

## Richard III, the Great Landholders, and the Results of the Wars of the Roses

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Historians nowadays accept that the Wars of the Roses were not a single continuous conflict between two sides, Lancaster and York, but were rather a series of separate wars between different protagonists, undoubtedly connected, but arising nevertheless for different reasons, and separated by periods of peace. Whatever the irreconcilable Lancastrians of the 1460s may have hoped, they were genuinely peripheral: Lord Rivers was not alone in acknowledging the Lancastrian defeat at Towton as decisive. It was initially a split amongst the victorious Yorkists that brought renewed conflict from 1469. Almost all remaining Lancastrians gave up in 1471, after Edward IV had annihilated the last of the houses of Lancaster and Beaufort. Edward's second reign presumed that the Wars were over. Secure on his throne, the succession assured, and financially solvent, Edward supposedly dared to confront the greatest of his magnates to their faces: he certainly publicly tried and executed his own brother. Though under age, his eldest son succeeded automatically as King Edward V. What happened in 1483–7, therefore, was a new conflict, unpredictable and unpredicted, that broke the Yorkist consensus and upset the Yorkist land settlement. 'This is seen most notably now in the general agreement', writes Christine Carpenter, 'that the Wars of the Roses ended not in 1485 but in 1471, to be restarted almost by accident in 1483'.<sup>1</sup> This third civil war originated in Richard III's usurpation of the throne.

It was this third civil war that *sealed* the results that historians have *attributed* to the Wars of the Roses and made them permanent. It was on these results that Tudor rule was founded. Were these results merely the cumulative effects of three civil wars? Or were they actually the effects of the third civil war alone? In some respects, the latter is obviously true: Henry VII and his Tudor dynasty are inconceivable without Richard III. Generally speaking, however, historians have seen the impact of the Wars on the composition and power of the nobility and on English landholding in general as results of the whole sequence of the Wars, the Wars as a whole.<sup>2</sup> This proposition has never been

<sup>1</sup> C. Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses: Politics and the Constitution c.1437–1509*, Cambridge 1997, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. K.B. McFarlane, 'The Wars of the Roses', *England in the Fifteenth Century: Collected Essays*, London 1981, pp. 230–67, esp. 257–59; J.R. Lander, 'Attainder and forfeiture 1453–1509', in the same, *Crown and Nobility 1450–1509*, London 1976, pp. 127–58, esp. 129–30; J.M.W. Bean, 'Landlords', *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, vol. 3, ed. E. Miller, Cambridge 1991, p. 543.

tested. If each war was separate, must we not concede that the results could have been different had they indeed terminated in 1461 or 1471? Could not the third phase alone have *caused* as well as *sealed* the results of the Wars of the Roses as a whole? May not Richard III, deliberately or accidentally, have been responsible for the major changes that occurred, perhaps even those often regarded as crucially dividing the medieval and Tudor eras of English politics? It is strange indeed that no historian or Ricardian appears ever to have explored this possibility, which this paper undertakes.

Historians are not agreed on what the results of the Wars of the Roses were. Almost forty years ago both K.B. McFarlane and J.R. Lander rejected as over-crude the old commonplace that the old nobility were exterminated. Widespread noble mortality alone did not destroy many noble families, more of whom expired due to natural causes that would have befallen them anyway. Most of those who were indeed attainted as traitors – including almost everyone who counted! – were in due course restored themselves or in the persons of their heirs.<sup>3</sup> Such judgements have nevertheless to be qualified somewhat, since the royal family ‘in all its branches’ and two of the greatest noble dynasties were admittedly terminated by force, and also since most of the Welsh marcher lordships – the Wars of the Roses being particularly a war between marcher lords – became concentrated in crown hands.<sup>4</sup> Recently it has been demonstrated that most of the apparently natural failures of noble houses were actually engineered, that the greatest dynasties were drastically thinned, their wealth henceforth underpinning the new crown estate, and that the impact in certain regions – in the North, West Country, West Midlands and Wales – decisively and conclusively altered structures of landholding.<sup>5</sup> What has not been considered, however, is how far these results were the consequences of the Wars as a whole or merely of the last phase. With some exceptions, the destructions of the houses of Lancaster and Beaufort for instance, it is the contention of this paper that *all* the significant long-term consequences resulted from the third phase. Included under this heading are some decisions, such as the union of whole inheritances with the crown and the rejection of the claims of rightful heirs to restoration, that were only made possible by the accession, thanks to Richard III, of a king in Henry VII who was exceptionally ruthless towards his relatives.

