

Warwick the Kingmaker

Michael Hicks

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Contents

Plates	vii
Genealogical Tables	ix
Preface	x
Abbreviations	xiii
1 The Legend of Warwick the Kingmaker	1
2 The Formative Years	7
2.1 Pedigree and Patrimony	7
2.2 Northern Roots	17
2.3 Shaping the Future	22
3 Earl of Warwick	31
3.1 Warwick Inheritance Update	31
3.2 Gathering the Spoils	36
3.3 Effectively Earl	48
3.4 The Warwick Traditions	53
4 The Polarization of Politics 1449–54	64
4.1 The Ascendancy of the Opposition	64
4.2 The Royalist Reaction 1451–3	75
4.3 Time for Decision	85
5 Partisan Politics 1454–6	94
5.1 York’s First Protectorate 1454–5	94
5.2 The First Battle of St Albans 1455	112
5.3 York’s Second Protectorate 1455–6	119

6	Countdown to Civil War 1456–9	126
6.1	Towards Reconciliation	126
6.2	Captain of Calais and Keeper of the Seas	138
6.3	The Opportunity Missed	148
6.4	Rout	159
7	Fortune’s First Wheel 1459–61	168
7.1	<i>Reculer pour mieux sauter</i>	168
7.2	Warwick’s Triumph	177
7.3	The Ideology of Reform	191
7.4	From Abyss to Victory	210
8	The Rule of the Nevilles 1461–7	220
8.1	The First Family	220
8.2	The Pacification of the North	234
8.3	Changing Priorities	248
9	Dropping the Pilot 1467–9	255
9.1	Growing Apart	255
9.2	Rising Tensions 1467–9	263
9.3	Warwick’s First Coup 1469	271
10	Fortune’s Second Wheel 1470–1	279
10.1	Warwick’s Second Coup 1470	279
10.2	Warwick as Kingmaker	286
10.3	From Triumph to Disaster 1470–1	296
11	Terminus	311
	Select Bibliography	314
	Index	326

Plates

1	The Neville matriarch Joan Beaufort Countess of Westmorland and daughters at prayer	101
2	Warwick's parents Richard Neville and Alice Montagu as Earl and Countess of Salisbury	101
3	Richmond Castle	102
4	Bear and ragged staff from a gold ring supposedly taken from Warwick's body at Barnet	103
5	The Neville screen, Durham Cathedral	103
6	The south-west corner of Guyscliff Chapel	104
7	Guy's Tower, Warwick Castle	105
8	Warwick as a mourner from the monument of his father-in-law Richard Beauchamp Earl of Warwick at the Beauchamp Chapel, Warwick	106
9	Muzzled bears and ragged staves from the entrance to the Beauchamp Chapel, Warwick	107
10	Warwick's seal as Lord of Glamorgan	108
11	Two cheap lead badges of the type distributed wholesale to Warwick's retainers	108
12	Cardiff, the principal town of Warwick's lordship of Glamorgan, from the early seventeenth-century map of John Speed	201

13	Henry VI sits in triumph whilst the future Edward IV and other Yorkist lords embark for Calais, 1459	201
14	The east end of Tewkesbury Abbey	202
15	A court scene	203
16	Bisham Priory	204
17	Reconstruction of Middleham Castle	204
18	Warwick and the Countess Anne from John Rous's Roll of the Earls of Warwick	205
19	Warwick's sole surviving book	206
20	King Louis XI of France	207
21	Signed letter of 12 February 1471 in French from Warwick to Louis XI	207
22	The Battle of Barnet: Edward IV leads the royal army to victory and Warwick's men flee to the right	208

Genealogical Tables

2.1	The Hollands	8
2.2	The Montagus	9
2.3	The Neville Family in the 1430s and 1440s	14
3.1	The Beauchamp and Despenser Inheritances	38
3.2	Title to the Lordship of Abergavenny	41
5.1	The Royal Family and the Protectorate 1454	95
7.1	The House of York's Title to the Crown 1460–1	188
8.1	The Salisbury Celebrations at Bisham 1463	229
8.2	The Nevilles in the North in the 1460s	231
10.1	Title to the Crown and the Succession 1470–1	283

Preface

Warwick the Kingmaker played a central role in all England's political crises between 1450 and 1471. He ranged across the islands of Britain and its nearest neighbours. He was a family-man, a great nobleman, statesman, rebel, general, admiral and subaltern, patron, benefactor and much else besides. If his own records are largely lost, he crops up in many other archives and chronicles in many different languages. No historian, certainly not this one, can consult everything or be expert in all these areas. I gratefully acknowledge both the work of my contemporaries and also of the centuries of researchers, editors, writers and archivists who have brought us to our present state of knowledge and understanding. All historians of the reigns of Henry VI and Edward IV must start and finish with the monumental studies of Professor Ralph Griffiths and Miss Cora L. Scofield. Though the late K. B. McFarlane now conditions all studies of late medieval English politics, it is Professor R. L. Storey's pioneering *End of the House of Lancaster* and Professor J. R. Lander's classic articles that are most influential in interpreting the reigns respectively of Henry VI and Edward IV. Many earlier writers are cited in the Bibliography, amongst whom for their guidance on particular areas I thank especially the late Mr John Armstrong, Dr Gerald Harriss, Dr Paul Johnson, Professor Tony Pollard, Professor Colin Richmond, the late Professor Charles Ross, Mr T. B. Pugh, Dr Livia Visser-Fuchs, and the editors of *John Vale's Book*. Mr Adrian Ailes, Dr Anne Curry and Dr Michael K. Jones supplied useful references and advice, the latter many times. Dr John Cherry and Mr Geoffrey Wheeler helped with the illustrations. Whilst I hope that they are all happy with the use I have made of their help, the responsibility for what appears here is mine.

