Serving Beyond their Proper Estate:
The Rise of the English Gentrified and Chivalric Classes 1450-1509

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I. Introduction

In August of 1485, a claimant to the English throne landed in Wales with a rag-tag band of foreign mercenaries, select "treasonous" members of the English nobility, gentrified landowners and the followers of those men. Though a small army in might, its leader Henry Tudor and his retainers (or followers) pushed towards central England in order to take what he believed was rightfully his-the English crown. Clashing against King Richard III (r. 1483-85) of the House of York in the marshlands of Leicestershire at the Battle of Bosworth Field, Henry Tudor and his army fought one of the most important battles in England's history. However, the culmination at the Battle of Bosworth did not occur suddenly, nor was it the result of a short, quick and clean war. In fact, it was the culminating event in a thirty year civil war which had plagued the British Isles since the 1450's. The conflict only came to a close with Henry Tudor's victory at Bosworth Field.

The road to Bosworth was not a short and easy route that resulted in a clean (or necessarily quick) takeover by the first Tudors. Rather so, the conflict was long and full of deceit as deals and counter deals had to be made while many of those deals had to be broken. Prior to Bosworth Field, Henry Tudor had confided in the prominent Stanley family through his extremely influential mother, Margaret Beaufort, in an effort to gain their allegiance, as well as the support of their large private army. The fate of Henry's rule of England hung in the balance as the young Tudor believed that the combined Tudor and Stanley forces would result in swift victory. Therefore Henry's confidence in the Stanleys' forces meant that he desperately clung to the thought of a combined victory, though the Stanleys' only pledged their forces to the young Tudor when "the time was right." This is often interpreted as the Stanley's having a clouded judgment. However the truth is most likely far simpler.

Like many noble families of the time, the Stanleys only wished to better themselves. Therefore, they sought to establish a direct connection (beyond the one which was established with Margaret Beaufort) with the Tudor family. Though pledged to Henry, Lord Thomas Stanley, Earl of Derby was already inclined to support the "rightful" king (Richard III) as per the customs and laws of feudalism. Furthermore, Richard III assured Stanley's obedience by holding his son captive which led to complications if Henry Tudor wanted victory.[1]

As Richard's Yorkist army and Henry Tudor's usurping Lancastrian/Tudor[2] army assembled and clashed, the result of this ever important battle forever changed the political makeup of England. Not only would the new monarchy usher in new changes in various aspects of life, but Henry changed the makeup and the political classes of England starting at the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485. Commanding Henry Tudor's vanguard was John de Vere, 13th Earl of Oxford, a prominent Lancastrian noble along with a French mercenary captain by the name of Philibert de Chandée. Henry Tudor led his personal bodyguard, charging into the fray along with prominent knights such as Sir John Cheney. Previously a Yorkist supporter but now a loyal Tudor follower, Cheney was described as being a "mountain of a man" and one whose support of Tudor was necessary in establishing the new dynasty.[3]

The odds were stacked against Henry's army as Richard III's much larger army quickly swarmed Henry's English and mercenary soldiers. They would only be victorious if Lord Thomas Stanley joined the fight. In an effort to provoke a response from Lord Stanley, Henry and his bodyguard charged into the masses of knights, men-at-arms and archers. This allowed Richard's

[1] Michael Bennet. *The Battle of Bosworth.* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing. 1987), 94-95 and 103, and Ingulph and Peter of Blois. *Ignulph's Chronicle of the Abbey of Croyland with the Continuations by Peter of Blois and Anonymous Writers.* (Translated by Henry T. Riley. London: George Bell and Sons, 1893), 501-503. Stanley was captured for allegedly conspiring against Richard III prior to Bosworth.
[2] Henry Tudor was descended to the Lancastrian Kings however, his so-called "bastard" claim to the throne meant that his family would be considered a different splinter dynasty to the Lancastrians.
[3] Bennett. *The Battle of Bosworth*, 104 and 116. Also called a "vigorous knight," Cheney's effigy alone leads to conclusions that the knight was probably in the area of six feet and six inches to six feet and eight inches tall-much taller than the average male during the fifteenth century.

own bodyguard to charge and harass Henry's bodyguard in an attempt to end the rebellion before it could begin. Richard himself made a pass at the Tudor claimant as he charged dangerously close to the usurper, unhorsing and killing Henry's standard bearer. Sir John Cheney and the rest of Henry's bodyguard in turn swarmed and unhorsed Richard, forcing the king to fight at a disadvantage on foot. At this crucial point in battle where Richard III was most vulnerable, Lord Stanley saw his chance as he brought his own men around the flank of the Ricardian army, punching through their exposed sides and swinging the battle into Henry Tudor's favor. Richard's army was hacked down by Stanley's fresh troops. Unable to reorganize themselves amongst the chaos, Richard's troops began to falter. Richard then famously proclaimed that he would "live or die as a king of England," rather than escaping on a horse offered by one of his bodyguards. Known to be Richard's last words, the last Yorkist king was hacked down by both noble and commoner alike. As his body was stripped down and removed from the battlefield, Lord Stanley placed Richard's circlet upon Henry Tudor's head and officially crowned the young Tudor as Henry VII of England (r. 1485-1509).[4]

Proving to be a momentous occasion, the battle at Bosworth Field changed England's political climate and monarchial rule in a variety of ways, notably through the empowerment of the gentry. England would no longer continue being a dark and backward lesser-kingdom on an isle in the North Sea, but would join the rest of Europe in the rebirth of classical ideas that had already taken hold for nearly a century elsewhere in Europe. Furthermore, Henry's empowerment

[4] Ingulph. *Croyland Chronicle*, 503 and Roger Lockyer. "Document I: The Death of Richard III" in *Seminar Studies in History: Henry VII.* (ed. Patrick Richardson. New York: Longman/Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1973) 108. The accounts of who actually crowned Henry Tudor are different, one set saying Lord Thomas Stanley crowned while the other says that Sir William Stanley placed the circlet on Henry's head. It would make more sense that Lord Stanley would be the one to crown Henry, as he was his step-father and would dutifully serve Henry (unlike Thomas who supported Perkin Warbeck, a contender for Henry Tudor's crown). Furthermore, the accounts both explain that Richard III's body was bashed and battered upon his death, receiving numerous wounds to his body and skull. He was stripped of all clothing besides a loincloth, and was taken to the Grey Friars Church in Leicester where he received a speedy burial. His body would not be uncovered until five centuries later.

of the gentry meant that England would begin to pull itself out of a feudal society, all at the cost of disempowering the noble classes.

The breakdown of the feudal system in England was important to kingdom as the system had been the only form of organized government, as well as a societal and economic system, that England had known during the Middle Ages. It consisted of a pyramidal system in which the peasants were at the bottom and the king was at the top. Between the top and bottom existed a struggling border between the nobility, who were closer to the king, and the gentry, who were closer to the peasantry. This allowed the system to have faults, with the upper classes generally holding most of the power and wealth. In the past, documents such as the Magna Carta attempted to curb the power of the nobles and king while defining their roles more plainly. However, this only gave the nobility the means to empower themselves further; events ultimately culminating with the outbreak of the Wars of the Roses and Henry Tudor taking action to ensure that no further civil wars would occur.

Punishing the nobility to ensure that he would not become another claimant who would lose his life in a civil war, Henry VII stripped the power of those nobles which he had spared and kept those powers for himself.[5] This consolidation of power was not an original idea for the time and place in Europe. However, as monarchs continued to strive for complete control over their kingdoms, they often saw it necessary to consolidate power to help usher in the renaissance and its Machiavellian ideas concerning a single and strong ruler.[6] Henry also brought in his own concepts, by seeking to ensure that he was upholding the laws that had been in place since Magna

[5] Lockyer. "Document 13: An Act of Attainder 1491" in *Henry VII*. 13. Acts of Attainder were used to essentially disempower those who were affected by it. The one in Lockyer's lecture guide was enacted much later than Henry VII's ascension, however this document would be same that would have been used to attaint the nobles.

[6] Thomas Penn. *Winter King: The Dawn of Tudor England.* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), 145-146 and Various. "An Act that no person going with the King to the wars shall be attaint of treason (1495: II Henry VII, c. I)" *The Tudor Constitution: Documents and Commentary.* (ed. G. R. Elton. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1978), 4-5. This was the time of Machiavelli's *Prince*, which described the strongest and ideal ruler of a country or political entity. Penn makes connections between the two, leading to conclusions that many of Henry VII's actions were necessary for the Tudor dynasty to be established.

Carta while also ensuring complete control over his kingdom. Henry accomplished this by bringing the lower nobility, as well as the gentry, into the political circle around Henry and his court. This act of bringing in outsiders allowed lesser-known individuals to establish themselves as ones who held an incredible amount of power, centralizing his government to the point where England would evolve into an early modern society. These changes would then continually work against the nobility as it saw them lose more power.

These instances exemplified the changes Henry VII sought to bring to the English political system. England was no longer defined by the pyramidal structure of the feudal system. Members of the lower classes rose to positions of great power which superseded the power that surrounded the nobility. Though a late starter to these changes in comparison to the rest of Europe, England's arrival in the early modern period was a unique one in the sense that men such as those who had fought with Henry VII, such as Sir John Cheney and Philibert de Chandée, as well as outliers to Henry VII's typical followers such as Sir John Paston III, became some of the most influential individuals in English political society. This project aims to not only explore the lives and rise of these three men in the English political system, but also explore their interactions within English political society and how their new status would affect Tudor rule.