Five facets to this topic are examined here. First of all, there is the impact that Richard III made on the Yorkist land-settlement that existed before his accession. Secondly, there were the enduring consequences of his own land-settlement. Thirdly, there is Richard’s role in restoring those Lancastrians who

<sup>3</sup> McFarlane, ‘Wars’, pp. 257–58; Lander, ‘Attainder’, pp. 257–58.

<sup>4</sup> McFarlane, ‘Wars’, p. 258; Bean, ‘Landlords’, p. 543; R.A. Griffiths, ‘Wales and the Marches’, *Fifteenth-Century England, 1399–1509*, ed. S.B. Chrimes, C.D. Ross and R.A. Griffiths, Manchester 1972, p. 163.

<sup>5</sup> M.A. Hicks, ‘What changed: regional aspects of the Wars of the Roses’, paper delivered at the Fifteenth-Century Conference at Bristol, 2001.

had suffered forfeiture during his brother's reign. Fourthly, there were the consequences of his failure, as engineered by his vanquisher, Henry VII. These interact, fifthly, to produce results both national and regional.

The destruction of the nobility was far from the intention of either Edward IV or Richard III. Both kings had grown up as aristocrats rather than putative kings and both looked automatically to noblemen like themselves to run the regions. They elevated their kinsfolk, both by blood and marriage, raised their most trusted adherents to the peerage, rewarded those who gave satisfaction with further promotion, and demonstrated their subscription to the belief, that noblemen had to live nobly to be effective, by endowing them generously at crown expense: albeit principally from windfalls and forfeitures. To the nobility that they had inherited, they made numerous additions. Edward IV created a prince, five dukes, two marquises, no less than fourteen earls – as many as existed before the Wars began – two viscounts, and 16 barons, total 40.<sup>6</sup> Richard III, in much less time, made his son a prince and created both a duke and an earl. What expectations had Sir Richard Ratcliffe after the grant of the bulk of the Courtenay estates? Edward IV has been credited with creating 'a new Yorkist nobility' in his first reign,<sup>7</sup> which was largely destroyed in 1469–71; he was already far advanced in creating a second new nobility, which to some extent supplanted the first, when he died. Both Edward and Richard were especially lavish moreover in the endowments they provided. On occasion they plundered the duchy of Lancaster and even the whole county of Chester to this end.

The aristocracy had been highly stratified before the Wars of the Roses, both in rank – there were five levels of the peerage and three of the gentry – and in wealth. Four great noble houses stood apart in the topmost tier. All four were royal kin, possessed of far-flung estates worth at least £5,000 a year that dominated several localities, and each enjoyed in Welsh marcher lordships wholly exceptional rights of jurisdiction. The four regional magnates of the 1450s were Richard, Duke of York (died 1460), Humphrey Stafford, Duke of Buckingham (died 1460), John Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk (died 1461), and Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick (died 1471), son and heir of his namesake Salisbury.<sup>8</sup> Although only the dukedom of Buckingham remained in 1483, an even more powerful decentralised power structure had emerged. In lieu of Edward IV's first abortive 'new Yorkist nobility', new creations and the diversion of long-established inheritances had more than reconstituted the top tier of great regional estates and hegemonies in the hands of magnates principally of royal blood or of Edward IV's inner circle. Altogether another seven had emerged as follows: we must be careful however not to attribute too self-conscious or permanent intentions to plans based on personal relationships and too easily upset by mortality, as the events of 1483–7 were to show.

