

Henry V of England

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Henry V (9 August 1386 – 31 August 1422^{[1][2]}) was King of England from 1413 until his death at the age of 36 in 1422. He was the second English monarch who came from the House of Lancaster.

After military experience fighting the Welsh during the revolt of Owain Glyndŵr, and against the powerful aristocratic Percys of Northumberland at the Battle of Shrewsbury, Henry came into political conflict with his father, whose health was increasingly precarious from 1405 onward. After his father's death in 1413, Henry assumed control of the country and embarked on war with France in the ongoing Hundred Years' War (1337–1453) between the two nations. His military successes culminated in his famous victory at the Battle of Agincourt (1415) and saw him come close to conquering France. After months of negotiation with Charles VI of France, the Treaty of Troyes (1420) recognised Henry V as regent and heir apparent to the French throne, and he was subsequently married to Charles's daughter, Catherine of Valois (1401–37). Following Henry V's sudden and unexpected death in France two years later, he was succeeded by his infant son, who reigned as Henry VI (1422–61, 1470–71).^[3]

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Henry V



Posthumous portrait of Henry

King of England; Lord of Ireland (more...)

Reign	20 March 1413 – 31 August 1422
Coronation	9 April 1413, Westminster Abbey
Predecessor	Henry IV
Successor	Henry VI
Born	9 August 1386 ^[1] Monmouth Castle, Monmouth, Principality of Wales
Died	31 August 1422 ^[1] (aged 36) Château de Vincennes, Vincennes, Kingdom of France
Burial	Westminster Abbey, London, Kingdom of England
Spouse	Catherine of Valois m. 1420; wid. 1422
Issue	Henry VI of England
House	Lancaster
Father	Henry IV of England
Mother	Mary de Bohun
Religion	Roman Catholicism

Early life

Henry was born in the tower above the gatehouse of Monmouth Castle, Monmouth, Principality of Wales (and for that reason was sometimes called Henry of Monmouth). He was the son of 20-year-old Henry of Bolingbroke (later Henry IV of England), and 16-year-old Mary de Bohun. He was also the grandson of the influential John of Gaunt and great-grandson of Edward III of England. At the time of his birth, Richard II of England, his cousin once removed, was king. As he was not close to the line of succession to the throne, Henry's date of birth was not officially documented. His grandfather, John of Gaunt, was the guardian of the king at that time.^{[1][2]}



Halfpenny of Henry V

Upon the exile of Henry's father in 1398, Richard II took the boy into his own charge and treated him kindly. The young Henry accompanied King Richard to Ireland, and while in the royal service, he visited Trim Castle in County Meath, the ancient meeting place of the Irish Parliament. In 1399, Henry's grandfather died. The same year King Richard II was overthrown by the Lancastrian usurpation that brought Henry's father to the throne, and Henry was recalled from Ireland into prominence as heir apparent to the Kingdom of England. He was created Prince of Wales at his father's coronation, and Duke of Lancaster on 10 November 1399, the third person to hold the title that year. His other titles were Duke of Cornwall, Earl of Chester, and Duke of Aquitaine. A contemporary record notes that during that year Henry spent time at The Queen's College, Oxford, under the care of his uncle Henry Beaufort, the Chancellor of the university.^[4] From 1400 to 1404, he carried out the duties of High Sheriff of Cornwall.

Less than three years later, Henry was in command of part of the English forces—he led his own army into Wales against Owain Glyndŵr and joined forces with his father to fight Harry Hotspur at the Battle of Shrewsbury in 1403.^[5] It was there that the sixteen-year-old prince was almost killed by an arrow that became stuck in his face. An ordinary soldier might have died from such a wound, but Henry had the benefit of the best possible care. Over a period of several days, John Bradmore, the royal physician, treated the wound with honey to act as an antiseptic, crafted a tool to screw into the broken arrow shaft and thus extract the arrow without doing further damage, and then flushed the wound with alcohol. The operation was successful, but it left Henry with permanent scars, evidence of his experience in battle.^[6] For eighteen months, in 1410–11, Henry was in control of the country during his father's ill health, and he took full advantage of the opportunity to impose his own policies, but when the king recovered, he reversed most of these and dismissed the prince from his council.^[7]

Role in government and conflict with Henry IV

The Welsh revolt of Owain Glyndŵr absorbed Henry's energies until 1408. Then, as a result of the king's ill health, Henry began to take a wider share in politics. From January 1410, helped by his uncles Henry Beaufort and Thomas Beaufort – legitimised sons of John of Gaunt – he had practical control of the government.

