



# Wars of the Roses

## Background Notes

### Source 1 – Portrait of Edward III

This portrait of Edward III hangs in the South Quire Aisle of St George's Chapel. It shows Edward as an old man, wearing the crown of England, holding the orb of state, and carrying his 6 foot sword, piercing the crowns of Scotland and France. In addition, he wears the George suspended from a blue ribbon, the insignia of his great establishment, the Order of the Garter. In the account book of Henry Beaumont, Canon Treasurer [SGC XV.59.32], we find the following entry in 1615:

*Maii 24 Ki. Ed. 3. oure founders picture 8li et ultra ijs ijd per billam mri Baker viijli ijs ijd*

[May 24: King Edward III our founder's picture £8 and an additional 2s 2d by Mr Baker's bill £8 2s 2d]

3 days later, on the 27th May, an entry records that a curtain was made by Daye and Berdill to hang over the painting, at a cost of 17s 8d.

In 1347 following triumphs in France, Edward wanted a way to reward those who had stood by him and helped him achieve his successes. His new Order of the Garter would do this. As originally conceived by Edward, the Order of the Garter would consist of twenty-four knights including the Sovereign. By 1352, this number had increased to twenty-six. These knights would be bound together by the chivalric code and loyalty to their monarch.

There are many mysteries surrounding the identity of St George, but the most commonly believed is that he was a soldier in the Roman Army, part of the imperial guard of Emperor Diocletian. In 302 AD, Diocletian ordered that every Christian in the army be arrested and sacrificed to the pagan gods. George refused to renounce his faith, and was eventually martyred. With the stories of protecting the Princess from the dragon, St George was seen as someone who displayed all the idealistic values of courage, honour and chivalry.

Stories of St George were brought back by the Crusaders in the 12th century, and during the reign of Edward III, he became venerated as the patron saint of England. When Edward founded the College of St George at Windsor in 1348, the original St Edward's chapel was rededicated to St Mary the Virgin, St George the Martyr and St Edward the Confessor, and was to be the permanent headquarters of his new chivalric order.

## **Source 2 – Portrait of Richard II taken from the Black Book, SGC G.1**

This *Register of the Order of the Garter*, known as the 'Black Book' because of its black velvet cover, was compiled by Canon Robert Aldridge, Register (Registrar) of the Order, around 1534, and continues until the reign of Edward VI. It names each monarch, starting with Edward III, and lists the Knights of the Garter installed by them. Edward III had founded the Order in about 1348, to reward and unite his loyal friends and soldiers.

It is illuminated, probably by Lucas Honebolter (who was appointed King's Painter in 1534), with portraits of monarchs from Edward III to Henry VIII, representations of Garter ceremonies, and colourful borders. This illumination shows Richard II as a young man.

## **Source 3 – Panther beast from the roof of St George's Chapel**

In stories from the Bestiary, the panther is a gentle beast; only the dragon is its enemy. It is a beautiful, multi-coloured animal; its coat is spotted with white or black disks. After the panther has feasted, it goes into a cave and sleeps for three days. When it wakes up it gives a loud roar, and while it is roaring a sweet odour comes out of its mouth. Any animal that hears the roar follows the sweet smell to reach the panther. Only the dragon stays away, hiding in a hole because it is afraid of the panther. The panther therefore represents Christ, who drew all mankind to him. The dragon represents the devil, who feared Christ and hid from him. The many colours of the panther symbolize the many qualities of Christ. After Christ was killed, he entered the tomb. After three days Christ left the tomb and roared out his triumph over death. The sweet breath of the panther that drew all animals to it is used as a symbol of the words of Christ that draw all to him.

The panther was used by King Henry VI as his badge and by other members of the House of Lancaster. As a symbol of Christ's triumph over evil, it would have appealed to the religious and devote Henry.

## **Source 4 – The Picquigny misericord**

A misericord (sometimes named mercy seat) is a small wooden shelf on the underside of a folding seat in a church, installed to provide a degree of comfort for a person who has to stand during long periods of prayer. The misericords of St George's Chapel form one of the finest collections of 15th century carvings in the country.

Edward IV chose to depict the meeting of himself and Louis XI of France on his seat. He believed that his military expedition into France and its success bringing peace and marriage treaties, together with a large lifelong annual tribute from the king of France was the most successful and satisfactory undertaking of his life. The misericord would have been hidden from the view of most people so could not have been used for 'propaganda value', but this was the episode in his life that Edward himself wished to be reminded of while praying in the chapel he founded. It is much larger than the other misericords, being 3 foot 7 inches wide.

The meeting took place on the bridge at Picquigny in northern France on 29 August 1475. The bridge has a wooden barrier across it in the middle. On each side is a king in armour and

short surcoat, attended by nine armed men on the right and eleven on the left. On the left hand side supporter, the King of France comes out of a castellated gateway preceded by three men. On the right, the King of England in the door of his tent, surmounted by the banners of St George. He has crown, orb and sceptre, and four attendants.

### **Source 5 – Diagram of the tomb of Edward IV**

Edward IV's tomb was discovered in March 1789 during the restoration of St George's Chapel, Windsor. The architect Henry Emlyn superintended the restoration, and this is his diagram of the excavated tomb.