These individuals who were part of the gentry are commonly overlooked. Prominent battlefield commanders including Philibert de Chandée, members of chivalric orders such as Sir John Cheney and outlying members of the gentry such as Sir John Paston III all played an important part in Henry's changes. Furthermore, the relationship between the three cases plays an important part to the analysis of the changing roles of the gentry later on in England's history.

II. Roots of Change

While the majority of focus within Tudor academia has been placed on monarchs such as Henry VIII or Elizabeth I, the early years of the Tudors under Henry VII are overlooked. Historians such as Thomas Penn acknowledge that the changes Henry VII brought about following his ascension to the throne were necessary in order to ensure that the Wars of the Roses would not continue past its last pitched battle in 1487.[7] Others such as T.L. Kington Oliphant also agree that the Wars of the Roses severely thinned the nobility and in some cases, killed families off completely.[8] In retrospect, Henry promoted common members of English society, notably members of the clergy and others such as lawyers to prominent positions within his court which would be the skeleton foundation to the modern idea of the Tudor Court. What these promotions established was an English political system that played an extremely important part in the subsequent Tudor rule of England.[9] This is oftentimes why many historians focus their attention on Henry VIII and his children rather than extremely intriguing rule of Henry VII who Thomas Penn calls the "Winter King."

Thomas Penn's "Winter King" idea focuses on the changes brought about during Henry VII's rule as well as the individuals who brought about those changes within Henry's rule. Without his changes that he enacted following the Battle of Bosworth, common men such as lawyers and members of the clergy would never have played such an important part in a king's reign as it had during the years of the Tudors. However, this focus on either the commoners (clergy, lawyers, etc.) rising within the political system or the consistent disempowerment of the nobility often

[7] Penn. *Winter King*, 10-11. This was due to the changes brought about by Henry VII, allowing the Wars of the Roses to end at the Battle of Stoke Field.
[8] T. L. Kington Oliphant. "Was the Old English Aristocracy Destroyed by the Wars of the Roses?" *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*. (Vol. 1 (1872): 351-356), 351-352. This was for a variety of cases. More often than not, the failure to produce a male heir was their shortcomings.
[9] Susan Brigden. *New Worlds, Lost Worlds: The Rule of the Tudors, 1485-1603*. (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 11-14. Brigden notes how Henry VII brought in the clergy and gentry to establish control of the English political system at a much lower level than what is argued in this thesis.

means that those individuals who were not at these opposing ends of the spectrum do not receive the same amount of attention. These individuals, known as the gentry, make up these classes and play just as an important role, if not more important. Men such as Sir John Cheney and Sir John Paston III are just as important as the nobles, lawyers and clergy of the time, as they not only played an active role in the establishment of Tudor rule in England, but actually helped build England as an early modern superpower in an ever modernizing Europe.

Defining early Tudor rule in England can be done so by analyzing the rise of the gentry, both of landowning and non-landowning ranks. Generally a title-less, but landed class who served a unique position between the nobility and the yeoman in the English feudal system, the gentry fulfill the roles of Henry VII's imagined government. They also fulfilled Henry's goals of consolidating and centralizing power within England. As noted before, Henry began the process of stripping the nobility of titles and lands and keeping those benefits to himself through what are known as Bills or Acts of Attainder.[10] While this was a common act to do as an ascending monarch, Henry often kept the power and lands he reaped as a way to control the nobility. In turn, this empowered the crown itself. Though Henry took the necessary steps to help secure his crown, he realized the need to designate trustworthy men to help manage what he had gained. Therefore Henry VII looked to the gentry, who were often considered more loyal and less likely to conspire or harm the place the crown held in English society. This allowed many of these gentrified individuals to serve in prominent positions high within the English political system. This also allowed many of these men to serve in positions that were previously unthought-of for such a class during the Middle Ages.

[10] Chris Skidmore. *Bosworth: The Birth of the Tudors.* (London: Phoenix, 2013), 356-357. Lockyer's book mentioned in footnote "4" is a good source for an example of an Act of Attainder. These did not harm the nobility physically per se, however the process of taking lands and titles from the nobility often left them vulnerable as their own followers either left them completely or lacked the motivation to provide the support that would be needed to help reestablish someone within the nobility. Henry Tudor also imprisoned and/or executed the most dangerous contenders to his throne, which generally consisted of those he considered to be problematic to his rule.

Henry VII first began this process by methodically rewarding those men who had supported him throughout his time in exile while in France, as well as those who had fought for him at Bosworth. By promoting lower-tiered members of the gentry to positions that had once been held by the nobility (or that were not previously occupied), the first steps to the consolidation of Henry's retainers as well as the solidification of Henry's kingdom occurred. The steps that Henry took ensured the security of the English crown from political threats (both internal and external), economic threats and societal threats. Henry's control over the nobility meant that these steps to centralization of his power could be finally achieved. Furthermore, Henry's reliance on the gentry to fill positions which had previously been filled by nobles also established a centralized powerbase as the gentry could be controlled and influenced far easier than the nobility.[11] This allowed men such as Sir John Cheney, Philibert de Chandée, and John de Vere to become trusted allies as well as valuable assets to the new Tudor dynasty.

John de Vere, 13th Earl of Oxford is another exceptional case to Henry VII's cause, as the noble would eventually become one of Henry's most trusted allies and in turn, an extremely powerful man. De Vere would receive some of the most important positions in politics under Henry's guidance, notably Lord High Admiral. While John de Vere's promotions fell in line with the promotions of nobles throughout the Middle Ages, Henry VII's confidence in men like de Vere meant that there was a fair amount of trust between the two magnates. This is where the story of John Paston III comes into play. Though Henry VII assigned men such as Sir John Cheney and Philibert de Chandée to prominent positions within his court, they became mere pawns within the politics of English society as they rose from the gentry to noble classes. John Paston III was not

[11]Skidmore. *Bosworth*, 331-346. Skidmore is not the only author who captures this fact. Others like Thomas Penn or Susan Brigden also touch on the subject, however Skidmore's analysis of Bosworth and how it influenced the start of the Tudor Dynasty means that one can fully realize the extent of Henry Tudor's changes on the English nobility. The inclusion of the gentry into larger political functions is one change that completely turned the way England function around, building a new a more "modern" meritocracy.

such a case, as though his family was extremely powerful and influential in Norfolk, they were still only members of the gentry. John Paston III was never destined rise to the heights that Cheney or de Chandée had achieved in his lifetime, yet under the guidance of a man such as John de Vere, Paston would still become one of the most powerful and influential men in England, channeling open lines of communication to the king towards the end of his career. Establishing such a meritocracy secured the legitimacy of Henry's claim, but also secured members of the gentry within English politics.

One question that remains unanswered in regards to how England got to this point is plainly put: was fifteenth-century England defined by the gory, bloodthirsty battles that many imagine marked the Middle Ages? Many modern readers characterize medieval life as "nasty, brutish, and short", since life was generally not easy in comparison to modern times and people died relatively young.[12] The truth however reveals far less nastiness or brutishness. While Europe had experienced events such as the Black Death of the fourteenth century or the numerous crusades which both ravaged the population of Europe, England had been in fact experiencing a period of population regrowth following the plague. During this period of regrowth, England saw many of its people satisfy their ambitions, which in turn helped said people gain an extraordinary amount of wealth. This increased ambition tends to focus itself on the nobility. Towards the end of the Middle Ages, the nobility's focus was more on cementing alliances or gaining more material wealth rather than waging open war. This was a new concept; the beginning of the renaissance, as conflict was more often than not dealt with through word of mouth rather than at the other end of a sword.

[12] Clifford R. Backman. *The Worlds of Medieval Europe*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), xv-xviii. Though not directly defined in Leviathan, Thomas Hobbes coins the phrase "nasty, brutish, and short" and is often associated with the Middle Ages. The common misconception of the Middle Ages is that people were not as intelligent and they lived in a "medieval" society. However, Backman attempts to clear this up within his introduction. Rather, the Middle Ages were a period in time where the world was rediscovering itself and what its potential was.

The nobility made and broke deals amongst each other while nations forged alliances through the thirty year "cold" war that plagued England during the second half of the fifteenth century. This meant that a great deal of time was spent conspiring rather than actually fighting. Arguably consisting of only twelve to fifteen weeks of armed combat, the Wars of the Roses could almost be comparable to the Cold War of the twentieth century in the sense that alliances were made, deals were struck and leaders sought out their own personal agenda. Historian Trevor Royle notes that Henry VI "had allowed himself to become so weak that his magnates were able to ignore Royal authority and act with impunity."[13] While the king remained in power, the deals and counter-deals struck by the nobility ultimately led to the downfall of Plantagenet rule.

The English monarchy was defined by many houses throughout its tenure on the throne and one particular family, the Plantagenets, were by far the greatest cause of the Wars of the Roses. The Plantagenet family ruled much of England and France throughout the Middle Ages. Since the later Norman rulers of England hailed from Normandy and because the family maintained ties in France, this meant that England struggled to maintain hold of its French territories. Lasting over one hundred years (contrary to its name), the Hundred Year's War (1337-1453) was the epic, as well as brutal struggle between two of Europe's strongest kingdoms.[14] Beginning with multiple victories under the English Plantagenet leaders such as King Edward III (r. 1327-1377) and his son Edward (who is commonly known as the Black Prince), the Hundred Year's War looked as if it would be another conflict that would come to define the two kingdoms. However, the roots of

[13] Trevor Royle. *Lancaster Against York: The Wars of the Roses and the Foundation of Modern Britain.* (Basingstoke: Palgrave and Macmillan. 2008), 136. The nobility had gained so much power during the Hundred Year's War that they were actually levying troops and essentially building their own miniature entities within England. This would eventually reach a turning point when Henry VI ascended to the throne, who was a weak ruler and did not have a strong grasp on his nobility. Upon further reading, Royle describes how Henry VI's stance on the nobility led to armed uprisings, leading to armed conflict in 1455.

