

THE NORMAN INVASION TO BRITAIN

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The Struggle for the Succession of Thrown : 1075- 1225

The Norman Conquest happened because there was a dispute about which man should succeed Edward the Confessor as king of England in 1066. The rules governing the royal succession in late Anglo-Saxon England were far from settled or clear. There was no fixed principle of male primogeniture (succession by the eldest son or the eldest surviving male relative) Lineal descent from father to son might be desirable as far as most kings were concerned; but several eleventh-century kings (Harold 'Harefoot', Harthacnut and William I) did not leave a son to succeed them. And further, where there was more than one surviving son, as in 1087 and 1100, the eldest did not automatically take precedence over his younger brothers. Before the events of the eleventh century can usefully be described, therefore, it is important to grasp how controversial and problematic the choice of a new English king could be, and to understand what factors might lead to the success of one claimant to the throne and the failure of others.

In 911, a group of Vikings (Danes) under the leadership of Rollo besieged Paris and Chartres. After a triumph near Chartres on 26 August, the French Carolingian ruler Charles the Simple decided to negotiate with Rollo, resulting in the Treaty of Saint-Clair-sur-Epte. The Vikings were granted all the land between the river Epte and the sea, as well as Brittany. In exchange for the land, the Norsemen under Rollo were expected to protect the coast and to halt further Viking incursions. Their settlement proved successful, and the Vikings in the region became known as the "Northmen" from which "Normandy" and "Normans" are derived. The Normans quickly melted into the native culture, renouncing paganism and converting to Christianity. Gradually distinctions became less clear as intermarriage, especially with native women, diluted racial identity and promoted bilingualism; they adopted the langue d'oïl of their new home and added features from their own Norse language, transforming it into the Norman language.

In the spring of 1002, Emma, the sister of Duke Richard II of Normandy, crossed the Channel to England and married King Aethelred II (978–1016), he had been married and had children . By the twelfth century, this episode was already regarded as the first link in a long chain of events which ended with the Norman Conquest. According to Orderic Vitalis, it was through Emma that the Normans 'won power in England'. And Henry of Huntingdon stated that 'from this union of the English king with the daughter of the Norman duke, the Normans were justified according to the law of peoples, in both claiming and gaining possession of England'.¹ It is certainly correct to say that, whatever hereditary claim Duke William of Normandy had to the English throne in 1066, it derived ultimately from the marriage of 1002.

Aethelred II was succeeded by Edmund, his eldest surviving son by his first wife, not by Emma of Normandy. Edmund in turn was replaced by a Danish invader, Cnut, whose two sons by different partners (the second of whom was the same Emma who had married Aethelred) succeeded him. With the failure of the Danish line, Emma's surviving son by Aethelred, Edward the Confessor (called "The Confessor" because of his construction of Westminster Abbey) who spent many years in exile in Normandy, succeeded to the English throne in 1042.

When King Edward the Confessor died childless, the failure to leave an obvious heir of his own, on the 5th of January 1066, England faced a succession crisis in which several contenders laid claim to the throne of England. Edward's brother in law immediate successor was the Earl of Wessex, Harold Godwinson, the richest and most powerful of the English aristocrats and noblemen . Harold, elected king by the Witenagemot of England and crowned by the Archbishop of York, Ealdred, was linked to the royal family through marriage rather than descent. Harold was immediately challenged by two powerful rulers . On the one hand, Duke William claimed that he had been chosen and promised the throne of England by King Edward and that Harold had earlier sworn on the relics of a martyred saint that he would support his right to be designated as the next king. On the other hand, The Norwegian king Harald Hardrada, as another rival, also contested the succession. His justification to the throne was was even more tenuous than William's as his claim was based on an agreement between his predecessor Magnus I of Norway and the earlier English king, Harthacnut, whereby if either died without heir, the other would

inherit both England and Norway. Harald invaded northern England in September 1066 and he was victorious at the Battle of Fulford, but Harold defeated and killed him at the Battle of Stamford Bridge on 25 September 1066.

Harold was viewed as a usurper by Duke William of Normandy, who justified his claim through his blood relationship with Edward (they were distant cousins), and that his ambitions for the English throne have been encouraged to throw by Edward who embroiled in conflict with the formidable Godwin and his sons.

In mid September, Hardrada's invasion force landed on the Northern English coast, sacked a few coastal villages on 20 September at the Battle of Fulford and headed towards the city of York. Hardrada, leading a fleet of more than 300 ships carrying perhaps 15,000 men, was joined in his effort by Tostig, Harold's exiled brother. Tostig raided south-eastern England with a fleet he had recruited in Flanders, later joined by other ships from Orkney. Threatened by Harold's fleet, he moved north and raided in East Anglia and Lincolnshire. He was driven back to his ships by the brothers Edwin, Earl of Mercia, and Morcar, Earl of Northumbria. Deserted by most of his followers, he withdrew to Scotland, where he spent the middle of the year recruiting fresh forces.

