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# A Tamed Nobility? An Evaluation of the Relationship between the English Monarchy and the Late Medieval Peerage

Elizabeth Paige Long

*Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College*, [elong6@lsu.edu](mailto:elong6@lsu.edu)

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A TAMED NOBILITY? AN EVALUATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP  
BETWEEN THE ENGLISH MONARCHY AND THE LATE MEDIEVAL  
PEERAGE

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
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by

Elizabeth Paige Long  
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To my father... who's fighting spirit during his battle with cancer this past year has been a source of inspiration and has encouraged me to keep fighting in the face of difficulties.

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## ABSTRACT

The fifteenth century in England was an extremely tumultuous period. The beginning of the century saw the continuation and eventual end of the Hundred Years War while the latter half saw a period of noble-led civil war known as the Wars of the Roses. The Wars of the Roses lasted for approximately thirty years and spanned the reigns of four kings: Henry VI, Edward IV, Richard III, and Henry VII. The English peerage was intimately involved throughout the entire conflict. Nobles such as Richard, Duke of York and Richard, Earl of Salisbury were responsible for beginning the Wars of the Roses, and other members of the nobility supported the Duke of York and the deposition of Henry VI in favor of Edward IV in 1461. Nine years later, Richard, Earl of Warwick and George, Duke of Clarence were responsible for the brief deposition of Edward IV. In 1483, the Duke of Buckingham aided Richard III in usurping his young nephew. Finally, in 1485, John, Earl of Oxford, Jasper, Earl of Pembroke, and Thomas, Lord Stanley were integral in placing Henry VII on the throne.

Some scholars have argued that Henry VII recognized that the main cause of the previous thirty years of civil war was the unrestrained and independent nobility which is why he sought to tame his nobility. This study will look at the *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, *Calendar of the Fine Rolls*, *Calendar of the Charter Rolls*, and *Calendar of the Close Rolls* from the reigns of the four kings intimately involved with the Wars of the Roses and its immediate aftermath. These sources will be used to examine the patronage given to the nobility by each king as well as any punitive measures taken against the nobility for misbehavior. This evidence will show that Henry VII did, in fact, tame his nobility. He did so by restricting his patronage to the nobility in comparison to his predecessors. He also placed troublesome nobles under repressive bonds to ensure their loyalty.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Henry Tudor was not born to be king. Born in 1457 to Edmund Tudor, the half-brother of Henry VI and Margaret Beaufort, a descendant of Edward III through an illegitimate line, Henry was not destined for the comfortable life of a great lord of the realm. In 1457, England was in the early stages of a political crisis between the noble houses of York and Lancaster which had spilled over into all-out war. Due to Henry's dangerous Lancastrian connections, he was soon seen as a threat to the rival house of York. Exiled to Brittany in 1471 at the age of fourteen Henry was forced to spend much of his young adult life away from his homeland. Due to his exile, he had no formal training or education in politics and certainly no knowledge of the art of ruling a kingdom. His claim to the throne was through a legitimized bastard line which was legally barred from the line of succession. Against all the odds, on August 22, 1485, Henry Tudor was crowned King on Bosworth Field and proceeded from there to found the greatest dynasty to ever sit on the English throne. During his nearly twenty-four year reign, he brought lasting stability and relative peace to a realm which had just experienced approximately thirty years of civil war. Henry transformed England's governmental structure and the stability his policies provided allowed for his son and his grandchildren to embark on controversial agendas without massive political upheaval.

It is difficult to argue against the claim that Henry VII brought stability to England. It was not until the outbreak of the English Civil War in 1642 that England saw civil conflict and rebellion similar to that brought by the Wars of the Roses. Historians typically point to Henry's administrative abilities as the cause of this new found stability. According to many, Henry revolutionized the financial system by improving taxation methods; he also strengthened and reformed the judicial system to be more effective at administering the king's justice. But it is



Henry's relationship with his nobility which historians have long heralded as the main reason for the return of stability. It is widely claimed that Henry suppressed or "tamed" his nobility by restricting his patronage of them, and by limiting the number of royal offices, lands, manors, and commissions granted to the nobility. He also placed suspect nobles under restrictive bonds, which if forced to pay would likely ruin a noble family financially. Henry placed his faith in men of low-birth who owed much of their career to the king's patronage, and these men played an integral role in Henry's attempt to force the nobility into submission.

Nearly every work on Henry VII and his reign mention this supposed suppression as one of his innovations that led to lasting stability and set him apart from his predecessors. Kenneth Pickthorn in his 1934 book *Early Tudor Government: Henry VII* claims that Henry's attentiveness to detail, his suppression of the nobility, and utilization of administrators who owed their success solely to the king, allowed Henry to establish peace in the realm, something three direct predecessors were unable to accomplish.<sup>1</sup> C.H. Williams in his 1937 biography of Henry VII makes the claim that "[Henry] had established power and again organized kingship." He continues by pinpointing Henry's attentiveness to detail as a major success of his reign. According to Williams, Henry relied on only a handful of men, likely his low-born administrators and often checked over financial documents and grants himself. It is clear from William's account that the suppression of the nobility was key to this as well. Henry's intense focus on the government allowed him to truly examine his subjects and determine if they needed to be encouraged into loyalty.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Pickthorn, *Early Tudor Government: Henry VII*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), 182.

<sup>2</sup> C.H. Williams, *Henry VII*, (London: Arthur Baker, LTD., 1937), 262.

In his 1958 article entitled “Henry VII: Rapacity and Remorse” G.R. Elton also makes the claims that a primary goal of Henry’s reign was to suppress the nobility. He claimed that he used fiscal policy such as increased taxation, the court of Star Chamber, and bonds to target landowners and specifically to intimidate the nobility.<sup>3</sup> Henry used the courts to levy massive fines on the nobility for minor infractions of laws such as maintenance of retainers, possession of livery, civil disturbances, and not appearing before the king to receive a knighthood. Henry also utilized bonds to place heavy debts on nobles. Elton claims that the threat of financial ruin was often enough to force the nobility into compliance with the king’s wishes.<sup>4</sup>

S.B. Chrimes was the next historian to take up the debate regarding Henry VII’s impact as a king. His biography entitled *Henry VII* remains influential to this day. It is Chrimes who explicitly states that it was in the late years of the reign when Henry moved to suppress the nobility. He claims that Henry had a preoccupation in his later years with the problem of security which led him to arbitrary and unjust actions. These actions included an increase in bonds against the nobility, bonds which were so oppressive that many dared not cross the king.<sup>5</sup> Chrimes continued by stating that Henry’s policies “produced a pacification, an orderliness, a cohesion, a viability in the forms and machinery of government, a sustained effectiveness without which stability and consolidation could not have been obtained, and provided an indispensable standpoint for subsequent growth and flowering.”<sup>6</sup> The pacification and orderliness Chrimes mentions are that of the nobility.

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<sup>3</sup> G.R. Elton, “Henry VII: Rapacity and Remorse”, *The Historical Journal*, 1 (1958): 26-34.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 26.

<sup>5</sup> S.B. Chrimes, *Henry VII*, (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1972), 319.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 320.

J.R. Lander in his 1976 book entitled *Crown and Nobility, 1450-1509* splits from the consensus on the topic of Henry's apparent suppression of the nobility. According to Lander, Henry's nobility was loyal and obedient yet did not necessarily cooperate with him.<sup>7</sup> Lander claims that it is incorrect to assume that the Tudors, namely Henry VII, repressed the nobility and governed through bureaucrats of middle-class origin. He also claims that 1485, the year Henry VII came to the throne, should not be seen as a fundamental dividing line in English history.<sup>8</sup> Lander claims that there was little to Henry VII in 1485 which would have inspired nervous politicians, particularly the nervous nobles who had been active during the political crisis of the Wars of the Roses which began around 1455 and only end upon Henry's accession.<sup>9</sup> These thirty years of civil war had decimated the nobility and left the once loyal and passionate supporters of either Lancaster or York remarkably indifferent to Henry VII and his successors.<sup>10</sup> As for the system of bonds and recognizances which Henry imposed on the nobility increasingly toward the end of his reign, Lander argues that it was not meant for suppression, but rather was an implication that Henry was becoming increasingly suspicious and fearful of his nobility.<sup>11</sup> He continues this line of attack, by claiming that a king could not ignore, much less suppress, any class of men who could assist in maintaining public order. Nobody at the time would have been "so wildly eccentric as to harbor the slightest idea of suppressing the nobility. Contemporary writing of all kinds constantly stressed their power and...the need for upholding it. Even violence and disloyalty could not destroy the nobleman's essential role in society."<sup>12</sup> "Late medieval and early modern kings could not suppress the nobility. To govern at all they were

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<sup>7</sup> J.R. Lander, *Crown and Nobility 1450-1509*, (London: Edward Arnold Publishers, 1976), 26.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 27.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid, 268.

forced to sustain it and yet, at the same time, control it.”<sup>13</sup> Lander does admit that Henry utilized recognizances and bonds more than the acts of attainder of which his predecessors were fond. However, he argues that recognizances were merely part of the normal texture of medieval life and once again, Lander asserts that the use of recognizances was merely a sign of Henry’s increasing paranoia in the last years of his reign.<sup>14</sup>

While Lander makes an interesting argument, it is not one that is furthered by historians of Henry VII. The most compelling work of scholarship on Henry VII’s reign since that of Lander’s is Thomas Penn’s 2011 work, *Winter King: Henry VII and the Dawn of Tudor England*. Penn falls in line with many other historians on the topic of the Henry’s tamed nobility. According to Penn, the success of Henry’s reign was due to two major innovations; the first was his successful taming of his nobility. Penn cites the development of the Court of Star Chamber to fine nobles for offenses such as inciting rebellion against the king and maintaining retainers. He also cites that recognizances placed against the nobility were often of such vast amount that if they were forced to pay it would ruin the family. Penn argues that this was sufficient motivation to comply with the king’s wishes and remain in his good graces and allowed Henry broader control over his kingdom.<sup>15</sup>

The second innovation is related to the topic of the suppression of the nobility. Henry typically favored men of low birth for his administrators, over the nobility. His favorites included Edmund Dudley and Richard Empson who were both lawyers from humble backgrounds. These two men and others rose to prominence in Henry’s administration and held a number of

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 272.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 276.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Penn, *Winter King: Henry VII and the Dawn of Tudor England*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 151.

important offices. These men were in charge of recording and collecting fines and recognizances from the nobility. They owed Henry for their success and their continued prominence at court. In Henry's mind, they would be more loyal to him because their careers depended on his favor; an element that was not true of the nobility. The nobility had a degree of independence, and they did not necessarily require the favor of the king, although they desired it. The nobility soon came to realize that if they catered to the king and did what he wanted them to do, then they too would be granted royal office, manors, and grants.<sup>16</sup>

Steven Gunn's book *Henry VII's New Men and the Making of Tudor England*, published in 2016, is the most recent work which touches on the subject of Henry's policy to suppress the nobility. The main focus of his work is on Henry's "new men," namely his relatively low-born administrators Richard Empson, Edmund Dudley, Thomas Lovell, and Reynold Bray. However, he does highlight Henry's relationship with the nobility and how these men aided Henry's effort to bring the nobility under his control. Gunn argues that

Henry and those around him saw that recovery from civil war would not be achieved merely by the repression of opposition and the elimination of rival claims to the crown. Good governance was required: effective justice, fiscal prudence, national defense, fitting royal magnificence, and the promotion of the common weal. More controversial or painful change might be needed to entrench good governance: perhaps a re-balancing of the local power of great noblemen and that of lesser men more beholden to the king.<sup>17</sup>

In this quest for good governance and balance of power, Henry's new men played an integral role. According to Gunn, Empson was responsible for "ferreting out offenses by the landed

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid,34.

<sup>17</sup> Steven Gunn, *Henry VII's New Men and the Making of Tudor England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 5.

classes and taking bonds for payment of the resulting fines.”<sup>18</sup> Edmund Dudley, who entered Henry’s service in 1504, immediately began to make entries into account books that would be the lasting proof of his efficiency in extracting money for the king from his subjects.<sup>19</sup> As for recognizances, Gunn admits that they were by no means an invention of Henry’s government, but the reign adopted them as a means of codifying his subjects’ obligations to him. New debts were set out in these bonds. Old debts were recorded and sought after. Bonds for good performance were considered forfeit if the officer’s or noble’s conduct did not appease the king. Most importantly for the suppression of the nobility was the fact that special debts were created to secure the political loyalty of those who would be financially ruined if the debts were collected.<sup>20</sup> Edmund Dudley admitted that the largest of these special fines were never intended to be paid but to hang over the head of the leading subjects to compel their loyalty.<sup>21</sup> While J.R. Lander saw the use of these special bonds as proof Henry’s growing paranoia, Gunn sees this as evidence of his successful, although unpopular policy, of taming the nobility.

J.R. Lander’s insistence in his book, *Crown and Nobility 1450-1509* and subsequent historian’s opposition to this view presents an interesting historiographical dilemma. What was the nature of Henry’s VII’s relationship with his nobility and how does his treatment of the nobility compare with those of previous kings, particularly the kings intimately involved in the Wars of the Roses? That is the question that this study aims to answer. Using evidence from the *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Fine Rolls, Charter Rolls* and *Close Rolls*, I compare the reigns of Henry VI, Edward IV, Richard III, and Henry VII regarding their relationship with the nobility. I compare the amounts and types of grants, commissions, and offices given to the nobility in each

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 78.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 9.

reign as well as the amount and types of recognizances placed against the nobility. Through this analysis, I argue, contrary to J.R. Lander, that Henry VII's relationship with his nobility was restrictive in comparison to the previous kings. Henry VII favored only a handful of nobles, most of whom were his family. He presented these few men with grants, commissions, and royal offices. In addition to his restricted noble patronage, Henry used recognizances against the nobility to an extreme degree. He also utilized his "new men" to oversee these bonds, even making some of the recognizances due not to the king, but to his loyal non-noble administrators. These actions allowed for Henry VII to keep the nobility largely under his watchful eye and caused the nobility to remain close and loyal to the king so that they were more likely to receive royal grants, offices, and relief from the recognizances levied against them.

The sources used in this study are from four collections of royal government documents entitled *The Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, *The Calendar of the Fine Rolls*, *The Calendar of the Charter Rolls* and *The Calendar of the Close Rolls*. All of these documents were preserved and published by the Public Record Office in several volumes covering roughly the reign of Henry III to the reign of Henry VII. *The Calendar of the Patent Rolls* was published in easily accessible volumes from 1891 to 1916. *The Patent Rolls* are a comprehensive register of the letters patent issued by the Crown. *The Patent Rolls* contain a variety of entries including grants of royal office, lands, commissions, wardships, licenses for widows to marry, pardons, confirmations of charters, as well as the creation of noble titles. These records were sealed "open" by the Great or Privy Seal. Sealed open simply means that the seal on these letters was placed on the document so that they remained open rather than physically closed. This source was valuable in determining the number of grants each king gave to the nobles and highlighted who the

important nobles were in each reign.<sup>22</sup> *The Calendar of the Fine Rolls* contains entries for offerings made to the king for royal favor in matters such as disposal of lands and offices, succession issues, and to quell the king's anger. Other entries include grants for offices, writs ordering livery, appointments of sheriffs, as well as the payment of debts.<sup>23</sup> *The Calendar of the Charter Rolls* contained the enrollments of royal charters and was used by the Crown to grant benefits such as liberties, privileges, immunities, exemptions, peerages, and grants of land. <sup>24</sup>*The Calendar of the Close Rolls* contains all letters close which are all writs which were sealed "closed" by the Great or Privy Seal, meaning that the wax seal rendered the documents physically closed indicating that these letters were of a more private nature than those of the *Patent Rolls*. These entries conveyed orders to the officers of the crown including summons to parliament. They, more importantly, held the record of bond and recognizances issued between two subjects or between the king and a subject.<sup>25</sup> These were integral in determining just how each king utilized recognizances, otherwise known as bonds when dealing with their nobility. These sources have been used by various English historians of the period as supplementary evidence. A close analysis of these sources, such as this study, has not been undertaken until now.

This study is organized into four chapters and an appendix. The first chapter will deal with the historical background of the reigns of Henry VI, Edward IV, Richard III, and Henry VII. This chapter will discuss the importance the Wars of the Roses had on these kings' relationship

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<sup>22</sup> "Chancery and Supreme Court of Judicature: Patent Rolls." The National Archives of the United Kingdom, accessed on May 1, 2017, <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C3626>.

<sup>23</sup> "Chancery: Fine Rolls," The National Archives of the United Kingdom, accessed on May 1, 2017, <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C3620>.

<sup>24</sup> "Charter Rolls," The National Archives of the United Kingdom, accessed on May 1, 2017, <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C3613>.

