Richard's body should be carried to be buried. The bishop of Chester, the abbot of St Alban's and the abbot of Waltham performed the last rites in the absence of the nobles and the people.

Study Source C. What evidence is there in the source to suggest that Richard may not have killed himself?



When the news of Richard's death became known a number of nobility and gentry began to question the new king's right to rule. Some thought they had exchanged one tyrant for another, while others wished to revenge themselves on the man they blamed for the late king's death. On the other hand, just as many supported the new regime and were content to be rid of Richard. In this increasingly unstable and uncertain atmosphere, Duke Henry assumed power. According to the chronicler Thomas Walsingham, 'Henry Bolingbroke was crowned King Henry IV at Westminster by Thomas, archbishop of Canterbury, on 13 October [1399], a year to the day after he had been sent into exile. This was thought to be a miracle sent by God.' Henry IV was to find that the crown was more easily won than held.

Summary diagram: The deposition of Richard II



4 The troubled reign of Henry IV

► *Why was Henry IV's reign so troubled?*

Henry IV

Henry IV was the son of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, who in turn was the youngest son of Edward III. This royal connection did not protect Henry IV from those who sought to challenge his kingship. By usurping the throne Henry had set a dangerous precedent. Other ambitious noblemen might do as he had done and mount a challenge for the crown. Henry's action had led to the throne losing some of its mystique, its majesty and more importantly, its authority. Henceforth, the power and authority of the Crown would come to rely heavily on the skill, strength and personality of the monarch. Henry possessed the attributes necessary to rule effectively but he was hamstrung by the consequences of his usurpation. Although many nobles were opposed to Richard, few were wholeheartedly for Henry.

Challenges to Henry IV

The deposed Richard II proved an immediate focus of opposition to the usurper. The death of the king did not deter the ambitious from pursuing their dreams of wealth and power. Among the first to conspire against the new regime were those nobles who had been closely linked to Richard and whom Henry had demoted on his accession to the throne:

- John Holland, Duke of Exeter, was demoted to Earl of Huntingdon.
- Thomas Holland, Duke of Surrey, was demoted to Earl of Kent.

John and Thomas Holland, half-brother and nephew, respectively, of Richard II, were joined in the conspiracy by former supporters of the former king, John Montacute, Earl of Salisbury, and Thomas le Despenser, Earl of Gloucester. The conspiracy was quickly quashed by Henry IV, who had the nobles involved tried and executed. Henry had successfully overcome the first serious threat to his kingship but he would face many more.

Besides complaints from Parliament over his extravagant spending, Henry endured a decade-long rebellion (1400–10) by the Welsh under their charismatic leader, Owain Glyndŵr (see page 19). The most serious opposition to his kingship came from a number of powerful noble families such as the Percy Earls of Northumberland and the Mortimer Earls of March. These families kept the flame of rebellion alive in England between 1403 and 1408. To add to his troubles, Henry also suffered periodic bouts of ill health; from 1410 he ceased to rule effectively after a series of strokes incapacitated him.

Conflict with France, Scotland and Wales

The difficulties facing Henry IV encouraged the French and Scots to try their luck against what they thought was a weakened England, led by an unpopular monarch. Before the Scots had a chance to invade England, Henry led an army north to confront his enemies. His invasion, in the autumn of 1400, proved successful and he reached Edinburgh but he failed to bring the Scots to battle. Having made his point and unable to sustain an occupation of the country – he lacked the funds and resources to do so – Henry returned to England.

Henry's successful military expedition to Scotland deterred the French from mounting an attack on English territory in France. Apart from demanding the return of Richard's widow, Queen Isabella, whom Henry was keeping in 'honourable confinement', the French simply confirmed the truce they had signed with Richard II. Unfortunately for Henry, his triumph in ensuring there would be no resumption of the Hundred Years' War was short lived. On his way back from Scotland news reached him that the Welsh had risen in rebellion. To make matters worse, Parliament refused to grant Henry the additional monies he had requested to equip and sustain an army in the field. Fearing a popular rebellion if he tried to raise taxation without Parliament's approval, Henry decided to try to live within his means. Shortage of money was to be an enduring problem for Henry throughout his reign.

SOURCE D

Adapted from an entry in Walsingham's *Historia Anglicana* dated September 1402. Walsingham describes the invasion of England by the Scots and the resulting Battle of Homildon Hill.

At that time the Scots, made restless by their usual arrogance, entered England in hostile fashion; for they thought that all the northern lords had been kept in Wales by royal command; but the Earl of Northumberland, and Henry his son, with an armed band and a force of archers, suddenly flung themselves across the path of the Scots who, after burning and plundering, wanted to return to their own country, so the Scots had no choice but to stop and do battle. They chose a hill near the town of Wooler, called Homildon Hill, where they assembled with their men-at-arms and archers. When our men saw this, they left the road in which they had opposed the Scots and climbed a hill facing the Scots. Without delay, our archers, shot arrows at the Scots to provoke them. In reply the Scottish archers directed all their fire at our archers; but they felt the weight of our arrows, which fell like a storm of rain, and so they fled.