Inevitably this book departs from existing works at many points. Any fresh look from a different angle, particularly from the vantage of a particular individual – for everyone's history is different – forces the historian or biographer

to reassess and revise in search of the best fit of evidence to interpretation. Narratives, arguments and analyses that appear to work well do so no longer when approached from a different point of view. Even accounts of the same events by the same author with reference to different individuals vary by more than mere perspective. I have tried to return to the evidence and not merely to repeat my own earlier work or that of others. At several points where others have seemed certain, I have not been so sure and freely admit that I do not know the answer. What is written here constitutes my current synthesis. It is not the last word on the subject nor, probably, my own last word. Much still remains to be learnt and doubtless to be much better understood. It is staggering how far we have come in the last hundred, fifty, and twenty years.

Biography is the study of an individual. It requires the presentation of the past in relation to that person and ideally through the eyes of that person. A taxing and ultimately impossible task. That does not mean that the biographer must take his subject's side, must ignore the views or decry the motives of others, or abandon objectivity. If I have sought to understand Warwick's actions, I have also, I believe, pointed out how unjustifiable, unreasonable or perverse they often were. I have not called Warwick great. He was certainly remarkable and demands some admiration. We do not have to like him. Can modern historians like any of the kings, politicians and magnates of late medieval England? But we should note that many people who lived in the fifteenth century definitely did admire Warwick.

Many years of reading, researching, travel, discussion, reflection and writing have gone into this book. They would not have been possible without the support and tolerance of my long-suffering family, especially my wife Cynthia to whom I dedicate this book, to her late mother who read all my books, and to my History colleagues at King Alfred's College, Winchester. The College kindly awarded me study leave in 1989 and has supported my attendance at conferences and in other ways. St John's College, Oxford, awarded me a scholarship in the summer vacation of 1994 to study in Oxford. I have benefited from membership of research seminars of the Institute of Historical Research and of the Wessex Medieval Centre at Southampton and from attendance at a dozen fifteenth-century colloquia. I am indebted to a host of librarians and archivists in many repositories over nearly thirty years. The notes I made on George Duke of Clarence as a research student have proved impressively full and unexpectedly useful. I acknowledge the contributions of John Armstrong, T. B. Pugh, and Charles Ross in that context too.

At a more technical level, efforts have been made – I hope with complete success – to avoid confusion in the early chapters between two Richard Nevilles, two Richard Beauchamps, two Richards Earl of Warwick, two Anne Beauchamps Countesses of Warwick, and four George Nevilles! Quotations in foreign languages have been silently translated; middle English has been retained, the runic thorn being replaced by the modern 'th'. In Middle English 'v' and 'u' are often interchangeable; so are 'i' and 'j'. Unless otherwise indicated, all manuscripts are at the Public Record Office and all works cited were

published in London. Prices in marks and ecus have been translated into modern British pounds and new pence without regard for inflation over 500 years.

September 1997

Winchester

Abbreviations

Manuscripts in the Public Record Office (PRO) are cited by callmark only.

<i>Annales</i>	‘ <i>Annales Rerum Anglicarum</i> ’, <i>The Wars of the English in France</i> , ed. J. Stevenson (Rolls Series, 4 vols, 1864), ii(2).
Anstis	<i>Register of the Most Noble Order of the Garter</i> , ed. J. Anstis, 2 vols, 1724.
<i>Benet’s Chron.</i>	‘John Benet’s Chronicle for the years 1400 to 1462’, ed. G. L. and M. A. Harriss (<i>Camden Miscellany</i> xxiv, Camden 4th ser. ix, 1972).
BIHR	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research.</i>
BL	British Library.
Bodl	Bodleian Library.
Carpenter, <i>Locality</i>	M. C. Carpenter, <i>Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society 1401–99</i> (Cambridge, 1992).
CCR	<i>Calendar of the Close Rolls.</i>
CChR	<i>Calendar of Charter Rolls 1427–1516.</i>
CFR	<i>Calendar of the Fine Rolls.</i>
CPL	<i>Calendar of the Papal Letters.</i>
CPR	<i>Calendar of the Patent Rolls.</i>
CSPM	<i>Calendar of State Papers Milanese.</i>
<i>Davies Chron.</i>	<i>An English Chronicle</i> , ed. J. S. Davies (Camden Soc. lxiv, 1856).
DKR	<i>Reports of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records.</i>
EETS	Early English Text Society.
EHD	<i>English Historical Documents</i> , iv, 1327–1485, ed. A. R. Myers (1969).

- EHR*
Ellis, *Original Letters*
Foedera
GEC
Gregory's Chron.
Griffiths, Henry VI
Griffiths, King & Country
Hicks, Clarence
Hicks, Richard III
HMC
HR
JMH
Johnson, York
Kendall, Warwick
'*Neville Pedigree*'
NMS
PL
Paston L & P
Plumpton L & P
POPC
RO
Rous Roll
RP
Scofield
SHF
- English Historical Review.*
Original Letters Illustrative of English History, ed. H. Ellis, 3 ser. 1824–46.
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Société de l'Histoire de France.

- Stevenson *Letters and Papers illustrative of the Wars of the English in France*, ed. J. Stevenson, 3 vols in 2, Rolls Series, 1864.
- Stone's Chron.* *The Chronicle of John Stone*, ed. W. G. Searle (Cambridge Antiquarian Society, octavo series xxiv, 1902).
- Storey, *Lancaster* R. L. Storey, *The End of the House of Lancaster* (2nd edn, 1986).
- TCWAS *Transactions of the Cumberland & Westmorland Archaeological Society.*
- Three 15th-Cent. Chrons.* *Three Fifteenth-Century Chronicles*, ed. J. Gairdner (Camden Society, new series xxviii, 1880).
- TRHS *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society.*
- Vale's Bk* *The Politics of Fifteenth-Century England: John Vale's Book*, ed. M. L. Kekewich, C. F. Richmond, A. Sutton, L. Visser-Fuchs, and J. Watts (Stroud, 1995).
- Warkworth's Chron.* J. Warkworth, *Chronicle of the First Thirteen Years of the Reign of King Edward the Fourth*, ed. J. O. Halliwell (Camden Society vi, 1839).
- Watts, *Henry VI* J. L. Watts, *Henry VI and the Politics of Kingship* (Cambridge, 1996).
- Waurin *Recueil des Anciennes Chroniques par Waurin*, ed. W. and E. L. C. P. Hardy (5 vols Rolls Series, 1864–91), vol. v.
- Waurin-Dupont *Anciennes Chroniques de l'Engleterre*, ed. E. L. M. E. Dupont, 3 vols, Société de l'Histoire de France, 1858–63.
- Whetehamstede *Registrum Abbatiae Johannis Whetehamstede, Abbatis Monasterii Sancti Albani*, ed. H. T. Riley (2 vols, Rolls Series, 1872–3).