In London, news of the invasion sent King Harold hurriedly north at the head of his army picking up reinforcements along the way. The speed of Harold's forced march allowed him to surprise Hardrada's army on September 25, as it camped at Stamford Bridge outside York. A fierce battle followed. Hand to hand combat ebbed and flowed across the bridge. Finally the Norsemen's line broke and the real slaughter began. Hardrada was killed and then the King's brother, Tostig. What remained of the Viking army fled to their ships. So devastating was the Viking defeat that only 24 of the invasion force's original 240 ships made the trip back home. Resting after his victory, fate dealt Harold a cruel stroke. On September 27 the wind turned around and began to blow briskly from the south. Within a few hours, William had his ships in the water and was heading for the English coast. He landed unchallenged at Pevensey the following morning, and quickly moved to capture the nearby fortified town of Hastings.

The Norman Conquest and the Battle of Hastings

As recently as 1064 Harold had sworn an oath of fealty to William at Bonneville-sur-Touques, albeit in difficult circumstances, and in 1051 Edward the Confessor had designated William as his heir. William decided to pursue his claim and right by force to take the crown that he had been denied, and he assembled an invasion fleet which landed at Pevensey on 28 September 1066. When this news reached Harold, who was returning from his victory over the Danes at Stamford Bridge in Yorkshire, he pressed on to London arriving there about 6 October.

All through the summer, William made preparations for the invasion. He assembled a large invasion fleet and gathered an army of noblemen and adventurers from Normandy and all over France, including large Frankish contingents from Brittany and Flanders. He mustered his forces at Saint-Valery-sur-Somme and was ready to cross the Channel by about 12 August. William's forces were unknown; the army consisted of cavalry, infantry, and archers or crossbowmen, with about equal numbers of cavalry and archers and the foot soldiers equal in number to the other two types combined to sustain a long war. To carry this massive force across the English Channel, William built close to 700-1000 ships. The most important of these was the Pope Alexander II's consent, particularly when he heard of the broken oath, signified by a papal banner for the invasion, along with diplomatic support from other European rulers. Among the fighting knights of Northern France, promised lands, titles and support in the new kingdom, who joined William were Eustace, Count of Boulogne, Charles Martel, Roger de Beaumont, Roger de Montgomerie and the monk René. As the summer drew to a close, William felt confident. With a huge, well-prepared army and the blessing of the pope, how could he be defeated?

During August and September, a strong northeasterly wind blew constantly, keeping William's invasion fleet in Normandy and preventing it from putting in the sea. There were probably other reasons for William's delay, including intelligence reports from England revealing that Harold's forces were deployed along the coast. William would have preferred to delay the invasion until he could make an unopposed landing.

The timing could not have been worse for the Saxons. The winds changed and William's fleet crossed the Channel, landing on the Saxon coast unopposed on 28th September 1066. However, a few ships were blown off

course and landed at Romney, where the Normans fought the local *fyrð*. Safely landed at Pevensey Bay, William built a fortification (a wooden castle) and then moved further east to Hastings; from which they raided and ravaged the surrounding area which was known to be part of Harold's personal earldom.

On the other side of the Channel, Harold Godwinson also was making preparations. Practically from the moment he was crowned, he had expected a challenge from William. Harold, therefore, had moved much of his army to the southern coast. Even so, reports of the huge military build-up in Normandy worried him. The sight of the weather vane pointing to the northeast every morning, however, helped to boost Harold's confidence. It is unclear when Harold learned of William's landing, but it was probably while he was travelling south. Harold stopped in London for about a week before reaching Hastings, so it is likely that he took a second week to march south, averaging about 27 miles (43 kilometres) per day, for the nearly 200 miles (320 kilometres) to London. Although Harold attempted to surprise the Normans, William's scouts reported the English arrival to the duke. The exact events preceding the battle are obscure, but all agree that William led his army from his castle and advanced towards the enemy. Harold had taken a defensive position at the top of Senlac Hill (present-day Battle, East Sussex), about 6 miles (10 kilometres) from William's castle at Hastings. Harold's army at Hastings ranged between 7000 and 8000 English troops. These men would have been a mix of the *fyrð* (levies), or militia mainly composed of foot soldiers, and the English men-at-arms (housecarls), or nobleman's personal troops, who usually also fought on foot. The main difference between the two types was in their armour; the housecarls used better protecting armour than that of the *fyrð*. Few individual Englishmen are known to have been at Hastings; the most important were Harold's brothers Gyrth and Leofwine.