[14] Backman. *Medieval Europe*, 479. England's involvement in France stretches back to the days of the Normans, who hailed from Normandy in Northern France. Because of this and the Angevin (later Plantagenet) dynasty, England claimed much of France for itself, leading to multiple conflicts that would slowly push England out of France. England had lost all its claim to its territories in France by the time Elizabeth I ascended to the throne.

the Wars of the Roses came about halfway through when both Edward's son and Edward himself died in 1376 and 1377 respectively. This left Edward III's infant grandson Richard II (r. 1377-1399) to the English throne under the care of the young boy's uncle, sparking the beginning of a tumulus fifteenth century.[15]

These deaths were the critical turning for the Wars of the Roses, well before the actual conflict itself. Richard II's ascension had the country in uproar and while Richard's uncle became regent at the time of his ascension, his links within the Plantagenet family meant that he would see his own family take the throne. By continually pushing to have his son placed on the throne paired with the low popularity of Richard II, Henry Bolingbroke (IV, r. 1399-1413) ascended to the throne in 1399.[16] Henry IV and his successor, Henry V (r. 1415-1422) were better liked than Richard, partially due to their competence in ruling the country as well as successful victories won in France. However, the later defeats of the English in France under Henry VI (r. 1422-1461 and 1470-1471) essentially depleted the royal treasury whilst also opening up opportunities for the causes of the Wars of the Roses later in the century.[17]

Bankrupting the country, the Hundred Year's War allowed the nobles to raid and steal money at their own discretion which was not only dangerous because it secured them financially, but it also allowed families to gain mass amounts of power unchecked. This allowed many families such as the Neville family to enrich themselves to the point where their own coffers rivaled that of the monarchy.[18] Paired with Henry VI's inability to rule or even win a war, a divide in the country

[15] Backman. *Medieval Europe*, 479-480 and Royle. *Wars of the Roses*, 2-5. Richard II would later be deposed by Henry Bolinbroke, beginning the troubles that would lead to the Wars of the Roses. The succession crisis following Richard II would be the key factor to a new civil war.
[16] Royle. *Wars of the Roses*, 43. John of Gaunt, Henry's father, continually asserted his family's claim to the English throne. His family would become the Lancastrians during the Wars of the Roses.
[17] Royle. *Wars of the Roses*, 127 and 138-139. Henry IV and Henry V were noted for many victories during the Hundred Years' War, notably an astounding victory at Agincourt in 1415, attributed to Henry V's reign.
[18] Royle. *Wars of the Roses*, 142-152. Richard Neville was as rich as the crown, allowing him to ally himself with future Edward IV. He was able to use his money to raise a large enough army to help depose Lancastrian claimants up until he switched to Lancaster in 1470 when he put Henry VI back on the throne.

took hold as Richard, Duke of York claimed that his son had a better connection to Edward III. With a proclamation such as this, Richard's son potentially made a more legitimate monarch. Powerful nobles such as Richard Neville began to support Richard's claim, pushing to have his son Edward placed forth and put on the English throne.

As tensions mounted, the result was a brutal civil war that plagued England for the next thirty years. The old Plantagenet family would then split into two cadet branches: the Lancastrian followers of Henry VI and the Yorkist followers of Richard and Edward. Each branch had its unique sigil, a red Lancastrian Rose and a White Yorkist Rose, which would attribute to the later naming of the conflict.[19] Both sides were incredibly strong due to their support from their retainers and nobles. Neither side knew what the eventual outcome would be.

Pitched battle came in the form in the First Battle of St. Albans in 1455 and resulted in only a few casualties, mainly amongst the nobility. Many battles followed the trend of nobles or knights being the greatest casualties of war, leading to generally inconclusive battles.[20] By the Battle of Towton in 1461, the way in which battle commenced changed. No longer were the nobility the target of the killing, but now the common foot soldier could be cut down even if found fleeing from the battlefield.[21] The lessons learned at Towton carried on throughout the conflict as mass amounts of soldiers could be expected to be killed, but more importantly beginning the pendulum swinging between the rule of Lancastrian and Yorkist kings. The first Yorkist king, Edward IV, then ascended to the throne with the help of Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick.

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[19] Henry Payne. *Choosing the Red and White Roses in the Temple Garden*. (1913. Watercolor, Gauche and Gold Medium. 505x516mm. Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery). A modern interpretation, the moment immortalized by Payne was not necessarily a true event, though a good enough representation to show how the conflict started.

[20] Royle. *Wars of the Roses*, 162. Inconclusive or a victory that both sides claimed, many of the early battles in the Wars of the Roses were skirmishes in respect to later battles in which thousands of men were killed.

[21] Royle. *Wars of the Roses*, 192 and Gairdner ed. "Letter 450" *The Paston Letters 1422-1509.* (Vol III-VI. London: Chatto and Windus, 1904), 266-268. Many sources note how that upon realizing the battle was lost, men turned and fled. The victors pursued and cut down the defeated by locating them based on the livery (or coats) they wore.

For the next decade, Edward and Neville (who gained his famous title, Kingmaker), were locked in a constant struggle with Henry VI for the crown. Although the famous Yorkist Kingmaker, even a noble as powerful as Neville could be persuaded by greed and ambition. Neville's personal goals to get his family situated in the royal family meant that he switched his loyalties from York to the Lancaster, serving Henry VI and his struggle to regain the crown.[22] Once more was Neville the Kingmaker, this time for Lancaster. In 1470, Henry VI sat once more on the English throne though his rule was destined for failure. Henry and Neville' lives were short-lived as they died shortly after when a disgruntled Edward reclaimed his throne in 1471.

Figure 1: **Tower of London** The plaque within the chapel where Henry VI was executed. The incriminating evidence that the Tudor king was found dead following his imprisonment after the Battle of Barnet pointed blame at Edward IV's siblings and himself. Henry VI was the last remaining heir to the Lancastrian throne, as many supporters of either side believed Henry Tudor's lineage to be corrupt or from a bastard claim. *Photo by the author.*

[22] Royle. *Wars of the Roses*, 219-225 and John Warkworth. "The Wars of the Roses: Fog, Confusion and Treachery-the Battle of Barnet, 14 April 1471 "*England: The Autobiography*. (ed. John Lewis-Stempel. London: Viking/Penguin Books, 2005), 104-105. Richard Neville married his daughters into both Yorkist and Lancastrian branches of the family. Originally he intended his first daughter to marry George, Edward IV's younger brother but that marriage did not yield a serving heir. Neville's second daughter married Henry VI's son originally, but due to his involvement in an attempted usurpation of Edward IV, was executed for treason. However, his wife lived to marry Richard III, though by this time Richard Neville had been killed in battle.

Though Edward IV was a well-liked king amongst his nobles and powerful members of English society, he died early and left a young heir to take the throne. When his son became King Edward V in 1483, Edward IV's youngest brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester became regent for the adolescent king. Soon after Edward IV's death, Edward V and his brother Richard, Duke of York, were imprisoned and suspected to have been executed at the hands of the Duke of Gloucester himself.[23] England once again was led by a king (in the form of Gloucester), another monarch facing usurpation during his rule.

When the Duke of Gloucester became Richard III (r. 1483-1485), the seeds of rebellion once again were sown amongst both Lancastrian and Yorkist supporters. Within the same year of his ascension to the crown, Richard successfully fended off the Duke of Buckingham and other rebellious members of the nobility in what would be known as Buckingham's Rebellion. This rebellion was especially crucial in the downfall of Ricardian and Yorkist rule because this is when staunch Yorkist supporters wanted to rid the throne of Richard III.[24] Though Richard managed to hold off these rebels, Richard once again faced opposition from an enemy. This time the enemy was one who threatened England from the shores of France rather than from within England.

Henry Tudor, son of Margaret Beaufort and Edmund Tudor, had been in exile for much of the Wars of the Roses but claimed to be the last remaining heir to the Lancastrian claim to the throne. Under the guidance of his uncle Jasper, Henry conspired with Lancastrian outcasts who had fled following the Battle of Barnet in 1471 and later, Buckingham's Rebellion. Though Tudor had originally attempted to invade England earlier, it wasn't until 1485 when the odds favored the

[23] Christine Carpenter. *The Wars of the Roses: Politics and the constitution in England, c. 1437-1509.* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 1997), 206-212. Or at least under the order of Richard. No one knows what actually happened to the princes, except that two child skeletons were found in the Tower of London in the seventeenth century. Shakespeare's *Richard III* is where the modern interpretation of the king comes from, which is only now being disproven following Richard III's reburial.

[24] Carpenter. The Wars of the Roses, 212. Richard III is argued to be both a "good" and "bad" ruler. Therefore, much of the nobility played a part in this rebellion, as they split and created a separate pseudo-faction under the leadership of the Duke of Buckingham. Unfortunately this was probably due to a struggle for power rather than criticism of Richard III's ruling style.

young Lancastrian claimant. Landing in Wales during August of 1485 with only a handful of followers, Henry clashed with Richard at the Battle of Bosworth Field with the help of his now stepfather, Thomas Stanley. It is at this point in time when Tudor rule of England begins. Upon Henry VII's ascension to the throne in 1485, the changes that resulted from his rule forever changed the political powerbase and leaders surrounding that of England's politics.