<sup>6</sup> T.B. Pugh, 'The magnates, knights and gentry', *Fifteenth-Century England*, pp. 90, 116–17.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 90, 116–17.

<sup>8</sup> Hicks, 'What changed'.

(1) and (2). The largest of the earlier inheritances, that of Warwick the Kingmaker, had been partitioned between the king's brothers, Clarence and Gloucester, creating for them two great estates in place of one that made them the pre-eminent figures respectively in the West Midlands (Clarence) and in South Wales and the North and even, potentially, in Scotland (Gloucester). Clarence's estates brought in more than £6,000 a year at their peak, perhaps £4,500 at his death,<sup>9</sup> whilst Gloucester's were ultimately worth decidedly more. That Clarence himself was attainted and forfeited his lands by royal grant was no obstacle to the continuance of his consort's earldom of Warwick under his son, Edward. Notoriously this partition was advanced and distorted at the expense of the rightful heirs by two acts of parliament in 1474–5.<sup>10</sup>

(3). The appanage of the king's eldest son Edward, Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall and Earl of Chester, had been expanded to embrace the marches, where his council controlled the marcher lordships of the duchy of Lancaster, earldom of March, and the crown, of which Pembroke had been unwillingly wrested from the Herberts in 1479.<sup>11</sup>

(4). The king's second son, Richard of Shrewsbury, Duke of York and Norfolk, had been scheduled by 1475 for a power block based on Lancaster, York, and Welles estates in the East Midlands area. However, the premature death of the last Mowbray duke of Norfolk made his estates available instead, at first by marriage in 1478 and then in 1483 by appropriation, to the disinheritance of the rightful heirs.<sup>12</sup> This inheritance was especially important in East Anglia, Surrey and Sussex, and the East Midlands.

Three other hegemonies perhaps were on a lesser scale and less enduring:

(5). That of the king's chamberlain William, Lord Hastings, in the North and East Midlands, as steward for life of duchy of Lancaster estates and as permanent grantee of Beaumont and Roos forfeitures, particularly in Leicestershire.<sup>13</sup> Both proved temporary.

<sup>9</sup> M.A. Hicks, *False, Fleeting, Perjur'd Clarence: George Duke of Clarence 1449–78*, rev. edn, Bangor 1992, p. 164.

<sup>10</sup> Most fully in M.A. Hicks, 'Descent, partition and extinction: the "Warwick inheritance"', in the same, *Richard III and his Rivals: Magnates and their Motives during the Wars of the Roses*, London 1991, ch. 18.

<sup>11</sup> M.A. Hicks, 'The changing role of the Wydevilles in Yorkist politics to 1483', in *Richard III and His Rivals*, ch. 11.

<sup>12</sup> D.A.L. Morgan, 'The King's Affinity in the Polity of Yorkist England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5<sup>th</sup> ser., vol. 23 (1973), p. 18; Pugh, 'Magnates', p. 111. The coheirs were Lords Howard and Berkeley.

<sup>13</sup> Hastings' role has often been discussed: W.H. Dunham, *Lord Hastings' Indentured Retainers 1461–83*, Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, History and Law 39, New Haven 1955; I. Rowney, 'Resources and retaining in Yorkist England: William, Lord Hastings and the Honour of Tutbury', *Property and Politics: Essays in Later Medieval English History*, ed. A.J. Pollard, Gloucester 1984, pp. 29–55; the same, 'The Hastings' affinity in Staffordshire and the Honour of Tutbury', *BIHR*, vol. 57 (1984), pp. 34–45; M.A. Hicks, 'Lord Hastings' indentured retainers?', in *Richard III and his Rivals*,

(6). That of the king's steward Thomas, Lord Stanley, in the North-West, again principally as chief officer of royal duchy and comital estates.<sup>14</sup>