Owain Glyndŵr

The Welsh rebellion, begun in the autumn of 1400, proved to be the most enduring problem facing Henry throughout his reign. Led by the accomplished and charismatic Welsh prince, Owain ap Gruffudd Fychan (known as **Owain Glyndŵr**, a name taken from the district in which he was born), the Welsh fought a long campaign that lasted for over a decade. Beginning as a guerrilla campaign, the Welsh gained in strength and confidence and within eighteen months of the start of the rebellion they were able to challenge the English in open combat. Two early battles, at Hyddgen in 1401 and Pilleth in 1402, cemented Glyndŵr's reputation as a brilliant military strategist and commander when he defeated superior English forces. Further victories and the capture of the strategically important castles of Aberystwyth and Harlech meant that by 1404 Glyndŵr was in control of virtually the whole of Wales. Successive royal expeditions led by Henry IV failed to find, let alone defeat, the Welsh leader. As English-held castles and garrison towns such as Carmarthen fell to the Welsh, Henry IV appeared powerless to help.

SOURCE E

Adapted from an entry in Walsingham's *Historia Anglicana* dated August 1404.

All through the summer, Owain Glyndŵr and his Welshmen looted, burned and destroyed the lands of the English. He captured and killed many Englishmen, took many castles and razed them to the ground through treachery, ambush or open warfare, and kept some for himself as protection. John Trevor, bishop of St Asaph, when he saw that the Welsh cause was prospering, became a traitor and went over to Owain's side.

Study Source D. What evidence is there in the source to suggest that the Scottish invasion of England was not intended to conquer the kingdom?

KEY FIGURE

Owain Glyndŵr (c.1359–c.1415)

A descendant in the direct male line of the Princes of Powys Fadog, Glyndŵr was one of the wealthiest native landowners in Wales. He was educated in the Inns of Court in London and had fought for Richard II in royal campaigns in Scotland and Ireland.

Study Source E. What evidence is there in the source to suggest that Walsingham was hostile to Glyndŵr?

 **KEY FIGURE****Henry Percy
(1364–1403)**

The son and heir of the Earl of Northumberland, Percy had earned a reputation for his courage and military skills. His father, Henry, and uncle, Thomas Percy, Earl of Worcester, had helped Henry IV to seize the throne but had become discontented with his rule, hence their rebellion in 1403.

 **KEY TERM****Tripartite Indenture**

An agreement signed by Mortimer, Percy and Glyndŵr to partition England and establish an independent Wales.

Mortimer, Percy and the Battle of Shrewsbury

The repeated failure to crush the rebellion led some disaffected English nobles, particularly those with extensive estates in Wales, to desert Henry. Among the first to do was Sir Edmund Mortimer, uncle of the young Edmund, Earl of March, who, as the great-grandson of King Edward III, had a claim to the throne. Mortimer's defection in 1402 sent shockwaves through the English establishment, the ripples of which encouraged other noblemen to challenge Henry. In 1403 **Henry Percy** (known as Hotspur), the son and heir of the Earl of Northumberland, and his uncle, Thomas, Earl of Worcester, rebelled against Henry IV. Their defeat and death at the Battle of Shrewsbury in July 1403 gave the king a breathing space but he was soon confronted by an even bigger problem. Encouraged by the success of the Welsh against Henry IV, the French decided to intervene and they forged an alliance with Glyndŵr.

The Franco-Welsh alliance

In the summer of 1405 a French army landed in Wales and joined a Welsh army under Glyndŵr. Later that year the Franco-Welsh army, some 13,000 strong, invaded England and confronted the royal army, led by Henry IV, north of Worcester. Fearful of the consequences of defeat, the armies did not engage in battle, and after a week the Welsh and their French allies retreated back to Wales. Undeterred by this setback, Glyndŵr and Mortimer planned future campaigns against Henry IV. They were joined by Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, who rose in rebellion against the king. In 1405 the allies signed the **Tripartite Indenture** whereby they agreed to partition England and Wales between them following the defeat and death of Henry IV. In the event, nothing came of the plan and thereafter the Welsh rebellion began to falter, Glyndŵr suffered a number of heavy defeats in battle and his French allies returned home. Nevertheless, it took the English nearly a decade to finally suppress the rebellious Welsh, who had returned to employing guerrilla tactics after the recapture of Aberystwyth and Harlech castles in 1409. The successful campaigns against Glyndŵr after 1406 were led by Henry IV's son and heir, the future Henry V.

Further conspiracies and rebellion

As Henry dealt with the French invasion of England through Wales, he received news that Hotspur's father, Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, together with Thomas Mowbray, Earl of Norfolk, and Richard Scrope, Archbishop of York, had risen in rebellion in the north of England. The rebellion was suppressed and Mowbray and Scrope were tried and executed. Percy escaped to Scotland. Following the beheading of Archbishop Scrope at York, Henry IV fell ill with what was rumoured to be leprosy. Many contemporaries regarded this as a sign from God that the usurper king was being punished for his many sins. In 1408 Percy returned from exile in Scotland and joined Thomas, Baron Bardolf, in leading an army to confront the king. They were overtaken by a force led by the