III. All Hail the New King

As noted previously, 1485 is often considered one of the most momentous years in English politics. This is due to the end of the Wars of the Roses and the ascension of Henry VII: a new monarch. However, instead of carrying on the conflict by allying himself to one side, Henry VII united and cemented the warring houses by marrying Edward IV's daughter, Elizabeth of York. Henry also ended internal conflict within England between the nobles and the crown while also attempting to expand England's borders.[25] Henry's main goals were not only to establish his dynasty within the political system, but also to ensure that he would be the sole ruler of England without any threat from the nobility, something which had previously affected monarchs.

Henry VII went about accomplishing his goals in multiple ways, however the surest way in which he could ensure that his status as the sole ruler of England was to consolidate power within the political classes. Although Henry wished to establish England as a political competitor amongst other European kingdoms, Henry's concern was largely to prevent the conflicts amongst the nobility that had occurred in the past fifty years. Knowing what a weak claim to the throne could result in, Henry established himself as the one true ruler in the eyes of the commoner to ensure that everyone believed and understood that he was king. One prime example of this establishment

[25] Brigden. *New Worlds, Lost Worlds*, 11-14. Upon Henry VII's ascension, the Kingdom of England only consisted of England, Wales and Calais. Parts of Ireland were under influence of the English monarchy, but due to later uprisings that opposed Henry which stemmed from Ireland, this cannot be considered fully true. Henry wished to expand further into France, regaining what his ancestors lost during the Hundred Years' War.

is Henry's proclamation as the King of England the day prior to Bosworth Field, which in essence meant that a victory condemned any opposition as treason.[26] Though the legitimacy of his rule and how his subjects viewed his claim was ultimately an important aspect of his rule, Henry's wishes to consolidate power within the nobility meant that both the nobility and the gentry would undergo changes that forever defined their roles within the English political system.

These ideas were sown during his exile in France when Henry Tudor sought to establish connections with other exiled nobles and members of the gentry in order to help establish his rule. Henry also saw that many of the problems that surrounded the nobility were internal conflicts which could easily have been prevented by simply ruling with a firmer grasp on one's subjects. Without this type of rule, nobles became greedy and ambitious. This is why historians debate about the actual cause of the Wars of the Roses, as greed and ambition came before honor and duty which is often expected from the nobility. Therefore, the nobility often had a hard time pledging their loyalty to one cause as they continued to want more power, land and monetary wealth.

Historians argue that not only was the situation in the middle of the fifteenth century made worse by the succession crisis that occurred, but the Wars of the Roses was in fact prolonged due to the nobility failing to remain loyal to one cause or another.[27] The most clear and important example of this is the case of Richard Neville, 16th Earl of Warwick who first served as Edward IV's Kingmaker, and later a key player in Henry VI's brief restoration to the throne. As one could imagine, this proved to be problematic and influenced other noblemen such as Lord Stanley, who

[26] Skidmore. *Bosworth*, 354-357. This is unique to Henry VII, as he anticipated being king. This gave him the reasoning to attaint so many nobles as well as establish himself as a strong ruler in front of Parliament. Doing so would have been incredibly risky, for if Henry did not win at Bosworth, he would have been deemed a false king, though his following would have probably allowed him to risk invading again (if he would have been alive after a defeat at Bosworth).

[27] Carpenter. *The Wars of the Roses*, 136. Many members of the nobility could simply not chose which side to join, joining either side out of impulse rather than considering the consequences. As a result, it was not uncommon for members of houses to be split between sides or to switch sides multiple times within the conflict. This is what happened to men such as Sir John Cheney, who pledged his following one way while his family pledged theirs the other.

failed to fully pledge his army to any given side at Bosworth Field.[28] Henry VII had seen how this disloyalty caused severe problems, meaning that he was forced to attaint many of his nobles as a form of brutal, but necessary punishment.

Henry VII's goals of consolidating power in England were achieved primarily by disempowering the nobility far beyond what many thought would be possible post-Magna Carta. Acts or Bills of Attainder was the prime way Henry VII stripped the power, lands and money of treasonous nobles. They had been used in the past, but Henry was the first king to use them successfully in the force and number that had occurred. Many attainted nobles were also forced to pay extortionate sums of money to the crown as well as be placed under crown supervision for a period of time.[29] This brought about two major changes which Henry benefited from: so-called "troubled" nobles lost their land and titles and more importantly, large private armies funded by nobles were essentially illegal.[30] This process took away the typical powers granted to the nobility which in turn modernized England to be ruled under a sole monarch with ultimate power.

The benefits of attainting the nobility superseded the drawbacks, though Henry VII was left with large chunks of land which had previously been ruled by extremely powerful nobles who were now expected to fend for themselves. While in some instances Henry kept some nobles such as the Earl of Northumberland (previously a Ricardian supporter who had been imprisoned following Bosworth) to rule those regions which were political threatening or not as important as others, Henry still saw the need to establish some sort of order within those other regions with vacancies.[31] For this, Henry looked to the gentry.

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[28] Bennett. *Bosworth*, 116. Like Neville, Stanley was a powerful player in the Yorkist Court. However, his marriage to Margaret Beaufort allowed him to pledge his support to Henry upon realizing the chance that he may have the chance to help his step-son while also advance his social status.
[29] Skidmore. *Bosworth*, 357-273.
[30] Brigden. *New Worlds, Lost Worlds*, 29.
[31] Brigden. *New Worlds, Lost Worlds*, 25. The case of Northumberland was not necessarily that Henry trusted him, but was rather under the impression that if he kept someone who was known in the problematic marches of England, that local uprisings and civil unrest would be avoided. This was generally true, however Northumberland was killed while collecting taxes in the early years of Henry VII's rule.

IV. John Cheney

Henry VII's establishment of a new gentry, one which took on the roles which had previously been associated with the nobility, was a new and improved way of thinking. The feudal system which had existed for this period was severely weakened by Henry's new improvements to the English political system, marking the end of noble dominance over England. Disempowering the nobility through the acts outlined in the previous sections meant that many gentrified men could begin the process of making their name within English politics, with some of these men making their mark for years to come. This was the case of Sir John Paston III who carried the Paston name into the eighteenth century where it would finally die out.[32]

Though Sir John Paston was a man of such esteem, one must first understand the accomplishments of those who did not influence local and national politics for such an extended period of time. Individuals in this category included knights and mercenaries, such as Sir John Cheney and Philibert de Chandée, both of whom served within prominent positions within the Tudor Court. Sir John Cheney's case stands out, as he rose from a simple commoner, to Yorkist knight and finally, bodyguard to Henry VII. His life was filled with changes of loyalties, but ultimately his final pledge of loyalty to Henry VII would allow him to rise to the rank of Baron.

John Cheney was born in 1442 to a Kentish gentleman. Born and raised into a gentrified family, Cheney would have been sent to undergo private education which continued the male-dominated roles within his family. Cheney's life was relatively comparable to most other gentrified lives for the early period of his life, as he only saw his rise to fame during the Wars of the Roses. Like most other gentrified young men, he would have been required to serve in support of either claimant house during the conflict. By the outbreak of the conflict in 1455 Cheney, was old enough to

[32] The Pastons surfaced in the mid-fifteenth century as a local and lesser known gentrified family in the English political system. Through the lineage of John Paston III, the family thrived and eventually held many noble titles such as the Earl of Yarmouth.

realize the importance the conflict on English history. His family also realized the importance of establishing connections with one side, however this caused a rift within the family. Within the Cheney family, support existed for both Lancaster and York, following the example of the other noble families who had been torn by greed or who had wanted to maintain the status quo.[33]

As the Cheney family already had a well-established estate in Kent, they wished to maintain the status quo and support their benefactor as well as the current king. John Cheney's father chose to fight on the side of Henry VI over the usurping Duke of York, which was not a surprising move considering his status and his indifference towards Yorkist claims. As time went on, Henry VI's support and grasp of his throne dwindled. With Edward IV (r. 1461-1470, 1471-1483) placed on the throne following a landslide victory of Yorkist forces at the Battle of Towton in 1461, John Cheney, like many of his fellow countrymen, were torn between supporting their family loyalties or to be "in with the new."[34] At this time John Cheney entered the service of Edward IV and jumpstarted his career in English politics.

Following Towton, John Cheney was selected to be an "Esquire of the Body" for Elizabeth Woodville, Edward IV's wife. This would be his first knighthood in the English political system, and would also be the first of many honorable positions which he would hold under the monarchs he served.[35] Though John Cheney was the bodyguard for the most powerful woman in England, Queen Elizabeth Woodville, his service to the new queen was most likely seen as being slightly taboo. Elizabeth Woodville had multiple factors that played against her. First, she had been previously married, meaning that Edward's heirs would not be considered as "pure" or legitimate

[33] T.L. Kington Oliphant. "Was the Old English Aristocracy Destroyed by the Wars of the Roses?" [*Transactions of the Royal Historical Society.* Vol. 1 (1872): 351-356]. Oliphant's argument focuses on the exact thing which effected the Cheney family-one part of the family supported one group while Sir John Cheney supported the other. However unlike Oliphant's analysis, the Cheney family was not destroyed by this split, but in fact strengthened by the fact that John Cheney eventually became a powerful magnate in parliament and within Henry VII's court.
[34] Carpenter. *The Wars of the Roses,* 136.
[35] WM. A. Shaw. *The Knights of England: A Complete Record from the Earliest Time to the Present Day of the Knights of all the Orders of Chivalry in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and of Knights Bachelors.* (Vol. 1. London: Sherratt and Hughes, 1906), 135.

to some. Second, her prior marriage to a Lancastrian knight (albeit deceased at this point), meant that her family already had strong ties to the opposing House of Lancaster. Third, Elizabeth was significantly older than Edward, which is noted as being very uncommon for the time.[36] Though many saw the marriage of Edward and Elizabeth as distasteful or unthinkable, the assignment of Sir John Cheney to guard Elizabeth was most likely a test of loyalty in order to counter the mass amount of so-called "loyal support" Edward gained following his victory in 1461. This service only allowed Sir John Cheney to succeed, as he continually proved to his Yorkist benefactors that he was a loyal supporter of the cause.