The sources for the Battle of Hastings are abundant but problematic. The full and detailed accounts offered by the Bayeux Tapestry and William de Poitiers are evocative and compelling. According to William de Poitiers, the battle began at about 9 am on 14 October 1066 and lasted all day. Although the two sides had roughly the same number of troops at their disposal, the armies they commanded were organised very differently; William had both cavalry and infantry, including many archers, while Harold had only foot soldiers and few archers. The English soldiers formed up as a shield wall along the ridge, and were at first so effective that William's army was thrown back with heavy casualties. Some of William's Breton troops panicked and fled disorderly retreat, horsemen could have pursued the retreating French troops down the hill and turned a flight into a rout. Norman cavalry then surrounded and slaughtered pursuing troops. While the Bretons were fleeing, rumours also circulated that the duke William himself had been killed. Only when he rode shouting through his troops and raising his helmet so that they could see his face, a scene famously depicted on the Bayeux Tapestry. Twice more the Normans made feigned withdrawals, tempting the English into pursuit, and allowing the Norman cavalry to attack them repeatedly.

In the afternoon, the death of Harold was the decisive event which finally broke the resolve of the English and swung the battle in the Normans favour. Different stories and interpretations are told about Harold's end. William of Jumièges claimed that Harold was killed at the beginning of the battle, but most of sources disagree with this. The most famous interpretation was derived from The Bayeux Tapestry which showed Harold's death by an arrow through his eye. By nightfall, the English were either dead on the field or being captured by the Normans. William and his men spent the night camping on the battlefield. Some time later the battle was pictured on a series of panels called the Bayeux Tapestry. His victory at Hastings gave Duke William the nickname he has been known by ever since: 'William the Conqueror'

The aftermath of the battle of Hastings

After the Battle of Hastings which was a major turning point in English history, William still had to conquer England. He marched from Hastings, crossing the Thames at Wallingford, and then on towards London. At Berkhamsted he received the surrender of the city. William took hostages to ensure that the surrender was kept. William wanted to be crowned King as soon as possible. His coronation took place on Christmas Day, 1066. It was held at Westminster Abbey, which had been built by Edward the Confessor. During the Coronation, as the people inside the Abbey shouted out their acceptance of William, the troops outside thought a fight had broken

out. Fearing that William had been attacked, they began to set fire to Saxon houses. As the Norman soldiers could not understand the language of the Saxons, and the Saxons could not understand the language of the Normans, it was difficult for them to communicate. Later, French became the language of the king's court and gradually blended with the Anglo-Saxon tongue to give birth to modern English. William I proved an effective king of England for more than 20 years, and the "Domesday Book," a great census of the lands and people of England, was among his notable achievements.

Normans' Achievements

The consequences of the Norman Conquest were many and varied. Further, some effects were much longer-lasting than others. Still, the following list which summarizes what most historians agree on as some of the most important changes the Norman Conquest brought in England:

- Norman landlords took place of the majority of Anglo-Saxon landowning elite.
- Power and wealth were held by a minority.
- Even bishops were replaced with Norman ones and many archdioceses' headquarters were relocated to other cities.
- The Feudal system was introduced to England and developed as William gave out lands in return for military service (either in person or a force of knights paid for by the landowner).
- The rise of Manors and Manorialism
- William took control of North England by force leading to severe damages circa 1069-70 CE.
- The reduction of Domesday Book which was "a detailed and systematic catalogue of the land and wealth in England was compiled in 1086-7 CE".
- Foreign affairs and trade between England and Europe greatly increased.
- France and England became historically intertwined, initially due to the crossover of land ownership, i.e. "Norman nobles holding lands in both countries" Fiefs and families.
- The French language was used as a prestigious court language which led to a significant change in the syntax and vocabulary of the Anglo-Saxon Germanic language.
- They built Abbeys and Cathedrals. It is thanks to the Normans that the Architecture of castles had developed.

Conclusion

The struggle did not come to an end as a matter of fact. After William's death, his sons raced for power and fought each other to win both the throne of England and the Dukedom of Normandy. These wars led to years of discontent and instability that ended mainly with the rise of the House of Plantagenet with Matilda of Normandy and Geoffrey of Anjou. The Anarchy period and the division of the kingdom will be explained in the next lectures.

The Anarchy: England's Medieval Civil War

The English Civil War occurred in the seventeenth century, and was fought between supporters of the King and those who wanted him punished. However, centuries before this, in the twelfth century, another civil war waged across the country between two competing claimants to the throne. This period, known as The Anarchy, lasted for nearly twenty years and almost destroyed the country.

The White Ship Disaster, where around 300 young members of the European nobility perished in a shipwreck. The White Ship Disaster of 1120 directly impacted on the Anarchy which began 15 years later. One of the victims of the disaster was William Adelin, heir to the throne of England, being Henry I's only legitimate son. After William's death, Henry was not successful in fathering another male heir before his death, and as such his only heir was his only legitimate daughter, Matilda.

Matilda was born in 1102, and had been married to the Holy Roman Emperor Henry V whilst still a child. This had given her the title of Empress of Germany. Her husband had died in 1125, 5 years after the White Ship Disaster, and Matilda was recalled to Normandy by her father, Henry I. Matilda was swiftly married to the less illustrious, but still important, Geoffrey of Anjou in order for Henry to have support to protect the southern borders of English lands in France. It was around this time that Henry designated Matilda as his heir, as his hopes of fathering a son were increasingly unlikely to be fulfilled. The hope was partially that Matilda and Geoffrey would quickly create a son who could grow up to a reasonable age before Henry's death, in order to pass the throne to him.