(7). That of the king's stepson Thomas Grey, Marquis of Dorset, in the West Country. Already in right of himself and his wife lord of three scattered baronies – Ferrers of Groby in the Midlands, Bonville in the South-West, and Harrington in the North-West – together worth as much as £2,000,<sup>15</sup> but subject to several dowers, Dorset was financially assisted by the queen and enabled by parliament in 1483 to secure the estates of the Holland duchy of Exeter as augmented by forfeitures by marrying his heir to the king's niece Anne, who was supposedly the heiress, but actually the daughter of the duke's ex wife Anne of York and her *second* husband Thomas St Leger.<sup>16</sup> It is important to realize that Dorset had no earldom of Devon to contend with. Forfeited by the earl in 1461 and again by Clarence in 1478, the Courtenay estate had become part of the crown lands. Dorset's uncle Rivers was receiver-general of the duchy of Cornwall.<sup>17</sup> Dorset had also secured the young earl of Warwick as husband for a daughter.<sup>18</sup>

It will not have escaped notice how close were the links of service or blood of all these magnates to the crown – they were all part of the Yorkist inner circle and/or the queen's family, presiding also over the households of king or prince. Also closely connected was Henry Stafford, 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Buckingham, the only one of the king's brothers-in-law of equivalent wealth and regional standing. Like all other husbands of the queen's Wydeville sisters, he was not a member of the council of Wales and was allowed no regional rule himself. Three of these estates – those of Princes Edward and Richard and Dorset – were controlled by the queen's brothers and sons.<sup>19</sup>

Two of these regional hegemonies rested not on natural inheritance, the traditional foundation of aristocratic landholding and power, but on royal office-holding: an impermanent basis, dependent on continued royal favour and liable to interruption on death and in minorities. Another five rested on legal manipulation, the diversion of the entitlements of others to alternative

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ch. 12; E. Westervelt, 'The changing nature of politics in the locality on the West Midlands in the late fifteenth century: William Lord Hastings, and his indentured retainers', *Midland History*, vol. 26 (2001), pp. 96–106.

<sup>14</sup> M.A. Hicks, 'Attainder, resumption and coercion 1461–1529', in *Richard III and His Rivals*, 46–47.

<sup>15</sup> In 1436 Lord Ferrers of Groby was assessed at £666 and Lord Harrington at £347, H.L. Gray, 'Incomes from land in England in 1436', *EHR*, vol. 49 (1934), p. 617. By his death in 1461 Bonville, who challenged the earl of Devon on equal terms, can hardly have been worth less. As Dorset's grandmother Lady Ferrers of Groby did not die until 1483 and the Harrington dowager until 1503–04, after Dorset's own death, these were expectations yet to be banked, *CP*, vol. 2, pp. 218–19; vol 5, pp. 360–62; vol. 6, pp. 320–21.

<sup>16</sup> Pugh, 'Magnates', pp. 111–12.

<sup>17</sup> Hicks, *Clarence*, p. 141.

<sup>18</sup> *CPR*, 1476–85, pp. 219–20.

<sup>19</sup> Hicks, 'Wydevilles', pp. 222–7.

purposes, to which parliament had apparently uncritically acquiesced. The problem with such schemes was that they conferred less secure titles and could be as easily reversed when political circumstances changed. The finishing touches to four of these regional hegemonies – those of Gloucester, Norfolk, the principality, and Dorset – had been laid with royal approval at Edward IV's last parliament of early 1483,<sup>20</sup> but they never came to fruition. It was Gloucester's accession as Richard III that stymied all of them. He never expanded into Scotland, becoming king of England instead. The council of Wales ended with Edward V's deposition: his household and escort had already been laid off. Without troubling to reverse the 1483 act, Richard partitioned Prince Richard's Norfolk inheritance between the coheirs, Lords Howard and Berkeley, who were created Duke of Norfolk and Earl of Nottingham respectively. The marriage of Dorset's son to Anne St Leger did not take place.<sup>21</sup> Dorset's flight abroad was one factor; the execution and attainder of Anne's father Thomas St Leger in 1483–4 was even more decisive.