<sup>25</sup> "Chancery: Supplementary Close Rolls," The National Archives of the United Kingdom, accessed on May 1, 2017, <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C3615>.



with their nobility. It will discuss the causes of the Wars of Roses and the nobility's involvement in the fighting and royal governance. It will also cover key points of the wars such as the deposition of Henry VI in 1461, the brief deposition of Edward IV in 1470, the usurpation of Richard III in 1483, and the victory of Henry VII on Bosworth Field in 1485. The next three chapters will cover the reigns of Henry VI, Edward IV, Richard III, and Henry VII. These chapters will feature an in-depth analysis of the *Patent Rolls*, *Fine Rolls*, *Charter Rolls*, and *Close Rolls* from each reign, with a particular focus on the grants given to the nobility and recognizances laid against them. The appendix features six graphs which provide a visual representation of a number of grants given to the top ten nobles of each reign as well as a visual comparison of the amount of grants and recognizances given by each king. Through the analysis of these sources, I will prove that Henry VII's relationship with his nobility was restrictive and that it was his specific goal to tame the nobility to bring lasting peace and stability to the kingdom of England.

## CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND-THE WARS OF THE ROSES

According to historian Dan Jones, “barons were not naturally troublesome or opposed to royal authority, but they were exceptionally sensitive to the inadequate or inequitable operation of kingship and would act to take a grip on government if they believed that the king was failing in his task.”<sup>1</sup> Before the 1450’s, the nobility of England had risen against their anointed king four separate times, two of which resulted in the deposition of the reigning king, in favor of another better suited for governance. The first instance of a deposition of a king since the Norman conquest in 1066 occurred in 1327 to Edward II. Edward II was a cruel and tyrannical king often set on revenge. This behavior in combination with his focus on his favorites caused the nobles to turn against him. Edward II’s first favorite was Piers Gaveston, and he showered Gaveston with honors, grants, and offices that should have gone to other nobles. Edward’s favoritism toward Gaveston caused animosity between the king and his nobility. The nobility forced Gaveston into exile, only to have Edward II recall him to court and vow his revenge on those responsible. The nobility then moved to execute Gaveston. Following Gaveston’s death, Edward quickly found another favorite, Hugh Despencer. Like his previous favorite, Edward gave many grants, offices, and commission to Despencer once again evoking the ire of his nobles as well as his queen, Isabella of France. His favoritism along with his inability to govern properly, provide relief for a famine occurring during his reign, and his continual failure in wars with Scotland led to an outbreak of civil war in 1321. Many nobles joined Queen Isabella in her quest to depose her husband. The Queen’s forces ultimately prevailed in 1328 and Isabella, and Edward’s son,

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<sup>1</sup> Dan Jones, *The Plantagenets: The Warrior Kings and Queens Who Made England*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), 308.

Edward III, was crowned king. These actions taken against the king taught the English nobility precisely how they should deal with ineffective monarchs.<sup>2</sup>

The nobility would repeat their actions against yet another king in 1399. Richard II, the great-grandson of Edward II, was said to have idolized his great-grandfather, which could provide an explanation for Richard's failure and cruelty as a king.<sup>3</sup> When Richard was fourteen, Wat Tyler led a rebellion of peasants to rid the king of his "cruel and wicked advisors" as they did not wish to directly accuse Richard of the harsh taxation and otherwise debilitating policies of his government. Richard's response to the rebellion, despite an initial promise of mercy, was to show cruelty and enact his revenge through a harsh suppression of the rebellion.<sup>4</sup> Richard sought intense revenge over perceived slights and did not work well with the vast majority of his nobility. Richard's fatal mistake was disinheriting his cousin, Henry Bolingbroke, following his father's death. Henry, who was in exile at the time, marched on England to reclaim his rightful inheritance. Once he landed, much of the nobility joined Bolingbroke's cause and asked him to take the throne for himself. He did and proceeded to depose and imprison Richard II in 1399.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Wars of the Roses: Origins**

The deposition of Edward II set a precedent for how the nobility could deal with incompetent and ineffective kings. The deposition of Richard II solidified that precedent in the minds of the nobility. So in the late 1450's when it became clear to many nobles that Henry VI was incapable of ruling the kingdom effectively, many knew what ultimately had to be done. Unlike the previously deposed kings, no one, contemporaries or now, could claim that Henry VI

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 340.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid,465.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 447-454.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 490-492.

ruled as a tyrant or acted against the law of England.<sup>6</sup> In fact, by the mid-1480's, twenty years after his initial deposition, Henry was widely revered as a saint "by reason of the innocence of his life, his love of God and of the Church." His nephew Henry VII even tried, unsuccessfully, to have his uncle canonized on more than one occasion.<sup>7</sup> This image of Henry VI persisted into the modern era of history writing with William Stubbs claiming that Henry VI was "without a doubt most innocent of all the evils that befell England because of him."<sup>8</sup>

What were these "evils that befell England" precisely and how did they develop?<sup>9</sup> In the 1450's a political crisis erupted in England and soon spilled over from the royal court onto the battlefield. This particular conflict occurred in three phases across a span of approximately thirty years and is more popularly known as the Wars of the Roses.<sup>10</sup> According to K.B. Macfarlane,

"The crisis of the mid-fifteenth century did not arise from structural weakness, which allowed 'overmighty subjects' to challenge the authority of the crown, but revolved around the effectiveness of kingship as an institution and, in particular, the inadequacies of Henry VI himself...in fact, only an undermighty ruler had anything to fear from overmighty subjects, and if he was undermighty his personal lack of fitness was the cause, not the weakness of his office and its resources."<sup>11</sup>

So what made Henry VI so ineffective? Henry VI came to the throne in 1422 as a nine-month-old infant. During his minority, England was ruled by his two uncles, the Dukes of Bedford and Gloucester, along with a regency council comprised of the Archbishop of

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<sup>6</sup> David Grummitt, *Henry VI*, (New York: Routledge, 2015), 205.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>10</sup> For further information in the Wars of the Roses see: Michael Hicks, *Wars of the Roses*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012); Alison Weir, *The Wars of the Roses*, (London: Ballentine Book, 1996); A.J. Pollard, *The Wars of the Roses*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2001); Sarah Gristwood, *Blood Sisters: The Women Behind the Wars of the Roses*, (New York, Basic Books, 2014).

<sup>11</sup> K.B. Macfarlane, 'The Wars of the Roses', in *England in the Fifteenth Century: Collected Essays*, (London: Hambeldon Press, 1981), 238-9.

Canterbury, the bishops of London, Winchester, Norwich, and Worcester, the Duke of Exeter, the Earls of March, Warwick, Northumberland and Westmorland, and the Earl Marshall, Lord Fitzhugh, and four knights: Sir Ralph Cromwell, Sir Walter Hungerford, Sir John Tiptoft, and Sir Walter Beauchamp.<sup>12</sup> The minority government and the English people as a whole shared a sense of responsibility to defend the achievements of Henry V at home and abroad until his son, Henry VI, came of age.<sup>13</sup> Despite minor tensions in the council, the minority government was relatively successful. It was not until Henry VI took over governance in 1437 that English politics took a turn for the worse. Henry was happy to leave the minutiae of government to his advisors, as many kings before and after him did. However, he was incredibly active in matters which concerned him: the Hundred Years War, the foundation of his royal colleges at Eton and Cambridge, and his dispensation of patronage.<sup>14</sup> As his personal rule progressed, it became increasingly obvious that Henry was not fit to be king. According to David Grummitt,

It would be foolish to argue that Henry VI was anything other than a failure as a king during the 1440s. In England, he failed in two aspects of kingship. First, he failed to show proper judgment in the dispensation of patronage, allowing the regime to fall victim to accusations of corruption and cronyism. Second, he failed to exercise effective lordship over his greatest subjects, failing to offer the king of princely authority that could dispense impartial and effective justice.<sup>15</sup>

Matters would only worsen for Henry VI in the decade of the 1450s. Toward the end of May 1450, men in Kent began to gather in open rebellion against the king. They were led by Jack Cade, who had affiliated himself with the Duke of York, the cousin of the King and heir presumptive. The rebels marched on Blackheath and demanded that the king rid himself of his

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<sup>12</sup> Grummitt, 55.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 72.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 123.

evil ministers. The crown gave in to the demands of the rebels, possibly due to the support of an emerging noble opposition, led by Richard, Duke of York and Richard, Earl of Salisbury against the king's closest advisors which supported the rebels.<sup>16</sup> After this rebellion, Henry and his counselors were able to reassert some semblance of royal authority, but it was not to last.<sup>17</sup>

### **The Wars of the Roses: Phase One (1455-1461)**

1453 was the tipping point for peace and stability for the monarchy in England. In July, following a final defeat in France, effectively ending the Hundred Years War, Henry VI was struck by a mysterious mental illness which rendered him completely incapacitated. He could not speak or respond to questions. He could not feed or clean himself nor could he even hold his head up.<sup>18</sup> With the King in a coma-like state, someone had to take control of the government. This task was initially taken up by Edmund Beaufort, Duke of Somerset, but he was soon ousted by Richard, Duke of York. York was extremely popular among many of the noble families and as the king's cousin, he had a powerful connection to the throne. York was named Lord Protector and quickly had the Duke of Somerset arrested, charged with treason for his failures in France, and imprisoned.<sup>19</sup> York remained in charge of the English government until Christmas 1454 when Henry VI finally regained his senses and control over his kingdom. By late January 1455, Henry VI had released Somerset from imprisonment, dropped his treason charges and reinstated him to his former position at court. The Duke of York was removed as Protector in early February.<sup>20</sup> Animosity between Somerset and York continued to grow, and York began to fear

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<sup>16</sup> Dan Jones, *Wars of the Roses: The Fall of the Plantagenets and the Rise of the Tudors*, (New York, Penguin Books, 2014), 109-113.

<sup>17</sup> Grummitt, 108.

<sup>18</sup> Jones, 132.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 134-136.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 137.

that Somerset would seek his revenge and bring charges of treason against him. In mid-May a great council was called in Leicester by the King and Somerset; York and his allies, the Earls of Salisbury and Warwick, were also invited. Fearing retribution, York amassed an army of 7,000 supporters. The king raised an army of 2,000. The two forces met on May 22, 1455, at the city of St. Albans. York's troops quickly decimated the town and the royal army. The Duke of Somerset and the Earl of Northumberland, another prominent Lancastrian noble, were killed and the King himself was taken into York's custody.<sup>21</sup> The First Battle of St. Albans, which this conflict would be called, marked the beginning of the Wars of the Roses and the dynastic struggle between the House of Lancaster and the House of York.

York and his allies were formally pardoned at the session of Parliament held on July 9, 1455. In November of the same year, Henry VI suffered another bout of illness and was once again incapacitated, and the Duke of York was named Protector for the second time. When the king recovered in February 1456, he made York his chief counselor and asked him to go north to deal with the King of Scotland. While York was dealing with the Scots, factions began to develop at court, slowly dividing between York and Lancaster. The fracturing at court was largely due to Queen Margaret's attempt to impose her will on matters of state. Men such as the Duke of Buckingham and Henry's two half-brothers, Edmund Tudor, Earl of Richmond and Jasper Tudor, Earl of Pembroke, began flocking to the Queen and her cause. Margaret convinced Richmond to take castles in Wales which were given to York. When he did, the Duke of York sent his men to recover the castles and had Richmond imprisoned. Richmond died of the plague

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 141-144.

in prison on November 1, 1456. He left behind his pregnant young wife, who would give birth to their son, Henry Tudor, three months later on January 28, 1457.<sup>22</sup>

Tensions continued to grow in 1458-1459. By late spring of 1459, both the Lancastrians and the Yorkists were preparing for an armed battle, to determine which side would control the king and the government. In September, the Earl of Warwick, who was the captain of Calais, began to build up the garrison there and to arm them, before publicly declaring, along with his father, the Earl of Salisbury, their support of the Duke of York's cause. On September 23, the Yorkist army, led by Salisbury, once again engaged in combat with a Lancastrian army, led by James Tuchet, Lord Audley at Blore Heath. Salisbury emerged the victor, though his army suffered considerable casualties.<sup>23</sup> Salisbury rode to meet York and Warwick at Ludlow Castle, where they were soon met by the main royal force which consisted of many prominent lords such as Henry, Duke of Somerset, Humphrey, Duke of Buckingham, Henry, Earl of Northumberland, the Duke of Exeter, and the Earls of Arundel, Devon, Shrewsbury, and Wiltshire.<sup>24</sup> It became clear to the Yorkists that they were vastly outnumbered. They decided that the Duke of York and his second son Edmund, Earl of Rutland would seek shelter in Ireland. York's first born and heir, Edward, Earl of March was to retreat to Calais with Salisbury and Warwick.<sup>25</sup>

While the Yorkist leaders were in self-imposed exile, a parliament was quickly summoned on November 20, 1459, where York, March, Rutland, Warwick, and Salisbury were all placed under a bill of attainder for their treason to the crown and all their estates and titles were forfeited to the king.<sup>26</sup> The Captaincy of Calais was taken from Warwick and given to

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid, 153-54.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 159-161.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 162.

<sup>25</sup> Hannes Kleineke, *Edward IV*, (New York: Routledge, 2009), 35.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 35.



Somerset. Somerset attempted to take his office by attacking Calais while the Earl of Warwick was in Ireland meeting with York. His attack failed, and he was defeated at Newnham Bridge on April 23, 1460.<sup>27</sup>

In June 1460, William Neville, Lord Fauconberg, Salisbury's brother, launched a raid on the port of Sandwich which was guarded by Somerset's men under the command of Osbert Mountfort. Fauconberg defeated Mountfort, who was carried off to Calais and executed as Fauconberg took control of Sandwich. On June 26, Salisbury, Warwick, and March landed in Sandwich and were quickly joined by the Kentish gentry. On July 10<sup>th</sup>, the Yorkist forces met Lancastrians once again, this time outside of Northampton. The battle lasted only a half-hour before it was decided in favor of York. The Duke of Buckingham, Earl of Shrewsbury, Viscount Beaumont and Lord Egremont, who were Lancastrians, were killed in the aftermath. Warwick, Salisbury, and March took Henry VI, who was present at the battle, into their custody and brought him with them as they entered London on July 16<sup>th</sup>.<sup>28</sup>

With the king in their custody, Yorkists controlled the capital city and could control the governance of the kingdom in Henry VI's name. Salisbury, March, and Warwick quickly set about replacing the household staff and the great officers of state. Salisbury became the king's chamberlain, the Bishop of Exeter became chancellor, and Viscount Bourchier became treasurer. Warwick was given a series of junior offices. Rumors soon began to circulate that the Yorkist lords would seek to make Edward, Earl of March, the king, passing over Prince Edward, the only son of Henry VI, whose paternity was openly in question.<sup>29</sup> In September, the Duke of York returned to London from Ireland as a Parliament was summoned. When Parliament opened in

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 36.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 37-39.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 30-40.

October, Richard, Duke of York walked into the building, marched directly to the throne, and laid his hand upon it, symbolically claiming the throne for himself and his heirs by right of birth.<sup>30</sup> Parliament made the determination that Henry VI was no longer capable of ruling by himself. York was named as Protector until the king's death, upon which York and his heirs would inherit. This compromise was known as the Westminster Accord.<sup>31</sup>

Henry VI may have been prepared to accept this accord, but Queen Margaret was not willing to have her son disinherited without a fight. Margaret amassed her army, and on December 9, 1460, York rode north to meet her challenge along with his second son, the Earl of Rutland. Edward, Earl of March, rode to the west to raise men on his family's estates in Wales and the Marches, expecting violence to break out once again. On December 30<sup>th</sup>, the Duke of York and the Earl of Salisbury met the queen's army, led by the Duke of Somerset, the Earl of Northumberland, and John, Lord Clifford, at Wakefield. The Yorkists were defeated. York and Rutland were killed in the fighting and Salisbury was taken prisoner and beheaded after the battle. Margaret's army placed his head, along with those of York and Rutland, over the gates of the city of York.<sup>32</sup>

The Yorkist cause was not dead, however. On February 2, 1461, the army of Edward, now Duke of York, clashed with that of Jasper Tudor, Earl of Pembroke, Owen Tudor, and James Butler, Earl of Wiltshire, at Mortimer's Cross in the Welsh marches. The Lancastrians were quickly routed. Pembroke and Wiltshire escaped the battlefield, but Owen Tudor, the king's stepfather, Sir John Throckmorton and seven other Lancastrian commanders were captured and

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 40.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 42.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 43.

beheaded in the nearby town of Hereford.<sup>33</sup> Queen Margaret was busy mustering her allies while Warwick took a force from London with John Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, John de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk, William Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel, and Lord Fauconberg and marched toward the Queen. They met her at St. Albans on February 17, 1461; the battle soon erupted into all out war with thousands of men fighting for either side. Queen Margaret ultimately won the day while Warwick and the other commanders managed to escape the battle while Henry VI was reunited with his wife and son.<sup>34</sup>

Warwick joined up with York, and they decided that now that the king was back under the control of his wife they had no other choice but to depose him and place Edward on the throne. On March 4, 1461, Edward, Duke of York was proclaimed Edward IV, King of England by the Bishop of Exeter and his supporters. While he was king in name, he was not yet king in practice; he had one more battle to fight. At sunrise on March 29<sup>th</sup>, Edward IV's army met that of Queen Margaret's at Towton. The two forces clashed in freezing weather and snow. The battle which lasted until 10 o'clock at night was the bloodiest in the entirety of the Wars of the Roses, and Edward IV emerged victorious. The Lancastrian Earl of Northumberland, Lord Dacre, and Lord Welles were killed in the fighting, while the Earls of Devon and Wiltshire were beheaded after the battle. Henry VI, Queen Margaret, and Prince Edward escaped to Scotland. Edward IV would be secure on his throne until 1469.