The Legend of Warwick the Kingmaker

Warwick the Kingmaker dominated the first half of the Wars of the Roses (1455–71). Traditions of service and royal blood destined him to be the loyal subject of the last Lancastrian King Henry VI and the natural opponent of his critic Richard Duke of York. He had realigned himself by 1454. In 1455, for the first battle of St Albans, he was a dashing Yorkist. In 1459–60 he was York's most formidable champion. Following the duke's death, he masterminded the victory over Lancaster of York's son and his usurpation as Edward IV. At first Warwick and his brothers ruled, whilst Edward merely reigned. Parting company acrimoniously, Warwick became Edward's fiercest critic. In 1470 Edward was dethroned in favour of Henry VI until, finally, in 1471 Warwick himself fell in battle. Had he lived, perhaps King Henry could have retained his throne. Such a central figure has attracted biographers: Thomas Gainford's *Unmatchable Life and Death of Richard Nevill Earle of Warwick in his tyme the darling and favorite of kings* of 1618 × 1624 and more recently the lives by Sir Charles Oman (1909), K. H. Francis (1916), and Paul Murray Kendall (1957). More material and new insights demand a more coherent and complete treatment.

Warwick is a household name. For those of a certain age who learnt the whole of English history by rote, he is forever the 'wicked baron' to whom contenders for the crown submitted application forms that specified their preferred means of death.¹ Yet no household name is so little known.² Like other late medieval politicians Warwick was depicted by Shakespeare. Following the *Mirror for Magistrates* he was 'thou plucker down and setter up of kings', but only in the *Henry VI* trilogy, hardly the playwright's most memorable or most frequently performed plays. Fortunately perhaps, since Shakespeare merged our Warwick

1 W. C. Sellar and R. J. Yeatman, *1066 and All That* (1930), 47–8.

2 Kendall, *Warwick*, 7.

with an earlier earl, his father-in-law and war hero, and made him the proposer of York's usurpation rather than its obstacle.³

Scarcely anybody in the past ninety years has favoured Warwick, observes Professor Richmond. A reassessment is perhaps overdue? In the way stands 'Warwick's amorality: he seems to have been the first of the serial killers of the Wars of the Roses'.⁴ Even for Kendall, Warwick was 'a gigantic failure . . . because he poisoned his character . . . [and] sold what he was for what he ought to be'.⁵ Kendall refers here to Warwick's deposition of Edward, which to a modern audience involved the overturning of his whole career and hence identified him with egotism and selfishness. This late *bouleversement* (reversal) has become the touchstone of his whole career.

If Warwick is controversial now, it is in part because he was controversial in his own day. Victory for York and maritime renown were earned at the expense of Lancastrians and Burgundians. It is one of the Lancastrians' misfortunes that their point of view was not preserved. Burgundian writers did however record their hatred of Warwick, a bogeyman akin to Talbot, and celebrated his death in verse and prose. For them, summarizes Livia Visser-Fuchs:

he was proud, a trickster and a coward who was a hero in his own thoughts and a child in his actions; a poor idiot whose hands were unable to hold all that he tried to grasp; a fool and a traitor rushing towards his end; and as a crowning insult he is made to say of himself that we must not regard him as one of the Nine Worthies, but rather as a character from Boccaccio, a conceited but helpless victim of Fortune's wheel. . . . Warwick's fall . . . was another instance of how men and cities, through their *oultrecuidance*, their excessive pride, could not but come to grief in the end and serve as a warning to others.⁶

There is a savage vindictiveness to the assessments of Georges Chastellain and Thomas Basin. Such French and Burgundian testimony was concealed from centuries of English historians in distant manuscripts in foreign languages.

Warwick was fortunate that there was no alternative view to the hero of the English, Yorkist, sources. Surely no other English medieval magnate attracted such acclaim during his life and since? His break with Edward was generally attributed to Edward's foolish marriage; Warwick was not at fault. It was not Warwick who was inconsistent. He was justified in feeling slighted by the king's match. His honour was unjustifiably impugned when he was required to answer smears of treason by Edward, who overlooked how much he owed the earl. Warwick's change of allegiance, his defeat and death did not prevent generally

3 W. Shakespeare, *Henry VI Part II*, Act I sc. i; *Part III*, I.i, II.iii, III.vi.

4 *Vale's Bk.* 49.

5 Kendall, *Warwick*, 8.

6 L. Visser-Fuchs, 'Edward IV's *Memoir on Paper* to Charles, Duke of Burgundy: The so-called "Short Version of the *Arrivall*"', *NMS* xxxvi (1992), 170; see also A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c.1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (1982), 485-7.

favourable interpretations. ‘Thow froward fortune hym deceuyd at his ende’, wrote his chaplain John Rous, he remained always:

A famus knyght and excellent gretly spoken of thorow the moste parte of christendam . . . He had all England at his ledyng and was dred and dowhyted thorow many landis. And thow froward fort[u]ne hym deceuyd at his ende yot his knyghtly acts had be so excellent that his noble and famous name could neuer be put owt of laudable memory.⁷

‘I was no hippocrite,’ the earl is made to say in *The Mirror for Magistrates* (1559).

I never did nor sayd, save what I mente,
The common weale was still my chiefest care,
To priuate gayne or glory I was not bent . . .
Which whan the people playnly vnderstoode,
Bycause they sawe me mind the common weale
They still endeuored how to do me good,
Ready to spend their substaunce, life, and blud,
In any cause wherto I did them move
For suer they wer it was for their behoue.