Changed political circumstances resulting directly or indirectly from Richard III's contested accession imperilled another three. First of all, Hastings was the principal victim of Richard's protectorate. Although attainder did not follow his execution, the minority of his son removed in 1485 the obstacle to the restoration of the rightful heirs to the Beaumont and Roos estates in the East Midlands that Hastings had occupied.<sup>22</sup> Secondly, Richard's accession and then his fall enabled his successor, Henry VII, to seize those Neville estates on which Richard's northern power had principally relied: that Richard's tenure was merely by courtesy and for life was not recognized as an obstacle.<sup>23</sup> And, thirdly, the reversal in 1487 of the act of 1474 that had allowed the royal dukes possession of the countess of Warwick's Beauchamp and Despenser estates, 'as though she was naturally dead', deprived the young Edward, Earl of Warwick, who was perceived by Henry VII as a dangerous Yorkist rival and who was anyway immured in the Tower, of his West Midlands and South Welsh inheritance and power-base.<sup>24</sup> Although executed for rebellion and attainted, Buckingham ironically proved posthumously to be on the winning side. His son and successor Edward Stafford, the 3<sup>rd</sup> duke, lost only the further accession of Bohun estates that Richard had granted him in 1483.<sup>25</sup> Tudor's manipulations were no more legal than those of his Yorkist predecessors and were also at the expense of legitimate claimants, but there were to be no more successful revolutions after 1485 to overthrow his provisions. The disappearance of the great regional hegemonies that the Yorkists had actually

<sup>20</sup> *RP*, vol. 6, pp. 202–07, 215–18.

<sup>21</sup> Anne married George Manners, later Lord Roos, c. 1490, and Thomas, 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquis of Dorset, married in 1509, *CP*, vol. 11, p. 108; vol. 4, p. 420.

<sup>22</sup> *RP*, vol. 6, pp. 280–81, 310–11.

<sup>23</sup> Hicks, 'Warwick inheritance', p. 333.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 333–34.

<sup>25</sup> *Harl. 433*, vol. 2, pp. 2–4.

enhanced is attributable not to the Wars of the Roses as a whole, but solely to this last phase.

Richard himself made two major contributions to landholding. No less than ninety-eight people were attainted by his only parliament.<sup>26</sup> A few traitors were executed, notably his brothers-in-law, Buckingham and St Leger, but most escaped unscathed into exile, only to return when Richard fell. Still living, they were available in 1485, when Richard's attainders were reversed *in toto*. Richard's forfeitures had no significant long-term effects on English landholding. Huge though these temporary forfeitures were, drastically though Richard's grants temporarily changed landholding patterns, lavishly though he had rewarded supporters such as Ratcliffe and Northumberland, as his signet letter book so splendidly illustrates, and politically explosive though his wholesale patronage and supposed importation of northerners was considered to be, almost the whole was reversed on his fall. Recipients, it seems, were happy merely to escape punishment for supporting Richard, and took in their stride the loss of their grants of forfeitures, which were always recognized to confer insecure titles. Thus Northumberland, both notoriously and memorably, secured the forfeited Stafford lordship of Holderness for his second son rather than his heir. Richard's reign was too brief, Lander rightly observed, to reveal whether his attainders and patronage were intended or destined to last.<sup>27</sup> In a handful of cases, rival claimants were able to exploit Richard's favour to secure recognition of their rights: Howard and Berkeley recovered their Mowbray inheritance; Buckingham himself did win his Bohun inheritance, Northumberland his de Brian inheritance, and Bergavenny was licensed to enter half the Despenser inheritance. Richard, Lord Latimer, was apparently recognized as rightful successor to the Neville inheritance in the North when he came of age.<sup>28</sup> So short was Richard's reign that we cannot tell whether Ralph, Earl of Westmoreland, Richard's trusted adherent, was to secure the duchy of Exeter on the death of his mother Anne Holland, Countess of Douglas, in 1486.<sup>29</sup> Barring the Mowbray case, in none of these instances did such titles endure under Henry VII. Northumberland, the luckiest, rightful sole heir of the de Brians, had nevertheless to settle for quartering their estates with three other less deserving rivals.<sup>30</sup>