Sir John Cheney's continued relations with Edward IV only meant that he continued to rise to positions of prominence within the English political, especially within chivalric orders. Earning Edward's trust after his service to Elizabeth Woodville, Cheney furthered his career by standing with the Yorkist cause at the Battle of Tewksbury following a brief restoration of Henry VI in 1471. This proved to Edward that Cheney was not only an extremely loyal follower and a skilled but brutish soldier, but also an incredibly important asset to ensure the safety of himself and his kingdom.[37] Following an instance in 1475 when Sir John Cheney (who by then had been granted the title of Master of Horse, a member of the King's retinue) was imprisoned in France for his part in the attempted invasion of France under Edward IV, Cheney's loyalty to the crown ultimately ended in a promotion which would help set him up for his service following the Wars of the Roses.[38]

By 1478, Sir John Cheney's loyalty had been rewarded with his promotion to the Master of Henchmen, strictly a military role which not only served the king but the entirety of England itself.

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[36] Carpenter. *The Wars of the Roses*, 170.
[37] Louise Gill. *Richard III and Buckingham's Rebellion.* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing. 1999), 33-34.
[38] Carpenter. *The Wars of the Roses*, 197-198. Cheney was designated to stay behind in France as a prisoner while Edward IV fled back to England. Cheney was released later, yet his loyalty to the crown was ultimately proved by his involvement in this deal.

As the head of Edward IV's bodyguard, Cheney also received lands which came with a political position, allowing him to serve as a local member of parliament (MP).[39] The years up to Edward IV's death proved to be fruitful and successful ones for the young knight who had risen from a common background which would otherwise have kept him locked in his social standing. However, Edward IV's death in 1483 meant that Cheney once again found himself pushing for greater responsibilities amongst his peers in hopes to better his position. This also meant that the long-served Yorkist soldier found himself in the service of the new Lancastrian claimant-Henry VII.

As 1483's events ranging from Edward IV's death, the alleged murder of his two surviving at the hand of Richard, Duke of Gloucester and Richard himself taking the throne occurred, men such as Sir John Cheney formed another, though unsuccessful rebellious faction. After dealing with allegations that Richard, Duke of Gloucester (by now Richard III, r. 1483-1485) had in fact executed his two nephews in what is known as the "Year of Three Kings," Richard's cousin and once closest ally, Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, led a rebellion against the new king in hopes to steal the crown. Sir John Cheney was an active member of Buckingham's plans after a failed attempt to secure the two murdered sons of Edward IV. He led uprisings from Berkshire and Wiltshire, notably from Salisbury where his continued service earned him a final resting place within Salisbury Cathedral. However as the rebellion had failed due to Richard III's quick responses, Cheney was attainted by the king and fled into exile with the only remaining Lancastrian claimant, Henry Tudor.[40] Cheney's only hope to regain any of his land or claim to titles was to

[39] Patricia Hyde and Helen Miller. "CHEYNE, Sir Thomas (1482/87-1558), of the Blackfriars, London and Shurland, Isle of Sheppey, Kent" *The History of Parliament: British Political, Social and Local History*, 1982. Accessed April 15, 2015. Pulled from a book entitled: *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1509-1558*, ed. S.T. Bindoff, 1982, the description of Sir Thomas Cheney, a relative of Sir John Cheney, makes some of the only references in the historical record of Sir John Cheney and his role within Parliament. The only other researched reference is the death effigy of John Cheney in Salisbury Cathedral, located within this paper.
[40] Gill. *Richard III*, 119.

support Henry Tudor, whom he had indirectly supported earlier that year when he attempted to save the two princes in the Tower of London.

V. Knight and Lords: Enter John Cheney, Baron Cheney and Philibert de Chandée, Earl of Bath

After his unsuccessful attempt at invading England during the early reign of Richard III, Henry Tudor finally landed in Wales in 1485, altering the course of English history forever. Henry's landing in Milford Landing in Wales not only began a series of events that ushered in a new ruling, but brought about the major changes needed to involve the gentry in England's political system.

Though Henry Tudor landed with a band of followers ranging from English nobles and knights, to Scottish and French mercenaries, many doubted the legitimacy to rule of the so-called "bastard" king. Richard III himself thought little of the landing, as he immediately prepared a counterattack to finally rid the Yorkist cause of any remnants of Lancastrian supporters. Henry knew that both his claim to the throne was far less legitimate than Richard's and that his small army of outcasts and foreign mercenaries would meet its match if it ever clashed with Richard in pitched combat.[41] Henry also feared that his cause lacked any form of experienced leadership, as the bastard king was relatively young and spent most of his life in exile. His most experienced supporter, John de Vere, 13th Earl of Oxford, was his only primary commander.[42] Though Henry could have solely relied on the leadership experience of John de Vere, Henry chose instead to legitimize his cause by choosing to knight many distinguished men at his landing in Milford Haven in August of 1485.[43]

[41] Gill. *Richard III*, 130.
[42] Gill. *Richard III*, 130.
[43] Skidmore. *Bosworth*, 232. Henry chose to knight eight of his trusted followers who had not previously been knights. Other along with these eight became knights upon landing at Milford Haven.

Like any monarch who would be placed in such a position, Henry Tudor knighted many of his retainers to serve as a way to reward his followers prior to battle and most likely as a way to keep his soldiers a loyal, coherent unit. Many of these men were deemed traitors by either Edward IV or Richard III through process of attainder. John Cheney was one of those men who had lost his lands and title following his participation during Buckingham's Rebellion.[44] Henry's desperation for support and the need for his rule to be legitimate in the eyes of his future subject meant that men such as Cheney *had* to be knighted, as a king would have been nothing without strong and distinguished retainers. Furthermore, Henry detailed Sir John Cheney to serve in the future king's bodyguard due to his extensive past experience.[45] Already before the changes brought about through Henry Tudor's reign, Sir John Cheney was in a prominent position in which the king's life depended on how well he as an individual fought. Yet one can not only interpret this closeness to the king as being a great honor amongst his fellow knights, but also a means for Henry VII to ensure the loyalty of previously powerful men by observing their actions first-hand.

Though Sir John Cheney was now a bodyguard to Henry Tudor, titles and honors were bestowed upon foreigners whom Henry had known throughout his time in exile in France. Philibert de Chandée landed in France alongside Henry and was given command of the large multinational mercenary force that was to be placed in John de Vere's vanguard.[46] De Chandée's placement in the vanguard was not only an incredible honor as his men would be the first to meet royal troops at Bosworth field, but it also meant that Henry's right-hand man John de Vere could also keep tabs on the French mercenary. Nonetheless, the mercenary forces and their placement at Bosworth only helped the Tudor force achieve victory, as they had employed tactics that had only been seen on

[44] WM. A Shaw. *The Knights of England: A Complete Record from the Earliest Time to the Present Day of the Knights of all the Orders of Chivalry in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and of Knights Bachelors.* (Vol. 2. London: Sherratt and Hughes, 1906), 22.
[45] Gill. *Richard III*, 137.
[46] Skidmore. *Bosworth*, 286-287. De Chandée was of gentle birth within France, however his help at Bosworth warranted him becoming the First Earl of Bath in the years after Bosworth.

the continent beforehand. When the young Tudor monarch was victorious, the lives of both Sir John Cheney and Philibert de Chandée only improved, as they underwent some of the most extravagant transformations within the English political system that would have been seen amongst the gentry.

Henry VII (r. 1485-1509) was quick to enact changes that disrupted certain policies of England during the fifteenth century, developing them into ones which were more consistent with other political entities of the early modern period. Henry began his tenure as many other kings had-by removing many of his enemies from their positions and offices. He took away their rights to lands, titles, deeds and political positions.[47] While doing this, Henry accomplished something that was a new concept in which many of the titles and lands which were attainted were not redistributed amongst the nobility. This ensured that Henry's claim was secured as well as used as a means to pay off England's debts that it owed. In short, the concept of attainting individuals was not new. Henry's use of the Bills of Attainder ensured that his plans for the gentry would be achieved.[48] In fact, men such as Sir John Cheney had originally been attainted previously, giving him the necessary motivation to defect to Henry Tudor's side in hopes that his lands would be restored to him. What resulted were rewards which were far greater than what was expected for a typical member of the gentry.

Sir John Cheney's involvement during Buckingham's Rebellion was the key reason why the Cheney estates had been attainted by Richard III. With Henry VII on the throne, Richard's policies were reversed and Cheney in turn was given the opportunity to outdo many of his fellow members of the gentry. Though Cheney had been a supporter of the House of York during the Wars of the

[47] Skidmore. *Bosworth*, 356-357.
[48] Skidmore. *Bosworth*, 356-357. Or in short, nobles would be attainted and the gentry would have the opportunity to serve in positions which they would have not been able to serve in before.