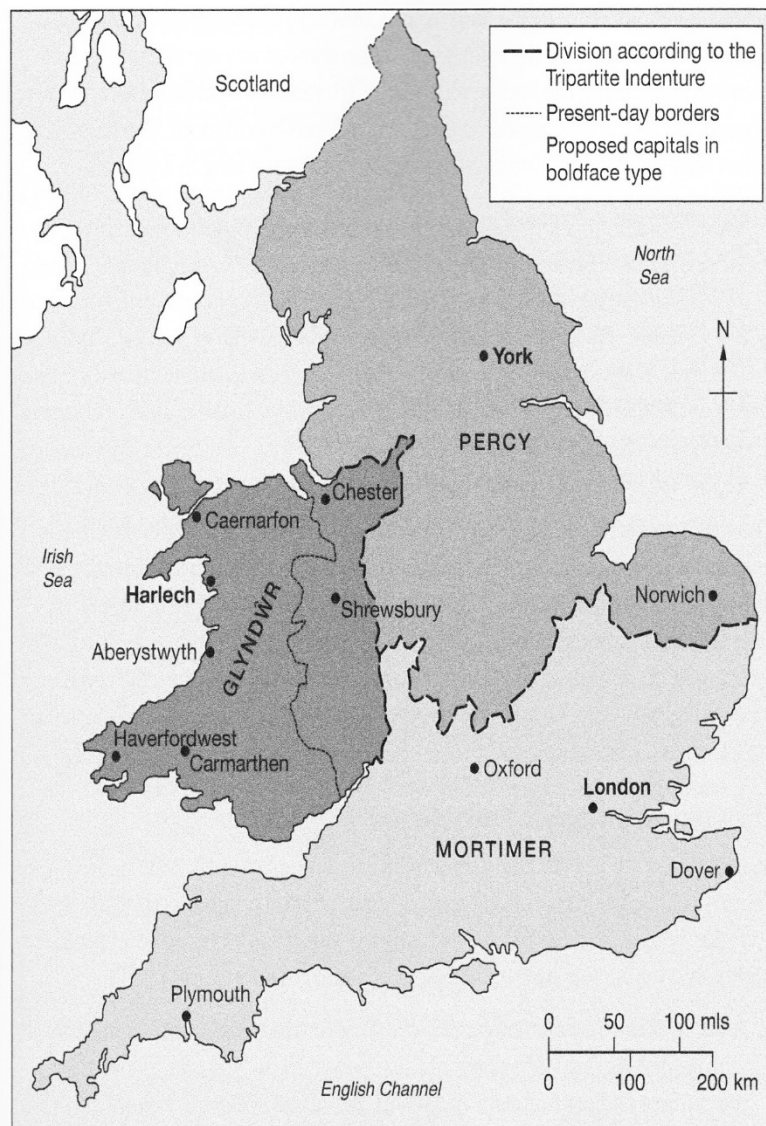


Figure 1.7 The intended partition of Henry IV's kingdom following his death. Why might this plan to partition the kingdom encourage the nobility to support Henry IV?

sheriff of Yorkshire, Sir Thomas Rokeby, who defeated and killed them at the Battle of Bramham Moor.

The Parliament of 1406

In the midst of his problems coping with conspiracies, rebellions and the French invasion, Henry IV endured a difficult relationship with his Parliaments. The Parliament of 1406, known as the Long Parliament, was the most contentious. It lasted, with two adjournments from March until December, longer than any other Parliament in Henry IV's reign. It also witnessed one of the most sustained confrontations between king and commons in English medieval history. Having

made a generous grant to the king in the Coventry Parliament of October 1404, neither the financial nor the military situation showed any significant signs of improvement during the subsequent year. A frustrated Commons was unwilling to subsidise a king who appeared unable to defend the kingdom. The following issues were cited by the Commons and presented to the king in a petition:

- The continued defiance of the Welsh.
- The presence of French troops in Wales.
- The French threat to the English province of Gascony.
- The threat posed by pirates terrorising English shipping.
- The high levels of taxation.
- The misappropriation of Crown revenues.
- The high cost of maintaining the royal household.
- The composition and powers of the royal council.

The real importance of the Long Parliament lies not in its legislation but in the political achievement of the Commons, which was arguably more substantial than that of any other medieval Parliament. The triumph of the Commons in 1406 was the culmination of several years of bitter wrangling with the king. By refusing to grant taxes until Henry IV had agreed to acknowledge the petition, followed by a promise to address their concerns, the Commons had managed to curb the power of the Crown.

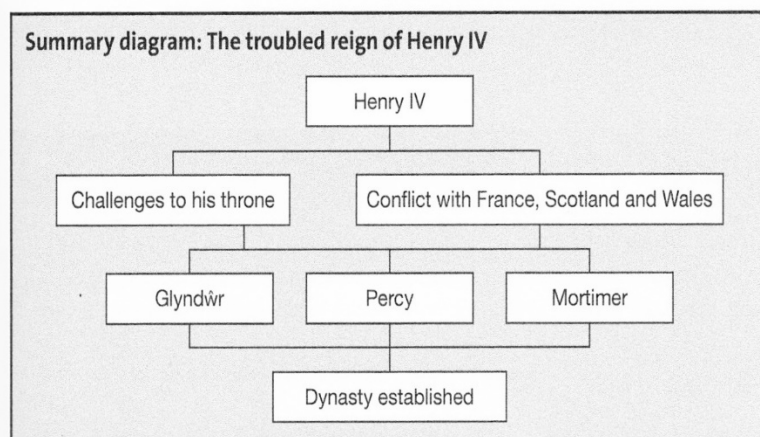
The Lancastrian dynasty established

By the beginning of 1410 Henry had finally secured his dynasty. He had defeated the Scots, Welsh and French, and suppressed numerous conspiracies and rebellions. Given the obstacles that faced him, Henry IV's achievements are impressive, but he was also the recipient of some good fortune:

- After 1404 the Scots no longer posed a threat owing to political differences within the kingdom. The death of King Robert III in 1406 was followed by the capture and confinement of his heir, the twelve-year-old James I, by Henry IV. James I was held captive in England for eighteen years before he was released by Henry VI on payment of a £40,000 ransom (nearly £19 million today).
- After 1407 the French were in no position to threaten Henry IV because of political infighting at court. Owing to the weak rule of the mentally ill Charles VI, the kingdom descended into civil war between two rival groups: the Duke of Orléans (Armagnac faction) and the Duke of Burgundy (Burgundian faction).
- By 1408 the English nobility had been cowed into submission, and there were to be no more conspiracies or rebellions after the defeat of the Earl of Northumberland at Bramham Moor.
- By 1410 the Glyndŵr rebellion was all but over. Although the Welsh continued to fight the English using guerrilla tactics for another two or three years, they no longer posed a threat to the English crown.

Death and succession

Despite Henry's achievements, the stresses and strains of ruling such a dangerous and unstable kingdom had taken their toll on his health. A sick Henry withdrew from public life and he invested his son and heir, Prince Henry, with the power to rule the kingdom. For nearly two years Prince Henry ruled with the assistance of a group of close advisers, chief among them was Henry Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester. Winchester suggested that, given the seriousness of the king's debilitating illness, the prince should persuade his father to abdicate. When Henry IV heard this he roused himself from his sickbed and, in November 1411, returned to take charge of the government. Prince Henry and Bishop Beaufort were dismissed from the royal council and replaced by men trusted by the king. Henry ruled for a further fourteen months before he finally succumbed to his illness and he died in March 1413. Shortly before he died Henry IV confirmed Prince Henry, the eldest of his four sons, as his successor.



Chapter summary

England's relationship with Europe developed significantly during the fifteenth century. Trade, diplomacy and war dominated this developing relationship, especially with France, which witnessed a century-long conflict for control of the kingdom. The usurpation of Richard II was a significant event that ended the succession of the direct line of Plantagenet kings. The usurper, Henry IV, endured a troubled reign. Besides complaints from Parliament over his extravagant spending, Henry endured a

decade-long rebellion (1400–10) by the Welsh under their charismatic leader Owain Glyndŵr. The most serious opposition to his kingship came from a number of powerful noble families who wished to remove him from the throne. The Percy Earls of Northumberland and the Mortimer Earls of March kept the flame of rebellion alive in England between 1403 and 1408. To add to his troubles, Henry also suffered periodic bouts of ill health; from 1410 he ceased to rule effectively after a series of strokes disabled him. Yet, in spite of the considerable obstacles placed before him, Henry IV succeeded in firmly establishing the Lancastrian dynasty on the English throne by the time of his death in 1413.

Henry V and the war in France 1413–22

Henry V was a man who commanded both respect and fear in equal measure. Apart from the failed rebellion of the Earl of Cambridge in 1415, there was no serious challenge to his kingship. His inspirational leadership, dominant personality and success in war against the French earned the respect and loyalty of the nobility. His greatest claim to fame was his victory over the French at the Battle of Agincourt. He died on the verge of settling the war with France in England's favour. His kingship is explored through three themes:

- ★ Henry V: the warrior king
- ★ Henry V and the conquest of France

The key debate on *page 33* of this chapter asks the question: Was Henry V an 'able but short-sighted adventurer'?

Key dates

1413 Henry V succeeded to the throne	1417 Henry's successful campaign to capture Normandy
1415 Conspiracy against Henry V	1419 The sealing of the alliance with Burgundy
Renewal of war against France	1420 Treaty of Troyes
English victory at the Battle of Agincourt	1421 Birth of son and heir, Henry
	1422 Death of Henry V

1 Henry V: the warrior king

► *What challenges did the new king face?*

The accession of Henry V

Henry V succeeded to the throne on the death of his father, Henry IV, in 1413. Described as tall, clean-shaven, sinewy and agile, Henry was a healthy 26-year-old when he assumed power. Henry was a warrior king and to him the principal functions of kingship were twofold: to defend the kingdom and to rule with justice. Henry had learnt the art of war in Wales against the rebels under Glyndŵr. So impressed was he by Glyndŵr's leadership that on becoming king he offered the Welshman a pardon, but the rebel refused. Nevertheless, after

 **KEY TERM**

Lollards Followers of John Wycliffe who derived their name from the medieval Dutch word meaning 'to mutter' (probably reflecting their style of worship, which was based on reading the scriptures).

 **KEY FIGURE****John Wycliffe (1324–84)**

A theologian, philosopher and religious reformer who taught at Oxford University. He was an influential dissident voice who criticised the wealth, power and corruption within the Church. He believed in the power of scripture and advocated the translation of the Bible into English. For this, he was declared a heretic.