Hence Warwick’s opposition to the abuses under Henry VI.

But whan king Edward sinful pranks stil vsed,
And would not mend, I likewise him refused:
And holpe vp Henry the better of the twayne
And in his quarel (iust I thinke) was slayne.

‘Sure’, observed the *Mirror*, ‘I thinke the Erle of Warwike although he wer a glorious man, hath sayd no more of him selfe than what is true.’⁸ When Warwick turned against Edward IV, the latter commissioned new histories hostile to the earl, but these reposed in manuscript until Victoria’s reign⁹ and thus missed the publicity given to Warwick’s own manifestos that were printed in the *Annales of England* of the Elizabethan John Stow. For four centuries of historians it was the earlier, Yorkist, Warwick that was praised.

‘Of him, it was said that he made kings and at his pleasure cast them down’, wrote the Scot John Major (1521), when first dubbing him the kingmaker in Latin (*regum creator*).¹⁰ The English translation was first deployed by the

7 *Rous Roll*, nos 56, 57.

8 *The Mirror for Magistrates*, ed. L. B. Campbell (1938), 208, 211.

9 ‘The Chronicle of the Rebellion in Lincolnshire’, ed. J. G. Nichols (Camden Misc. i, 1847); *Historie of The Arrivall of Edward IV*, ed. J. Bruce (Camden Soc. i, 1838).

10 *John Major’s History of Greater Britain* (Scottish Hist. Soc., 1892), 390–1; J. Major, *Historia Maioris Britanniae* (Lodoco Badia, 1521), f. cxlv.

Elizabethan Samuel Daniel and achieved currency only in the eighteenth century with David Hume;¹¹ during the interim ‘the great’, ‘the stout earl of Warwick’ and ‘Warwick make-king’ were preferred.¹² It was Warwick’s glory to have made and unmade kings. To his first biographer, he deserved the surname

Great, by reason of his hospitality, riches, possessions, popular love, comelynes of gesture, gracefulness of person, industrious valour, indefatigable paynstaking and all the signatures of a royal mynde and generous spirite.¹³

For Thomas Carte (1750) Warwick was ‘the most popular man of the age, universally beloved and esteemed. He was undoubtedly the greatest subject in England for power and estate and deserved all the popularity he enjoyed’.¹⁴ For Warwick’s fellow northerner James Raine the Elder (1834), the earl was:

‘the greatest subject that ever lived. . . . His marriage with the heiress of the Beauchamps added to the splendour of his inheritance and his valour and extraordinary energy, combined with his profuse liberality and fascinating manners, rendered him the idol of the multitude. He was, in good truth, the setter up and putter down of kings.

He was ‘King Edward’s father’ who ‘trained him up’, ‘the Soul of Edward’s Army’, even worthy of the crown itself. He stood for the public good.¹⁵ He was a romantic or heroic subject to nineteenth century-painters. Those cited above are merely the most extravagant of many tributes.

Such hero-worshipping historians were themselves the products of an age of aristocracy. They still understood and respected the lineage, magnificence, largesse, hospitality, committed retainers, ruthless justice, courage, boldness and frankness that they perceived in Warwick. They praised him for his virtues and for his popularity with the people, which they attributed to his eloquence, to his generosity and hospitality, and to his good lordship, and illustrated always with the same examples from *Fabian’s Chronicle* and Commines’s *Mémoires*. ‘Warwicke had their hartes’, said Daniel.¹⁶ ‘The common people,’ wrote Edward Hall, ‘iudged hym able to do all thynges, and that without hym, nothyng to be

11 S. Daniel, *The Ciuill Wares betweene ye howses of Lancaster and York* (1609), 146; D. Hume, *History of England* (8 vols, Oxford, 1826), iii. 160.

12 E.g. F. Biondi, *A History of the Ciuill Warres of England* (1641), esp. 39; W. Dugdale, *Baronage of England* (2 vols, 1675), i. 304; P. Rapin de Thoyras, *History of England*, ed. N. Tindall (2nd edn, 1732), i. 579; Bodl. MS Wood F24, p. 7.

13 BL Add. MS 34352, p. 8 [Gainford’s *Life*].

14 T. Carte, *General History of England* (1750), ii. 741.

15 *Testamenta Eboracensia*, ed. J. Raine (Surtees Soc. xxx, 1834), ii. 242n; Dugdale, *Baronage*, i. 305; Rapin, *History*, i. 579; Bodl. MS Wood F12, f. 136; Campbell, *Mirror*, 209.

16 Daniel, *Ciuill Warres*, 185.

well done'.¹⁷ 'Send his soul rest', asked the *Mirror*, 'for sure his bodye never had any'.¹⁸

An absence of rest can be translated into unruliness and disorder. So thought Thomas Habington, who saw Warwick's 'mighty spirite . . . consumed in his own fire'.¹⁹ 'Nothing more glorious could be said of a private man', observed Rapin de Thoyras in 1732, 'if true glory consists in excess of power'.²⁰ The values that Warwick stood for became antique and out of date: pride of lineage was transmuted into haughty arrogance, liberality into extravagance, and his exceptional ruthlessness was ruthlessly exposed. His generalship, his abilities and his character were considered more critically. Historians more overtly biased towards kings and towards progress took no pride in those who opposed such desirable ends. The Scot David Hume categorized Warwick into 'the greatest, as well as the last, of those mighty barons who formerly overawed the crown, and rendered the people incapable of any regular system of civil government'.²¹ For Sharon Turner in 1823, he was a poor general, irascible and splenetic, ambitious and restless, 'too powerful to be a peaceful subject to any sovereign, yet compelled always to remain one' and hence better off dead.²² Lord Lytton's three-volume novel *The Last of the Barons* presented Warwick as the end of his type, 'the old Norman chivalry',²³ at which the new critical and scientific historians rejoiced. 'He comes hardly within the ken of constitutional history', Stubbs opined.²⁴ 'He was the last great feudal nobleman who ever made himself dangerous to the reigning king', denounced Gairdner. 'His policy throughout seems to have been selfish and treacherous and his removal was an unquestionable blessing to his country'.²⁵