In 1135, Henry I died. Henry had done all he could to ensure the throne would pass to Matilda on his death – whilst her gender was obviously a disadvantage, Henry had made all of his court swear an oath of loyalty to her and her heirs on three separate occasions, and it seemed reasonably likely that Matilda would succeed him. However, this is where the influence of the White Ship again comes into play. Stephen of Blois, Henry I's nephew, was meant to have been on the fateful ship, but took ill prior to the voyage and didn't end up embarking. Upon Henry's death, with Matilda and Geoffrey caught up in fighting in Anjou, Stephen took his chance. He was currently in Boulogne, and when news of Henry's death arrived he hurried to England along with his military household. Many of Matilda's supporters were stuck in Normandy, having taken an oath that they would not leave until Henry was properly buried. Matilda and Geoffrey advanced to Normandy, seizing a number of castles, but were prevented from advancing further.

As such, Stephen was the first to reach England. It appears that Stephen may have been denied access to the ports of Dover and Canterbury by Robert of Gloucester, who may have been protecting Matilda's claims, but nonetheless Stephen managed to make land probably in his own estates by the edge of London. With Matilda still stuck in France, Stephen made his move and began to seize power. The citizens of London proclaimed Stephen king, whilst Stephen's brother, Henry of Blois, who was Bishop of Winchester, rallied Church support for his claim. There were some issues for Stephen – he had been amongst those who had sworn to uphold Matilda's claim to the throne upon Henry's death, and as this was a religious oath, some members of the church were hesitant to support him. Henry of Blois put forwards numerous arguments as to why this should not impede Stephen, and he also persuaded Henry's royal steward to swear that on Henry I's deathbed he had changed his mind and nominated Stephen to be his successor. With Matilda still in France, Stephen was crowned King of England at Westminster Abbey on 26th December, 1135.

Stephen had immediate problems. The Scottish King David I, who was Matilda's uncle, invaded the north, taking key strongholds. Stephen had to immediately march north with an army to stop David, and an agreement was made between the two. At Easter 1136, Stephen held his first royal court, where he did everything he could to bring the nobility onto his side. He positioned himself as Henry's natural successor, promising to uphold all of Henry's popular policies, and much money was spent on the festivities, with lavish gifts being distributed, and numerous grants of land and favour being granted. Later that year, Pope Innocent II confirmed Stephen as lawful king.

However, Stephen was not in the clear. Welsh uprisings early in the year had been successful, which encouraged further rebellions across south Wales in 1137. Revolts occurred in south-west England too, with people defecting to Normandy to criticise the king from a safe distance. Matilda and Geoffrey had not been quiet either; in early 1136, shortly after Stephen's coronation, Geoffrey attacked Normandy, but Stephen had to stay in England to deal with issues there and could do little to prevent him. Stephen tried to retake land on the Normandy-Anjou border in 1137 which had been seized by Geoffrey in 1135, but his army ended up fighting itself and then his Norman forces deserted him.

Whilst Stephen had been reasonably successful in stabilising England, much of the north was now at the mercy of the Scottish king, he had effectively abandoned Wales, and Normandy was destabilised by fighting. Even within England, barons began to feel that they had not been suitably rewarded by Stephen, and began to grow disgruntled. Moreover, the royal coffers were almost empty from the expense of war and a lavish court.

In 1138, the real fighting that defined the Anarchy began. Robert of Gloucester, who may have denied Stephen entry to the country in 1135, rebelled against Stephen. He was the illegitimate half-brother of Matilda, and one of the most powerful barons in the country. Importantly, he held lands not just in England, but also Normandy. Robert declared his support for the claim of his sister, Empress Matilda, and this triggered a major rebellion across the south-west of England. This encouraged Matilda and Geoffrey to take action – Geoffrey once again invaded Normandy, and David I once again invaded the north of England, announcing his support for his niece's claim. This was a powerful three-pronged initiative.

However, Stephen acted swiftly, once again focusing on holding England. He sent his wife, Queen Matilda, to Kent to deal with Robert's rebels, whilst a small retinue was sent north to deal with the Scots. Stephen headed west to retake several rebelling counties, although he was unable to take Bristol. Stephen managed to once again negotiate peace with David, but this came at the expense of giving land in Carlisle and Cumberland to David, which greatly aggravated its current owner, the Earl of Chester.

By 1139, Geoffrey and Matilda had conquered a significant proportion of Normandy, and felt secure enough to begin mobilising forces with Robert to cross to England. Stephen sussed up his defenses by creating new earldoms and promoting men he considered loyal and militarily capable to help him hold land when Matilda inevitably attacked. Both sides built new castles to protect their territory, with some of Matilda's supporters in England building castles in the south-west.