Edward IV's first reign had witnessed the attainder and forfeiture of 143 of his Lancastrian foes: they included fourteen peers.<sup>31</sup> It was their possessions that Edward had redistributed so lavishly, endowing his two brothers

<sup>26</sup> *RP*, vol. 6, pp. 244–49.

<sup>27</sup> Lander, 'Attainder', p. 130.

<sup>28</sup> *Hart. 433*, vol. 2, pp. 2–5; Hicks, 'Warwick inheritance', p. 332; the same, 'Richard, Lord Latimer, Richard III, and the "Warwick inheritance"', *The Ricardian*, vol. 12 (2000–02), pp. 316–18.

<sup>29</sup> Pugh, 'Magnates', 112.

<sup>30</sup> J.M.W. Bean, *The Estates of the Percy Family 1416–1537*, London 1958, pp. 117–18.

<sup>31</sup> Lander, 'Attainder', p. 307.

more generously than any previous royal dukes and his Wydeville sisters-in-law as countesses, enriching the Nevilles, and creating the 'new Yorkist nobility' of the Wydevilles, Herberts, Hastings, and Stafford of Southwick. The resumption of conflict in 1469–71 eliminated some of the original beneficiaries and generated thirteen new forfeitures, but much of what had earlier been confiscated was restored at this point to the original holders or their heirs.<sup>32</sup> Altogether 397 individuals suffered attainder and forfeiture during the Wars of the Roses, of which Lander has shown no less than 256 – sixty-four percent – were restored. Eventually. The forfeitures of 1459, 1470 and 1484 were immediately undone.<sup>33</sup> However, many of those attainted in 1461–75 had to wait for restoration until 1485 or even later. Restoration was not therefore inevitable.

| Date | Attainder |       | Reversals |         |       |       |
|------|-----------|-------|-----------|---------|-------|-------|
|      | Number    | Total | By 1485   | In 1485 | Later | Never |
| 1461 | 114       | 66    | 39        | 27      | 3     | 48    |
| 1465 | 22        | 6     | 3         | 3       | 0     | 16    |
| 1475 | 13        | 13    | 3         | 9       | 1     | 0     |

Reversals of attainders from Edward IV's first reign had almost dried up by his death. 'That only six attainders were reversed in Edward's last two Parliaments made it seem less, not more likely, that patentees would be dispossessed of grants of 20 year's standing'.<sup>34</sup> Thirty-nine were to be reversed in 1485. They owed their good fortune to the two dynastic revolutions of 1483 and 1485. But for Richard III's accession and fall, which rehabilitated proscribed Lancastrians as supporters of Henry Tudor, significantly more would have remained unrestored. If we discount those attainders of Henry VI and Richard III, almost all of which were revoked en masse at the first opportunity in 1460 and 1485, the total number of attainders actually falls to 279 and the number of reversals to 137, representing a reversal rate of only 49%. Less than half is obviously very different from Lander's two-thirds. Of this 49%, no less than 45, representing 14% or nearly a third of those restored, were actually reversed *after* 1485. Focusing yet more precisely, 56% of Edward IV's attainders were reversed, 30% of them after 1485. So much for Edward IV's excessive leniency! However forgiving Edward may sometimes have appeared, no matter how willing he may have been to allow his enemies to work their way back as Lander has shown and even to allow them immunity from further punishment, he reversed their sentences quite sparingly and was rarely persuaded if they did not carry weight as individuals,<sup>35</sup> who threatened him or were of use to

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 136–37, 307–08.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>34</sup> Hicks, 'Attainder', p. 66.