Both in foreign and domestic policy he differed from the king, who in November 1411 discharged the prince from the council. The quarrel of father and son was political only, though it is probable that the Beauforts had discussed the abdication of Henry IV, and their opponents certainly endeavoured to defame the prince.

Supposed riotous youth

It may be that the tradition of Henry's riotous youth, immortalised by Shakespeare, is partly due to political enmity. Henry's record of involvement in war and politics, even in his youth, disproves this tradition. The most famous incident, his quarrel with the chief justice, has no contemporary authority and was first related by Sir Thomas Elyot in 1531.^[8]

The story of Falstaff originated in Henry's early friendship with Sir John Oldcastle, a supporter of the Lollards. Shakespeare's Falstaff was originally named "Oldcastle", following his main source, *The Famous Victories of Henry V*. However, his descendants objected, and the name was changed (the character became a composite of several real persons, including Sir John Fastolf). That friendship, and the prince's political opposition to Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, perhaps encouraged Lollard hopes. If so, their disappointment may account for the statements of ecclesiastical writers like Thomas Walsingham that Henry, on becoming king, was suddenly changed into a new man.^[9]

Accession to the throne

After Henry IV died on 20 March 1413, Henry V succeeded him and was crowned on 9 April 1413 at Westminster Abbey, London, Kingdom of England. The ceremony was marked by a terrible snowstorm, but the common people were undecided as to whether it was a good or bad omen.^[10] Henry was described as having been "very tall (6ft 3 in), slim, with dark hair cropped in a ring above the ears, and clean-shaven". His complexion was ruddy, the face lean with a prominent and pointed nose. Depending on his mood, his eyes "flashed from the mildness of a dove's to the brilliance of a lion's".^[11]

Domestic policy

Henry tackled all of the domestic policies together and gradually built on them a wider policy. From the first, he made it clear that he would rule England as the head of a united nation. On the one hand, he let past differences be forgotten – the late Richard II was honourably re-interred; the young Mortimer was taken into favour; the heirs of those who had suffered in the last reign were restored gradually to their titles and estates. On the other hand, where Henry saw a grave domestic danger, he acted firmly and ruthlessly – such as the Lollard discontent in January 1414, including the execution by burning of Henry's old friend Sir John Oldcastle in 1417, so as to "nip the movement in the bud" and make his own position as ruler secure.

His reign was generally free from serious trouble at home. The exception was the Southampton Plot in favour of Mortimer, involving Henry Scrope, 3rd Baron Scrope of Masham and Richard, Earl of Cambridge (grandfather of the future King Edward IV of England), in July 1415.

Starting in August 1417, Henry V promoted the use of the English language in government,^[12] and his reign marks the appearance of Chancery Standard English as well as the adoption of English as the language of



Henry, while Prince of Wales, presenting Thomas Hoccleve's, Regement of Princes to the Duke of Norfolk, British Library, 1411–13



A gold noble coin of Henry V



English chancery hand. Facsimile of letter from Henry, 1418

record within Government. He was the first king to use English in his personal correspondence since the Norman conquest, which had occurred 350 years earlier.^{[13][14]}

Foreign affairs

Diplomacy

Henry could now turn his attention to foreign affairs. A writer of the next generation was the first to allege that Henry was encouraged by ecclesiastical statesmen to enter into the French war as a means of diverting attention from home troubles. This story seems to have no foundation. Old commercial disputes and the support the French had lent to Owain Glyndŵr were used as an excuse for war, while the disordered state of France afforded no security for peace. The French king, Charles VI of France, was prone to mental illness; at times he thought he was made of glass, and his eldest surviving son was an unpromising prospect. However, it was the old dynastic claim to the throne of France, first pursued by Edward III of England, that justified war with France in English opinion.

Following Agincourt, Sigismund, then King of Hungary and later Holy Roman Emperor, made a visit to Henry in hopes of making peace between England and France. His goal was to persuade Henry to modify his demands against the French. Henry lavishly entertained the emperor and even had him enrolled in the Order of the Garter. Sigismund, in turn, inducted Henry into the Order of the Dragon.^[15] Henry had intended to crusade for the order after uniting the English and French thrones, but he died before fulfilling his plans.^{[16][17][18]} Sigismund left England several months later, having signed the Treaty of Canterbury, acknowledging English claims to France.



Silver groat of Henry V, York
Museums Trust

Campaigns in France

Henry may have regarded the assertion of his own claims as part of his royal duty, but in any case, a permanent settlement of the national debate was essential to the success of his foreign policy.