Matilda was hindered somewhat by her sex, as she was not allowed, as a woman, to lead an army into battle. As Geoffrey never crossed to England during the war, instead holding Normandy, Matilda's forays into England had to be led by senior nobles. In this, her half-brother Robert was most important; he was well known for his military experience and leadership ability, and his close relationship to Matilda meant he could be reasonably relied upon to stay loyal.

In August 1139, Matilda's initial invasion began. Some of her forces crossed the channel to Wareham to try and capture a port for Matilda's forces to land, but they were repelled by Stephen's forces and had to retreat to the south-west. However, in September, Matilda was invited by the Dowager Queen Adeliza (who had been the second wife of Matilda's father, Henry I) to land in her lands at Arundel, West Sussex. At the end of September Matilda and her brother Robert landed with 140 knights. Robert marched north-west to raise support, and to meet up with the dispersed forces from the first landing attempt, whilst Matilda stayed at Arundel Castle.

Stephen ignored the other troops and immediately besieged Arundel, trapping Matilda. Stephen agreed to a truce, and released Matilda from the siege to allow her and her knights to be escorted to the south-west where she was reunited with Robert. The reasons why Stephen allowed this are not quite known, although it could have come from a sense of chivalry, or because Arundel Castle was considered impregnable, or because he worried about keeping his army at Arundel whilst Robert roamed freely. In this, Matilda's sex

may have been to her advantage – it would have been frowned upon to include Matilda in warfare as a woman, and her male half-brother would probably have been viewed as far more of a threat.

Whatever the reason, this proved to be a mistake for Stephen. Matilda managed to consolidate her support in the south-west, and controlled territory from Devon and Cornwall, across Gloucester and Bristol, into the Welsh Marches, and even across to Oxford and Wallingford, threatening London. In 1140, Stephen started to feel the effects of some of his neglected and disgruntled nobility. The Bishop of Ely, who had had his castles confiscated in 1139, rebelled in East Anglia – although unsuccessfully – whilst the Earl of Chester siezed Lincoln Castle, which he had previously held claims to, and eventually he defected to Matilda.

The spite of the Earl of Chester proved invaluable to Matilda. In 1141, Stephen and Chester took to battle on 2nd February. Stephen's centre was encircled by Robert and Chester's cavalry, and many of Stephen's supporters fled. Stephen was captured and taken back to Matilda's base in Gloucester. The two met, and then Stephen was transferred to Bristol castle.

Matilda swiftly began to take steps to make herself Queen. She managed to get Stephen's brother, Henry, to declare church support for her, and he handed over control of the royal treasury to her, even going as far as to excommunicate many of Stephen's supporters who refused to give Matilda their support. Everything seemed set in Matilda's favour: Stephen even released his subjects from their oath of fealty to him, which had placed many in a dilemma of whether they could morally abandon Stephen for Matilda.

Just after Easter, 1141, the clergy gathered in Winchester and declared Matilda Lady of England and Normandy, prior to her coronation. Matilda then moved to London to begin preparations for her coronation in June. She had the support of the man who controlled the Tower of London, but many were still loyal to Stephen. It was here that Matilda wilted under sexism; whilst in theory, many didn't have much issue about being ruled by a queen, in practice, her behaviour in London changed many minds. Matilda was very much her father's daughter, and held a lot of self-importance that was owed to her as previous Empress of Germany, and the soon-to-be Queen Regnant of England and Normandy. However, whilst she didn't behave in any way that would have been ill-considered of a king, as a woman these characteristics meant that many viewed her as un-womanly and unbecoming, and simply couldn't abide the realities of being dominated by a woman.

This sexism, combined with the remnants of support for Stephen, meant that just days before Matilda's planned coronation the City of London rose up against her. She and her followers only just managed to escape. Nonetheless, support for Matilda was still increasing. Many barons held land both in England and Normandy, and with Matilda and Robert seizing land in England, and Geoffrey siezing land in Normandy, many began to defect from Stephen towards Matilda in the interests of keeping their possessions.

Despite Stephen's captivity, his wife Queen Matilda had been working hard to maintain support for him. When London rose up against Empress Matilda, Queen Matilda led Stephen's loyal forces into the city. Queen Matilda later led forces towards the Empress, and Robert was captured. Queen Matilda attempted to use Robert as leverage to secure Stephen's release, but Robert refused to change sides. Eventually, Robert and Stephen swapped places, with Robert being returned to the Empress, and Stephen returned to the Queen. Stephen's legitimacy as king was renewed by the church under his brother Henry, and Stephen and Matilda were re-coronated during Christmas 1141.

Robert returned to Normandy to provide assistance to Geoffrey, whilst Matilda retreated to Oxford Castle. Stephen attempted to assail it, but it was too powerful a fortress, and so he settled down for a long winter siege to attempt to starve her and her forces out. However, Matilda managed to sneak out of the castle, crossing the icy river on foot, avoiding the royal army, and reached safety in Wallingford, allowing Oxford Castle to surrender the next day.