Glyndŵr's death (thought to be in 1415) Henry recruited his only surviving son, Maredudd, into his household. Henry was determined to reconcile old adversaries and to bring peace to the kingdom. However, all was not well within England and Henry faced some serious challenges to his kingship. There were two main sources of opposition: the **Lollards** and dissident nobles.

The challenge of Lollardy

The Lollards, who were followers of **John Wycliffe**, were a minority religious reform movement who demanded an end to corruption in the Church and the translation of the scriptures into English. They were denounced by the Church as heretics but they were supported by a powerful group of knights at the court of Richard II. However, during Henry IV's reign, the Crown and Church had united against the Lollards and driven them underground. This persecution caused resentment and by the beginning of Henry V's reign some of the more radical Lollards planned to assassinate the king.

The leading Lollard knight and head of the conspiracy to murder the king was Sir John Oldcastle. Oldcastle had been among Henry V's most effective and loyal commanders in the war against the Welsh, but his support for Lollardy drove a wedge between the knight and his king. Under Henry's patronage Oldcastle had acquired wealth and power, and secured an advantageous marriage to an heiress, through whom he acquired the title of Lord Cobham. In 1413 some of Oldcastle's letters and manuscripts fell into the hands of his clerical critics, who used them to secure his arrest and trial for heresy. Oldcastle was found guilty and condemned to death, but the king spared his old comrade and imprisoned him in the Tower of London.

Oldcastle somehow escaped and fled to the Welsh border, where he began recruiting followers to join him in a rebellion against the Crown. He sent word to Lollard communities in the Midlands, the West Country and south-east England to join him in London in January 1414, where it was intended to capture and kill the king. However, only 250 Lollard rebels turned up rather than the 20,000 expected. The plan was discovered and the plotters were arrested before the rebellion could take place. Oldcastle went on the run for four years until his capture in 1418. He was hanged for treason and his body was burned on the gallows for heresy. According to Thomas Elmham, 'Lord Cobham, greatest and most beloved of the king's servants was the horn of Antichrist, arch-traitor to God and man'.

The Southampton Plot 1415

The Southampton Plot was hatched by a group of dissident nobles led by Richard, Earl of Cambridge, on the eve of Henry V's departure for France in 1415. The plotters were motivated by anger, frustration and greed. Cambridge was embittered by his lack of wealth and status, while his leading co-conspirators, Henry, Lord Scrope of Masham, and Sir Thomas Grey, felt aggrieved because Henry V appeared unwilling to reward them for their service.

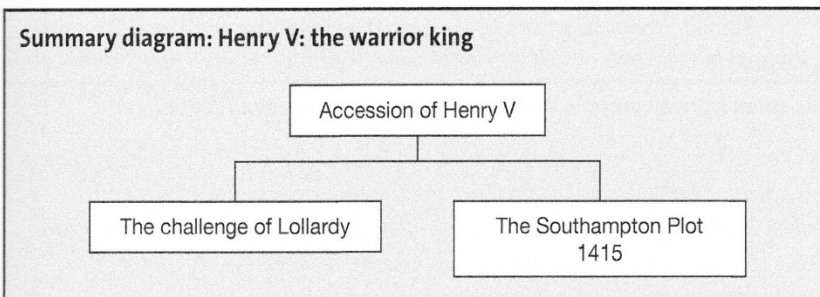
The plot consisted of a plan to remove Henry V and replace him with his brother-in-law Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March (see page 20). Cambridge had originally planned to take Mortimer to Wales to start a rebellion there, but this changed and it was decided to murder the king and his brothers at Southampton (see Source A). The plan failed when Mortimer lost his nerve and told the king about the conspiracy to assassinate him. Cambridge and his two henchmen were arrested, tried for treason and executed, but Mortimer was spared and eventually pardoned by the king.

SOURCE A

Tito Livio Frulovisi, an Italian humanist scholar and author of the *Vita Henrici Quinti* (a biography of Henry V written in 1437), relates the events of the plot against the king at Southampton.

During an inspection of the army, a great conspiracy was discovered, led by three men. One of these was a kinsman of the king, an earl, the second was Thomas Grey, who held an important position among the king's councillors; the third was Henry Scrope, a knight who until this time, had ever been an ornament of chivalry. When they had been arrested and confessed their crimes they were punished according to the custom of the kingdom.

Study Source A and the attribution. Why might the reliability of this source be questioned?



2 Henry V and the conquest of France

▶ How successful was Henry V's French campaign?

The French expedition

According to the chronicler Thomas Walsingham, Henry had set his sights on conquering France from the moment he succeeded to the throne. Henry was determined to renew England's war with France and thereby claim the French crown. Inspired by the warlike exploits of his great-grandfather, Edward III, Henry was infused with a sense of his own destiny, believing that glory on the

battlefields of France awaited him. Henry believed that he had been chosen by God to humble the French and to bring them within the orbit of his power.