### **The Wars of the Roses: Phase Two (1467-1471)**

Edward IV and his older cousin, the Earl of Warwick, worked in conjunction with one another for the first few years of Edward's reign. However, cracks soon began to form in their

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<sup>33</sup> Jones, 180-181.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 181-183.

relationship following Edward's marriage to the common-born Elizabeth Woodville. Warwick considered this match completely unsuitable and had hoped for Edward to make a match with a French princess to broker peace with them. Shortly after Edward's marriage, it was clear that the King had begun to favor the Woodville's, often over Warwick. Edward and Elizabeth quickly began arranging marriages between the high peerage and Elizabeth's thirteen brothers and sisters. Warwick had two daughters of his own and hoped that the king would make a match between his eldest, Isabel and the king's brother, George, Duke of Clarence. In 1467 Edward told Warwick that he would not allow the marriage between Isabel and George. This, along with a long list of other perceived slights caused Warwick to retreat to his northern estates and repeatedly refuse to attend the king's council.<sup>35</sup>

Warwick was not Edward's only problem. In June 1468, Jasper Tudor returned from France and launched a small invasion of Wales. While Tudor was beaten back into exile, this was far from the end of the resurgence of Lancastrian pride. In early 1469, John de Vere, Earl of Oxford, was imprisoned for conspiring with other nobles to depose Edward. The Lancastrian plotting was to be expected, but Edward did not expect the betrayal of Warwick and Clarence. In the spring of 1469, there were a series of popular uprisings in Yorkshire, backed by Warwick. On July 11, 1469, in direct defiance of the King, Clarence and Isabel were married in Calais. Warwick and Clarence returned to England with troops and met Edward's force at Edgecote on July 24<sup>th</sup>. Edward, who was not present at the battle, was taken prisoner at Olney in Buckinghamshire.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 214.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 220-221.

Warwick attempted to rule England through Edward while he was in his custody, but the kingdom was not pleased with this arrangement. Unable to rule, Warwick was forced to set Edward free in October.<sup>37</sup> By March of the next year, it was discovered that Clarence and Warwick were supporting yet another rebellion in the north of England. They were both proclaimed traitors on March 24, 1470, and fled to France. While in France, Warwick allied with Queen Margaret to support the return of Henry VI. To solidify this alliance, Warwick married his youngest daughter, Anne, to Edward, son of Henry VI. Warwick and Queen Margaret raised forces and landed in the south of England on September 13th, while Edward IV was in the north. Edward soon realized that his army was too small to defeat the Lancastrians and decided to escape to Burgundy with his brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, his brother in law, Anthony, Earl Rivers, and his closest friend, Lord Hastings. Queen Elizabeth took sanctuary Westminster Abbey with her children for protection.<sup>38</sup>

On October 6, 1470, Warwick marched into London and released Henry VI from the Tower, where he had been since he was captured by Edward's men in 1465. Warwick had Henry re-crowned as King of England. By declaring Henry king, rather than the Duke of Clarence, Warwick effectively alienated him. This slight led Clarence to rejoin his brother Edward in Burgundy. By March 1471, Edward had gathered a Burgundian force of one thousand men set on reclaiming his throne. On March 14<sup>th</sup>, Edward landed north of York with his two younger brothers at his side. As they marched south, they quickly gathered support and amassed an army of four thousand, meeting no resistance along the way. On April 13<sup>th</sup>, Edward entered London and took possession of the vacant Henry VI who greeted Edward by saying "My cousin of York,

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 222.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 225-228.

you are very welcome. I know in your hands my life will not be in danger.”<sup>39</sup> Edward returned Henry to the Tower and reunited with his Queen who presented him with his second son, born while she was in sanctuary. On April 16<sup>th</sup>, Edward met Warwick’s force at Barnet. Edward was victorious, while Warwick and many of his allies were killed in the chaotic battle. Edward then turned his attention to the south where Queen Margaret’s army had landed in England.<sup>40</sup> On May 4<sup>th</sup>, Edward’s army clashed with Margaret at Tewkesbury. Edward was once again victorious. The prominent Lancastrian lords, the Duke of Somerset and the Earl of Devon were killed during the battle as was Edward, the former Prince of Wales. Edward arrested Margaret and brought her back to London.<sup>41</sup> On May 14<sup>th</sup>, Henry VI was found dead and while it was ruled a “natural death” it was likely that he was murdered. Only two Lancastrian lords remained at large after 1471: Jasper Tudor, Earl of Pembroke and Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond. Neither of them posed much of a threat to Edward. Edward IV was finally secure on his throne, and England remained relatively peaceful until his death in 1483.<sup>42</sup>

### **The Wars of the Roses: Phase Three (1483-1485)**

On April 19, 1483, Edward IV died suddenly at the age of forty-two. Before he died, he managed to arrange a regency council for his eldest son’s minority. However, he did not state who would lead the council as Lord Protector. There were two obvious candidates for this position: the king’s brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester and the Queen Elizabeth’s brother Anthony Woodville, Earl Rivers. Rivers initially had the upper hand as the young twelve-year-old king, Edward V, was in Wales under Rivers' supervision. As soon as word of Edward IV’s

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 232.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 233-234.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 1238-239.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 240-241.

death reached them, Rivers and the young Edward set out for London. They were contacted by Gloucester who convinced them to join forces.<sup>43</sup> Gloucester, accompanied by the Duke of Buckingham met with Rivers and immediately placed him and Richard Grey, the son of Elizabeth Woodville from a previous marriage, under arrest and soon took the young king into their custody and brought him to London. Gloucester announced that the coronation would be postponed for seven weeks and would occur on June 22, 1483. On May 8, Gloucester was proclaimed the Lord Protector of the King and all the Woodvilles were cut out of any significant position in the regency council. Seeing Richard's grab for power at the expense of her own family, Queen Elizabeth once again sought sanctuary in Westminster Abbey with her daughters, her second son with Edward VI, Richard, Duke of York and her eldest son, Thomas Grey, Marquess of Dorset.<sup>44</sup>

Gloucester spent May solidifying his power in the minority council. He had Edward V safely in the Tower and was able to rule in his name. However, as the month progressed, he became more concerned about the loyalty of the other councilors and decided to make a decisive move. On June 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, Gloucester sent letters with his loyal servants to Yorkshire requesting military support in the capital. He claimed that "the Queen, her blood, adherents, and affinity...have intended and daily do intend to murder and utterly destroy us and our cousin the Duke of Buckingham and the old royal blood of this our realm."<sup>45</sup> On June 13<sup>th</sup> Gloucester assembled the Council at the Tower of London and informed them that he had Earl Rivers and Richard Grey executed for their treason, which was a lie. He left, then returned with Buckingham, and a group of soldiers arrested the councilors. They dragged William, Lord

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 269.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 271.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 273.

Hastings, who had been supportive of Richard and was Edward IV's dearest friend, onto Tower Green and beheaded him without trial. Following this coup, Richard acted quickly. On June 16<sup>th</sup> the Archbishop of Canterbury went to Westminster Abbey and convinced Queen Elizabeth to release her younger son, Richard, to his custody, claiming that he was to play an important role in the coronation of Edward V. Elizabeth agreed and Richard was transported to the Tower to join his older brother.<sup>46</sup>

With both York princes in his custody, Richard made the decision to usurp the throne from his nephew. On June 22<sup>nd</sup>, Richard had theologian Dr. Ralph Shaa declare that Edward IV's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville was invalid because Edward was contracted to marry another at the time. Shaa claimed that Edward V and Richard, Duke of York were therefore illegitimate. The disinheritance of the princes left Richard, Duke of Gloucester, the only legitimate heir of Edward IV. On June 25<sup>th</sup>, Gloucester ordered the Earl of Northumberland to actually execute Anthony, Earl Rivers and Richard Grey and the following day he formally took the crown as Richard III. The last sighting of the young princes was in the late summer or early autumn of 1483, and it was rumored that they had been murdered on their uncle's orders.<sup>47</sup>

Richard's usurpation and the apparent murder of his nephews would not go unnoticed or unanswered. As early as October 1483, Richard's reign was unraveling. The Duke of Buckingham, who had been one of Richard's fervent supporters, turned against him. Rebellion broke out in the south of England. The Woodvilles joined Buckingham, and it was decided that they would invite Henry Tudor, the last Lancastrian with any true claim to the throne, to invade and fight for the crown. Richard worked quickly to suppress the rebellion. Richard had the Duke

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 274.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 277.



of Buckingham executed and attained ninety-eight men, one-third of whom had been in the service of Edward IV. Those who had managed to escape fled to Brittany to join Henry Tudor, who had returned to his exile after arriving in England a few days after the rebellion had ended.<sup>48</sup> The significant noble opposition to Richard's reign would not only aid Henry Tudor in his quest for the English throne, but it would serve as a stark reminder of the power of the nobility and the importance of maintaining control over them once he was king.

With the threat of Henry Tudor looming over his reign Richard had to demonstrate that he was firmly in control of his kingdom. Richard began to replace the ninety-eight men who were attained with men loyal to him. He gave men from the north, Richard's power base, positions in the south. While his goal was to provide a stronger power base in the south filled with his loyal retainers and servants, what he really did was provide Henry Tudor with a ready-made faction of alienated gentry and nobility from the south who could command local loyalties in areas where Richard's power was weak.<sup>49</sup> His formation of a new power base was not Richard's only plan to thwart Henry Tudor. He entered into talks with France and Brittany to have Tudor handed over to him, but to no avail. All the while, Tudor began to style himself as the King of England. On Christmas Day 1484, Henry made a proclamation in Rennes Cathedral that he would invade England and challenge Richard for the throne. He also promised to marry Elizabeth of York, the eldest daughter of Edward IV who arguably had a better claim to the throne than he did.<sup>50</sup>

On August 7, 1485, Henry Tudor landed at Mill Bay near Milford Haven, Wales. As they marched through Wales, the place of Tudor's birth, they gained supporters. Tudor's army was

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<sup>48</sup> Rosemary Horrox, *Richard III: A Study of Service*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 178-179.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 224-225.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas Penn, *Winter King: Henry VII and the Dawn of Tudor England*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 2.

made up of former servants of Edward IV, John de Vere, earl of Oxford, as well as various foreign mercenaries. He finally met Richard's army on August 22, 1485, on Bosworth Field in Leicestershire.<sup>51</sup> According to historian Rosemary Horrox, Bosworth was the battle which should have been fought during Buckingham's rebellion in October of 1483. Richard was backed largely by men who had brought him to power. While he had attempted to reconcile with some of the rebels from 1483, their reconciliation did not stick, and many had joined Tudor's cause.<sup>52</sup> The battle was a decisive one. Richard, seeking an opportunity to strike Henry down, lunged toward him, but was killed in a violent attack by one of Henry's bannermen. Once the battle ended, Henry's stepfather, Thomas, Lord Stanley, crowned Henry with the crown that had fallen from Richard's head in the midst of the fighting. From that moment on, Henry Tudor was Henry VII of England. While Henry would face his fair share of pretenders to the throne, none would unseat him, and upon his death in 1509, the crown passed peacefully to his son and heir Henry VIII--for the first time in forty-eight years.<sup>53</sup>

### **The Nobility and the Wars of the Roses**

The Wars of the Roses was a high political crisis which ultimately turned into a thirty-year dynastic struggle fought out on the battlefield. Aside from the low-born foot soldiers, the conflict was fought mainly among the nobility and the high gentry. The conflict started with the Duke of York's attempt to take control of the government in the stead of Henry VI. He was supported by many notable noblemen, such as the Earls of Salisbury and Warwick. Henry VI had his own list of noble supporters as well, namely the Duke of Buckingham and the Earls of Shrewsbury, Oxford, and Pembroke. Each of the four kings during this period of 1455-1485

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>52</sup> Horrox, 324.

<sup>53</sup> Penn, 9.

depended heavily on their noble supporters and their armies of private retainers to fight for the throne.

The prevalence of noble involvement during the Wars of the Roses is evident in the sheer devastation of the peerage. During just the first phase between the years of 1455-1461 more than a quarter of the English peerage had died in battle or had been executed afterward.<sup>54</sup> It was also Yorkist policy during conflicts to spare the common soldiers but kill lords, knights, and esquires.<sup>55</sup> Descriptions of each battle typically came with a laundry list of noble deaths as well as those lucky few who managed to escape to fight another day. The nobility was so decimated by the end of the conflict in 1485, that Henry VII came to the throne with only seventy-three members of the English peerage, eighty-nine if the Irish peerage is included.<sup>56</sup>

Due to their intense involvement in this conflict, it is evident that the King's relationship with the nobility was key to either their ultimate success or failure. An analysis of this relationship during the reigns of each of the four kings of the Wars of the Roses is integral in understanding the conflict. It is also necessary to understand why it is that historians claim that Henry VII was successful at taming his nobility and preventing yet another phase of the civil war which had permeated English politics for three decades.

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<sup>54</sup> Kleineke, 204.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 39.

<sup>56</sup> George E. Cokayne, *The Complete Peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom, Extant, Extinct, or Dormant Vol. 1-12*, (London: St. Catherine Press, 1910-59).

### CHAPTER 3: HENRY VI'S OVERMIGHTY NOBILITY

Henry VI came to the throne in 1422 as a nine-month-old infant.<sup>1</sup> His father, Henry V, had suddenly died of dysentery while fighting yet another campaign in France as a part of the Hundred Years War. Having a minor as king was always problematic, particularly one as young as Henry VI. Two of the king's uncles, The Duke of Bedford, and the Duke of Gloucester were given extensive powers in both England and France. They were able to appoint various men to royal offices and grant lands, manors, and commissions in the name of the king. They were assisted by a regency council comprised of the various bishops and prominent noblemen, such as the Duke of Exeter, the Earls of March, Warwick, Northumberland, and Westmorland, and Lord Fitzhugh. With a king so young and a council filled with noblemen and clerics, it is clear to see that the nobility as a whole would play an important, overarching role in the government of the kingdom throughout the reign of Henry VI.<sup>2</sup>

Henry VI reached his majority in 1437, but after fifteen years of a council of noblemen running the kingdom some, particularly the Duke of Gloucester, were not willing to relinquish many of their powers. This may have been a problem if Henry VI had been more interested in the minutia of day to day government, but as it was, he left those responsibilities to his various noble councilors. Henry concerned himself with other things, such as his royal colleges at Eton and Cambridge and more importantly his dispensation of patronage.<sup>3</sup> Royal patronage was highly sought after by any ambitious man wishing to curry the king's favor. Patronage was also a way for

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<sup>1</sup> For further information on the Reign of Henry VI see: Bertram Wolffe, *Henry VI*, (London: Eyre Methuen, 1981); John Watts, *Henry VI and the Politics of Kingship*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Ralph A. Griffiths, *The Reign of Henry VI: The Exercise of Royal Authority, 1422-1461*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

<sup>2</sup> David Grummitt, *Henry VI*, (New York: Routledge, 2015), 55.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 7.

the king to show his gratitude to those loyal to him. It was a way for the king to show others who he trusted with various offices and responsibilities.

Every king had the ability to dispense patronage as he saw fit, but it was assumed that the king would show restraint. David Grummitt argues that one of the ultimate failures of the reign of Henry VI was that he did not show proper judgment with his patronage and often gave to his royal servants with an open hand. This troublesome behavior caused the reign to be open to accusations of corruption as well as charges that “evil ministers” took advantage of the king’s generosity and used him as a puppet to rule the kingdom.<sup>4</sup> Evidence of Henry VI’s open-handed patronage can be found in the *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, *Calendar of Fine Rolls*, *Calendar of Charter Rolls*, and *Calendar of Close Rolls*.

In examining the *Patent Rolls* which cover the period of Henry VI’s personal rule, 1437-1461, it is evident that Henry was heavily reliant on his nobility. Over the course of the twenty-four-year personal rule, there were 1,186 grants which gave royal office, land grants, wardships, titles, commissions and pardons to various nobles. These grants were given to approximately eighty-three different noblemen, most of whom received multiple grants throughout the reign (figure 1 and 5 in the appendix). While Henry VI’s patronage reached a wide spectrum of the nobility, it is evident from the various entries, which nobles were the most prominent.

Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, the king’s uncle, was the most prominent noble featured in the rolls for the first portion of the personal rule, which is not altogether surprising. Gloucester was in charge of England during Henry VI’s minority, and following the death of his brother, John, Duke of Bedford, Gloucester essentially became the de facto king of both England and France.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 123.