Most of Gairdner's twentieth-century successors have followed his lead. Integrating the hostile testimony of Yorkist and Burgundian propaganda and Milanese despatches into balanced assessments has inevitably diluted and detracted from the English eulogies. Warwick became a diplomat subservient and inferior to Kendall's real hero, the French King Louis XI.²⁶ Thanks to K. B. McFarlane, modern historians are more sympathetic to English magnates and have rediscovered the material bases of aristocratic power that earlier generations

17 *Hall's Chronicle*, ed. H. Ellis (1809), 232, derived from P. Vergil, *Historia Angliae 1555* (1972 edn), 503; *Three Books of Polydore Vergil's English History*, ed. H. Ellis (Camden Soc. xxix, 1844), 95.

18 *Mirror*, 211.

19 T. Habington, *A Survey of Worcestershire*, ed. J. Amphlett (2 vols, Worcs. Hist. Soc. i, ii, 1895–9), ii. 111; see also his son William's *Historie of Edward the Fovrth King of England* (1640), esp. 85.

20 Rapin, *History*, i. 613.

21 Hume, *History*, iii. 160–1.

22 S. Turner, *History of England during the Middle Ages* (1823), iii. 290, 337.

23 E. G. E. L. Bulwer-Lytton, *The Last of the Barons* (3 vols, London, 1843), esp. i. 8.

24 W. Stubbs, *Constitutional History of England in the Middle Ages* (3 vols, Oxford, 1878), iii. 212.

25 J. Gairdner, *The Houses of Lancaster and York* (1874), 186.

26 Kendall, *Warwick; Louis XI* (1971).

of historians took for granted. Rediscovering the ambience and values is more difficult. Modern researchers cannot be content with the mere assertion that Warwick had good qualities and was popular as their predecessors had been, but the sources are lacking to reconstitute these qualities. A full biography is impossible. A fuller one is my attainable end.

This book avoids judging Warwick's whole career by the *bouleversement* of his last years. It tries to identify the influences that formed him, his actions, and motives at each stage of his career. For any biographer, still more one of a man who died 500 years ago, this is a challenging task. We lack almost all the materials of a modern life and most of those desired by medievalists. Warwick must always be seen through the eyes of others, always partisan, often mistaken or misled by his own propaganda, or deduced from actions capable of more than one interpretation. Though much seems clear enough, his total character is beyond recall.

Though still only forty-two when he died, Warwick is a big subject for a biographer. He was the greatest nobleman of his age, the heir to four great families, their estates, connections and traditions. He was the wealthiest and the most wide-ranging in interests. Bursting full-grown and unexpectedly on to the national scene in 1449, he constantly added geographical interests, new activities, and responsibilities to his portfolio. He ceded none to others. His relentless attention to business demanded an extraordinary energy that we can only marvel at. His ceaseless journeys took place over unmade-up roads, on horseback and sailing ships, and in English weather conditions. He was apparently never ill and never flagged. He is the model rather of the medieval nobility of service and of the all-encompassing chief minister of the future. Pragmatism and ruthlessness went hand in hand with honour. He was a daring subaltern, the boldest and most brilliant of strategists, a consummate logistician, and a pioneer in the tactical use of seapower, combined operations, and field artillery; flawed solely (but fatally) as a battlefield tactician. There was nothing Warwick would not attempt and no obstacle that he would not overcome. He was indomitable, never surrendered, and never failed to recover until the very end. For twenty years he shaped events, his own career, and indeed history itself. An underlying strength of will and determination and an intolerance of opposition and viciousness towards opponents needs to be set against the charm that cajoled, persuaded and won over men of whatever standing. It was this indefinable popularity that made him so much more than the greatest of subjects.

The Formative Years

2.1 Pedigree and Patrimony

Richard Neville, the future Warwick the Kingmaker, was born on St Cecilia's day (Monday, 22 November) 1428.¹ At birth he had nothing whatsoever to do with Warwick. That connection came later with his marriage. Until he became Warwick he will be referred to here as Richard, the baptismal name that he shares with his father. Richard was the eldest son and the third out of the eleven children of Sir Richard Neville and his wife Alice Montagu, who were to be recognized as Earl and Countess of Salisbury in Alice's right on 7 May 1429.² From the moment of his birth there was mapped out for him a political and military career as the head of one of the dozen leading English families. Yet only half a dozen facts are recorded about the first twenty years of his life. Very little, in particular, can be known about the upbringing that prepared him for his remarkable career, though we may presume it followed the conventional course sketched out for others of his class. Much more is known about the influences around him that constrained and shaped his subsequent career. It is with these, therefore, that we must commence.