Henry summoned Parliament to meet in May 1414 and requested its support in his claim to the French crown. Parliament duly obliged and after some discussion it authorised an embassy to France to press Henry's claim to the throne. The embassy returned without a resolution to the claim, and a second Parliament met in November 1414 and authorised the sending of a second delegation of diplomats to the French court. This, too, failed because the French were hopelessly divided and could not come to a decision. In January 1415 Henry began to prepare for war (see Source B).

Henry V set sail for France in June 1415. He commanded an army estimated to have been 12,000 strong. The campaign began with the successful capture of the important port of Harfleur but the six-week siege had taken its toll on Henry's troops. Racked by dysentery – the bloody flux – and running short of supplies, Henry lost over 3000 men, a quarter of his force. Henry was advised to garrison Harfleur and return home to re-equip his army. Henry, however, decided to march the 130 miles (210 km) to the English-held port of Calais. Henry needed a quick victory that he hoped would tempt the French army into committing itself to a single decisive encounter. The French took the bait and marched to meet the English as they approached Calais, and the two sides drew up against each other at Agincourt.

SOURCE B

Adapted from an entry in Walsingham's *Historia Anglicana* (1414).

When affairs had been properly settled in Ireland, Scotland and Wales, Henry decided to win back the kingdom of France which belonged to him by birth-right. First, however, he sought advice in all the schools and universities from men learned in divine and human law whether he might justly and without fear of wrongdoing, seek to regain the crown of France by force of arms. Without exception they all agreed he might pursue this plan. The king then sent an embassy to France with instructions to present his claim to a council of the French and, if by any chance the French should refuse him justice, to announce to them that King Henry would come with an army to claim his right.

The Battle of Agincourt, October 1415

It soon became clear that Henry had underestimated the strength of his French opponents. Henry's army of roughly 8000 men faced a French army of over 12,000. Henry commanded a force of mainly longbowmen (more than half of whom were Welshmen) supported by men-at-arms and a small troop of cavalry. The French force was more mobile, consisting of mainly heavy cavalry with a small contingent of archers. Henry positioned his army in a muddy field bounded on one side by thick woods and on the other by a marsh. By using the terrain to his advantage, Henry had ensured that his army could not easily be

? Study Source B. How did Henry justify his claim to the French crown?

outflanked, while the muddy ground would slow the momentum of the cavalry attack.

The mass cavalry attack was met by a hail of English arrows that felled many French knights and panicked others. Unable to manoeuvre easily in the confines of the terrain, the French knights crashed into each other before withdrawing. Henry moved his cavalry up to capture hundreds of dismounted French knights unable to flee the battlefield. As the French regrouped, ready to mount a fresh attack, they were joined by reinforcements. On seeing this, Henry ordered that all the French captives should be put to death (see Source C). In the opinion of Tito Livio Frulovisi, Henry did this because 'The English were greatly outnumbered even by their French prisoners and were afraid lest they should have to fight again against their own captives as well as the new army.'

Henry's victory at Agincourt stunned the French. An anonymous Parisian writer recorded the shock of the defeat: 'Never since Christ was born has anyone done so much damage to France.' Unfortunately for Henry, he was unable to take advantage of the victory at Agincourt. His army was exhausted, desperately short of food and much reduced in size and strength. He was in no position to fight another battle. He returned home to prepare for another campaign.

SOURCE C

From Jean de Waurin, *Recueil des croniques d'Engleterre (English Chronicles)*, 1399–1422. Waurin was the illegitimate son of a Flemish knight, Robert de Waurin, who fought with the French at the battle and was killed. Waurin witnessed the battle.

When the King of England perceived them coming thus he caused it to be published that every one that had a prisoner should immediately kill him, which those who had any were unwilling to do, for they expected to get great ransoms for them. But when the King was informed of this he appointed a gentleman with two hundred archers whom he commanded to go through the host and kill all the prisoners, whoever they might be. This esquire, without delay or objection, fulfilled the command of his sovereign lord, which was a most pitiable thing, for in cold blood all the nobility of France was beheaded and inhumanly cut to pieces, and all through this accursed company, a sorry set compared with the noble captive chivalry, who when they saw that the English were ready to receive them, all immediately turned and fled, each to save his own life. Many of the cavalry escaped; but of those on foot there were many among the dead.

Study Source C. Why were some of the English troops reluctant to obey the king's order to kill their prisoners?

The Normandy campaign 1417–19

Having strained the kingdom's military and financial resources, Henry was unable to follow up his triumph at Agincourt for two years. During this period his uncle, Thomas Beaufort, Duke of Exeter, had successfully withstood a French attack on Harfleur in 1416. Keen to renew his campaign in France, Henry focused on the conquest of Normandy, which began in August 1417 with the landing

of an English army of 12,000 men at the mouth of the River Touques. Henry's campaign was swift and successful, and in less than two years the strategically important city of Rouen had been captured and the duchy had been conquered. At its conclusion Henry was again forced to halt all military operations owing to dwindling supplies and lack of finance. Fortunately for Henry V, the bitter conflict between competing members of the French aristocracy left Paris undefended, enabling the English to take the city without a fight.

The French court was weak and divided because the king, Charles VI, was suffering from a mental illness, and was unable to control the ambitious French nobles. There were two rival groups vying for power at court:

- The Armagnac group was led by Bernard VII, Count of Armagnac, and included his son-in-law, Charles, Duke of Orléans, and the Dauphin, Charles, the son and heir of Charles VI.
- The Burgundian group was led by **John the Fearless**, Duke of Burgundy, and after his assassination in 1419 by his son, Philip the Good.