<sup>35</sup> Lander, 'Attainder', pp. 129–30.

him. Twenty or more years on, their forfeitures and the land settlements based upon them had come to be regarded as permanent.

Most important amongst these were the five earls of Devon, Oxford, Pembroke, Richmond and Wiltshire, Viscount Beaumont, and Lords Clifford, Roos and Welles. There were two principal reasons why they were excluded. First of all, three of them – the two Tudor earls of Pembroke and Richmond and the earl of Oxford – were irreconcilable, if not Lancastrians, at least anti-Yorkist. Even though the honour of Richmond had been resumed in 1461, not forfeited, was in crown hands following forfeiture, and Henry Tudor's mother Margaret Beaufort was seeking an accommodation that would enable her son to return,<sup>36</sup> nothing had yet transpired.

Secondly, those restored tended to be those who carried weight with the king – perhaps those whose support he needed or with whom he wished to come to terms, like Henry, Duke of Somerset, in 1463<sup>37</sup> – rather than the inoffensive or obscure who were of no account. Thirdly, restoration depended as much on the power of recipients of forfeitures as the identity of the forfeited. Even though Edmund Roos, Henry Clifford, William Beaumont, and John Welles, all heirs to peerages, had long been resident in England and living within the king's allegiance, the occupants of their lands were too powerful to dispossess: principally Gloucester in the case of the northern possessions of Roos and Beaumont, Lord Hastings as grantee of the Midland estates of Roos and Beaumont, his brother Richard, Lord Welles, as heir general of the Welles barony, both Hastings and Gloucester as occupants of the Hungerford baronies, Lord Dynham (Courtenay lands), and the Wydeville-controlled Prince of Wales for Pembroke.<sup>38</sup> In two cases, the earldoms of Devon and Wiltshire, the heirs were resident in England – Sir Roger Clifford, Hugh Conway, and Thomas Ormond – and their lands were in the king's hands, but their titles were dubious. Wiltshire had only a life-estate through his wife, Avise Stafford, before resettling it on his own family and away from hers.<sup>39</sup> The Courtenay earldom may have been heritable through the female line, but much of the estate was not. That all these attainders were indeed reversed in 1485 was therefore for three reasons: because the claimants rebelled with Buckingham in 1483 or joined the Tudor side in the Bosworth campaign, as both Tudor earls, Oxford, Edward Courtenay of Bocannoc, John Welles and Walter Hungerford did; because their rights, as Lancastrian victims with Henry VI, could not be denied – this applied to Beaumont, Clifford, and Roos as well as most of the above; and because the deaths of Gloucester, Hastings, and

<sup>36</sup> M.K. Jones and M. Underwood, *The King's Mother*, Cambridge 1992, p. 60.

<sup>37</sup> M.A. Hicks, 'Edward IV, the duke of Somerset, and Lancastrian loyalism in the North', in *Richard III and his Rivals*, pp. 156–57.

<sup>38</sup> *CPR*, 1461–7, pp. 103, 104; 1467–77, p. 139; 1476–85, pp. 90, 200; *RP*, vol. 6, pp. 148–49; M.A. Hicks, 'Piety and lineage during the Wars of the Roses: The Hungerford experience', in *Richard III and His Rivals*, pp. 180–81; Pugh, 'Magnates', p. 111.