Roses, his earlier family connections to the Lancastrian cause and more importantly, the action of him taking a blow from Richard III in Henry's stead at the Battle of Bosworth likely helped sway Henry's decision to allow Cheney to receive his lands and titles once more.

Figure 2: **Bosworth Field** Sir John Cheney and Philibert de Chandée would have likely fought on this patch of boggy grass or nearby. The two men probably never met on the battlefield, however both of their actions would help save the life of Henry Tudor and put him on the English throne. For this, Henry Tudor would forever be grateful and would reward his two (as well as other) followers well. *Photo by the author.*

Whatever Henry's reasoning, the decade following Bosworth Field saw the most changes occur to the life of Sir John Cheney as the knight rose from knight bachelor, Knight of the Garter, knight banneret and finally, a baron. The English chivalric system is one that is often quite complicated, consisting of a series of ranks. Sir John Cheney was an integral part of the system, rising through the ranks of knighthood all the way until he gained an official title and place in the peerage following his extended service to both the Yorkist and Lancastrian crowns. Though Sir John

Cheney had been a bodyguard to Henry VII at Bosworth, Henry realized his potential to become a new member of the English peerage through the final battle of the Wars of the Roses.

Prior to the end of the Wars of the Roses, Sir John Cheney had been inducted into the illustrious Order of the Garter in 1486, one of England's two senior chivalric orders. While this selection carried a substantial amount of weight amongst other knights and nobles at the time, the flipside is the title came without any land or monetary rewards as would have been common with a typical knighthood in the past.[49] This was ultimately part of Henry VII's plan to help disempower the nobility and the rest of the English peerage and gentry. By attainting individuals immediately following his ascension to the crown, he rewarded many of his followers for their actions that they had taken in support of Henry VII's rule by using means such as the Order of the Garter. Contrary to what many previous monarchs had done, Henry VII inducted these individuals into either the Order of the Garter or the Order of the Bath to show they were in the good graces of the king. Prompting competition amongst men of all classes, the nobility and other gentrified folk who managed to break through into either order benefitted from Henry VII's plans to reconsolidate the crown and the political system of England. It allowed Henry not only to maintain a watch over these nobles, but also ensure that the nobility was happy even if they did not own the same lands they once had.[50]

As Cheney was a part of the Order of the Garter, his position was envied by many. However Henry VII felt that Sir John Cheney had done much more than what many other prominent nobles or knights had done throughout their service to the crown. Henry kept Cheney as a Knight of the Garter, but due to Cheney's continued support and experience on the battlefield, kept his

[49] WM. A Shaw. *The Knights of England: A Complete Record from the Earliest Time to the Present Day of the Knights of all the Orders of Chivalry in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and of Knights Bachelors.* (Vol. I. London: Sherratt and Hughes, 1906), 17.
[50] Penn. *Winter King*, 187-191.

promotions up the chivalric ranks flowing at a near consistent rate. His expertise and service resulted in a confrontation with Yorkist sympathizers at Stoke Field in 1487, where the last pitched battle of the Wars of the Roses was fought and Henry VII's rule was finally solidified.

The Battle of Stoke Field occurred in 1487 as it pitted Henry VII and his Tudor supporters against a usurping Lambert Simmel and John de la Poole, Earl of Lincoln. Simmel had been a young boy when the Earl of Lincoln argued that the boy had looked like one of the young princes who had been allegedly killed by Richard III in 1483. De la Poole used Simmel as a puppet and launched the invasion from Ireland, clashing with Henry's army at Stoke Field. Sir John Cheney helped lead the attack, successfully defeating one of the last Yorkist threats to the throne and finally ending the Wars of the Roses. In return for their service, many of Henry's retainers were granted either a knighthood or a banneret (the ability to possess a larger retainer and their own banner in battle). Sir John Cheney was one of these individuals as he was one of a few granted a knights banneret following Stoke Field. This moment is a prominent entry within the Paston Letters, a collection of letters that help explain the motives behind much of the nobility at the time.[51] As Cheney's continued service not only meant that he was a mere knight, Cheney was now both a Knight of the Garter and a knight banneret. This meant that Cheney possessed two things that gave him power amongst his peers: royal favor and assets to command. These promotions solidified Sir John Cheney's reputation and one final step remained, representing the pinnacle of the knight's career.

Sir John Cheney's rise to prominence among the English political system did not stop merely at his rise to a knight banneret, but in fact continued to grow to the point where the once common gentrified man from a simple gentrified family would actually grow to serve as a lord in the English

[51] Gairdner ed. "Note to No. 1016," *The Paston Letters 1422-1509.* (Vol VI. London: Chatto and Windus, 1904), 187. This note is an amendment to Letter 1016 as it was not complete when James Gairdner analyzed the document.

political system. This not only symbolized an instance where Henry VII's goals of empowering members of the gentry to prominent positions within his court and the political system of England, but also shows the beginning of a meritocracy. Such devices were often carried on throughout an individual's life and in death they would as well.

Figure 3: **Funerary Effigy of Baron Cheney** Located in Salisbury Cathedral in Wiltshire, the funeral effigy of Baron Cheney displays the knight not only as a rich individual, but as an important member of a royal council. The Collar of Esses (sometimes called an "SS" Collar) is a collar popular amongst royal courtiers. The Gatehouse sigil at the end of the collar was a Tudor symbol as well. Cheney's other achievement of a Knight of the Garter is located on his left shoulder clasp as it takes the shape of a Garter Belt and Knot typical of Garter Knights. Other symbols of Cheney's knighthood include the sword at his hip (not pictured), the fact that he is armored and the fact that his tomb is located within a prominent cathedral. Furthermore, the location of the cathedral itself is within the region Cheney led uprisings from during Buckingham's Rebellion. *Photo by the author.*

Being such an integral part of the Tudor political system in Henry VII's early years, Sir John Cheney's achievements are represented with typical pomp and circumstance on his funeral effigy within Salisbury Cathedral in Wiltshire. Though contemporary sources of Cheney's service are not plentiful, the representations on his effigy are what is needed to validate the historical record as well as Henry VII's plans to bring the gentry into his court. Symbolism included being

in full plate armor with a longsword at his hip signify that Cheney was indeed a knight. Furthermore, the Garter Belt and Knot as well as his Collar of Esses both show that Cheney was far more than merely a knight, but a knight of an order who was also a politician. Finally, the inclusion of the gatehouse and rose sigil at the end of the Collar of Esses meant that Cheney died in the service of Henry Tudor.[52] Unfortunately, Sir John Cheney's effigy is one of the only primary sources that depict the so-called "mountain of a man," but also the badges of service and office that he held up until his death in 1499.

Like Sir John Cheney, Philibert de Chandée was an integral part of the victory at the Battle of Bosworth. Employing effective tactics that swung the tide of the battle into the favor of Henry's forces, de Chandée would prove to be a valuable asset to Henry VII and the new English political system.

Much of the French mercenary's life is unknown to historians, however though this being true, Philibert de Chandée served King Henry VII in a way that justified the French men-at-arms to become more than just a common soldier in Henry VII's army. Like Sir John Cheney, Philibert de Chandée was knighted by Henry VII upon landing in Milford Haven in 1485.[53] This not only ensured that Henry's ranks were bolstered by experienced commanders who would be competent enough to lead troops, but also served as a first lawful action that would be completed by a king.[54] The French mercenary and now English knight followed the Tudor monarch to Bosworth, where he fought alongside John de Vere, 13th Earl of Oxford in the vanguard. De Chandée and his men fought bravely at Bosworth, with contemporary historians attributing Henry VII's victory entirely or partially due to the tactics of the French, Scottish and Swiss mercenaries employed to defeat the

[52] Penn. *Winter King*, 17.
[53] Walter Metcalfe. *A Book of Knights Banneret, Knights of Bath, and Knights Bachelor made Between the fourth year of King Henry VI and the Restoration of King Charles II.* (London: Mitchell and Hughes, 1885), 9. There is also a note to de Chandée's later status as Earl of Bath.
[54] WM. A Shaw. *The Knights of England: A Complete Record from the Earliest Time to the Present Day of the Knights of all the Orders of Chivalry in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and of Knights Bachelors.* (Vol. II. London: Sherratt and Hughes, 1906), 22.

opposing Ricardian army. Bernard André, Henry VII's biographer, even noted that de Chandée was "one of those knights [who] was particularly distinguished in his knowledge of the art of war."[55] This not only helped lead Henry's army to victory at Bosworth, but also gave the new Tudor king one more reason to place his trust in the gentry.

As stated numerous times before, Henry VII enacted a plethora of changes upon his ascension to the English throne in 1485. Most importantly, Henry ensured that his followers who had supported him were well rewarded. This meant that those who had never been a part of the English political system had the opportunity to receive a title and land. The previous case of Sir John Cheney was already a stretch in politics purely because the individual was a title-less and landless individual upon birth. However, Cheney was still part of a well-to-do gentrified family which had land and included individuals with titles. Philibert de Chandée however, was from a foreign country who had also supported a claimant with a bastard right to the throne. What prompted Henry Tudor to reward a foreign individual the rights to lands as well as a title and position of prominence among the Tudor political system? The answer is simpler than one might think.