The rivalry between the two groups had erupted into civil war as far back as 1411. Henry V had planned to take advantage of this strife but in his first campaign he had found the French to be far stronger than he had anticipated. The army that confronted him at Agincourt and had fought him in the Normandy campaign had consisted of troops recruited and led by the Armagnacs. Thus far the Burgundians had remained neutral, but this changed with the assassination of John the Fearless in 1419.

The Burgundian alliance 1419–20

Henry realised that he was unlikely to win a war against the French by military means alone. He thus added a diplomatic string to his bow by negotiating an alliance with the Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Good. Henry was able to do this because Philip's father, John the Fearless, had been murdered by the heir to the French crown, the Dauphin, Charles (later King Charles VII). Prince Charles's regency of France had been challenged by his cousin, Duke John of Burgundy, who raised an army and captured Paris. On the fall of Paris an angry Dauphin ordered his cousin's assassination. This drove the Burgundians into the arms of the English, who took advantage of the civil strife to secure an alliance

KEY FIGURE

John the Fearless (1371–1419)

Succeeded his father, Philip the Bold, as Duke of Burgundy in 1404. He was one of the most powerful noblemen in France. He competed for power in France with Prince Louis of Orléans, younger brother of the French king, Charles VI. Following the assassination of Louis in 1407 John acted as regent when King Charles became mentally ill. However, he was ousted from power by the king's son and heir, Prince Charles. John was succeeded as Duke of Burgundy by his son, Philip the Good.

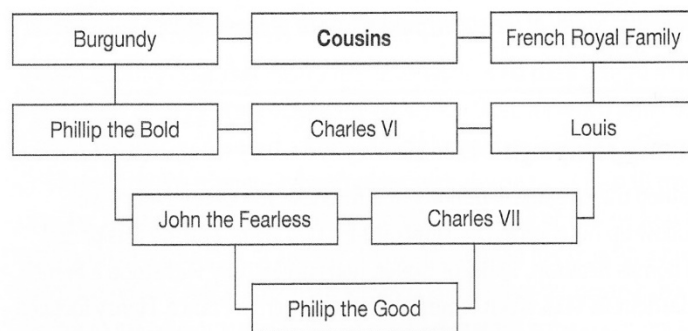


Figure 2.1 Family tree showing the relationship between the Burgundian and French royal families.

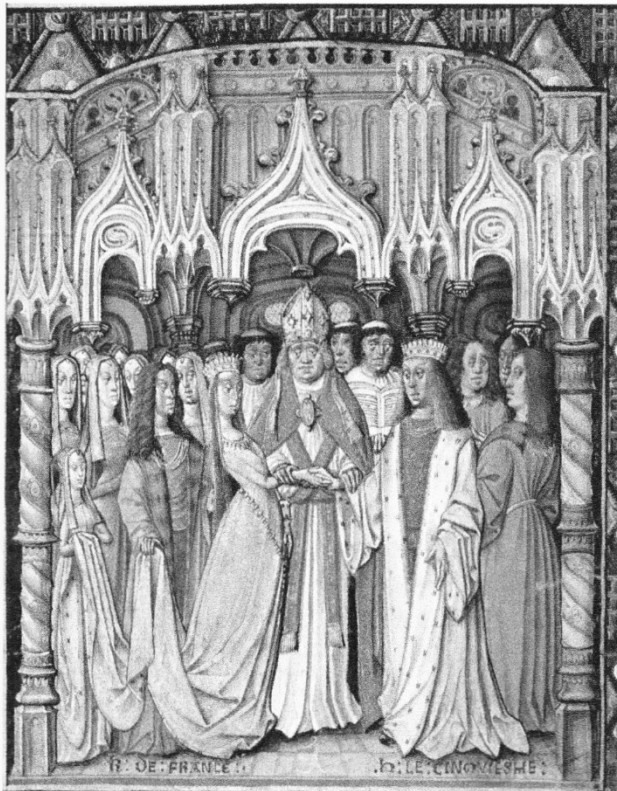
with Duke John the Fearless's successor, Duke Philip. Thus, Henry V was able to achieve his aim of taking Paris to successfully conclude his Normandy campaign.

The Burgundians now became the firm allies of the English and in May 1420 Duke Philip and Henry V sealed their alliance by signing the Treaty of Troyes. The treaty was highly significant because both sides agreed that:

- Henry V and his heirs would inherit the throne of France on the death of Charles VI.
- Charles VI's daughter, Catherine, would marry Henry V (see Source D).
- The Dauphin, Charles, was to be formally disinherited.
- Large tracts of land around Boulogne and Calais were given to Henry V, which he added to his gains in Normandy.

Following the capture by Henry V of Charles, Duke of Orléans, at Agincourt (he was to remain a prisoner in England until 1440), and the death of Bernard, Count of Armagnac, in 1418, the Armagnac group effectively disintegrated. Only the Dauphin remained but he was forced to flee south with a small band of followers. With the support of the Duke of Burgundy, allied to the detention of the insane French king, Charles VI, it seemed as if the whole of France now lay at Henry's feet.