Having played such an important role during the first fifteen years of the reign, he remained influential and powerful during the personal rule until his death in 1447. Gloucester received approximately thirty-two separate grants in the ten years between 1437-1447. Upon Henry VI's majority, he continuously honored his uncle's service to him. On March 16, 1437, he was appointed a justice of the county of Anglesey in Northern Wales, a position which had previously been held by the king's mother, Queen Catherine de Valois.<sup>5</sup> Throughout 1437, Henry VI granted his uncle various monetary grants for his "great labours and expenses in attending the councils and on other matters by the king's command."<sup>6</sup> Gloucester also received various grants of land. On July 16, 1437, Gloucester was given the manors of Woodstock and Wotton.<sup>7</sup> In 1439, Gloucester received the manor and the income from the estate of Stannowe, in Norfolk.<sup>8</sup> In July 1440, he was granted the issues and profits of all the castles, lordships, manors, hundreds, commotes, lands, rents, and services in England and Wales which came into the king's hands by the death of Isabel, Countess of Warwick. This grant alone greatly increased the duke's personal income and wealth as well as his prominence in the kingdom.<sup>9</sup> In 1443, Gloucester was given the castle and lordship of Rockingham.<sup>10</sup> The thirty-two grants given to him were a combination of monetary payments, castles, manors, estates, forests, and various royal offices such as the Warden of Dover castle and the Cinque Ports. The land grants were spread out throughout the whole of England and even parts of Wales. He held lands in Wiltshire, Northamptonshire, the Cotswolds, Norfolk, and Yorkshire among many other places. The widespread sphere of Gloucester's power showed Henry VI's

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<sup>5</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office: Henry VI, Vol. III A.D. 1436-1441*, (London: Mackie and Co., 1907), 19.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 70.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 77.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 254.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 435.

<sup>10</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office: Henry VI, Vol. IV A.D. 1441-1446*, (London: Mackie and Co., 1908), 198.

dependence on his uncle. Powerbases across England and Wales allowed Gloucester to exercise broad control over the kingdom in a way similar to the king himself.

Gloucester seemed to remain an integral member of England's governmental administration until the 1440's, after which his influence waned. This could be due to Henry VI's no longer needing to depend on his uncle for guidance in ruling. Of the thirty-two grants given to Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester during the period of the Henry VI's personal rule, only four were granted after 1441. Gloucester was quickly falling from the king's favor. This was accelerated by the increasing failures in the war with France, which many close to the king, such as William, Duke of Suffolk and Edmund, earl of Somerset, blamed on Gloucester. In 1447, Gloucester was arrested on what is presumed to be trumped up charges of treason, orchestrated by Suffolk and Somerset. Suffolk and Somerset had convinced the King that Gloucester was plotting to steal the throne from the young king. Gloucester was arrested at the Parliament in February 1447 and thrown in prison where he died three days later after suffering an apparent stroke.<sup>11</sup> His estates appear to have fallen into the hands of the king following his death. These estates were subsequently re-distributed to other prominent nobles such as the Duke of Suffolk and the Duke of Somerset.

Even before Gloucester's downfall, William, Duke of Suffolk had replaced him as the head of the government. From 1437 until his death in 1450, Suffolk received one hundred and four grants from the king. This is more than any other noble throughout the reign of Henry VI. It is clear that he was strongly favored and that Henry depended upon him a great deal. The first grant he received is that of the marriage of Anne Harling, the king's ward, on March 8, 1437. This gave

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<sup>11</sup> Grummitt, 143-146.

him the benefit of choosing a husband for her and the potential of forming a marriage alliance.<sup>12</sup> In 1438, Suffolk received five different commissions to make inquisitions in the counties of Kent, Oxford, and Norfolk, for uncustomed goods, the values of lands and estates, and other offenses.<sup>13</sup> He continued to receive commissions for county inquisitions throughout his life. Suffolk, like Gloucester, received many grants for lands and manors which were spread throughout the kingdom to give him a wide powerbases similar to Gloucester's. For example, on November 28, 1441, he was granted the office of Warden of the New Forests as well as the manor and park of Lyndhurst.<sup>14</sup> In addition to his manors, he was granted the wardship of Margaret Beaufort, during her minority, the future mother of Henry VII. Suffolk and his wife Alice also appeared to be charitable people as there was a grant of a license which allowed Suffolk and his wife to found an almshouse with two chaplains and thirteen poor men at Newelm in Oxford and to endow it with lands and rents valued at 100 marks a year.<sup>15</sup> There were also at least two grants for a license for the couple to grant to the "poor men" of the same almshouse.<sup>16</sup>

When William, Duke of Suffolk died in 1450, three noblemen were ready to step up and fill the political void that he left: Richard, Duke of York, Richard, Earl of Salisbury, and Richard, Earl of Warwick. The death of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, left Henry VI's cousin, Richard, Duke of York as the heir apparent to the throne. Between 1437 and his death in 1460, York received forty-five grants from the king, the bulk of which were given after 1450. Richard, Earl of Salisbury, was brother-in-law to York, and he received forty-four grants from the king during his life. Richard, Earl of Warwick, son of Salisbury and nephew to York, received thirty- two grants

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<sup>12</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office: Henry VI, Vol. III A.D. 1436-1441*, 41.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 146-149.

<sup>14</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office: Henry VI, Vol. IV A.D. 1441-1446*, 66.

<sup>15</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office: Henry VI, Vol. III A.D. 1436-1441*, 80.

<sup>16</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office: Henry VI, Vol. V A.D. 1446-1452*, (London: Mackie and Co., 1908), 54, 60.



during the latter half of the reign of Henry VI. Richard, Duke of York, took prominence in the government in 1453, when he became the Lord Protector during Henry VI's illness.<sup>17</sup>

York, Salisbury, and Warwick all received grants for various offices, monetary sums, and lands and manors just as other nobles. What is interesting about these three men is that they were the main nobles fighting for the Yorkist cause during the first phase of the Wars of the Roses. What is even more interesting is that York, Salisbury, and Warwick continuously received royal grants, commissions, and offices throughout the first years of the conflict. For example, Warwick received the captaincy of Calais in 1457. The captaincy was an extremely important royal post, which placed Warwick in control of the army and navy posted in Calais.<sup>18</sup> In 1456, Salisbury along with Jasper, earl of Pembroke, William, earl of Arundell, Henry, earl of Northumberland, Henry, Viscount Bouchier, and John, Earl of Worcester was commissioned to seek out all treasons committed in Sussex since Christmas 1455. As for York, he was commissioned along with Edward, Earl of March, his son, Warwick, Salisbury, and Ralph, Lord Greystoke August 24, 1460 to arrest and commit to prison various common men who were accused of uttering falsehood "to arouse discords among the magnates of the realm contrary to the statute in the parliament at Gloucester, 2 Richard II."<sup>19</sup> Two days later on August 26<sup>th</sup>, York, March, Warwick, Salisbury, and Greystoke were commissioned to arrest and commit to prison "all oppressors, plunderers, and slayers of Long's people and their favoureres, abettors, and receivers in the county and city of York."<sup>20</sup> One would assume that the king would refuse to grant nobles in active rebellion against him commissions, offices, and lands, but this was not the case with Henry VI. It possible that the

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<sup>17</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office: Henry VI, Vol. VI A.D. 1452-1461*, (London: Mackie and Co., 1910), 159.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 411.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 608.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 610.

Yorkist were granting themselves various manors, commissions, and offices while they were in charge of the government in 1453 and 1456, but these were not the only years which they received grants during the conflict. His continued patronage to these men during their rebellion is proof of his bad judgment in his dispensation of patronage as well as his general weakness as a king in controlling his nobility. Perhaps, he thought that continued patronage of York, Salisbury, and Warwick, would cause them to return to the fold. If this was the case, it was unsuccessful.

The five men discussed were not the only ones who profited heavily from the generosity and patronage of Henry VI. Ralph, Lord Cromwell received thirty-two separate grants during the personal rule. John, Viscount Beaumont received sixty-five grants, while John, Earl of Oxford received thirty-six. Humphrey, Duke of Buckingham was given fifty-five individual grants, and John, Earl of Shrewsbury, got forty-five. James, Earl of Wiltshire, received forty-eight grants and John, Duke of Norfolk, thirty-four. As was previously mentioned, about eighty-three lords received multiple grants from Henry VI; the men mentioned above are the ones who received the most from the king.<sup>21</sup> Of those eighty-three lords, seventeen were known supporters of the Yorkist cause while an additional six nobles switched from Lancaster to York during the conflict.

Further evidence for Henry VI's unchecked patronage to the nobility can be found in the *Calendar of Fine Rolls* from 1437-1461. There were approximately one-hundred and sixty-seven grants given to the nobility in the *Fine Rolls*. These grants were given to fifty-four different nobles. While most of the nobles mentioned received less than five grants a piece in these Rolls, there were some who received more. Unsurprisingly, the noblemen who received the most grants in the *Patent Rolls* were also the ones who received the most in the *Fine Rolls*. Richard, Earl of Salisbury,

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<sup>21</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office: Henry VI, Vol. III-VI, A.D. 1436-1461.*

was mentioned on fifteen separate occasions, far more than any other lord. John, Lord Dudley received the second most, with thirteen grants.<sup>22</sup> The majority of these grants were for the keeping or management of various estates and lands in the king's name. For example, on February 2, 1450, there was a commitment to Ralph, Lord Cromwell and John, Lord Dudley for the keeping of all the castles, manors, lordships, and lands in the county of Shropshire, in Wales, and the Welsh Marches and elsewhere in England, held by Henry Grey at the time of his death.<sup>23</sup> On December 14, 1450, there was a commitment to Richard, Earl of Salisbury and others of the keeping of the castles of Bokenham and the manors of Old Bokenham, New Bokenham, two-thirds of the manor of Gryshaugh, and the hundred of Shropham in the county of Norfolk.<sup>24</sup> On February 23, 1456, there was a commitment to Richard, Duke of York for the keeping of all the king's mines of gold and silver within the counties of Devon and Cornwall for ten years.<sup>25</sup>

The *Calendar of Charter Rolls* also provides evidence of the prominence of the nobility during Henry VI's reign. Thirty-three grants were given to sixteen separate nobles. William, Duke of Suffolk received the most with six grants, while Humphrey, Duke of Buckingham and Edmund Beaufort, Duke of Somerset both received four apiece. Of the thirty-three total grants, fifteen proclaimed the creation of a new noble title, including the elevation of Humphrey, Earl of Buckingham to be Duke of Buckingham, Edmund, Marquess of Dorset to be Duke of Somerset, and William, Marquess of Suffolk to Duke of Suffolk.<sup>26</sup> The creation of Edmund Tudor as Earl

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<sup>22</sup> *Calendar of the Fine Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office: Henry Vol 17-19, A.D. 1437-1461* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1937-1939).

<sup>23</sup> *Calendar of the Fine Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office: Henry Vol 18, A.D. 1445-1452* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1939), 149.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 184.

<sup>25</sup> *Calendar of the Fine Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office: Henry Vol 19, A.D. 1452-1461* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1939), 150.

<sup>26</sup> *Calendar of the Charter Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office: Vol. VI 5 Henry VI-8 Henry VIII, A.D. 1427-1516*, Kraus Reprint Edition. (Nendeln: Kraus -Thomson Organization Limited, 1972), 44, 99, and 100 respectively.

of Richmond can also be found in an entry from November 23, 1452.<sup>27</sup> In the *Charter Rolls*, there is also evidence of Henry VI's continued patronage of Richard, Duke of York after the start of the Wars of the Roses. On June 9, 1457, Richard, Duke of York was granted the right to hold a weekly market at Fotheringay in the county of Northampton.<sup>28</sup>

The *Calendar of Close Rolls* is a unique set of records. Not only does it record grants, commissions, and orders to royal officers, it records bonds and recognizances either between individuals or groups or between individuals or groups and the king. These bonds and recognizances, especially those due to the king directly are often seen by historians as efforts to punish or penalize various members of society, specifically the nobility.<sup>29</sup> There were two hundred and ninety-four separate grants given to ninety-three different nobles.<sup>30</sup> While the majority of the nobles only received one or two grants each, some received more and once again their prominence in the government of the realm was reflected in grants they received. Henry, Earl of Northumberland and his son, Henry, Earl of Northumberland, fervently loyal supporters of Henry VI and the Lancastrian cause, received twenty-one grants collectively, the most of any noble listed in the *Close Rolls*. Examples of the grants given to the Earls of Northumberland include one from May 20, 1443, where Northumberland was ordered to present himself to the Tower of London, not for punishment but to await further commands from the king.<sup>31</sup> Also, on December 1, 1455, there was an order for the king to deliver the manors of Slagham and Pingden

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 122.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 128.

<sup>29</sup> For additional reading see J.R. Lander, *Crown and Nobility 1450-1509*, (London: Edward Arnold Publishers, 1976); Steven Gunn, *Henry VII's New Men and the Making of Tudor England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); K.B. MacFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England: The Ford Lectures of 1953 and Related Studies*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973); Ronald G. Asch and Adolf M. Birke, *Princes, Patronage, and the Nobility: the Court at the Beginning of the Modern Age, C. 1450-1650*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>30</sup> *Calendar of the Close Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office: Henry VI, Vol. III-VI A.D. 1435-1461*, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1937).

<sup>31</sup> *Calendar of the Close Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office: Henry VI, Vol. IV A.D. 1441-1447*, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1937), 98.

to Northumberland. John, Earl of Shrewsbury and his son, John, Earl of Shrewsbury, also loyal Lancastrians, received the second-most grants with nineteen collectively. Interestingly, Richard, earl of Salisbury, the fervent Yorkist, received thirteen individual grants, the third-most of all the nobles, once again showing Henry VI's unrestrained patronage, even in the face of rebellious nobles. These grants include orders for the king to meddle no further with manors and giving the administration of those manors to a nobleman. They also include orders for the Royal escheators of a particular county to take the fealty of various noblemen. For example in an entry for June 16, 1440, the escheator in Cambridgeshire was ordered to remove the king's hand and meddle no further with the manor of Iselham. It was to be delivered to Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland along with any issues that were found via an inquisition into the manor.<sup>32</sup> An entry on March 25, 1442, ordered the escheator in Yorkshire to take the fealty of Richard, Earl of Salisbury and to give him livery of the castle and manors of Sheriff Hutton and Raskell.<sup>33</sup>

The most important element that is featured in the *Calendar of Close Rolls* are the bonds and recognizances. As J.R. Lander argued, bond and recognizances were commonplace in the Rolls of the four kings in discussion. Therefore their presence in the rolls from the reign of Henry VI is no surprise.<sup>34</sup> Sixty-eight bonds and recognizances were found in the *Close Rolls* from 1437-1461 which were against various members of the nobility. Of those sixty-eight, twenty-three of them were due to the king directly (figure 6 in the appendix). The rest were simply recognizances or bonds between a noble and another noble or a noble and a gentleman.

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<sup>32</sup> *Calendar of the Close Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office: Henry VI, Vol. III A.D. 1435-1441*, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1937), 317.

<sup>33</sup> *Calendar of the Close Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office: Henry VI, Vol. IV A.D. 1441-1447*, 12.

<sup>34</sup> J.R. Lander, *Crown and Nobility 1450-1509*, (London: Edward Arnold Publishers, 1976), 274.

In the first volume of the *Close Rolls* for Henry VI's personal rule, covering the years 1435-1441, there was a total of twenty-one recognizances against the nobility. Only six were due to directly to the king, two of which occurred in 1436 before the personal rule. The first to occur after 1437, was on November 20, 1438. A recognizance to the king was levied against Humphrey, Earl of Stafford for the sum of 300*l*.<sup>35</sup> This was followed by one on July 2, 1440, levied against John, Duke of Norfolk for the sum of 10,000 marks. This recognizance came with a condition which said "that the Duke shall abide continually about the king's person or in his household, not withdrawing without license of the king until he shall find security such as the king shall appoint to keep the peace and to do...no hurt or harm...to any of the peoples and that he shall be of good behavior toward the king..."<sup>36</sup> While many of the recognizances came with a condition which had to be met to avoid paying the fee, this particular condition indicated one of the goals of recognizances to the king. These recognizances often served as a method which the king could encourage a noble to behave and follow the king's wishes. This is a tactic that Henry VI continued to utilize periodically throughout his reign as will be shown, and a tactic which Henry VII exploited throughout his reign.

The second volume of *Close Rolls* for Henry VI's reign covered the years 1441-1447. There were ten recognizances against nobles, none of which were due directly to the king. Instead, there were all between nobles and other men. For example, on April 26, 1442, there was an entry for a recognizance against Henry, Lord Grey to Ralph Basset, Esquire for 200 marks.<sup>37</sup> Another on November 26, 1443, was against John, Duke of Norfolk to Humphrey, earl of Stafford for 600*l*.<sup>38</sup> The third volume, which covered the years 1447-1454, followed a similar

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<sup>35</sup> *Calendar of the Close Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office: Henry VI, Vol. III A.D. 1435-1441*, 239.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 381.

<sup>37</sup> *Calendar of the Close Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office: Henry VI, Vol. IV A.D. 1441-1447*, 65.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 196.

pattern to the previous volume. Out of the six noble recognizances, only one was due to the king. It was levied against John, Duke of Norfolk. The entry from December 11, 1453, read “John, Duke of Norfolk to the king. Recognizance for 12,000*l.* to be levied in Norfolk. Condition, that he shall appear in Chancery on Monday in the first week of Lent, next, and in the meantime shall do no hurt or harm to Alice, duchess of Suffolk or any of the people.”<sup>39</sup> Out of all the recognizances due to the king in the first three volumes, this recognizance levied the largest fine making it clear that John, Duke of Norfolk was so troublesome that the king or his advisors needed to restrain him without arresting him.