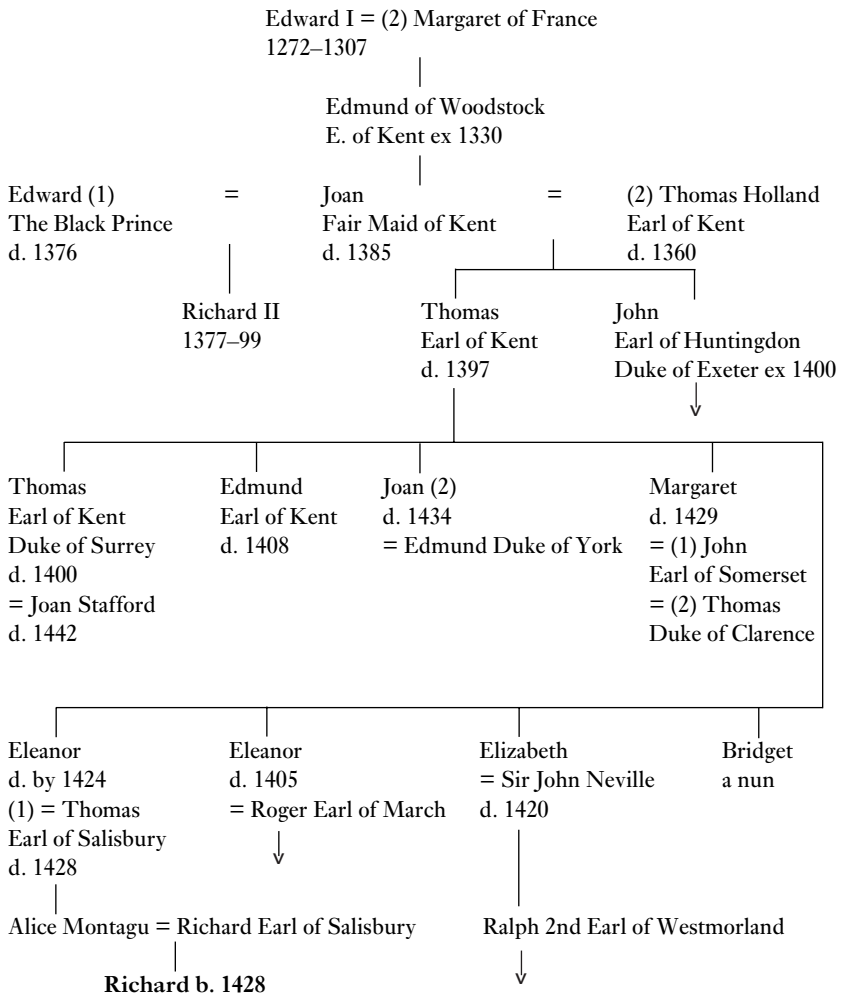
Richard's mother was the only surviving daughter of Thomas Montagu, Earl of Salisbury, by his first wife Eleanor, one of the six sisters and ultimately four heiresses of Edmund (d. 1408), the last Holland Earl of Kent. From the thirteenth century the Montagus had been outstanding servants of the crown. Several had been stewards of the royal household. William, first Earl of Salisbury (d. 1344), had helped Edward III to overthrow Isabella and Mortimer and had

1 *Rous Roll*, no. 57. Unless otherwise stated, genealogical information in this chapter is from *GEC passim*.

2 *POPC* iii. 324–5.

been rewarded with the Isle of Man, subsequently alienated, the castle, honour, borough and hundred of Christchurch Twynham, and other lands in Hampshire, Wiltshire, Somerset and Dorset. John (d. 1400), the poet and third earl, had committed himself to Richard II even beyond his deposition and died a traitor to Henry IV in consequence. His forfeiture for treason was reversed in favour of his son, but the actual sentence of condemnation was revoked by parliament only in 1461 at Richard's request. Several Montagus were soldiers of renown and knights of the Garter. Thomas himself was a distinguished general, the best of the

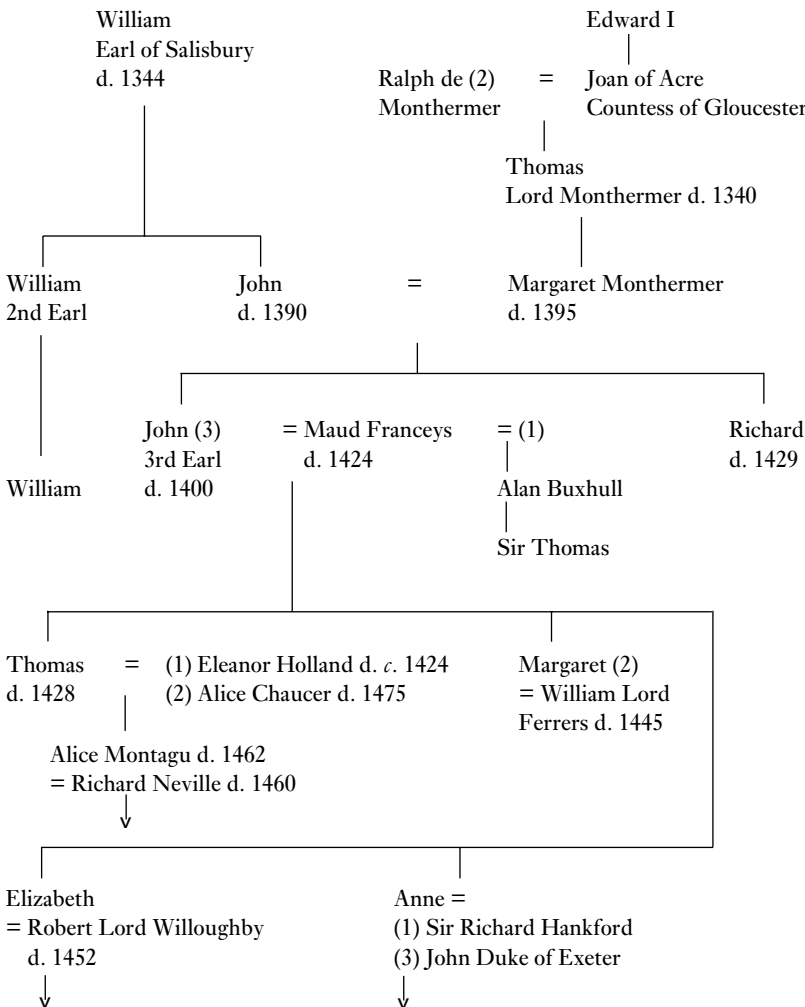
Table 2.1 The Hollands



English commanders in France after Henry V's death, and his death in 1428 was a grievous blow to the English. The Montagus had been earls for almost a century, barons somewhat longer, and had built up a proud tradition of royal service.

The Montagu lineage is celebrated in the Salisbury Rolls of Arms, which consist of a succession of pairs of stylized portraits of husbands and wives. Two versions now survive: the earlier tentatively dated to 1463 and attributed to Richard and a second one more definitely commissioned for his son-in-law

Table 2.2 The Montagus



King Richard III.³ Although late, each records traditions apparently preserved and elaborated by Richard and his parents and apparently transmitted to them by earlier rolls that have been lost. They reveal how the Montagu and Neville earls perceived themselves: their self-image, which Richard shared and promulgated.

