



ENGLISH PLANTAGENETS

Plantagenet (Also called the House of Anjou or Angevin Dynasty)

It is the royal house of England, which reigned from 1154 to 1485 and whose name came from the nickname of Geoffrey count of Anjou, father of Henry II, who often wore in his hat a sprig of broom, Plantagenista. The first Plantagenet king was **Henry II** and the last was **Richard III**.

Summary of Key Points about Barons' Wars (Civil Wars in England)

1215- 1217: between King John and his barons, over his failure to honor Magna Carta.

1264- 1267: between Henry III (and the future Edward I) and his barons (led by Simon de Montfort).

1264: 14 May **Battle of Lewes** at which Henry III was defeated and captured.

1265: 4 August Simon de Montfort was defeated by Edward at Evesham and killed.

Edward I (1272- 1307), as able a monarch as Henry II, ascended the throne after another civil war (1264-66). He will always be remembered for summoning the **Model Parliament** (1295).

From the Outbreak of the Hundred Years War to the End of the Wars of the Roses: The Decay of Feudalism (14th + 15th cc.)

These two centuries form the period of transition from feudalism to pre-industrial era. The long war with France helped to form a sense of national identity: a native English culture was born and English became the official language of the country.

The Hundred Years War (1337-1453)

The Hundred Years of War was fought between France and England during the late Middle Ages. It lasted 116 years from 1337 to 1453. When Charles IV of France died in 1328 without an immediate male successor, Edward III of England believed he had the right to become the new king of France through his mother. Edward III (1327-77) claimed the throne of France, but its real objective was to bring Flanders (the main English wool trade market) and Gascony (the chief supplier of wine and salt) under the English control.

The period historians call the Hundred Years War, stretching from 1337-1453, brought about a number of changes to England and France. The period is known for military advances, the chivalric writings of Geoffroi De Charny, the founding of the Order of the Star in France and the Order of the Garter in England, and Joan of Arc. The Hundred Years War also saw the early developments of national consciousness and state-building that allowed England to enter into the early modern period with a more defined sense of “**national self**” than many other European countries. **Edward III** influenced state building from 1327-1377. The Hundred Years War saw changes in the way that the crown of England taxed its subjects, acquired international loans, and was involved in Parliament, allowing for the early development of state-building to occur during the reign of **Edward III**.

Most historians agree that **nationalism** was a concept not present in Europe until the French Revolution in 1789. The Oxford English Dictionary defines nationalism as: “advocacy of or support for the interest of one’s own nation, especially to the exclusion or detriment of the interests of other nations. Also: advocacy of or support for national independence or self-determination.” English citizens at the start of the Hundred Years War did not have a sense of being “English” but rather identified generally with their specific communities or townships. State-building, for the purpose of this period, will be described as the steady emergence of a national identity. Due to the fighting with France, and the developing **independence of Parliament** the regional communities represented by the commons began to self-identify as part of the English Kingdom. Although Kingdoms were not nation states, England did begin

to resemble one between 1327 and 1377, because the Parliament and monarchy began to function together as an independent political state where the people were connected by a common history.

The long war is traditionally divided into three stages, with period of uneasy truce (agreement) between them:

The First Stage (1337-60)

- It was successful for England, because the English army consisted of well-organized professional soldiers, while the French army was an undisciplined feudal host. The French suffered two crushing defeats at Crécy (1346) and Poitiers (1356), and gained large territories in France.

The Second Stage (1369-75)

- It was successful for France: the French adopted the strategy of guerrilla war, and gradually reconquered the lost territory except for two ports.

The Third Stage (1415-53)

- The war was resumed by Henry V (1413-22), the second Lancastrian king: he dealt the French another crushing defeat at Agincourt (1415) and gradually extended his territory. In 1420, he was acknowledged heir to the French throne. Though he died in 1422, the war continued and, in 1428, the French were defending their last stronghold at Orleans. The appearance of *Joan of Arc* in 1429, however, led to a French revival. The war dragged on for more than twenty years, until the *battle of Chatillon* finally ended it in 1453.

The war exhausted England and led to political disruption, which enabled the outbreak of the Wars of the Roses.

The Black Death (1348-51) and the Peasants' Revolt (1381)

In the mid-14th century, an epidemic of bubonic plague called "**Black Death**" swept across Europe. It reduced the English population by nearly a half, which caused a severe shortage of labor. As a result, free workers were able to obtain higher wages and serfs demanded compensation for labor services.

By the end of the 1370s, however, the population had increased and the peasants could no longer demand either higher wages or release from serfdom. High taxes were demanded in order to pay for the war in France: In 1379, the so-called **Poll Tax** was imposed on every male over sixteen. This situation resulted in the outbreak of a revolt in 1381: The rebels marched on London and held the government at their mercy. King **Richard II** (1377-99), who was a boy of fourteen at that time, promised to meet all their demands, but as soon as they dispersed, the revolt was brutally crushed. Yet, there was no return to the previous system, and serfdom had disappeared by the end of the 15th century.

The Wars of the Roses (1455-85)

This series of wars was a dynastic struggle between two powerful families, the **Lancastrians** and the **Yorkists**, both descendants of **Edward III**: they fought for the crown. The Wars were marked by indecisive victories and defeats on both sides. During the thirty years of intermittent fighting, the feudal nobility was impoverished and almost exterminated, while the Crown became wealthy, as a result of confiscations of their estates for the benefit of the Crown after each battle. This paved the way for the establishing of Tudor absolutism.

Works Cited:

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Chart 1: The Plantagenet House Family Tree.