For the next few years, there was much of a stalemate. Numerous skirmishes continued, with lands being captured and recaptured. Stephen was almost captured by Robert once more at the Battle of Wilton in 1143, but he narrowly escaped. The same year, the Earl of Essex rebelled against Stephen, and in 1144 the Earl of Chester revolted once again. Robert continued to raid land in the west, and Wallingford Castle – close to London – continued to be held by Matilda's forces. At the beginning of 1144, King Louis VII of France recognised Geoffrey as Duke of Normandy, crippling Stephen's authority there.

By the late 1140s, however, most of the fighting was over. In 1147, Robert died, and Matilda's son Henry led a small, failed, mercenary invasion of England. Stephen allowed Henry to return home safely, perhaps as a way to build a relationship with him, and as an attempt to move towards peace in a dying war. Nobles began to make deals amongst themselves to maintain peace and secure land which again increased peace and reduced fighting.

Matilda switched her focus to the more secure Normandy, stabilising it, and moving her focus to promoting the rights of her son Henry's claim to the English throne. Henry once again returned to England in 1149, making an alliance with the Earl of Chester that made both Chester and the Scottish King happy, and plans were drawn up to attack the northern city of York. This quickly fell apart when Stephen rapidly marched north. Henry returned to Normandy where Geoffrey proclaimed him Duke of the duchy.

Henry began to gain a reputation as a capable leader, and in 1152 he unexpectedly married Eleanor of Aquitaine, an attractive woman who was recently divorced from the French King. This boosted his reputation, and the lands that Eleanor brought with her increased his influence and power. In 1153, Henry again led forces to England, and was again supported in the north by the Earl of Chester, and in the east by remnant loyal lands. Stephen agreed to a temporary truce and returned to London, but Henry now controlled much of the north, the midlands, and the south-west. By the summer, Stephen was slowly losing land to Henry.

Finally, in November 1153, Stephen agreed to the Treaty of Winchester where he recognised Matilda's son Henry as his adopted son and successor, as long as Henry gave homage to him. Stephen's son William would in turn pay homage to Henry and renounce his claims to the throne in return for security of his lands. This peace was precarious, though, and if Stephen lived for many years longer it would have been no guarantee for peace as either Henry or William may have made bids for power. However, on October 25th 1154 Stephen died. Henry was crowned Henry II in December 1154. The period of Anarchy was finally over.

The Anarchy had certainly been just that. For nearly 20 years much of the country was in turmoil. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle claimed that "there was nothing but disturbance and wickedness and robbery" and in many places, particularly in the south, there had certainly been periods of lawlessness. The centralised royal coinage system had been destroyed, with Stephen, Empress Matilda, and local lords all producing their own coins. Forest law had collapsed, and royal income severely damaged. Whilst Matilda was never successful in claiming her rightful title as Queen, she was comforted by the fact that her son was now King, and she continued to wield reasonable influence at court. Henry began a programme of reconciliation and rebuilding, and many were relieved that there was peace at last. Whilst Stephen was in many ways a successful king, and had managed to hold onto power until his death, his failure at securing succession for his own children, and subsequent criticism and propaganda of him has meant that there has never been another English king that bore his name.

The Plantagenets (1154-1399)

Angevins

- 1- Henry II (1154-1189)
- 2- Richard I "Richard the Lionheart/ son of Henry II" (1189-1199)
- 3- John "lack land /son of Henry II" (1199-1216)
- 4- Henry III "son of John" (1216-1272)
- 5- Edward I "son of Henry III" (1272-1307)
- 6- Edward II "son of Edward I" 1307-1327)
- 7- Edward III "son of Edward II" (1327-1377)
- 8- Richard II (1377-1399) "son of Edward the Black and grandson of Edward III"

The House of Lancaster (1399-1461, 1470-1471)

- 1- Henry IV "His father was the third son of King Edward III of England, John of Gaunt" (1399-1413)
- 2- Henry V "son of Henry IV" (1413-1422)
- 3- Henry VI "son of King Henry V" (1422-1461, 1470-1471)

The House of York (1461-1470, 1471-1485)

- 1- Edward IV "son of Richard, Duke of York" (1461-1470, 1471-1483)
- 2- Edward V "son of Edward IV" (1483)
- 3- Richard III "the fourth surviving son of Richard Plantagenet, the 3rd Duke of York" (1483-1485)

Introduction

The Plantagenets, sometimes referred to as the Angevin-Plantagenets, were the ruling dynasty of England from 1154 to 1485 CE. The name Angevin derives from the family's ancestral lands in Anjou, France and the term Plantagenet (perhaps) from the broom plant (*planta genista*) used in the coat of arms of Geoffrey, Count of Anjou (l. 1113-1151 CE), the father of the royal dynasty's founder Henry II. In these 331 years of English history, there were notable heroes and monarchs Henry II, known for legal reforms and the Thomas Becket conflict, Richard the Lionheart, a prominent figure of the Third Crusade, and Edward I, who sought to strengthen royal authority.