<sup>39</sup> Bean, *Estates*, pp. 117–19.

the young Edward V had removed those obstructing their restoration. All these changes of circumstances resulted from Gloucester's accession, consequent divisions, the violent dispossession of grantees, and the accumulation of political credit with the new Tudor regime by the disinherited. Otherwise they would not have been restored. Subsequently Beaumont, Clifford and Roos, to name but three, were found not to match up to the responsibilities to which they had been re-admitted.<sup>40</sup>

Henry VII, in contrast, passed few attainders in 1485, becoming more vengeful in subsequent parliaments. Those that he did pass in 1485 did cause much offence, since the victims had been acting in accordance with their allegiance, but the king insisted on having his way.<sup>41</sup> If no truly major figures were attainted, the consequences were significant enough for those like Lord Ferrers of Chartley and Lord Zouche who did suffer, since reversals of those attainted by Henry VII were virtually never total.<sup>42</sup> Henceforth the balance of advantage in bargains lay more strongly with the recipient in possession than the rightful heir.

We have already seen how Henry disregarded titles to confiscate the Neville and Warwick inheritances. Just as striking, however, is his failure to forge a new land settlement to replace the old. He did create two royal dukes, his uncle Jasper as Duke of Bedford and his second son Henry as Duke of York: the former was provided for principally by marriage to Katherine Wydeville, Dowager-Duchess of Buckingham, whose title was for life only.<sup>43</sup> Had a son resulted from the marriage, it would not have been provided for. Henry's own son, Henry, might indeed have become a great magnate as temperamentally overmighty as any other, but no lands actually changed hands before he became prince of Wales. Other kin, such as his uncle Viscount Welles and his three sisters-in-law, sisters of his queen, were provided for by marriage into established noble families rather than new endowments.<sup>44</sup> By allowing such marriages, Henry showed a lack of prescience akin to that of Edward III, both kings contributing inadvertently to the dynastic divisions of the next century. Henry's sisters-in-law were, with the queen, equal co-heiresses of the earldom of March, until it was annexed by parliament to the crown in 1489, just as Edward, Earl of Warwick, was heir male to the duchy of York itself. If, as Wolffe suggests, these were the accidental by-products of a sparse royal family,<sup>45</sup> they certainly enabled Henry to build up a large crown estate, which was bringing in £42,000 a year at his death. Whatever his good intentions and planning, Edward IV had hardly begun the task of establishing a crown estate

<sup>40</sup> *CP*, vol. 2, p. 63; vol. 11, p. 106.

<sup>41</sup> *Parliamentary Texts of the Later Middle Ages*, ed. N. Pronay and J. Taylor, Oxford 1980, p. 183.

<sup>42</sup> Lander, 'Attainder', pp. 144–45.

<sup>43</sup> *CP*, vol. 2, p. 73.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 330; vol. 9, p. 619; vol. 12 (2), pp. 448–49.

<sup>45</sup> B.P. Wolffe, *The Royal Demesne in English History*, London, 1971, p. 220.

at his death and Richard III, with pressing political priorities, could do no better.

If the highest nobility and the greatest estates were curtailed during the Wars of the Roses, therefore, it was the result of events from 1483, not before. Pre-existing noble hegemonies disappeared and the new lineages that were projected failed to take root. On several occasions Henry VII was able to exploit newly-exposed weaknesses to his destructive attentions. It was a consequence of this final phase of the Wars of the Roses that the dominant northern family, the Nevilles of Middleham and their heirs Gloucester, George Neville (died 1483), and Latimer, were dispossessed, leaving their Percy rivals as the only northern magnates. Similarly it was Richard's fall that exposed the 'Warwick Inheritance' to Henry VII's destructive attention and that ended the regional hegemony of the earls of Warwick in the West Midlands. Dorset's ambitions were frustrated in the West Country, where the earls of Devon were restored as the principal – but scarcely dominant – regional dynasty. The Percies and Courtenays stand out as outstandingly important regional potentates in the Tudor era because almost all their potential peers had expired in the last phase of the Wars of the Roses. How very different would the Tudor regime have been but for this: how very decentralised and dominated by the nobility, as Edward IV indeed had planned. If one of the characteristics that divides the English middle ages from the modern age is indeed the absence of the high nobility, as has often been alleged, then it was Richard III who created the conditions that Henry VII so decisively exploited.