1415 campaign

On 12 August 1415, Henry sailed for France, where his forces besieged the fortress at Harfleur, capturing it on 22 September. Afterwards, Henry decided to march with his army across the French countryside towards Calais, despite the warnings of his council.^[19] On 25 October 1415, on the plains near the village of Agincourt, a French army intercepted his route. Despite his men-at-arms being exhausted, outnumbered and malnourished, Henry led his men into battle, decisively defeating the French, who suffered severe losses. It is often argued that the French men-at-arms were bogged down in the muddy battlefield, soaked from the previous night of heavy rain, and that this hindered the French advance, allowing them to be sitting targets for the flanking English and Welsh archers. Most were simply hacked to death while completely stuck in the deep mud. Nevertheless, the victory is seen as Henry's greatest, ranking alongside the battle of Poitiers.

During the battle,^[20] Henry ordered that the French prisoners taken during the battle be put to death, including some of the most illustrious who could be used for ransom. Cambridge Historian Brett Tingley posits that Henry was concerned that the prisoners might turn on their captors when the English were busy repelling a third wave of enemy troops, thus jeopardising a hard-fought victory.

The victorious conclusion of Agincourt, from the English viewpoint, was only the first step in the campaign to recover the French possessions that he felt belonged to the English crown. Agincourt also held out the promise that Henry's pretensions to the French throne might be realised.

Diplomacy and command of the sea

Command of the sea was secured by driving the Genoese allies of the French out of the English Channel. While Henry was occupied with peace negotiations in 1416, a French and Genoese fleet surrounded the harbour at the English-garrisoned Harfleur. A French land force also besieged the town. To relieve Harfleur, Henry sent his brother, John of Lancaster, the Duke of Bedford, who raised a fleet and set sail from Beachy Head on 14 August. The Franco-Genoese fleet was defeated the following day after a gruelling seven-hour battle, and Harfleur was relieved. Diplomacy successfully detached Emperor Sigismund, Holy Roman Emperor, from France, and the Treaty of Canterbury in 1416 paved the way to end the Western Schism in the Church.

1417–20 campaign

With those two potential enemies gone, and after two years of patient preparation following the Battle of Agincourt, Henry renewed the war on a larger scale in 1417. Lower Normandy was quickly conquered, and Rouen was cut off from Paris and besieged. This siege cast an even darker shadow on the reputation of the king than his order to slay the French prisoners at Agincourt. Rouen, starving and unable to support the women and children of the town, forced them out through the gates believing that Henry would allow them to pass through his army unmolested. However, Henry refused to allow this, and the expelled women and children died of starvation in the ditches surrounding the town. The French were paralysed by the disputes between Burgundians and Armagnacs. Henry skilfully played them off one against the other, without relaxing his warlike approach.

In January 1419, Rouen fell. Those Norman French who had resisted were severely punished: Alain Blanchard, who had hanged English prisoners from the walls of Rouen, was summarily executed; Robert de Livet, Canon of Rouen, who had excommunicated the English king, was packed off to England and imprisoned for five years.^[21]

By August, the English were outside the walls of Paris. The intrigues of the French parties culminated in the assassination of John the Fearless by the Dauphin's partisans at Montereau (10 September 1419). Philip the Good, the new Duke, and the French court threw themselves into Henry's arms. After six months of negotiation, the Treaty of Troyes recognised Henry as the heir and regent of France (see English Kings of France), and on 2 June 1420 at Troyes Cathedral, he married Catherine of Valois, the French king's daughter. (They had only one son; Henry was born on 6 December 1421 at Windsor Castle.) From June to July 1420, Henry's army besieged and took the castle at Montereau. He besieged and captured Melun in November, returning to England shortly thereafter.

1421 campaign and death



The ratification of the Treaty of Troyes between Henry and Charles VI of France



Late 15th century depiction of Henry's marriage to Catherine of Valois

While he was in England, Henry's brother Thomas of Lancaster, 1st Duke of Clarence, led the English forces in France. In March 1421, Thomas led the English to a disastrous defeat at the Battle of Baugé against a Franco-Scottish army. The Duke himself was killed in the battle. On 10 June 1421, Henry sailed back to France to retrieve the situation. It would be his last military campaign. From July to August, Henry's forces besieged and captured Dreux, thus relieving allied forces at Chartres. That October, his forces lay siege to Meaux, capturing it on 2 May 1422.

Henry V died suddenly on 31 August 1422 at the Château de Vincennes, apparently from dysentery,^[22] which he had contracted during the siege of Meaux. He was 36 years old and had reigned for nine years.

Shortly before his death, Henry V named his brother John of Lancaster, 1st Duke of Bedford, regent of France in the name of his son Henry VI of England, then only a few months old. Henry V did not live to be crowned King of France himself, as he might confidently have expected after the Treaty of Troyes, because the sickly Charles VI, to whom he had been named heir, survived him by two months. Henry's comrade-in-arms and Lord Steward John Sutton, 1st Baron Dudley, brought his body back to England and bore the royal standard at his funeral.^[23] Henry V was buried in Westminster Abbey on 7 November 1422.