The fourth and final volume of Henry VI’s close rolls cover the final years of the reign 1454-1461, essentially the years of the first phase of the Wars of the Roses. The noble involvement in the conflict against the king is evident in the recognizances found in this volume. There were thirty-three recognizances listed, twenty of which were due directly to the king. This is the most found until the reign of Henry VII. All twenty came after the start of the conflict, with the first entry found on January 16, 1456, levied against Henry, Duke of Exeter, for 2000*l.* It is important to know that Exeter was a loyal Yorkist supporter.<sup>40</sup> This entry was followed by five entries levied against Lancastrian supporters, Humphrey, Duke of Buckingham, John, Earl of Oxford, John Bouchier, Lord Berners, and Thomas Grey, Lord Ridgemont for the sum of 500*l.* each.<sup>41</sup> On March 23, 1458, a recognizance for 10,000*l.* was levied against Richard, Duke of York. This was followed by two other recognizances against Richard, Earl of Salisbury and Richard, Earl of Warwick for 12,000*l.* each. Henry, Duke of Somerset, Henry, Earl of

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<sup>39</sup> *Calendar of the Close Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office: Henry VI, Vol. V A.D. 1447-1454*, Kraus Reprint Edition. (Nendeln: Kraus -Thomson Organization Limited, 1971), 476.

<sup>40</sup> *Calendar of the Close Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office: Henry VI, Vol. VI A.D. 1454-1461*, Kraus Reprint Edition. (Nendeln: Kraus -Thomson Organization Limited, 1971), 109.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 109.

Northumberland, and John Clifford, Lord Clifford also received a similar recognizance. The condition for these six recognizances read as follows:

Condition that he shall abide and obey the king's award touching all controversies, trespasses, debts, debates, actions, offences, condemnations, executions, and demands between him, Henry, Duke of Somerset, Henry, Earl of Northumberland, John Clifford, Lord Clifford, Thomas Percy, Lord Egremount, Richard Percy, his brother, all brethren and sisters of the said Duke of Somerset, Earl of Northumberland and Lord Clifford, and all servants and tenants of theirs and Thomas Percy and Richard Percy...<sup>42</sup>

These six recognizances indicate the conflict between the lords mentioned above, and it is clear that the king used this as a method of resolving the conflict. There is no indication in the rolls that these recognizances were canceled by Henry VI or his successor. However, due to the continued misbehavior of the nobility and Henry VI's lack of control of the kingdom, it can be assumed that these fines were not collected. Fines of such magnitude as the ones levied on the Duke of York and Earl of Salisbury would have ruined them and would have certainly rendered them unable to afford to continue rebelling against the king. The sheer fact the York and Salisbury continued to rebel after 1458 is evidence that Henry did not collect the money associated with the recognizances.

The evidence indicated in the *Close Rolls* shows the Henry VI made an attempt to calm his nobility through recognizances during the Wars of the Roses, albeit unsuccessfully. However, his successor would do no better. In fact, Henry VI was temporarily restored to the throne for a brief period in 1470, nine years after his original deposition. During his short restoration, it is clear that Henry VI was still under the control of powerful, overbearing nobles. This time he was under the control of Richard, Earl of Warwick and George Duke of Clarence. During the mere

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 292-293.



six months of his restoration (from October 3, 1470-April 11, 1471) one hundred and twenty-four grants in the *Patent Rolls* were granted to fourteen separate nobles. Forty of those grants were given to Richard, Earl of Warwick and forty-one of them were given to George, Duke of Clarence. These grants were a mix of offices and estates which spanned the kingdom rather than one centralized location For example on February 18, 1471; Clarence was granted to lieutenancy of Ireland while on March 23, He was granted the manors of Merston, Mesey, and Cosham in the county of Wiltshire.<sup>43</sup> From this alone, it is clear that Clarence and Warwick were firmly in control of the government with Henry VI acting as merely a puppet.

Henry VI was an inconsistent king who exercised poor judgment when it came to his dispensation of patronage. His overflowing patronage on the nobility and his general weakness in other aspects of government allowed the nobility to act independently of him and often at times directly against him without many consequences, particularly during the early years of the Wars of the Roses. Although he attempted to resolve the open rebellion of the Yorkist nobles against his reign through monetary penalties in the form of recognizances it was unsuccessful. The rebellion led to his eventual deposition in 1461. His successor, Edward IV, the former Earl of March, would face a similar problem of an unruly nobility.

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<sup>43</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office, Edward IV and Henry VI, A.D. 1467-1477*, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1900), 241-243.

## CHAPTER 4: EDWARD IV AND HIS FACTIONAL NOBILITY

Edward Plantagenet, Duke of York and Earl of March, won the throne of England in 1461 after finally deposing Henry VI at the Battle of Towton on March 29<sup>th</sup>. His reign lasted for approximately twenty-two years from 1461- 1483, excluding the period of six months, from October 1470 to April 1471, when Richard, Earl of Warwick deposed Edward and temporarily restored Henry VI to the throne. Edward, like his predecessor, would struggle with the dynastic ambitions of various nobles, particularly those of his cousin, Richard, Earl of Warwick and his brother, George, Duke of Clarence. Unlike Henry VI, however, Edward IV's struggles were not born out of his weakness or unrestricted patronage. Instead, Edward's problems with the nobility were born out of favoritism which created factions within the court. While Edward IV had to deal consistently with threats to his throne from Lancastrian nobles and the factionalism of his own Yorkist supporters, he still relied heavily on his nobility.<sup>1</sup>

The Wars of the Roses which initiate Edward's reign and continued before and after it, caused profound changes to the makeup of the English nobility.<sup>2</sup> The battles of 1455-1461 and executions that went with them claimed the lives of approximately one-fourth of the entire peerage.<sup>3</sup> As a result, Edward was more active in creating new peers or elevating existing ones than any monarch since Richard II. Over the course of his twenty-two-year reign, he created forty-five new titles. More than two-thirds of them were created in between 1461 and his temporary deposition in 1470. According to historian Hannes Kleineke, the creations during the first half of Edward's reign were due to the fact the Edward had little choice in the matter. In the

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<sup>1</sup> For Further information on the reign of Edward IV see: Charles Ross, *Edward IV*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974); Mary Clive, *This Sun of York: A Biography of Edward IV*, (New York: Knopf, 1973); Johnathan Hughes, *Arthurian Myths and Alchemy: The Kingship of Edward IV*, (Shroud: Sutton, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Hannes Kleineke, *Edward IV*, (New York: Routledge, 2009), 159.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 204.

early years of his reign, Edward had to replenish the ranks of the nobility, place the English countryside under new and steady supervision, reward his supporters and reconcile with former Lancastrians. Expanding the nobility was the way that Edward achieved these goals. The start of the reign saw the creation of nineteen new barons, nine earls, a marquess and two dukes. The second half of the reign, Edward no longer needed to create a new power base or appease former Lancastrians. The majority of the creations after 1471 were reserved for the king's immediate family. Outside of the king's relatives only four new barons, an earl, and a viscount were created from 1471-1482. <sup>4</sup>

It was factionalism which ultimately caused Edward's relationship with his nobility to become strained. This factionalism was caused by Edward's marriage with Elizabeth Woodville. Elizabeth was the daughter of a minor baron, Richard Woodville, Lord Rivers and Jacquetta of Luxemburg, Dowager Duchess of Bedford. Edward and Elizabeth met when he stayed at her family home of Grafton Regis, in Northamptonshire while he was putting down a rebellion led by the Duke of Somerset from 1463-1464. They were married secretly in 1464 and Elizabeth was crowned queen of England in 1465. Edward's marriage to Elizabeth was problematic for a number of reasons. First, Elizabeth was a widow. She was previously married to a Lancastrian knight, Sir John Grey of Groby, who had died at the Second Battle of St. Alban's. Her first marriage also produced two sons which Edward looked upon favorably as proof of her fertility. Second, Elizabeth had thirteen siblings, all of marriageable age. During the first years of their marriage, Edward and Elizabeth worked diligently to make matches between the Woodville siblings and prominent noble families, typically at the expense of other nobles seeking important matches for their own children. Third, Edward elevated his new father-in-law to the rank of an

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 159.

earl, creating him Earl Rivers. He also elevated his eldest brother-in-law, Anthony Woodville to a barony, creating him Lord Scales. Edward began to favor the advice of his wife's relatives occasionally over the advice of those who brought him to the throne, particularly Richard, Earl of Warwick. Edward was convinced by his in-laws to make alliances with Burgundy while Warwick advocated an alliance with France. Edward's decision to marry his sister Margaret to Charles, Duke of Burgundy caused a decisive break between him and Warwick and solidified the factionalism between the Woodvilles and their opponents that would plague his reign and the short reign of his young son.<sup>5</sup>

The prominence and necessity of the nobility, as well as the developing factionalism within the peerage, can be seen in the grants and commissions given to various nobles in the *Patent Rolls* from Edward's reign. Over the approximately twenty-two year reign, roughly 1,163 grants were issued to eighty-five separate nobles, most of whom received multiple grants (figure 2 and 5 in the appendix). While George, Duke of Clarence and Richard, Duke of Gloucester, the king's brothers, received the most grants of any nobles, they were not significant forces in the reign until the late 1460's, and 70's when they reached their majority.<sup>6</sup> The most significant force in the early years of Edward's reign was Richard, Earl of Warwick. From the beginning of the reign until his death at the Battle of Barnet in 1471, Warwick received seventy-two separate grants for offices, lands, money, and commissions. Most of the seventy-two grants were given before 1467, where the break between him and Edward over the alliance with Burgundy and

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<sup>5</sup> Dan Jones, *Wars of the Roses: The Fall of the Plantagenets and the Rise of the Tudors*, (New York, Penguin Books, 2014), 213-215.

<sup>6</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office, Edward IV, A.D. 1461-1467*, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1897); *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office, Edward IV, Henry VI, A.D. 1467-1477* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1900); *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office, Edward IV, Edward V, Richard III, A.D. 1476-1485* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1901).

Edward's reluctance to allow Warwick's daughter to marry his brother George became evident.<sup>7</sup> This reluctance to reward Warwick's misbehavior sets Edward IV apart from his predecessor who continuously gave grants to those acting against him.

Examples of the various grants given to Warwick include a commission on March 8, 1461 which called for Warwick to "array all able-bodied men in the counties of Northampton, Warwick, Leicester, Stafford, Worcester, Gloucester, Shropshire, Nottingham, Derby, and York for defense against Henry VI and his adherents and the king's enemies of France and Scotland and to arrest and imprison rebels."<sup>8</sup> This particular grant and those similar to it indicated Edward's faith and dependence on Warwick to defend his right to the throne and protect him from any adversaries. Further proof of this dependence is found in an entry from November 6, 1462 which calls for Warwick and the king's lieutenant "to raise his standard in the north against his enemies of France and Scotland, who are disturbing the tranquility of the realm by the procurance of Henry VI and Margaret his consort and other rebels."<sup>9</sup> Warwick was also named the constable of Dover Castle and the warden of the Cinque Ports which was one the highest offices in the land.<sup>10</sup> It was a position that was previously held by Henry VI's uncle, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester before his death. Warwick was also granted to the office of great chamberlain of England and warden of the west march of Scotland, yet another prestigious office.<sup>11</sup> Warwick's holdings centered in the Midlands of England, however, he did have power bases in the southern and northern parts of the country as well as in Wales.

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<sup>7</sup> Jones, 214.

<sup>8</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office, Edward IV, A.D. 1461-1467*, 31.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 231.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 302.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 342.

While Warwick still received various grants, mainly for the keeping of various lordships and estates, following his break with Edward in 1467, it was clear that he was no longer the premier noble in Edward's court. Others were competing for his position. The three most significant competitors included Edward's two brothers and Anthony Woodville, Lord Scales, the queen's brother. George, Duke of Clarence was a prominent figure throughout the reign. He received a total of one-hundred and seven grants from the beginning of the reign until his execution in 1478. Only twenty-four of those grants were bestowed upon him before 1467; the other eighty-three were given after 1467. This indicates that he was one of the noblemen who sought to fill the power vacuum left by Warwick. Although George did join Warwick in his rebellion against Edward in 1468 and again in 1470, George was soon reconciled with his brother and restored to prominence. George was given such grants as the appointment as the lieutenant of Ireland for seven years on February 28, 1462, a position that was previously held by his father, Richard, Duke of York.<sup>12</sup> In 1465 he was granted the manor and lordship of Hunspell Maryse "with knight's fees, advowsons, parks, warrens, chaces, forests, and all liberties, franchises, courts, leet, views of frankpledge, customs, and profits."<sup>13</sup> In 1472 he was granted "all castles, honors, lordships, manors, lands and other possession late of Richard, earl of Warwick and Salisbury."<sup>14</sup> Clarence received his final royal grant on August 26, 1476, which was a license for him and ten other men to "found a fraternity or gild of four guardians and other persons wishing to be of the fraternity within the Church of St. Mary, Asshewell" in the county of Hertford.<sup>15</sup> Clarence was executed for treason in February 1478. This final grant in 1476 was an indication of his downfall.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 142.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 366.

<sup>14</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office, Edward IV, Henry VI A.D. 1467-1477*, 330.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 597.

Richard, Duke of Gloucester, the king's younger brother, rose to prominence following Edward's restoration to the throne in 1471. This was due in part to the fact the Richard was still a minor during the first portion of the reign, having only been nine-years-old when Edward won the crown from Henry VI. During the reign, Gloucester received one hundred and twenty-two grants from the king, all but seven received after 1467. Richard became even more important in the final years of Edward's reign, particularly after Clarence's downfall. On June 29, 1471, Edward granted his brother the castles, manors, and lordships of Middleham, Sheriff Hutton, and Penrith with all reversions, services, knight's fees, dowers, advowsons, members, and appurtenances in the county of York.<sup>16</sup> In May, of the same year, he was granted the office of great chamberlain of England. However, this office was surrendered the next year because Edward granted it to Clarence.<sup>17</sup> In 1473 he was commissioned to "array the king's lieges of the county of York and bring them to king's presence with all speed when required"<sup>18</sup> Before 1477, Gloucester was made the admiral of England and was commissioned on February 14, 1477, to enquire after a merchant's complaint.<sup>19</sup> On May 12, 1480, Gloucester was appointed as the king's lieutenant-general to fight against King James of Scotland who had violated his truce with England.<sup>20</sup> This appointment is an indication of Gloucester's prominence in the north. Edward bestowed upon Richard many offices centered in the northern portion of the region making Gloucester almost the proxy king of the North. It was Edward's intention to give his brother as strong a power base in the Northern portion of the country as possible to undermine the massive amount of influence wielded by the Percy family who remained prominent Lancastrians.<sup>21</sup> His

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 260.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 262.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 408.

<sup>19</sup> *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office, Edward IV, Edward V, Richard III, A.D. 1476-1485*, 23.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 205.

<sup>21</sup> The Percy Family were the Earls of Northumberland.

power in the north became essential in the days and month's following the death of Edward in 1483, as it would be his Northern affinity who aided Richard in taking the throne from his young nephew.

Richard, Duke of Gloucester seemed to be in constant competition with the Queen's brother, Anthony, Lord Scales, later Earl Rivers. While Rivers only received sixty-three royal grants in comparison to Richard's one-hundred and twenty-two, he still features prominently in the rolls, particularly after 1467. Of his sixty-three grants, only four were given before Warwick's decisive break with Edward. On November 19, 1467, he was granted the custody of the king's castle and the town of Porchester as well as the town of Portsmouth.<sup>22</sup> In 1471, he was commissioned to "array the king's lieges in the county of Oxford and to arrest and imprison certain persons stirring up insurrection."<sup>23</sup> In 1474, he was granted "all manors, lands, rents, reversions, services, possessions, hereditaments, and emoluments in the counties of Cornwall, Worcester, Northampton, Bedford, Essex, Hereford, and Kent belonging to the king by reason of the forfeiture of Willaim Vaux, attained for treason."<sup>24</sup> In November 1482 he was appointed for life as the "surveyor and chamberlain of the king's hundreds, manors, and lordships of Middleton and Marden, co. Kent, and captain of the king's castle of Queensburgh, co. Kent with the accustomed fees."<sup>25</sup> In addition to his sixty-three grants, he was given the responsibility for the protection of Prince Edward, the heir to the throne. Prince Edward would be in Rivers' custody when Edward IV succumbed to his sudden illness in 1483. Upon Edward IV's death, the

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 41.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 285.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 421.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 322.



competition between Rivers and Gloucester came to a head as did the competition between Gloucester's faction at court and the Woodvilles'.