Clues to what these earlier versions comprised can be detected in those that survive. Both surviving rolls are preoccupied with the family's royal descent and noble in-laws. Though the Montagus were not themselves royal nor even descended from earlier earls of Salisbury, both rolls include William Longespée, Earl of Salisbury, bastard son of Henry II; interestingly the arms of Longespée were included by the Kingmaker on his seal. Unlike other earlier earls, also unrelated to the Montagus and hence omitted, William was royal. Instead of tracing the Montagus to their origins, the rolls start only with Simon Montagu, heir to Affrica Lady of the Isle of Man. They highlight the first earl's foundation of the Augustinian priory of Holy Trinity Bisham (Berks.), the spiritual home of the family, where subsequent Montagus and Nevilles – including Richard – were buried. There is an illumination of the priory church. The Montagu line proceeds side by side with that of the Monthermers whose first ancestor, Ralph Earl of Gloucester (d. 1325) and his wife Joan of Acre (d. 1307), daughter of King Edward I and Queen Eleanor of Castile, feature on the roll. The union of the two lines in 1340 on the wedding of John Montagu, father of the third Earl, to Margaret Monthermer, which brought royal blood to their descendants, could have prompted the preparation of a first roll; particularly as the second Earl subsequently alienated the Isle of Man. In the next generation Earl John was to marry the widowed Maud Franceys, daughter of a London alderman: a plebeian marriage that has been made much of by modern historians. This connection is acknowledged but not stressed in later rolls.

A second updated version of the roll may have been prepared by Earl Thomas about 1420. The earliest surviving version records his first wife Eleanor, not the second married by 2 November 1424, and it includes the marriage contracted by 1421 of his daughter Alice to [Richard Neville] 'son of the Earl of Westmorland', who died in 1425, but none of their offspring. Strangely it ignored the royal descent both of the Countess Eleanor from Edward I and of the Nevilles from Edward III. Much is made of kin relevant in the 1420s, notably Earl Thomas's siblings Margaret Lady Ferrers of Chartley, Elizabeth Lady Willoughby, and the much married Anne, eventually Duchess of Exeter. Earl Thomas's kin were also those of his daughter, his son-in-law Richard Neville Earl of Salisbury, and their son, Richard. Salisbury had dealings with Maud Franceys's elder son Sir Alan Buxhull, who served under him in France in 1436, acquired land from Buxhull's son Thomas, and was guardian of Maud's Hankford grand-daughters in 1431.⁴

3 A. Payne, 'The Salisbury Roll of Arms, c. 1463', *England in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. D. Williams (Woodbridge, 1987), 187–98, esp. 181–91; BL MS Loan 90, ff. 176–225. These are the source of the next two paras.

4 *CCR 1422–9*, 116; E 326/ B5455, B9266; Devon RO Chanter MS 722 f. 2.

Some collateral lines, such as the Willoughbys, were updated for the 1463 version. If he had no other kin but the Montagus, therefore, Richard inherited a lineage and pride of lineage that was long-standing, noble, and royal, and kinship with many of the leading English families.

Richard's maternal grandmother Eleanor Holland hailed from a family as noble, royal, and much better endowed than his own. Her grandmother, the Fair Maid of Kent, grand-daughter of Edward I, had married the Black Prince and her father was therefore stepbrother of Richard II, who had briefly made dukes of both his half-brothers. Eleanor's own brothers both died prematurely without legitimate offspring, but three of her sisters married the dukes of York and Clarence, the Earl of Somerset, and the Earl of Westmorland's eldest son John Neville. The Holland connection also brought Earl Thomas and hence Richard an extensive kindred among the highest nobility.

Eleanor also brought Earl Thomas a fifth share of the Holland inheritance; other portions later accrued to Alice on the deaths of Holland dowagers and a childless aunt. Together her quarter share of the Holland inheritance was worth more than what remained of Thomas's own patrimony.⁵ But Eleanor bore Earl Thomas no son to continue the Montagu line, only two daughters: Joanna, who died young, and Alice, who was married to Sir Richard Neville before 12 February 1421, when the bridegroom carved before Queen Katherine of France at her coronation and the bride was also in attendance.⁶ Following Eleanor's death, Earl Thomas remarried at once to the widowed heiress Alice Chaucer, grand-daughter of the poet Geoffrey Chaucer, with a view to producing a son to continue the Montagu line and, inevitably, to cut his daughter and new son-in-law out of the Montagu inheritance. This match was barren. Had Earl Thomas survived Orleans and borne a son, the careers of both Richard Nevilles would have been very different. When Earl Thomas died, Alice and Richard succeeded at once to the Holland lands of his first wife and to those lands he had held in fee simple and in tail general. After the death of Thomas's elderly uncle Sir Richard Montagu in 1429, Richard and Alice were recognized by Henry VI's minority council as earl and countess of Salisbury: a decision perhaps influenced by Neville's royal lineage and confirmed by Henry VI in 1443. Finally and with doubtful legality, in 1461, Alice secured all Thomas's tail male lands too. Only very much later, in 1475, long after the deaths of the earl and countess of Salisbury and even of Richard too, did Alice Chaucer's West Country jointure finally return to the main line. In 1429 she had settled for complete manors and a pension in lieu of her legal entitlement to scattered thirds of everything. On 10 December 1436 Salisbury also agreed with her new husband to share the proceeds and costs of any of Earl Thomas's property recovered in France. This husband was William de la Pole, Earl of

5 Hicks, *Richard III*, 357.

6 *The Brut or The Chronicles of England*, ed. F. W. D. Brie (Early English Text Soc. cxxxvi, 1908), ii. 445-6. Clavering (Essex) was apparently part of their jointure, see SC 6/839/16 rot. 1 m. 2, but see also E 315/32/92; E 315/36/53.