SOURCE D



Marriage of Henry V of England to Catherine of Valois. This is a fourteenth-century drawing made in France by an unknown artist.

Study Source D. Why might viewers of this image conclude that the marriage was not universally popular with the French people?



The Dauphin strikes back

Most historians agree that the Treaty of Troyes was Henry's greatest triumph because it made him the regent and legal heir to Charles VI. The importance of the Burgundian alliance should not be underestimated because Henry's power in France depended heavily on his allies. Secure in his triumph, Henry returned with his bride to England. In Henry's absence, the Dauphin had been busy building up a power base in central and south-eastern France. Here he rallied his supporters and launched an offensive against the Anglo-Burgundian forces. The Dauphin's forces (known as Orléanists), supported by a force of Scots (traditional allies of the French), captured the fortified town of Bauge and killed its commander, Thomas, Duke of Clarence, Henry V's brother. Henry returned once more with an army to France and sought out the Dauphin but the latter evaded battle.

Henry now set his sights on wearing his opponent down by laying waste to vast tracts of land and by taking one fortified town after another. It was a slow, laborious task and one which took its toll on his troops. According to the chronicler Thomas Walsingham, Henry 'laid siege to the town of Meaux which was full of rebels. Because of the fighting and the lack of food, a great part of the king's army was exhausted and fell sick, and most returned to England.' Henry stubbornly refused to end the siege but as it wore on the shortage of food and clean water eventually struck him down too. After taking the town Henry contracted dysentery and died after a short, painful illness in August 1422.

Henry's legacy

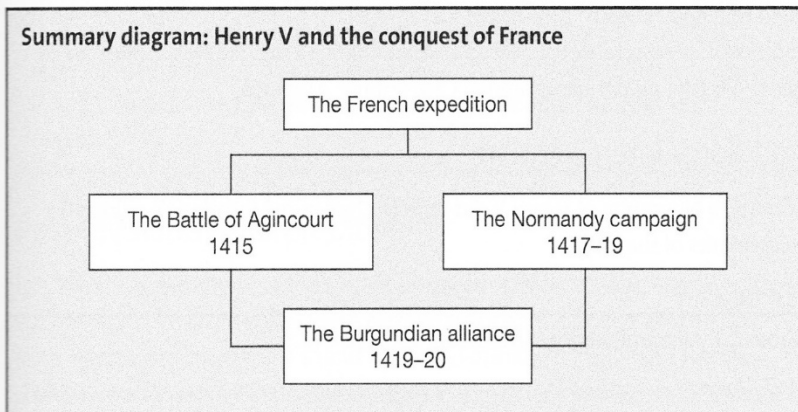
Henry's most enduring legacy was war. He was a warrior by training and by inclination, and his ambition to secure the French crown set the tone for his reign. Although Henry spent the majority of his kingship focused on France, he ensured that England was well governed during his absences on campaign. Unfortunately for Henry, he never lived to secure the French crown; he died two months before Charles VI. The accession was disputed by the Dauphin, who continued the fight to succeed his father as king of France. The war would continue for another 30 years and end in defeat for the English.

Henry left a legacy of uncertainty over the kingship for although he and Catherine had a son, his heir, Henry, was only nine months old when he succeeded to the crown of England. The government of the kingdom was entrusted to a ruling council of nobles led by the infant king's uncles, John, Duke of Bedford, and Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester. Although they were effective in uniting the kingdom and successful in prosecuting the war against the French (at least until 1431), their achievements were to be undermined by the weak rule of Henry VI (see pages 38–50).

In the opinion of historian David Cook (writing in 1983):

[Even if Henry V] had lived, it is doubtful whether [he] could have ever have firmly established the Lancastrian dynasty in France. The spirit of resistance, albeit somewhat dimmed, still shone in many areas of France. In England, on the contrary, there were definite signs of war-weariness. Henry was hard pressed for both men and money in the last years of his reign. Parliament had readily granted taxation in a first flush of enthusiasm for the war, but by the early 1420s the Commons were growing increasingly reluctant. Loans postponed the inevitable crisis, but as debts mounted so creditors became ever more wary.

Summary diagram: Henry V and the conquest of France



3 Key debate

► Was Henry V an 'able but short-sighted adventurer'?

The personality of Henry V and the nature and achievements of his rule are hotly debated by historians. Henry has long been admired and lauded for his courageous exploits on the battlefield. The victory at Agincourt inspired poets and playwrights to praise Henry in verse and song. Even usually more sober chroniclers were apt to wax lyrical about Henry. The author of the *Gesta Henrici Quinti* (*Chronicle of Henry V*), Thomas Elmham (died in 1427), wrote:

Nor, indeed, is evidence to be found in the chronicles or annals of kings of which our long history makes mention, that any king of England ever achieved so much in so short a time and returned home with so great and so glorious a triumph.

The man most responsible for immortalising Henry's greatness was William Shakespeare (died in 1616). His play *Henry V* and its depiction of Henry as a heroic figure did much to solidify the king's historical reputation for greatness. In the play, Henry is described as being 'full of valour as of kindness. Princely in both.' Elsewhere the king is quoted as saying 'But if it be a sin to covet honour,