There were many other prominent nobles who featured in the *Patent Rolls* which further proves that Edward was very reliant upon his nobility.<sup>26</sup> John, Earl of Worcester, received fifty-four royal grants. Henry, Earl of Essex, Edward's uncle, received fifty-two various grants throughout the reign. But perhaps the most prominent noble aside from the four discussed at length above, was William, Lord Hastings. Hastings was widely regarded to be Edward's closest friend throughout his reign. Hastings went with Edward when he was in exile during his temporary deposition in 1470. Throughout the entire reign, Hastings was granted seventy-five royal grants, the most of any noble aside from Clarence and Gloucester. On June 2, 1471, he was granted the offices of constable of the king's castles of Nottingham, porter of the gate of the castle, steward, and keeper of the forest of Sherwood, and keeper of the king's parks of Beskewood and Clipston.<sup>27</sup> On January 8, 1477, he was given the offices of master and worker of the king's mints and keeper of the king's exchange within the Tower of London, the realm of England and the town of Calais.<sup>28</sup> Hastings was so favored that Edward even placed him on the regency council for the minority of his son, Edward, following Edward IV's death in 1483.<sup>29</sup>

While the factionalism among the nobility of Edward IV is not evident in the *Calendar of Fine Rolls* and the *Calendar of Charter Rolls* the importance and strength of the nobility is. In the *Fine Rolls*, forty-one noble grants were given to twenty separate peers. Richard, Duke of

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<sup>26</sup> Those excluded from patronage included minors, as their estates were typically granted to prominent lords for safe keeping until the minor reached their majority, and prominent Lancastrians such as Jasper Tudor, Earl of Pembroke and John de Vere, Earl of Oxford.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 310.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 10.

<sup>29</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office, Edward IV, A.D. 1461-1467; Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office, Edward IV, Henry VI, A.D. 1467-; Calendar of Patent Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office, Edward IV, Edward V, Richard III, A.D. 1476-1485.*

Gloucester received the most mentions with seven grants and Richard, Earl of Warwick received five. As for the charter rolls, Edward gave thirty-four grants to nineteen peers. Twenty of those grants were creations of new peers or elevations of existing peers. These charters included the elevation of Richard, Lord Rivers to Earl Rivers, the creation of William Herbert as Earl of Pembroke, and the creation of Thomas Grey as the Earl of Huntingdon and later the Marquess of Dorset.<sup>30</sup>

Edward had to deal occasionally with various uprisings from the Lancastrians and people within his own inner circle, such as Warwick and Clarence, in addition to the factionalism which continuously caused tensions at his court. It does appear that Edward tried various methods to control his troublesome nobles. He restricted his patronage when Warwick and Clarence rebelled against him, and he placed bills of attainder on several nobles throughout his reign. Unlike Henry VI and Henry VII, Edward did not utilize bonds and recognizances as a method of controlling his nobles. Throughout his entire reign, there were only nine bonds and recognizances placed against the nobility. Five of them were due directly to the king (figure 6 in the appendix). On June 10, 1468, a recognizance to the king for the value of 1000*l.* was levied against John, Earl of Shrewsbury, John, Lord Dudley, and Walter, Lord Mountjoy.<sup>31</sup> On June 21, 1468, another recognizance to the king for 1000*l.* was levied against Henry, Lord Grey, William, Lord Hastings, and Thomas Wyngfeld, esquire.<sup>32</sup> In 1469, a bond due to the king for 3000*l.* was placed against William, bishop of Ely, William Earl of Arundel, Edmund, Earl of Kent, and

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<sup>30</sup> *Calendar of the Charter Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office: Vol. VI 5 Henry VI-8 Henry VIII, A.D. 1427-1516*, Kraus Reprint Edition. (Nendeln: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1972), 214, 225, 239, 249 respectively.

<sup>31</sup> *Calendar of the Close Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office, Edward IV Vol. II A.D. 1468-1476*. (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1953), 25-26.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 26.

Walter Devereux, Lord Ferrers.<sup>33</sup> On March 21, 1473, a bond to the king was placed against Henry Bouchier, Earl of Essex and John Howard, Lord Howard for the value of 2000*l.* each.

<sup>34</sup>The final bond to the king was placed on June 9, 1476, against Edward Neville, Lord Bergavenny for 4000 marks.<sup>35</sup> In comparison to Henry VI, these bonds were for smaller sums, making it clear that it was not Edward's intention to suppress his nobility through debilitating fines. Edward's lack of bonds and recognizances against his nobility is indicative of both his dependence on the peerage and his complete faith in their loyalty to him. It seems that Edward, particularly after 1471, felt secure in his throne and did not find many nobles, if any, who threatened his power.<sup>36</sup>

After his restoration to the throne in April 1471, Edward IV was finally secure. Henry VI and his heir, Prince Edward were dead and the last Lancastrian claimant, Henry Tudor, was in exile in Brittany and a minimal threat at best. Richard, Earl of Warwick, was dead as well and could no longer plot against the king, especially since George, Duke of Clarence was reconciled with his brother. Edward had a broad and powerful nobility which he trusted and depended upon. It was not Edward's dependence or faith in his nobility which caused yet another outbreak of civil war after his death. It was a combination of ambitious, overly powerful nobles, and the factionalism which had plagued Edward's court throughout the reign. Upon his death, Edward set up a regency council, and his brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester proclaimed himself Lord Protector. Anthony, Earl Rivers was in control of the new king, Edward V. Gloucester met

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 101.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 302.

<sup>35</sup> *Calendar of the Close Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office, Edward IV, Edward V, and Richard III A.D. 1476-1485*, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1954), 14.

<sup>36</sup> There is no indication in the Rolls as to why these recognizances were dispensed.

Rivers, arrested him and seized the king and placed him in the Tower of London for his protection.

Edward IV died in April 1483. Throughout May, Richard worked to solidify his power as the Lord Protector, but as May turned into June, Richard became increasingly paranoid about the loyalty of the councilors, particularly those associated with the Woodville faction. On June 13<sup>th</sup>, he staged a coup against the Council and had William, Lord Hastings, Edward IV's closest friend, beheaded on Tower Green. He ordered that Anthony, Earl Rivers be executed as well. Richard began to spread rumors about the illegitimacy of his nephew and had him declared a bastard. He took his final step and declared himself the rightful and legitimate heir of Edward IV and named himself Richard III in late June 1483.<sup>37</sup>

Richard's overwhelming ambition and paranoia led him to steal the throne from his twelve-year-old nephew. While he had many noble enemies, namely the remaining Woodville supporters, he also was completely reliant on the support of the nobility, particularly the northern nobles. Edward had given his brother overarching powers in the north, making him a pseudo-king in the region. Due to this power and influence, Richard had formed an extremely large noble affinity.<sup>38</sup> It was Richard's initial plan to work with the nobles who were loyal to his brother, but this proved unsuccessful, particularly after the Duke of Buckingham's rebellion in 1483, a plot to put Henry Tudor on the throne. Following this rebellion, Richard attained ninety-eight men whose property became forfeit to the king. Richard, to establish royal supremacy in

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<sup>37</sup> For further information on Richard III see: David Hipshon, *Richard III*, (New York: Routledge, 2011); Bertram Fields, *Royal Blood: Richard III and the Mystery of the Princes*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1998); A.J. Pollard, *Richard III and the Princes in the Towers*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991).

<sup>38</sup> Rosemary Horrox, *Richard III: A Study of Service*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 27.

the South, where the rebellion was centered, placed his loyal northern magnates in the positions vacated by the attained men.

While Richard's reign only lasted two years, it is clear in the records from his reign that he was interested in creating and maintaining a strong, noble powerbase. In his two years, he gave two hundred and twenty-four grants to thirty-six different nobles (figure 3 and 5 in the appendix). Francis Lovell, Viscount Lovell received the most patronage from Richard as he was a loyal northern magnate. Lovell received twenty-one grants. On August 14, 1483, Lovell, who had already been made the king's chamberlain, was made the chief butler of England for life.<sup>39</sup> On January 10, 1485, he was given the office of steward of the lordships of Cokeham and Bray in the County of Berkshire.<sup>40</sup>

The *Charter Rolls* also give evidence to Richard's need for noble support. Although there were only three noble entries in these rolls for Richard's reign all three were creations of nobility. William, Viscount Berkeley was made the Earl of Nottingham, John Howard, Earl Marshal, was made the Duke of Norfolk, and Edward Grey, Lord Lisle was elevated to Viscount Lisle.<sup>41</sup> The *Close Rolls* are indicative of just how important the nobility was to Richard's regime. In the *Close Rolls*, Richard gave eleven lords twenty-one grants and only issued four bonds against them. Three of the four bonds were due to the king (figure 6 in the appendix). John, Duke of Suffolk, Gilbert Talbot, William Stanley and Gilbert Debenham had a bond placed on them for 2000 marks due to the King in February 1484.<sup>42</sup> William, Earl of Nottingham, was

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<sup>39</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office, Edward IV, Edward V, Richard III A.D. 1478-1485*, 365.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 365.

<sup>41</sup> *Calendar of the Charter Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office: Vol. VI 5 Henry VI-8 Henry VIII, A.D. 1427-1516*, 258 and 260.

<sup>42</sup> *Calendar of the Close Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office, Edward IV, Edward V, and Richard III A.D. 1476-1485*, 351.

placed under a significant bond to the king of 10,000*l.* in March 1484<sup>43</sup> Finally, Edward Grey, Viscount Lisle was placed under a 1000 mark bond to the king on August 29, 1484.<sup>44</sup>

The lack of bonds and recognizances in the *Close Rolls* along with the relatively large number of grants given in the *Patent Rolls* is evidence of Richard's dependence on the nobility and his reluctance to do much, if anything, to control them. While he did place ninety-eight men under attainder, many of them nobles, these were men directly involved in the 1483 rebellion against him. He did not attempt to control his nobles as a protective maneuver, and he even attempted to reconcile with the rebels. It is clear that Richard sought to bribe his nobles through the promise of patronage and prominence to gain their loyalty rather than oppress them through financial measures. Richard's dependence and his unwillingness to do much to control the nobles led to his downfall. Many of his enemies went to Brittany and joined Henry Tudor's cause. At the battle of Bosworth, many of Richard's nobles, particularly Thomas, Lord Stanley, switched to Tudor's cause. This betrayal ultimately led to Richard's death and Tudor's victory on the battlefield.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 361.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 388.

## CHAPTER 5: TAMING THE NOBILITY-HENRY VII AND HIS “NEW MEN”

Henry Tudor’s victory at Bosworth Field was unexpected, as was Henry’s rise to the throne. Despite the odds, Henry Tudor, with his distant and questionable claim, was crowned on the battlefield in August 1485 as Henry VII, King of England. The previous three reigns had been plagued with civil war waged by overmighty and ambitious nobles who wanted nothing more than to influence the king and his policies and when the king did not do what they wished, many aimed to depose him. This was the climate in which Henry VII came to the throne. The problems with the independent and powerful peerage did not simply evaporate. In fact, the nobility would be an issue with which Henry would grapple his entire reign, and he would ultimately find a solution to this problem.

Throughout his reign, Henry faced three significant threats to his throne. The first was a young boy named Lambert Simnel. Simnel was convinced by Francis, Viscount Lovell, the Earl of Kildare, and the Earl of Lincoln to pretend to be Edward, Earl of Warwick, who was the son of George, Duke of Clarence. The problem with this plot was that Henry had the actual Earl of Warwick securely imprisoned in the Tower of London. Lincoln, Lovell, and Kildare raised an army in Warwick’s name. They met with Henry’s forces on June 16, 1487, at the battle of Stoke. Henry’s force defeated Simnel’s, the Earl of Lincoln was killed in the conflict while Lovell escaped, after which he disappeared without a trace.<sup>1</sup>

Henry next faced the pretender Perkin Warbeck. Due to the suspicious disappearance of the York princes during the reign of Richard III, Warbeck was able to claim that he was the younger of the princes, Richard, Duke of York. Warbeck staked his claim to the English throne

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Penn, *Winter King: Henry VII and the Dawn of Tudor England*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 24-27.

in 1490 while in the comfortable protection of Margaret of Burgundy, the sister of Edward IV and Richard III. Warbeck gained international support from Charles VIII of France and Maximilian I, Holy Roman Emperor. Warbeck landed in Scotland in 1495 hoping to acquire enough support to raise an army against Henry VII. However, the support failed to materialize. In 1497, Warbeck tried once again to win the throne. This time he landed in Cornwall, hoping to draw on the Cornish resentments toward Henry VII. The Cornish were not willing to help Warbeck for they feared Henry VII and were unwilling to place their faith in this young pretender. While Warbeck had some noble support, it was not enough to dethrone Henry. Henry's forces met Warbeck at Taunton and Warbeck surrendered.<sup>2</sup>

The final challenger Henry had to face was Edmund de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, the brother of John de la Pole, who had died at Stoke. He had a stronger claim to the throne than Henry, as his mother was Edward IV's sister. In 1501, Suffolk began to claim his right to the throne and fled to the continent to seek international support. While this claim did not lead to battle, he remained a thorn in Henry's side until 1506 when Henry persuaded Philip of Burgundy to hand Suffolk over to him under the condition that he would remain unharmed. Henry remained true to his promise and only had Suffolk imprisoned.

These three challenges during Henry's reign and the noble involvement in them along with the thirty previous years of noble led dynastic conflict led Henry to take a different stance when it came to his relationship to his nobility. He developed a three-fold strategy to tame his nobility and force them into compliance with his wishes. First, Henry restricted his patronage. Second, he relied on non-noble men, mostly lawyers from humble backgrounds, to be his trusted

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 24-27.



advisors and administrators. Henry trusted these men because he made them what they were, and they were more likely to be loyal to him because they derived all their power directly from the king. This concept is the complete opposite of the nobility who derived their power through their hereditary titles, lands, and wealth. They had a level of independent power which could be threatening to the king.<sup>3</sup> The third step of Henry's process was to place bonds and recognizances against various members of the nobility when they were suspected of disloyalty or found in violation of various new laws, such as restrictions on maintaining private retainers.

The first step of the process was to restrict royal patronage in regards to the nobility. Unrestricted royal patronage was one of the causes of the downfall of Henry VI. Henry VII was determined not to repeat the mistakes of his uncle. Henry had a fairly small nobility when he came to the throne. There were only seventy-three English peers and sixteen Irish peers. The smaller nobility was helpful in his efforts to restrict his patronage. In his nearly twenty-four-year reign, he gave four hundred and thirty-five grants to only fifty-eight different nobles (figure 4 and 5 in the appendix). This is a drastic change from the reign of Henry VI who gave 1,186 grants to eighty-five nobles and Edward IV who gave 1,163 grants also to eighty-five nobles. The bulk of these four hundred and thirty-five grants went to four separate peers: John, Earl of Oxford, Giles Daubeney, Lord Daubeney, Thomas, Earl of Derby, and Jasper, Duke of Bedford. Of these four men only Giles, Lord Daubeney was not a kinsman of Henry VII.<sup>4</sup>

These four men collectively received one hundred and eighteen grants. John, Earl of Oxford, was the most prominent man of Henry VII's reign. Oxford was not only a kinsman of

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<sup>3</sup> Steven Gunn, *Henry VII's New Men and the Making of Tudor England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office, Henry VII Vol. I and II A.D. 1485-1509*, (London, The Hereford Times Limited, 1914-1916).

the king, but he was also one of the most loyal Lancastrian supporters and had been since the beginning of the conflict in 1455. He was Henry's main commander at the Battle of Bosworth and again at the Battle of Stoke. He continuously proved loyal to Henry throughout the reign.<sup>5</sup> He received fifty-five grants in the *Patent Rolls*. On September 22, 1485, John, Earl of Oxford was given the office of keeper of the lions and leopards in the Tower of London.<sup>6</sup> In 1486, Oxford was given to the office of steward of the honor of Clare, and the manors of Clare, Hunsdon, and Sudbury in Suffolk and Thaxsted, Great Berdfeld, and Ashlyn in Essex.<sup>7</sup> On December 2, 1489, he was granted the keeping and stewardship of the whole of Essex.<sup>8</sup> In December 1494, he was commissioned to investigate offenses committed on the seas by various pirates, since he was the great chamberlain and admiral of England.<sup>9</sup>

Giles Daubeney, Lord Daubeney came into Henry's service after he joined him in Brittany following the 1483 rebellion against Richard III. He proved his loyalty to Henry at Bosworth and continued to earn Henry's trust and favor throughout the reign.<sup>10</sup> He was appointed as the Master of the Mint in 1485. In 1486, he was appointed the lieutenant of Calais, and in 1487 he became one of the chamberlains of the receipt of the Exchequer.<sup>11</sup> Daubeney received a total of twenty-five grants over the course of the reign. On March 1493, he was made the constable of Windsor Castle and was granted the custody of all forests and parks associated

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<sup>5</sup> Penn, 21.

<sup>6</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office, Henry VII Vol. 1 A.D. 1485-1494*, 23.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 160.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 296.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 475.

<sup>10</sup> Penn, 35.