The Plantagenet era witnessed key and momentous events which included the signing of the Magna Carta in 1215 and the prolonged conflict with France known as the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453). The dynasty faced internal strife during the War of the Roses, a power struggle between the houses of Lancaster and York.

During this era, royal arms were created, castles and palaces were built, and the English language adopted at court as the influence of these monarchs far-outlasted their reigns. Notable monarchs of this dynasty included Henry II, known for legal reforms and the Thomas Becket conflict, Richard the Lionheart, a prominent figure of the Third Crusade, and Edward I, who sought to strengthen royal authority.

The dynasty, which had by then become the cadet branches of the Houses of Lancaster and York, came to an end with the defeat of Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485, leading to the establishment of the Tudor dynasty under Henry VII, who became known as Henry VII of England (r. 1485-1509 CE) and founder of the next royal house, the Tudors.

The Hundred Years War

Historians adopted the term 'Hundred Years' War' as a means to periodise all the events that culminated in the longest military conflict in European history (1337 to 1453). The conflict drew in many allies of the English House of Plantagenet against the French House of Valois over the right to rule the kingdom of France and the issue of sovereignty. The English royal family was French in origin. The House of Plantagenet originated from Anjou in the 1100s. Between 1154 until 1485, the English throne was occupied by Plantagenet rulers. Meanwhile, the House of Valois was the royal house of France from 1328 until 1589.

1-1-The causes of the Hundred Years' War

The seizure of English-held Gascony (Aquitaine, south-west France) by Philip VI of France.

The claim by the English king Edward III to be the rightful king of France.

The expedition of Edward III to take by force territories in France, protect international trade and win booty and estates for his nobles. In 1328, Charles IV of France died without any sons or brothers, and a new principle, Salic law, disallowed female succession. Charles's closest male relative was his nephew Edward III of England, whose mother, Isabella, was Charles's sister. Isabella claimed the throne of France for her son by the rule of proximity of blood, but the French nobility rejected this, maintaining that Isabella could not transmit a right she did not possess. An assembly of French barons decided that a native Frenchman Philip, who became later as Philip VI, should receive the crown, rather than Edward.

The ambition of Charles V of France to remove the English from France's feudal territories.

The descent into madness of Charles VI of France and the debilitating infighting amongst the French nobility.

The ambition of Henry V of England to legitimise his reign in England and make himself the king of France through conquest.

The determination of the Dauphin, future King Charles VII of France (r. 1422-1461), to regain his birthright and unify all of France.

The root causes of the conflict can be found in the demographic, economic, and social crises of 14th-century Europe. The outbreak of war was motivated by a gradual rise in tension between the kings of France and England about Guyenne, Flanders, and Scotland.

The Hundred Years' War started when king Edward III of England (r. 1327-1377) squabbled with Philip VI of France (r. 1328-1350) over feudal rights concerning Gascony and trade with the Low Countries. Edward also asserted that he was the rightful king of France and pressed this claim by winning great victories at the battles of Crécy (1346) and Poitiers (1356). In 1360, Edward renounced his claim to the French throne in return for lordship over a quarter of France. The war then continued as each side attempted to control north and southwest France. After Charles V of France (r. 1364-1380) steadily regained much of the lands lost since the war began, there was a period of peace when Richard II of England (r. 1377-1399) married the daughter of Charles VI of France (r. 1380-1422). Henry V of England (r. 1413-1422), eager to win glory, booty, and legitimacy for his own reign, then reignited the conflict with his stunning victory at the Battle of Agincourt in 1415 which enabled him to be nominated the heir to the French throne. After Henry V's untimely death and the ineffectual rule of Henry VI of England (r. 1422-61 & 1470-71), Charles VII of France (r. 1422-1461) retook the initiative. With help from such figures as the Duke of Burgundy and Joan of Arc (1412-1431), Charles won the war and managed to remove the English from all French territory except Calais.

Phases / Stages of the Hundred Years War

- The Edwardian War was driven by Edward III's ambition to maintain sovereignty in Aquitaine and assert his claim as the rightful king of France by unseating his rival, Philip VI of France.
- The Caroline War was named after Charles V of France, who resumed the war after the Treaty of Brétigny.
- The Lancastrian War was the third phase of the Anglo-French Hundred Years' War. It lasted from 1415, when Henry V of England invaded Normandy, to 1453, when the English failed to recover Bordeaux.
- Joan of Arc was a French peasant woman who had visions commanding her to drive out the invaders. She inspired the French troops, and they retook many French cities held by the English. Joan was burned at the stake and, 25 years after her death, declared a martyr.