As Philibert de Chandée became a knight and successfully fought at Bosworth, he also became even closer to the new English king.[56] This was already building on what relationship the two men had prior to Henry Tudor landing in Wales. As Henry VII began to attaint land from the nobility who had fought against him at Bosworth, Henry kept a majority of this power for himself. As stated before, he also distributed some of this power and wealth amongst his followers as a reward. While this could be the concluding piece of evidence that supports Philibert de Chandée's reward

[55] Bernard André. *The Life of Henry VII.* (Translated by Daniel Hobbins. Ithaca: Ithaca University Press, 2011), 26.
[56] Skidmore. Bosworth, 227.

of becoming the First Earl of Bath (first creation),[57] Henry VII's true motives were not fully revealed until after he became king.

While Henry took the throne after a long period of civil war, he sought to allow members of the common landed (and many times those who weren't landed) classes to enter noble ranks or other ranks of prominence. This was done as a means to both reward Henry's dutiful followers but also a means to establish a strong central government, allowing full control over his kingdom. Many nobles had died and new ones had been created throughout the Wars of the Roses, but nonetheless there were many vacant positions within Henry VII's court due to the instances where Henry kept lands to himself. Henry kept many of these spots vacant to allow him to control more power, as was his right as king. This let much of the lower nobles and gentry to not expect the same sort of rewards as an upper noble, making it easier to please these classes. This in turn would allow the gentry to be influenced by royal decree to the point where the king not only controlled the gentry directly, but ensured the power they did have would never be on the level of the Dukes and other upper nobles throughout the Wars of the Roses.

VI: A Commoner in King Henry VII's Court

While men such as John Cheney or Philibert de Chandée focused themselves on the larger, more important aspects of government, other men considered outsiders to English politics were also brought into Henry VII's government upon his ascension. Henry's will to include these men ensured that Henry VII became the first English Monarch who had ruled uninterrupted for nearly twenty five years since the beginning of the conflict. Furthermore, Henry entrusted many of his supporting nobles to establish and maintain their own retainers, which in turn allowed gentrified

[57] Skidmore. Bosworth, 349 and Metcalfe. *A Book of Knights*, 9.

individuals such as John Paston III to rise to multiple positions of prominence. Focusing on merit rather than hereditary claim, the inclusion of the gentry not only signified a shift in English rule and politics during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, one in which the gentry and select lesser nobles gained prominence that could not have been possible before, but it also allowed Henry VII to strengthen his dynasty and he could not have done it without men such as John Paston III.

John Paston III was born in 1444 in the county of Norfolk to John Paston I, a local lawyer. John Paston III also had an older brother, John Paston II who like his father, gained a reputation as a successful landowner but also as a courtier, establishing successful connections later on.[58] The Paston family owned numerous estates throughout East Anglia, establishing themselves as wealthy landowners. Crops and livestock earned the most wealth for the Pastons, though the East Anglian climate allowed the production for grains used for ale.[59] Furthermore, they established a reputation amongst the local nobility as a hardworking and self-sufficient family. As gentrified individuals, the Paston family managed their estates themselves rather than through an appointed representative; a common practice amongst the nobility. Though having an appointed individual running their estates would be easier, the Pastons became more involved in the lives of the tenants who worked their land, resulting in their reputation as tough but respected landowners.[60] Their work meant that they could live well in the local community, though the resulting Wars of the Roses and the ascension of Henry Tudor upon the end of the conflict meant that the family gained the opportunity to rise to prominence.

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[58] Helen Castor. "Paston, Sir John (II) (1442-1479)." [*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edition. Oct 2006] and James Gairdner ed. "Letter 879," *The Paston Letters 1422-1509.* [Various Authors. Vol V. London: Chatto and Windus, 1904]. Pgs. 242-244. Sir John Paston II saw himself away from Norfolk following his knighthood under Edward IV. Though John Paston III was often left with much of John II's work, the connections would prevent the Pastons from experiencing any real trouble throughout the Wars of the Roses.
[59] R.H. Britnell. "The Pastons and Their Norfolk." [*The Agricultural History Review*. Vol. 36, No. 2 (1988): 132-144]. Pgs. 132-134.
[60] Britnell. "The Pastons and Their Norfolk." Pgs. 143-144.

As the Wars of the Roses broke out, the Pastons found themselves involved deeply within the conflict. Like many other members of the gentry, there were times where their loyalties were split between the two causes. Even more so, the Pastons supported whoever was in power at the time due to the fact that the gentry merely wanted to maintain the status quo. For much of the thirty years of war, the Pastons were allied with the Yorkist cause, which helped establish connections among the royal court. John Paston II, John III's older brother, was a follower of Edward IV and was an active member in the court following his knighthood.[61] While the gentry followed whoever was on the throne at the time, family members who supported opposing views could potentially destroy families altogether as noted by historian T.L. Kington Oliphant. Throughout the conflict, landed families switched sides in order to gain titles, lands, power and monetary wealth, though according to Oliphant, this meant that many families were destroyed by battle, disease, or other causes.[62] Though the Pastons fought for both Lancaster and York during the conflict, they avoided the destruction that plagued many families. While visibly Yorkist supporters for most of the conflict, the Paston brothers avoided destruction by maintaining both Lancastrian and Yorkist connections. Their Lancastrian ties would help John Paston III later on in his career, as the brothers allied themselves with John de Vere, 13th Earl of Oxford who in the future would serve as Henry Tudor's right hand man.

As noted before, the Wars of the Roses was not a conflict of continuous fighting. This meant that though the Pastons were involved in the conflict, they were also struggling for their rights in Norfolk. As noted before, the Wars of the Roses allowed the Pastons to make deals with nobles and gentrified individuals of both sides, though this did not mean that their work in their

[61] Britnell. "The Pastons and Their Norfolk." Pg. 143.
[62] Oliphant. "Old English Aristocracy" Pgs. 352-353. Oliphant's argument is strictly focused on the Ancient families that had existed since the Norman times, however his article also compares these changes to the courts of other European kingdoms while also to "created" noble families since the Norman Invasion of England in 1066.

local communities halted. John Paston III would soon find himself fighting a battle on two fronts, fighting for the king and fighting for his father's promised property at Caister Castle.

John Paston I was the lawyer to an aging Norfolk knight who had fought during the Hundred Years War, Sir John Falstoff, and had been promised the fortified manor home at Caister upon Falstoff's death in 1459. Falstoff divided his goods amongst his followers, with John I receiving much of Falstoff's property.[63] Caister Castle not only provided another estate for the Pastons to take care of, but it was also a commanding location on the Norfolk coast. It was for this reason that the de Mowbray family pursued rights and even besieged the castle. John de Mowbray, 4th Duke of Norfolk besieged the garrison of thirty men in 1469 with a large force allegedly numbering thousands. John Paston III defended his family's claim to Caister in one of the only sieges that occurred during the Wars of the Roses. John III held the besieged castle for around a month, surrendering the castle as well as all rights to the estate to the younger de Mowbray.[64] Though a crushing blow to the morale of the Paston family, the de Mowbrays failed to produce any male heirs, erasing the family from history. Upon the death of the de Mowbrays, the Pastons once again commanded Caister. Though Yorkist supporters, the betrayal by the de Mowbrays made the Pastons realize a need to establish the connections with Lancastrian supporters in case things went awry.

The Paston brothers continued to fight for their Yorkists benefactors even after the tensions with de Mowbray, however the Paston brothers began to support their new benefactor John de Vere, 13th Earl of Oxford in an effort to maintain the reestablished Lancastrian crown. They did so

[63] Helen Castor. "John Paston (I) (1421-1466)." (*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edition. 2004). Documents exist of Falstoff passing on his goods to his followers, though no written will of Caister passing to John Paston I exists. This is what probably would have caused much of the conflict concerning Caister, though the de Mowbrays would have probably pursued Caister even with a written will.
[64] Gairdner ed. "Letter 732," *The Paston Letters 1422-1509.* Vol V. Pg. 56. John Paston III formally surrendered to de Mowbray in the autumn of 1469.

by fighting for de Vere at the Battle of Barnet in 1471 under the banner of Henry VI.[65] However, the Pastons had chosen the losing side at Barnet, with the usurping Yorkist King Edward IV on the throne once again, executing or imprisoning Lancastrian supporters and suspected of ordering the execution of Henry VI himself. Luckily, John II's ties at the court ultimately meant that the Paston family eventually regained esteem amongst Edward and his Yorkist retainer.[66] As "the Kyng had syngnyd [Sir John Paston II's] bylle of perdon,"[67] the Pastons remained in relative safety, though their continued ties with John de Vere meant they would once again fight for another Lancastrian claimant.