<sup>11</sup> Steven Gunn, "Daubeney, Giles". [Oxford Dictionary of National Biography](#) (online ed.). Oxford University Press.

with the castle lands.<sup>12</sup> In 1500, he was given the office of Steward of the lordship and manor of Cranborne in Dorset and the warden of the chace of Cranborne.<sup>13</sup>

Thomas, Earl of Derby, formerly, Thomas, Lord Stanley, was Henry VII's stepfather and was integral in his victory at Bosworth. Derby received twenty-two grants during Henry's reign. On October 7, 1485, he was appointed for life as the steward of the lordship, manor, and master forester of the chace, with the keeping of the park of Sutton in Warwick and Stafford. For his labors and expenses for the king. On February 25, 1486, Derby was appointed along with Pembroke, Northumberland, and Devon, as the king's commissioner of the mines in England and Wales of tin, lead, copper, gold, and silver. On March 5, 1485, he was granted the office of constable of England.<sup>14</sup> He also received various commission to investigate various offenses and received various grants of lands and manors until his death in 1504.

Jasper, Duke of Bedford, formerly the earl of Pembroke, was Henry VII's paternal uncle and was the only relative in exile with Henry during Edward IV's reign. He was not only elevated to a dukedom; he also received sixteen grants in the Patent Rolls. For example: on December 13, 1485, he was granted the office of chief justice of South Wales.<sup>15</sup> Then, on March 21, 1488, he was granted all the castles, lordships, manors, commotes and cantreds of Glamorgan in Wales.<sup>16</sup>

*The Fine Rolls* and the *Charter Rolls* confirms Henry's restrictive patronage to the nobility. In the *Fine Rolls*, there were only six given to five nobles: John, Earl of Oxford, Thomas, Lord Dacre, Henry, Lord Clifford, Giles, Lord Daubeney, and James, Earl of Wiltshire.

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<sup>12</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office, Henry VII Vol. 1 A.D. 1485-1494*, 422.

<sup>13</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office, Henry VII Vol. 2 A.D. 1491-1509*, 188.

<sup>14</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office, Henry VII Vol. 1 A.D. 1485-1494*, 82.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 47.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 220.

In the *Charter Rolls* there were only seven grants given to seven nobles: Thomas, Earl of Derby, Jasper, Duke of Bedford, Philibert de Shaunde, Earl of Bath, William, Marquess of Berkeley, Robert, lord Broke, Margaret, Countess of Richmond, the king's mother, and the king's second son, Henry, Duke of York. Every grant, save for the one given to Margaret, countess of Richmond, were creations or elevations within the nobility.<sup>17</sup>

The second step of Henry's process to tame his nobility was his reliance on what has been termed his "new men" According to Steven Gunn; these new men were necessary for allowing the kingdom to recover successfully from the previous years of civil war. Henry knew that merely repressing his opposition and eliminating rival claims to the throne would not be enough to achieve stability. He needed effective justice, fiscal prudence, national defense, royal magnificence and the promotion of the common weal. There also needed to be a rebalancing of the local power of great noblemen and lesser men beholden to the king.<sup>18</sup> There were four men in particular who were central to Henry's government and played a role in Henry's attempt to rebalance power: Reynold Bray, Thomas Lovell, Richard Empson, and Edmund Dudley. According to Gunn, Bray was the "first and greatest of the new men." He was the second son of a surgeon from Bedwardine in Worcestershire. Before serving the king, he served the king's mother, Margaret Beaufort as an estate officer. He became a prominent part of Henry's government from the start after playing a prominent role in the multiple conspiracies during the reign of Richard III, which brought Henry to the throne. He became the chancellor of the duchy

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<sup>17</sup> *Calendar of the Charter Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office: Vol. VI 5 Henry VI-8 Henry VIII, A.D. 1427-1516*, Kraus Reprint Edition. (Nendeln: Kraus -Thomson Organization Limited, 1972), ???

<sup>18</sup> Steven Gunn, *Henry VII's New Men and the Making of Tudor England*, 5-6.

of Lancaster and served as Lord Treasurer in 1486. He accumulated a wide range of offices and even established himself as coordinator of the king's financial policies until his death in 1503.<sup>19</sup>

Thomas Lovell, a lawyer, came to Henry's attention when he made himself useful to Thomas, Marquess of Dorset, the half-brother of Henry's wife, Elizabeth of York. By October of 1485, he was an esquire of the king's body. By 1503 he was the treasurer of the King's household. He was also the chancellor of the exchequer and treasurer of the King's chambers.<sup>20</sup>

Richard Empson and Edmund Dudley became more prominent as the reign continued, particularly following the death of Reynold Bray. Empson was the son of a minor property owner in Towcester in Northamptonshire. His father was wealthy enough to pay for his son's legal education. Empson bought lands, collected local offices and worked his way up through the Duchy of Lancaster to the chancellorship. He spent his time ferreting out offenses by the nobility and the gentry and taking bonds for payment of the resulting fines.<sup>21</sup> Edmund Dudley was a more flamboyant and noticeable figure than the others. His grandfather was a baron, and his uncle was the bishop of Durham. His father was a younger son and married a minor heiress. In the 1490's Dudley arrived at Gray's Inn to become a lawyer. He was marked out by his sharp reading of the statutes and by his compelling contributions to various debates. He worked as an under-sheriff in London until 1504 when he became Speaker of the House of Commons during Henry VII's final parliament. By October of 1504, he was made a full-time royal councilor. In 1506 he was made the president of the king's council. Empson and Dudley were both responsible for the reformation of the financial system in 1504 following the death of Bray. According to Gunn, in less than four years, Dudley collected some £219,316 6s 11d. in cash and bonds for future

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 8.

payment, a sum equivalent to nearly two years' worth of royal income from the crown lands and customs. Dudley raised this money on a range of pretexts such as the sale of offices, wardships, fines on clergy, escapes from prisons, and pardons for various offenses. This won him no favors, and he became the enemy of every influential man in England from noblemen to bishops to London merchants.<sup>22</sup>

Henry's dependence on these new men can be seen in the number of grants bestowed upon them in the *Patent Rolls*. Henry gave two hundred and eighty-seven grants collectively to these four men. Gunn's claim that Reynold Bray was the greatest and most important of these men is confirmed in the *Patent Rolls*. Bray received approximately one hundred and six grants between 1485 and 1503. On December 11, 1485, Bray was appointed the steward and surveyor of all possessions in England, Wales, and the town of Calais, late of Henry, Duke of Buckingham.<sup>23</sup> On June 11, 1488, he paid for a grant for the keeping of all lands late of Robert Wintershill and the wardship and marriage of Wintershill's son and heir.<sup>24</sup> In August 1495, he was given the manors of Stone and Hinton in the county of Northampton.<sup>25</sup> Thomas Lovell received roughly seventy-eight grants. On October 12, 1485, he was granted the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer.<sup>26</sup> In 1489 he was given the office of constable and porter of the gate of Nottingham castle and steward and keeper of the forest of Sherwood.<sup>27</sup> Richard Empson received seventy-three grants including one in March 1485 where he was appointed as the steward of the lordships and manors of Long Buckbuy and Potterspury.<sup>28</sup> In 1505 he was granted

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 8-9.

<sup>23</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office, Henry VII Vol. 1 A.D. 1485-1494*, 54.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 228.

<sup>25</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office, Henry VII Vol. 2 A.D. 1491-1509*, 57.

<sup>26</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office, Henry VII Vol. 1 A.D. 1485-1494*, 18.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 265.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 64,

the keeping of the lands of Robert Ingleton, during the minority of Joan Igleton his daughter and heir, with the wardship and marriage of Joan.<sup>29</sup> In Edmund Dudley only received thirty grants, but this was not because he was less important than the others. Rather, it is because he only entered into Henry VII's service in 1504 giving him only a little less than five years to receive royal patronage. In 1505 he was granted the wardship and marriage of Elizabeth and Agnes, daughters and heirs of Henry Lovell.<sup>30</sup> On November 15, 1506, he was granted the stewardship and office of the rape of Hastings in the county of Sussex.<sup>31</sup> In comparison to the nobility where fifty-eight nobles received four hundred and thirty-eight grants, it is clear how much Henry depended on his new men. It is clear that he trusted them far more than he trusted his nobles and he was convinced that they were more loyal because they derived their power directly from him and not from any hereditary independent power base.<sup>32</sup> Despite all of the grants and rewards received by these four men, none every rose above the rank of a knight.

The third and final step of Henry's scheme to tame the nobility was to penalize them for any transgression, major or minor, and to place them under a bond or recognizance for their offense or simply to ensure their continued loyalty. These bonds and recognizances were possibly the most important element of Henry's plan. Restricting patronage was irksome to the nobility, but not exactly damaging. The nobility always preferred royal patronage, but it was often not a necessity. Nobles were independently powerful and most of their wealth derived from their various lands and estates, not from royal offices. Henry knew the only truly effective way to

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<sup>29</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office, Henry VII Vol. 2 A.D. 1491-1509*, 395

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, 96.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 501.

<sup>32</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office, Henry VII Vol. 1 and 2 A.D. 1485-1509*.

prevent his nobility from resurrecting the civil wars was to target the source of their independence: their wealth.

Henry VI attempted to control his nobility through bonds and recognizances during the final years of his reign after the start of the first phase of the Wars of the Roses. While it was unsuccessful for his uncle, the use of bonds and recognizances was massively successful for Henry VII. From December 1485 to December 1508, there are one hundred and thirty-five bonds and recognizances mentioned in the *Close Rolls*. Of these one hundred and fifteen were due directly to the king (figure 6 in the appendix). Fourteen of the recognizances were due to Reynold Bray, Thomas Lovell, Richard Empson, and Edmund Dudley collectively. The three most expensive recognizances were one levied on December 8, 1485, which was a bond to the king for 10,000*l.* against William, Viscount Beaumont; one levied on June 18, 1503, which was a recognizance to the king for 10,000 marks against William Blount, Lord Mountjoy; and one levied on August 19, 1507, which was a recognizance to the king for 10,000*l.* against Richard, Earl of Kent.<sup>33</sup> 10,000*l.* was a massive sum of money for the period as it is roughly £5,000,000 in today's currency.<sup>34</sup> Should Henry call in this fine, it was likely that the noble would have been financially ruined. In fact, according to Edmund Dudley, some of the largest fines he and his associates had negotiated were not even intended to be paid but meant to hang over the head of leading subjects to compel their loyalty. Henry wished to “keep many persons in his danger at his pleasure.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *Calendar of the Close Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office, Henry VII, Vol I A.D. 1485-1500*, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1955), 14. and *Calendar of the Close Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office, Henry VII, Vol. II A.D. 1500-1509*, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1955), 84 and 300 respectively.

<sup>34</sup> “Currency Converter,” The National Archives of the United Kingdom, accessed on May 10, 2017, <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/results.asp#mid>.

<sup>35</sup> Gunn, 9.



In addition to the large grants, Henry also had a habit of placing multiple recognizances against a noble at one time. For example, on November 15, 1506, he placed nine recognizances valued at 400*l.* each against Thomas, Earl of Derby, grandson, and heir to Thomas, earl of Derby, Henry's stepfather.<sup>36</sup> According to Gunn, the years between 1500 and 1503 death robbed Henry of two sons, Arthur, his eldest, and Edmund his third son, and his beloved wife Elizabeth of York. 1503-1504 marked a significant shift in Henry's reign, as he became more brooding and suspicious. It was after 1504 where he truly began to manipulate the nobility into submission to his authority and compliance with the succession of his son, Henry.<sup>37</sup> His increasing suspicion and paranoia coincided with Edmund Dudley and Richard Empson's reformation of the financial system as well and their vigorous attempts to seek out noble offenses.<sup>38</sup> John, Earl of Oxford, appears to be exempt from the recognizances, and while Lord Daubeney had fourteen recognizances placed against him, they were for relatively small sums ranging from 100*l.* to 120*l.* In fact, only thirty-five of the one-hundred and thirty-five bonds and recognizances were levied before 1504, the other hundred occurred afterward and continued at a steady pace until the end of 1508 when Henry VII became increasingly ill.<sup>39</sup>

The bonds and recognizances were capable of yielding £100,000 or more a year, and the sum reached its peak in 1508 when they yielded £163,443 in 1508.<sup>40</sup> It was recorded that approximately twenty-six of these recognizances were canceled either in the final years of Henry VII's reign or the first years of Henry VIII's. While there is no direct indication how many were actually collected it can be assumed that most were considering the animosity towards those

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<sup>36</sup> *Calendar of the Close Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office, Henry VII, Vol. II A.D. 1500-1509*, 251.

<sup>37</sup> Gunn, 5.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>39</sup> *Calendar of the Close Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office, Henry VII, Vol. I A.D. 1485-1500*, and *Calendar of the Close Rolls, Preserved in the Public Record Office, Henry VII, Vol. II A.D. 1500-1509*.

<sup>40</sup> Gunn, 78.

responsible for collecting the fines and the vast surplus left to Henry VIII by his father. These bonds and recognizances were integral in placing the financial system and the crown's finances on a solid footing and left Henry VII's heir with a massive surplus. All of Henry's new men were intimately involved in taking and processing the bonds and recognizances, and it won them no friends. Empson and Dudley were particularly hated by the nobility and other great magnates of the kingdom. They were so despised that they were rapidly arrested after Henry VII's death in April 1509. They were charged with treason and conveniently blamed for the extortions of Henry VII's regime.<sup>41</sup>

The system of debilitating bonds and recognizances used in conjunction with restricted royal patronage to the nobility aided in Henry VII's successful plan to tame his nobility. His use of new men beholden only to him set an example to all who wished to be in the king's good graces. It proved to the nobility that they should be subservient to their king if they did not want heavy fines placed against them and if they wanted to hold royal office and have influence in day to day government. Henry succeeded where his three predecessors had failed. In taming his nobility and bringing them in from the countryside, he prevented any further phases of the Wars of the Roses. In the words of Steven Gunn, "It may be that their vigor sometimes stoked unrest or built support of challengers to his rule, but in the long run, their efforts made his government of England and that of his successors more ambitious and more powerful than any that had gone before."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 8-9.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 6.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Henry VII's three step process to tame his nobility, while grossly unpopular at the time, led to a lasting era of relative peace and stability. It caused the nobles to move from the countryside to the court and caused political conflict to move from the battlefield to the dark corners of the palace. No longer were nobles and their retainers settling political disputes with their swords. Instead, they began to seek the favor of the king. This shift ushered in an era of personal monarchy which was solidified during the reign of Henry VIII.

The Wars of the Roses was a noble caused and noble led conflict which ravaged England off and on for thirty years. Due to this pervasive conflict, this overmighty, unrestricted nobility became an issue that the four kings who reigned before, during, and after it had to address. Each king did so in his own way, and some were more successful than others. Henry VI's relationship with his nobility was arguably the cause of the conflict. He was uninterested in the day to day procedures of government and exercised bad judgment when it came to dispensing his royal patronage. His unrestricted patronage factional conflict. It also led to nobles at times seeing themselves as above the authority of the king. They took it upon themselves to oppose a monarch whom they viewed as increasingly incompetent and ineffective. They justified their actions by claiming that there had been a precedent set by previous barons, who force John I to sign the Magna Carta and those who saw to the deposition of Edward II and Richard II. Once the conflict erupted, Henry VI did make an attempt to place his nobility back under his control by placing bonds and recognizances against them, but this effort was counteracted by the fact that he continued to give grants of offices and commissions to those who were responsible for the rebellion against him. Ultimately, a group of his nobles, the Yorkists, were able to depose him and place their own king on the throne.

Edward IV, the first Yorkist king, had a different tactic in dealing with the peerage. For his reign to be successful, he had to compromise with former supporters of Henry VI and bring them into his administration in addition to rewarding his loyal supporters. To do this, he distributed his patronage across a broad spectrum of the nobility while reserving a large segment for a handful of his loyal supporters. Edward's fatal mistake was the factionalism that he caused within his court. When he married Elizabeth Woodville in 1464, he began to favor her relatives over the men who brought him to the throne. This factionalism led to his brief deposition in 1470. After his restoration in 1471, the factionalism remained but did not affect his reign negatively. In the latter half of his reign, Edward managed to keep the nobility in check without restricting his patronage and without placing heavy bonds or recognizances against them.

Following Edward's death, the factionalism which plagued his court returned. This factionalism mixed with the ambition of Edward's brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester led to Gloucester usurping the throne from his young nephew. As a usurper, Richard was paranoid about loyalty and knew that he needed the backing of the nobility. Initially, he continued the policy of his brother and gave grants to a wide range of the nobility. However, following a rebellion in October of 1483 led by the Duke of Buckingham, who had been a loyal supporter of Richard until that time, Richard began to restrict his patronage to his loyal, noble followers from the northern part of the kingdom where his power was the strongest. He gave his northern affinity lands and offices in the southern part of the kingdom hoping that they would provide him with more control of the area. It did not, and many of the southern nobles joined Henry Tudor in his campaign against Richard.

After his victory at Bosworth Field, Henry knew that his policy in regards to the nobility had to be different from that of his predecessors. He knew that the only way to bring peace to the

realm was to bring the group of people directly responsible for the previous thirty years of war under his direct authority and control. Pursuing a policy of repression rather than cooperation, he did three distinct things. First, he restricted his patronage of the nobility to roughly two-fifths of what Henry VI and Edward IV had given the group. Second, he relied on his “new men” who were a group of relatively low-born administrators. He gave them a variety of royal offices and depended upon them to run his newly renovated financial system and to ensure that the nobility was abiding by all of the laws of the land. Third, he used the existing system of bonds and recognizances and exploited it. He places various bonds and recognizances, typically for rather large amounts, against the nobility for any transgression no matter the severity, or if he suspected them of disloyalty. While, according to his administrators, he did not intend to collect many of these fines, the threat of collection was enough to convince the nobility that compliance with him was in their best interest.