1-3-The consequences and effects of the Hundred Years' War

- The loss of all English-held territory in France except Calais.
- A high number of casualties amongst the nobility, particularly in France.
- A decline in trade, especially English wool and Gascon wine.
- A great wave of taxes to pay for the war which contributed to social unrest in both countries.
- Innovations in forms of tax collection.
- The development of a stronger Parliament in England.
- The almost total bankruptcy of the English treasury at the war's end.
- The disagreement over the conduct of the war and its failure fuelled the dynastic conflict in England known as the Wars of the Roses (1455-1487 CE).
- The devastation of French towns and villages by mercenary soldiers between battles.
- Developments in weapons technology such as cannons.
- The consolidation of the French monarch's control over all of France.
- A greater use of international diplomacy and specialised diplomats.
- A greater feeling of nationalism amongst the populations of both countries.
- The creation of national heroes, notably Henry V in England and Joan of Arc in France.
- A tangible rivalry between the two nations which still continues today, seen particularly in sports such as football and rugby.

The War of the Roses

Wars of the Roses, (1455–85), in English history, the series of dynastic civil wars fought in medieval England from 1455 to 1485 between the House of Lancaster and the House of York for the English throne .whose violence and civil strife preceded the strong government of the Tudors. Fought between the Houses of Lancaster and York for the English throne, the wars were named many years afterward from the supposed badges of the contending parties: the white rose of York and the red of Lancaster.

2-1-Causes of the conflict

1) Both houses claimed to have a right to the English throne as direct descendents of King Edward III . It was a struggle to claim the throne between the families descended from Edward III and the families descended from Henry IV. The last Angevin ruler, King Richard II, died without an heir. He had been overthrown and murdered by Henry IV (i.e., Henry Bolingbroke, who was of the House of Lancaster through his father John of Gaunt). Henry IV's descendants and their supporters were the Lancastrian faction. The other branch, descended from Edward IV, were associated with families in the North of England, particularly the House of York and Richard of York. They are called the Yorkist faction.

2) The ruling Lancastrian king, Henry VI, surrounded himself with unpopular and corrupt nobles.

3)The untimely episodes of mental illness and weak rule of Henry VI which revived interest in Richard of York's claim to the throne. He was housed in the Tower of London for many years until he died.

4) The civil unrest of much of the population.

5) The availability of many powerful lords with their own private armies.

6) Margaret of Anjou - Wife of Henry VI, she took control of the country and led the fight against Henry's enemies.

7) Wars of the Roses were also caused by the structural problems of feudalism

The wars ended when Richard III, the last Yorkist king, was defeated at the battle of Bosworth in 1485 by Henry Tudor founder of the house of Tudor.

8) The effects of the Hundred Years War ; The English had just suffered their final defeat in the Hundred Years' War. Nearly a hundred years and five generations' worth of battling and occupying France, and finally losing was a cause of great upset to the population.

9) Financial problems and societal changes; the Black Plague which had caused enormous losses in population, which in turn caused a shortage of labor force to tend the crops. This caused severe inflation in the prices of labor and agricultural products, and, in years of crop failures, periods of grave famine. Furthermore, the death toll of the plague had caused a great shift in the social order; previously minor landholders grew wealthy and upwardly mobile, taking over lands whose owners had all died. The French Wars also had put a strain on the royal treasury.

Nobles who had grown in power during Henry's reign, but who did not like Henry's government, took matters into their own hands by backing the claims of the rival House of York, first to the regency, and then to the throne itself. After a violent struggle between the houses of Lancaster and York, Henry was deposed on 4 March 1461 by his cousin, Edward of York, who became King Edward IV. But Edward failed to capture Henry and his queen, and they were able to flee into exile abroad. During the first period of Edward IV's reign, Lancastrian resistance continued mainly under the leadership of Queen Margaret and the few nobles still loyal to her in the northern counties of England and Wales. Henry was captured by King Edward in 1465 and subsequently held captive in the Tower of London. Queen Margaret was exiled, first in Scotland and then in France. However, she was determined to win back for her husband and son, and with the help of King Louis XI of France she eventually allied with the Earl of Warwick, who had fallen out with Edward IV. Warwick returned to England, defeated the Yorkists in battle, set Henry VI free and restored him to the throne on 30 October 1470. Henry's return to the throne lasted a very short time. By this time, years in hiding followed by years as a prisoner had taken their toll on Henry, who had been weak-willed and mentally unstable to start with. Henry looked tired and vacant as Warwick and his men paraded him through the streets of London as the rightful King of England. Within a few months Warwick had went too far by declaring war on Burgundy, whose ruler responded by giving Edward IV the assistance he needed to win back his throne by force.

Battle of Bosworth Field (1485): Henry Tudor (soon to be King Henry VII), Earl of Richmond, lands in Wales on August 7, 1485 to challenge Richard III for the crown. Richard moves to meet Henry's army south of the village of Market Bosworth. After the armies engage, Lord Thomas Stanley and his brother Sir William switch sides and fight for Henry. Henry defeats the Yorkist forces, Richard is killed, and Henry ushers in the rule of the house of Tudor effectively ending the Wars of the Roses. Henry VII spends the next two years wiping out any other claimants to the throne.