An entry from a guide book to Windsor written in 1811 reads:

*At the east end of the north aisle, are deposited the remains of Edward IV, in a tomb covered with touchstone, over which is erected a beautiful monument, composed of steel, representing a pair of gates between two towers of curious workmanship, after the gothic manner. The trophies of honour over the Prince's grave, were richly ornamented with pearls, rubies, and gold, and hung secure 'till this Chapel was plundered in 1642.*

*The steel front of this monument formerly faced the north aisle, but is now towards the altar; and, in 1790, was added, on the back part of it, towards the north aisle, a neat stone monument, chiefly composed of fragments, collected from other parts of the Chapel, and which contribute greatly to the beauty of the whole. In the front of the monument is a fine black marble slab, and on it, in solid brass old-English characters 'EDWARD III'. Over these are his arms and crown, supported by angels; and at the base of the monument, on a flat stone, are countersunk, in the characters before-mentioned:*

#### **King Edward III and his Queen Elizabeth Widville**

*In the beginning of March, 1789, as the workmen were employed in preparing the ground for a new pavement, they perceived a small aperture in the side of the vault, which curiosity soon rendered sufficiently large to admit an easy entrance to the interior part. This was found to contain a leaden coffin, seven feet long, with a perfect skeleton, immersed in a glutinous liquid, with which the body is thought to have been embalmed as it is near 307 years since its interment.*

*On the inside of the vault were inscribed several names and characters, but which probably were done by the attendants at the funeral, or by the workmen employed in the erection of the vault, many of them being written in chalk, and as none of them immediately appertain to the King, except the name 'Edward'.*

### **Source 6 – Panel of Kings**

The panel painting of the four kings faces the Oliver King chapel and forms part of the scheme commemorating Dr Oliver King, Canon of Windsor, 1480-1503.

The “kings” represented are from right to left, Prince Edward, first son of Henry VI, killed at the Battle of Tewkesbury in 1471, the only heir apparent to die in battle; King Edward IV; King Edward V, king of England from the death of his father on 9 April 1483 until June of

that year. On his accession, Edward was brought to London by his uncle, Richard Duke of Gloucester, and plans were made for his coronation. Repeatedly postponed, eventually in June 1483, Richard declared Edward and his younger brother Richard to be illegitimate as their father was already married at the time he married their mother. Richard named himself as King. The two boys were kept in the Tower of London, seen less and less frequently until they disappeared from public view altogether around July 1483. If, as seems likely, Edward V died before his fifteenth birthday, he is the shortest-lived monarch in English history; and lastly King Henry VII, the first Tudor King.

These men are represented because Oliver King acted as Secretary or Tutor to them all.

### **Source 7 – Decoration over the vault of Henry VI**

Following his death in May 1471, Henry VI had been interred in the Abbey of Chertsey. During his life, Henry had expressed a wish to be buried at Westminster Abbey, even choosing a specific site. However, with speculation rife over the manner of his death, a site a little distance from London had been chosen by the man many believed to have killed him, Edward IV.

In August 1484, Richard III, another accused in the death of Henry VI, ordered his remains to be exhumed and brought to Windsor, where they were reinterred in a place of honour, to the south of the High Altar and directly opposite the burial place of Edward IV himself.

It is not known if a tomb was ever erected, but there was certainly an altar and the vault over the space was richly decorated with arms and heraldic badges, with the roof boss of Henry's crowned coat of arms with supporters forming the centrepiece.

The Royal Badges include the red rose of Lancaster, the beacon, the sunburst and the ostrich feather. Other badges include the red eagle and the cinquefoil ermine. The arms of England and France appear alternately, and around the outside are painted a series of Royal beasts – the white antelope, white swan and the white hart, as well as a badge of the mast of a ship with the words "*en dieu en dieu*", a badge used by Henry VI's father-in-law, Duke Rene of Anjou.

Today, the roof boss is all that remains, displaying the Royal Arms of Henry VI ensigned by a crown and supported by two silver antelopes collared and chained in gold.

### **Source 8 – Tudor rose**

When Henry VII defeated Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth, he brought about the end of what is now known as the Wars of the Roses. Henry VII was through his mother of the House of Lancaster, and when he married Elizabeth of York, daughter to Edward IV of the House of York, he brought together both sides of the family.

At the Battle of Bosworth, Richard had fought under his banner of the White Boar, and Henry under his banner of the Red Dragon. It was not until his marriage in 1486 that he used the idea of the two roses, bringing them together to form the Tudor Rose.

Henry needed to marry Elizabeth to bring about stability to a kingdom rocked by civil war, and weaken the claims of other surviving members of the House of York. However, he claimed the throne through a weak link to John of Gaunt, son of Edward III, rather than through his marriage to the heir of the House of York. This enabled him to rule alone, rather than sharing power.

Although St George's Chapel was begun by Edward IV, it was not completed until 1528, with the bulk of the vaulting being carried out during the reign of Henry VII. Many of the emblems which appear on the roof are therefore associated with Henry VII and the Tudors.