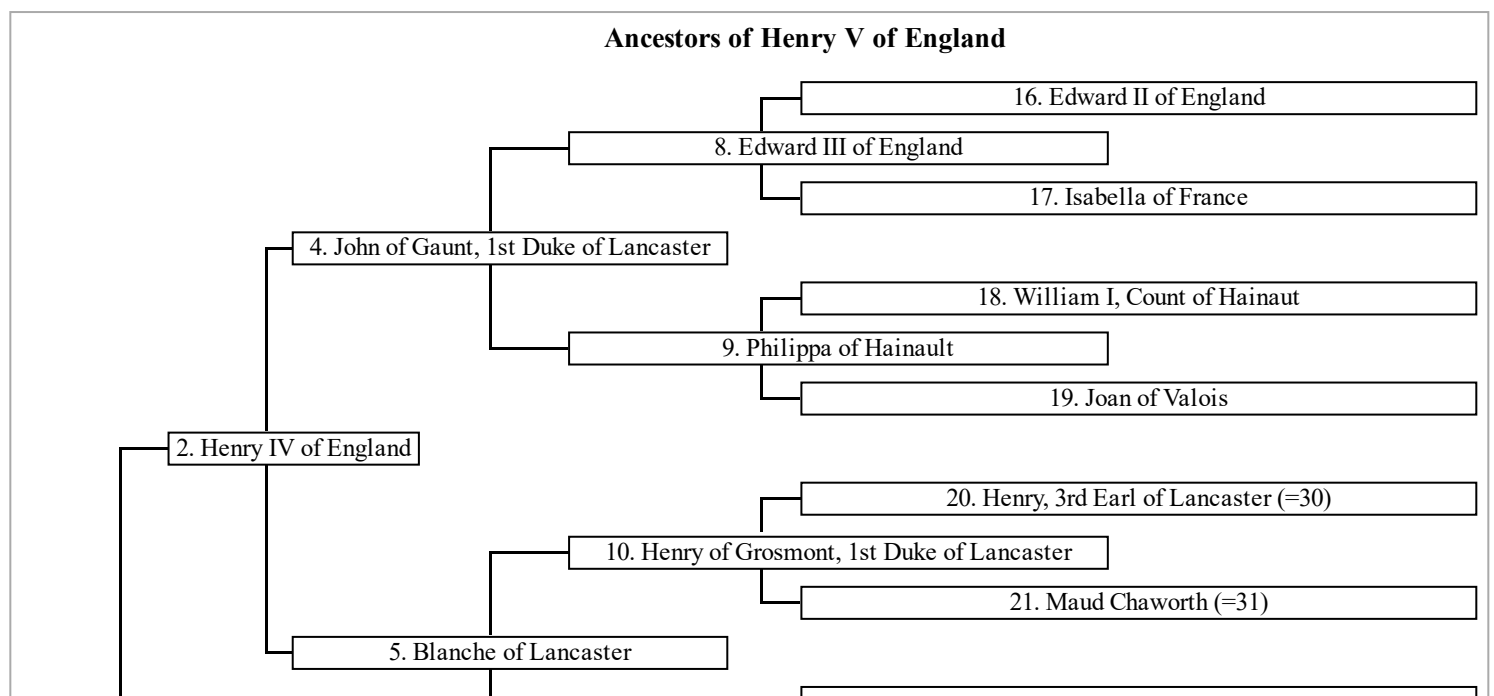
Arms

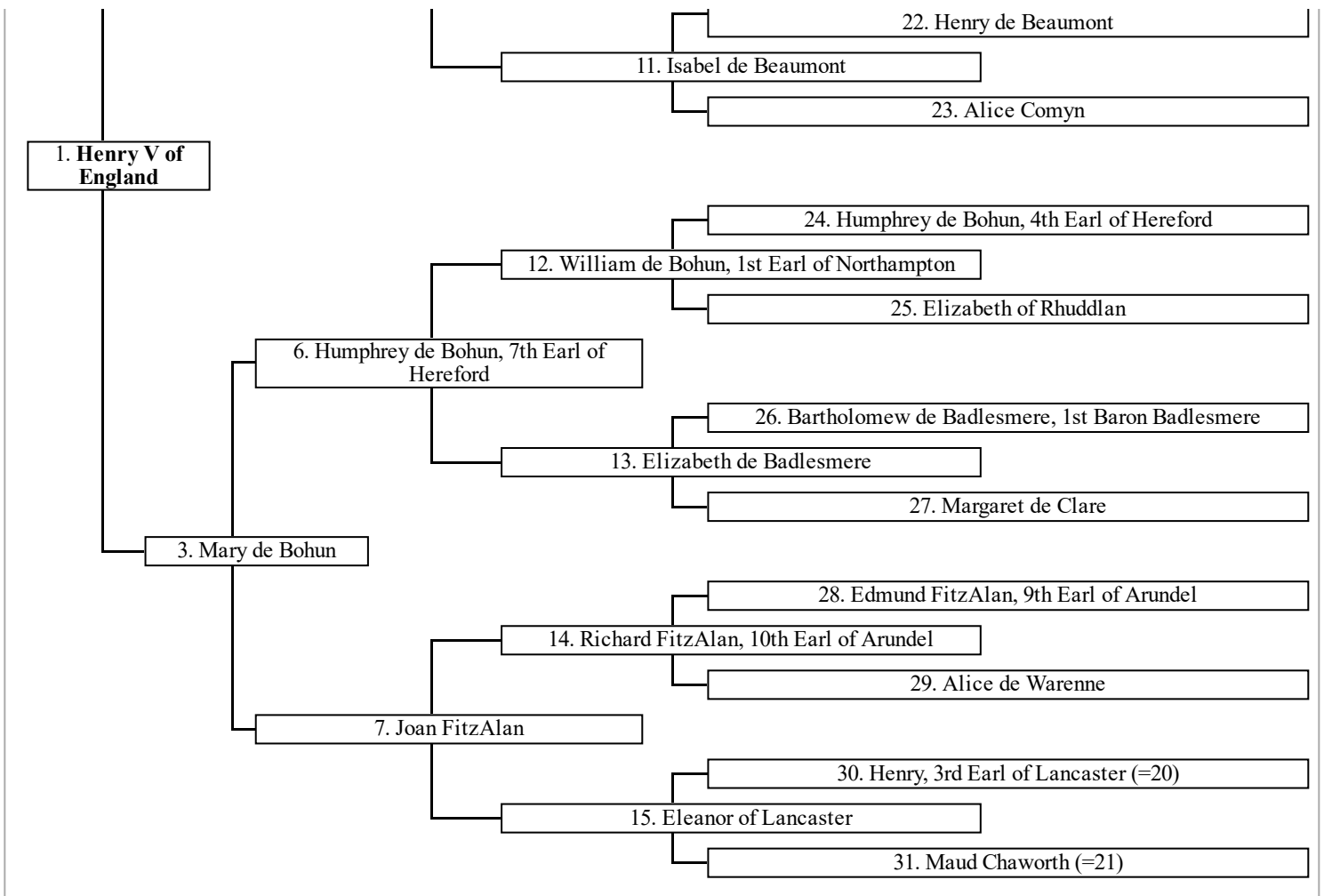
As Prince of Wales, Henry's arms were those of the kingdom, differenced by a label argent of three points.^[24] Upon his accession, he inherited use of the arms of the kingdom undifferenced.

Marriage

In 1420 Henry V married Catherine of Valois, daughter of Charles VI of France and younger sister of the widow of Richard II, Isabella of Valois (who died several years after her husband). Her dowry, upon the agreement between the two kingdoms, was 600,000 crowns.^[25] Together the couple had one child, Henry. Upon Henry V's death, the infant Prince was made king and was crowned Henry VI of England.^[26]

Ancestry





Notes

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See also

- Cultural depictions of Henry V of England
- Dafydd Gam
- Dieu et mon droit
- English longbow
- List of English monarchs

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- Works by or about Henry V of England (<https://worldcat.org/identities/lccn-n50038127>) in libraries (WorldCat catalog)
- BBC Radio 4 Great Lives on Henry V - listen online: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00p62v6>



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Henry V of England House of Lancaster Cadet branch of the House of Plantagenet Born: 16 September 1387 Died: 31 August 1422		
Regnal titles		
Preceded by Henry IV	King of England Lord of Ireland 1413–1422	Succeeded by Henry VI
	Duke of Aquitaine 1400–1422	
Peerage of England		
Vacant Title last held by Richard of Bordeaux	Prince of Wales 1399–1413	Vacant Title next held by Edward of Westminster
	Duke of Cornwall 1399–1413	Vacant Title next held by Henry VI
Preceded by Henry of Bolingbroke	Duke of Lancaster 1399–1413	Merged in Crown
Honorary titles		
Preceded by Sir Thomas Erpynham	Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports 1409–1412	Succeeded by The Earl of Arundel

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