Suffolk and steward of the royal household, later to be Duke of Suffolk and Henry VI's most trusted councillor, a kinsman with whom Salisbury was to have future dealings. Mediation was provided by Henry Cardinal Beaufort, kinsman of both parties.⁷

Sir Richard Neville – or *Salisbury* as we shall henceforth call him – was himself of royal and noble (if somewhat more ambiguous) ancestry. The Nevilles were already significant northern barons in the twelfth century and their fifteenth-century members justifiably believed themselves on the strength of their (largely fictional) family genealogies to have originated with the Norman Conquest. Geoffrey, the earliest Neville, was supposedly William I's admiral; Ribald, first Lord of Middleham (Yorks.), was bastard brother of Alan the Red of Brittany, the Conqueror's Earl of Richmond; and Ansketill de Bulmer was first lord of Sheriff Hutton (Yorks.). The Nevilles, however, were not content merely to be associated with the victorious invaders, but claimed descent also from the vanquished Anglo-Saxons. A fourth line was derived from Ughtred son of Earl Waltheof and in some rolls was extended back to King Ethelred II the Unready. These four lines intermarried into one by 1320 that derived from Ughtred, but which adopted the Neville surname. Their four castles of Raby, Brancepeth (Dur.), Sheriff Hutton and Middleham (Yorks.) were first united in the hands of Ralph Lord Neville of Raby (d. 1367). The barons Neville of Raby were wealthier than many an earl and were well able to support the earldom of Westmorland created for Salisbury's father in 1397.

The Nevilles were distinguished by much more than the length of their pedigree. Successive heirs married well: when not to heiresses, to other notable northern families. There had been two Percy matches before Salisbury's sister Eleanor married the second Earl of Northumberland. Moreover the Nevilles were a prolific breed who produced half a dozen younger sons and daughters with each generation. They spawned several cadet branches and a whole series of successful churchmen. There was supposedly a Thomas, archdeacon of Durham, before Alexander (d. 1388) Archbishop of York, whose brother was elected, but never consecrated, as Bishop of Ely. Robert (d. 1457) was to be bishop of Durham and George (d. 1476) was another archbishop. As befitted such a great house, the Nevilles patronized the church, founding the Premonstratensian house at Swaynby (later Coverham Abbey), the Franciscan friary of Richmond, a hospital at Welle, chantries at Sheriff Hutton and Durham Cathedral, and presumably the many other churches in which their arms of *gules a saltire argent* were reportedly displayed. The saltire (St Andrew's cross) appears prominently on the tomb in Durham cathedral of John Lord Neville (d. 1388), the donor of the Neville screen there. Probably they also shared in the distinc-

7 Hicks, *Richard III*, 356; *Catalogue of Ancient Deeds* iv. A6166. The rest of this section is based on 'Neville Pedigree'; J. R. Lander, 'Marriage and Politics in the Fifteenth Century: The Nevilles and the Wydevilles', *Crown and Nobility 1450–1509* (London, 1976), 95–7; M. A. Hicks, 'Cement or Solvent? Kinship and Politics in Late Medieval England: The Case of the Nevilles', *History* 83 (1998), 31–46.

tive enthusiasms of the late medieval archdiocese, patronizing hermits like their FitzHugh and Scrope neighbours did. Two of Earl Ralph's daughters were to join that most enclosed order of nuns, the minoresses. In 1442 Pope Eugenius IV agreed to exempt from residence any of the eight chaplains serving in Salisbury's household chapel holding cures of souls.⁸

The Nevilles were major players in the Scottish wars, in which Robert 'Peacock of the North' was killed and his brother Ralph (d. 1367) was captured, which Ralph shared in the victory at Neville's Cross in 1346 when King David Bruce was captured. The next Baron Neville, John (d. 1388), moved beyond his purely northern context. This 'magnanimous knight and famous baron' was a knight of the Garter, who distinguished himself in France and was lieutenant of Gascony. It was his son Ralph (d. 1425), that 'illustrious and most famous of princes', who was created Earl of Westmorland in 1397 and who was briefly earl marshal. The attendance of attorneys of Westmorland and his cousin Northumberland are registered at Yorkshire parliamentary elections. It is this Ralph who is the culmination – the hero – of the Neville genealogies. Yet although Ralph had a national profile, it is clear that he also saw himself and his family in their local context and in terms of local traditions. He sought to advance himself locally, founding a college at Staindrop near Raby in County Durham, and marrying his offspring into such baronial houses as the Mauleys, Lumleys and Dacres. The senior Neville line, represented by Ralph's eldest son John, who predeceased him, and the latter's son Ralph second Earl of Westmorland (d. 1484), remained of regional rather than national importance.

In this context Salisbury was very much a younger son: one of at least twenty-one children of Ralph. There were also two elder half-sisters from his mother's first marriage. The excellent marriages that they all made, the most remarkable sequence of the fifteenth century, are celebrated in the *Neville Book of Hours*, which shows the earl, countess and their children all kneeling in prayer and identifiable by Robert's mitre and their coats of arms. No distinction is made in the *Book* between the issue of Westmorland's first and second consorts. Yet a distinction needs to be made, for it was the earl's second family – his offspring by Joan Beaufort – who married best and who constituted Richard's closest relations. In this case the step really mattered.

Amongst Ralph's second brood, Salisbury was the most senior. He and his siblings of the whole blood were to have a very different, indeed national, destiny. Not only were they more numerous – thirteen at the last count! – but they married into the noblest houses in England. Thus Katherine married a Duke of Norfolk, Anne a Duke of Buckingham, Eleanor in turn to Lord Despenser and the Earl of Northumberland, and the youngest, Cecily, to Richard Duke of York. Salisbury, as we have seen, married Alice Montagu and his brothers William, Thomas, George and Edward wed the Fauconberg, St Maur, Beauchamp of Bergavenny, and Beauchamp/Lisle heiresses. Moreover Ralph secured the modest Latimer barony for George and a sixth son Robert rose to

8 *CPL 1434–47*, 34; see also J. Hughes, *Pastors & Visionaries* (1988), 16.