Henry VII achieved what his predecessors could not. He managed to put an end to the nobility’s independence. He was able to place them under his control, through his three step process. With the suppression of the peerage, Henry completed his mission to bring stability to England. The work he did allowed for the Tudor Dynasty not only to survive but thrive. The Tudors were able to institute controversial policies, such as the English Reformation, with minimal disruption. The success and strength of the Tudor Dynasty would not have been possible if Henry VII had not found a way to tame his nobility.

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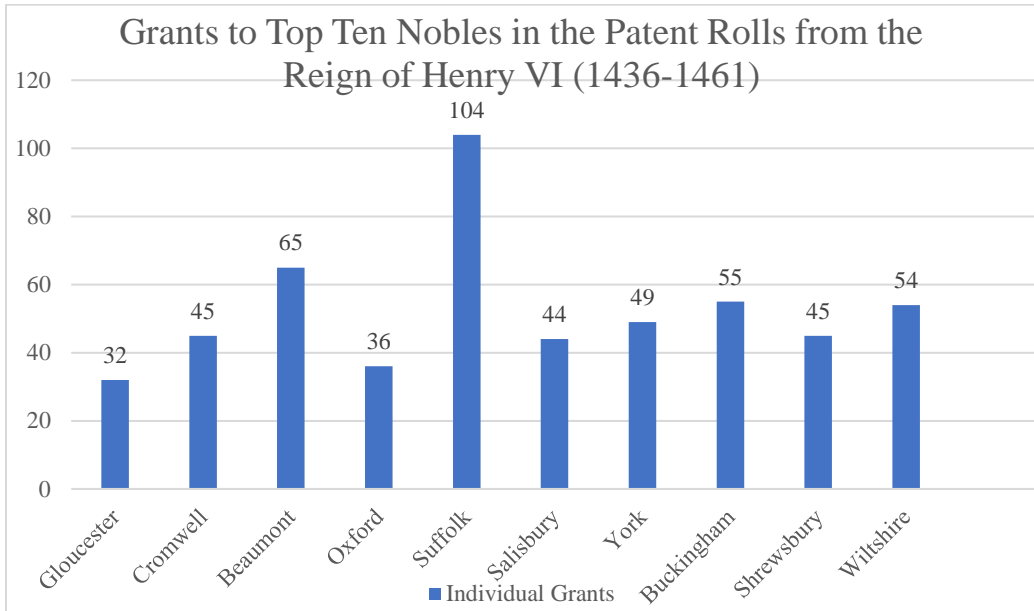
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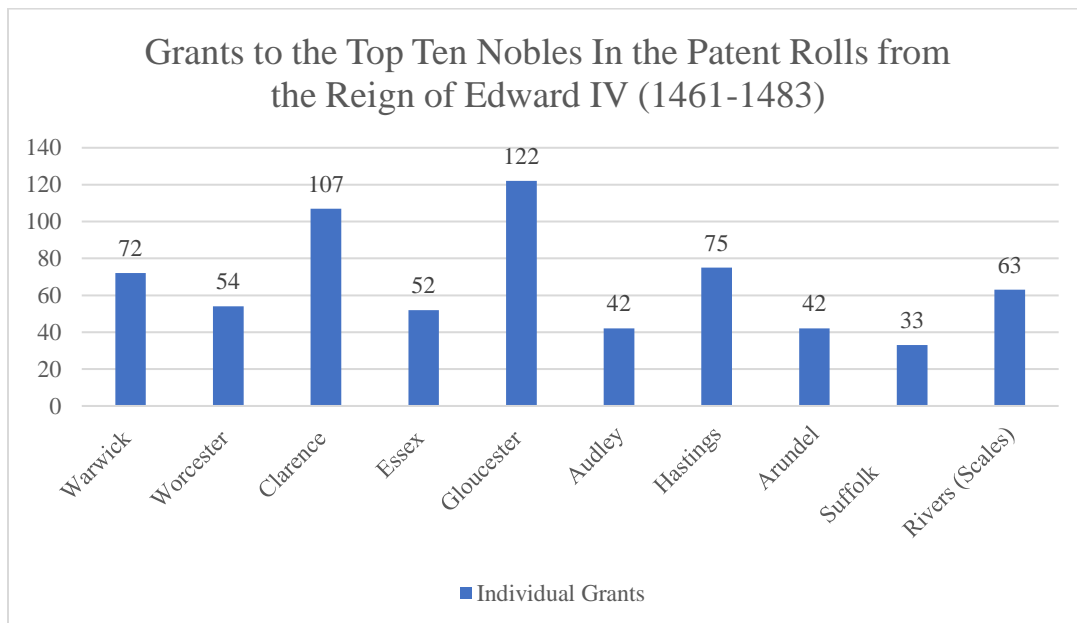
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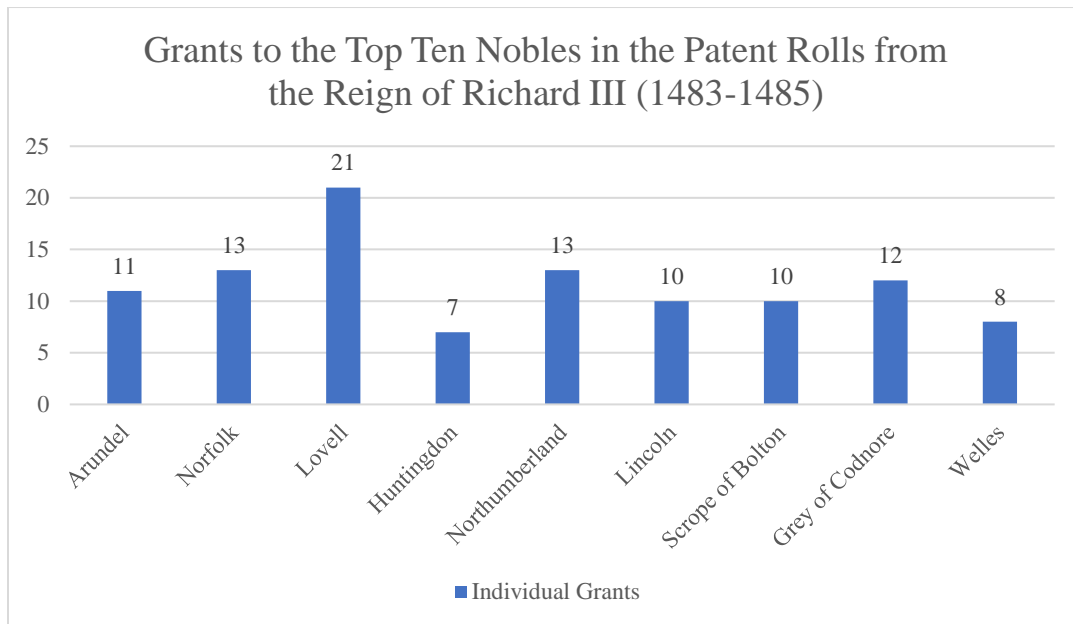
## APPENDIX



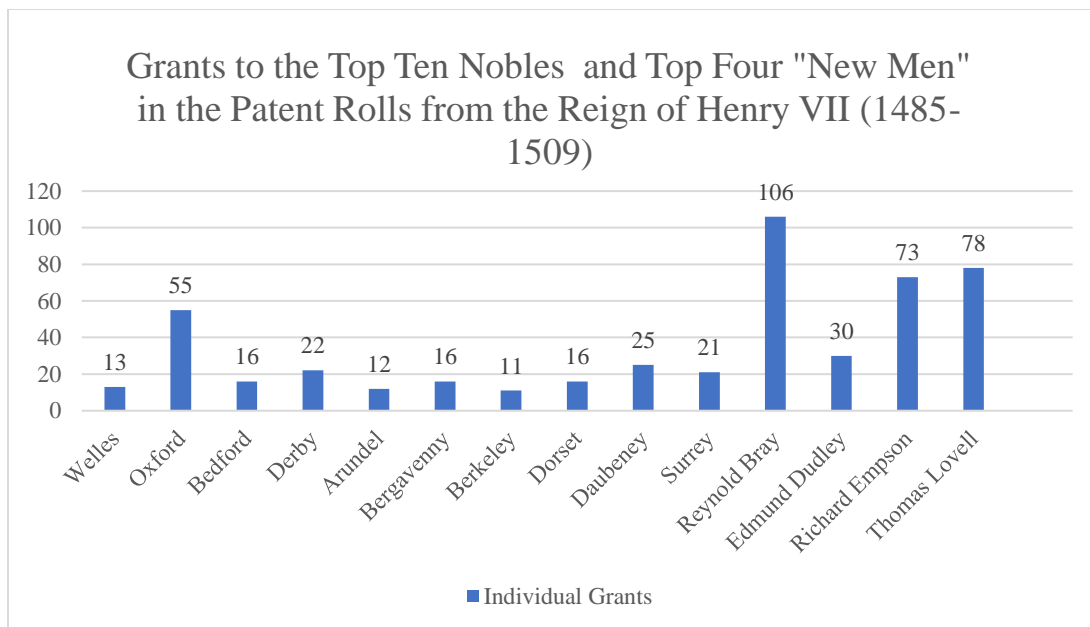
**Figure 1:** This graph shows the number of individual grants given to the top ten nobles as found in the *Patent Rolls* from the Reign of Henry VI. These nobles were Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, Ralph, Lord Cromwell, John, Viscount Beaumont, John, Earl of Oxford, William, Earl of Suffolk, Richard, Earl of Salisbury, Richard, Duke of York, Humphrey, Duke of Buckingham, John, Earl of Shrewsbury, and James, Earl of Wiltshire.



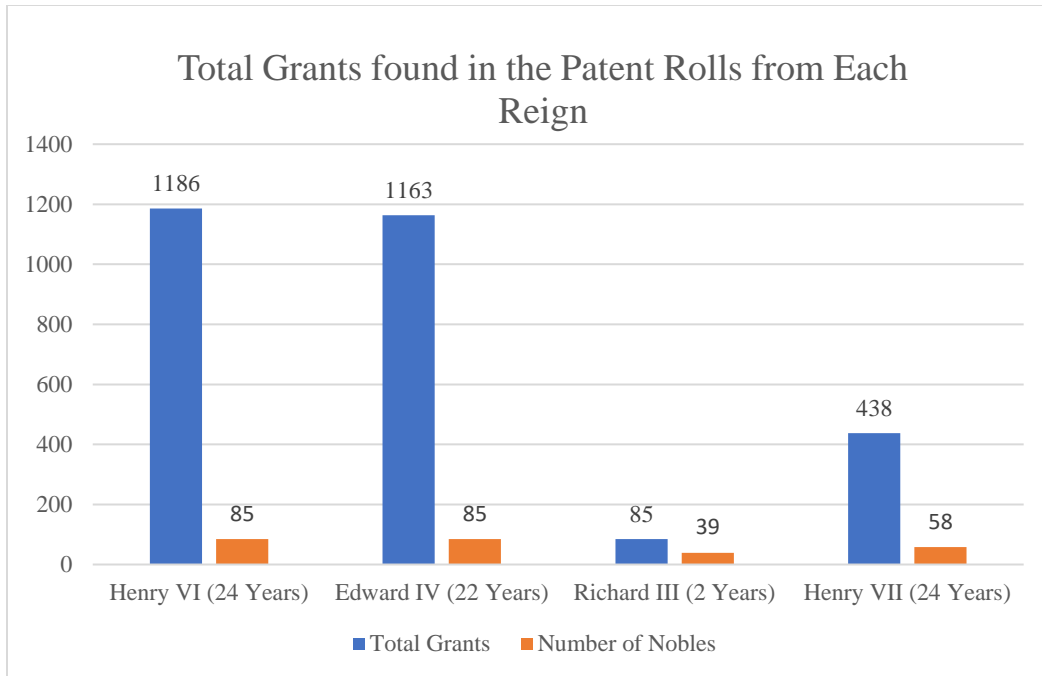
**Figure 2:** This graph shows the number of individual grants given to the top ten nobles as found in the *Patent Rolls* from the reign of Edward IV. These nobles were Richard, earl of Warwick, John, Earl of Worcester, George, Duke of Clarence, Henry, Earl of Essex, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, John, Lord Audley, William, Lord Hastings, William, Earl of Arundel, John, Duke of Suffolk, and Anthony, Earl Rivers (formerly Lord Scales).



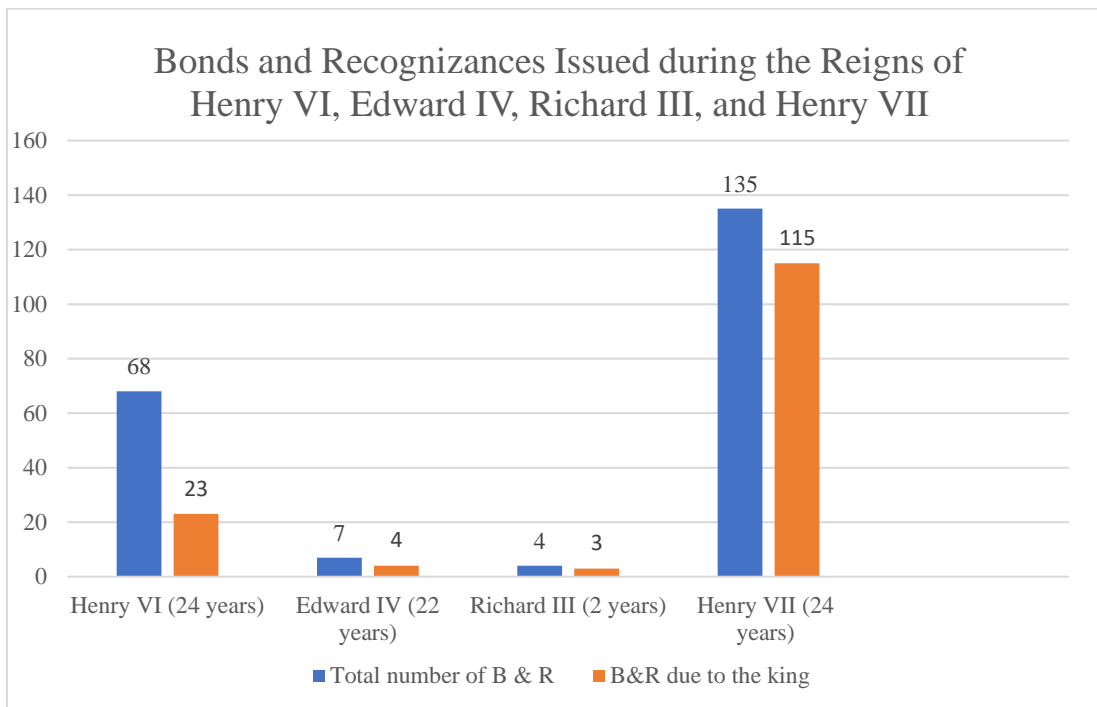
**Figure 3:** This graph shows the number of individual grants given to the top ten nobles as found in the *Patent Rolls* from the reign of Richard III. These nobles were William, Earl of Arundel, John, Duke of Norfolk, Francis, Viscount Lovell, William, Earl of Huntingdon, Henry, Earl of Northumberland, John, Earl of Lincoln, John, Lord Scrope of Bolton, Henry, Lord Grey of Codnore, and Lionel, Lord Welles.



**Figure 4:** This graph shows the number of individual grants given to the top ten nobles and the most important of the “New Men” as found in the *Patent Rolls* from the reign of Henry VII. The Ten nobles were John, Viscount Welles, John, Earl of Oxford, Jasper, Duke of Bedford, Thomas, Earl of Derby, Thomas, Earl of Arundel, George, Lord Bergavenny, William, Marquis of Berkeley, Thomas, Marquis of Dorset, Giles, Lord Daubenny, and Thomas, Earl of Surrey. The four “New Men” from the reign are Reynold Bray, Edmund Dudley, Richard Empson, and Thomas Lovell with 78 grants.



**Figure 5:** This chart shows the total number of grants given in each of the four king’s reigns. It also shows the number of nobles given the royal patronage.



**Figure 6:** This chart shows the total number of bonds and recognizance issued during each of the four king’s reigns. It also shows the number of bonds and recognizances which were due directly to the king.

## VITA

Elizabeth Long was born in May 1993 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Her enthusiasm for history, particularly Tudor history, began at a young age when she read various historical fiction novels aimed at children. In 2011, she received her high school diploma from Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts, a residential high school in Natchitoches, Louisiana. While attending Louisiana State University in 2014, she participated in a study-abroad program at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, England. Her study abroad experience allowed her to study Medieval English history in an actual medieval city and allowed her to expand her horizons by traveling around Europe and by forging lasting friendships with people from different countries. She graduated from LSU in 2015 with a Bachelor of Arts in History. She is a candidate to graduate with a Master's of Arts in History in August 2017.