Henry Tudor invaded England in 1485 where he Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth field, ending both Yorkist and Plantagenet rule. In order to legitimize his already weak claim to the throne, Henry legally confirmed himself as king the day prior to Bosworth, meaning that those who fought against him committed treason and those who fought for him were his allies.[68] Upon a Tudor victory, many Ricardian supporters were put to the block, imprisoned or attainted. Henry realized the problems of greed and corruption that had existed during the fifteenth century and therefore chose to keep attained land and power to himself while carefully redistributing these powers among his closest retainers and allies. His follower's loyalty, but more importantly Henry VII's goals to disempower the nobility, allowed the gentry of English society to receive lands, titles and power.[69] John Paston III fell into this group, who like many within the gentry received

[65] Gairdner ed. "Letter 774," *The Paston Letters 1422-1509.* Vol V. Pgs. 99-101. John Paston III was also injured at this battle, though his injuries did not kill him nor prevent him from fighting in the future.
[66] Gairdner ed. "Letters 780 and 781" *The Paston Letters 1422-1509.* Vol V, Pgs. 107-111 and Castor. "Paston, Sir John (II) (1442-1479)." As Sir John Paston II was a knight, it was much easier for him to be pardoned by the King. John Paston III was not excluded, and received his royal pardon months after Barnet. The period following Barnet meant that Sir John II spent much of his time away from Norfolk, including time spent away guarding the King's interests at Calais.
[67] Gairdner ed. "Letters 780 and 781" *The Paston Letters 1422-1509.* Vol V, Pgs. 107-108.
[68] Thomas Penn. *Winter King: The Dawn of Tudor England.* [London: Penguin Books, 2012]. Pgs. 20-22.
[69] Penn. *Winter King: The Dawn of Tudor England.* Pg. 20.

lands and powers but unlike most, was given the opportunity to serve the kingdom in ways that were not given to his peers.

VII: Sir John Paston III

The breakthrough of John Paston III in the Tudor political system came in the form of the outstanding alliance between Paston and his longtime benefactor John de Vere, 13th Earl of Oxford. This allowed Paston to rise to new heights which in turn secured his family for years to come. The relationship of Paston and de Vere stretched from Barnet in 1471, all the way until Paston's death in 1504.[70] The two men quickly not only became political allies and supporters of each other, but also close friends who trusted each other as if equals. The friendship is demonstrated between the two men in many instances within the historical record, however one instance that stands out is a gift of a stork and hawk given by John Paston III to his noble benefactor. These gifts would have been extremely expensive as a hawk is a hunting bird (and usually reserved for the nobility) and the stork was possibly just as expensive due to the unusual nature as a gift. Furthermore, the gift of the two birds could have possibly represented a restored peace and prosperity on one another following the Wars of the Roses.[71] Either way, the friendship between the two men allowed a connection to be established between Paston and de Vere, who would serve in one of Henry VII's great offices of state.

Following Henry VII's ascension as king in 1485, de Vere was rewarded for his loyalty to Henry and was established as Lord High Admiral, one of Henry's nine Great Officers of State. De Vere quickly realized the need to designate a deputy to assist him in this great position and chose his close friend John Paston III. Though a unique promotion since John Paston failed to answer

[70] Colin Richmond. "Paston family (*per. c.*1420–1504)." [*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edition. 2010].
[71] John de Vere. Letter. Rulers of England Box 01, no. 54 (Henry VII). Record ID: 125899. September 22, after 1485. Sherman Fairchild Reading Room, Morgan Library.

Richard III's call to fight at Bosworth in August of 1485,[72] Henry VII put a great deal of trust in de Vere to make the proper decision to designate members of the gentry to prominent positions. De Vere designated Paston as Admiral in the North and East in 1485 through a proper legal declaration written in Latin and would have been sealed to demonstrate the legality of the document in the name of King Henry VII.[73] While some may consider this position as one that does not carry the same importance as a full officer, Paston would have access to some of the most important legal and political information which would place him above the gentry and nobles who did not have direct access to the King. This was demonstrated in multiple cases, notably when John Paston III was sent to end hostilities between Danish settlers in Iceland and English fishermen.

The position may have seemed like a burden, but the fact that Paston acted not only as an executor of the King's will, but also a diplomat, meant that Paston was in the King's high graces and trust. One example of note is detailed in the Paston Letters dated 1491 where John Paston III settled a dispute between the Danish settlers in Iceland who had been affected by the rowdiness, unrest, and piracy caused by English fishermen who had been fishing out of the Atlantic. Henry VII initially wrote a request to John de Vere to immediately cease these actions, who replied to the King's request that he "[had] assygned and deputyd [his] seyd servant to see our seyd Sovereyn Lordes lettyrs pleynly executyd acordyng to the tenure of the same." Though Iceland was a small island in the Atlantic, it was under the control of the Kingdom of Denmark. Henry VII did not want to have problems with other monarchs considering his kingdom had only just come out of a brutal civil war that saw the usurpation of multiple kings; not to mention that King John of

[72] James Gairdner ed. "Letter 1002," *The Paston Letters 1422-1509*. [Various Authors. Vol VI. London: Chatto and Windus, 1904]. Pg. 85.
[73] John de Vere. Legal Document. Special Collections-Manuscript Collection, MISC 1648. December 1485. Stanford University Library Special Collections.

Denmark was a distant cousin to Henry. Paston acted under the King's authority as de Vere also announced "by thys present wrytyng have yevyn to hym full autoryte and pouer to put undyr arrest all such doggeres as be dysposyd to mak the viage towardes Islond."[74] The problems were resolved before the summer of 1491, as the instigator to the problem had been located and dealt with. Paston's focus was not only on his duties as Deputy Admiral, but also on the safety and concern of his realm and lands.[75]

John Paston III rose within the English political system even before the Iceland incident. As the Pastons had been prominent in East Anglia throughout the latter half of the fifteenth century, they were often involved both in local and national politics. For example, John III had not only held Caister, but later earned a pardon by both Edward IV[76] and Richard III because of his earlier support of John de Vere at Barnet. This allowed continued service of John III as the shrieve, or sheriff of both Norfolk and Suffolk. The shrieve of a county acted as an upholder of the King's law and would also play a role in Parliament.[77] Though only on a local level, being the shrieve of two counties was not only a tremendous responsibility, but an incredible honor which would only be bestowed upon trustworthy individuals. This trustworthiness would carry on into Henry VII's reign and would eventually result in John III being knighted.

John Paston III had always served the crown dutifully, though his real service came in his role of putting down uprisings which would ultimately result in his knighthood. Living through most of Henry VII's reign, Paston served the King in dealing with three separate uprisings. As a trusted councilman to de Vere and a loyal subject to Henry VII, Paston was often tasked at settling

[74] Gairdner ed. "Letter 1046," *The Paston Letters 1422-1509*. Vol VI. Pgs. 136-137.
[75] Gairdner ed. "Letter 1047," *The Paston Letters 1422-1509*. Vol VI. Pg. 138.
[76] Gairdner ed. "Letter 780," *The Paston Letters 1422-1509.* Vol V. Pgs. 107-108.
[77] Gairdner ed. "Letter 1006," *The Paston Letters 1422-1509*. Vol VI. Pgs. 89-90. Paston had already been prominent in East Anglia before, but the Paston Letters first reflect his titles in 1485, in both letters prior to but mostly after Henry VII's reign.

regional conflicts which were a part of large-scale uprisings.[78] In 1487, Paston not only carried out the King's justice but like Sir John Cheney, fought alongside King Henry VII victoriously at the Battle of Stoke Field. As noted before, Henry rewarded select followers with land but most importantly knighthoods or bannerets. John Paston III was among those to be knighted.[79] Though other individuals had served Henry longer or had been more powerful, Sir John Paston III's continued and future service to the crown would allow him to become a powerful leader in Parliament, key leader in East Anglia and now, knight in the King's court. More importantly, it allowed Paston to become closer to the King which would eventually pay off in the greatest responsibility that a noble or a member of the gentry could be elected to serve.

In 1500, Henry VII had arranged for a union and treaty between the Kingdoms of Spain and the Kingdom of England through the marriage of Henry VII's heir Arthur and the Spanish Princess Catherine of Aragon. Henry needed someone who was "trusty and welbeloved" to meet the Princess Catherine and "consideringe that it is right fittinge and necessarye, as well for the honor of us as for the lawde and praise of our said Realme, to have saide Princesse honourably received at her arriveall." Henry designated Paston, rather than a noble, to meet the princess given the instructions that he should "continue in redynesse upon an houres warning." Henry included how great of an honor it was to be selected for this duty, but nonetheless included a warning not to fail and dishonor himself or his kingdom. Princess Catherine would not arrive until the following year, though the same instruction to the now aging Sir John Paston stood. It was here at this point in Sir John Paston III's career as a politician and trusted gentleman reached its apex.[80] Paston's duty to meet the Spanish princess not only demonstrated this, but it also demonstrated King Henry

[78] Gairdner ed. "Letter 1039," *The Paston Letters 1422-1509*. Vol VI. Pgs. 129-130.
[79] Gairdner ed. "Letter 1016," *The Paston Letters 1422-1509*. Vol VI. Pg. 102.
[80] Gairdner ed. "Letter 1066," *The Paston Letters 1422-1509*. Vol VI. Pg. 161.

VII's will to bring the gentry as well as other low-levelled individuals in British society into positions of prominence, beginning the end of the feudal system in England.

Conclusions

While historians often attempt to address the importance of their arguments surrounding the cases of Henry VII and his political changes, the cases and importance of low-levelled individuals such as certain members of the nobility, other peers, and the gentry are not given the credit they deserve. The categories include many individuals, however, the cases of John Cheney, Philibert de Chandée and most importantly, John Paston III are overlooked completely. The promotions of these men into higher echelons of England's political society in fact helped establish the roots of English power now only within the British Isles, but also throughout Europe. These individual promotions were not important for the simple fact that they only accomplished Henry VII's goals of consolidating power within the English political system, but they also helped establish the names of these individuals within English politics for years to come. Some families such as the Pastons attribute their rise to fame solely due to men such as John Paston III, who carried on the family name which did not die out until the eighteenth century.

Though the Paston family seems to surface within the historical record within the early fifteenth century, the legacy had been established by John Paston III and his various promotions from a common gentrified landowner, to a prominent knight and Member of Parliament. The history of the Pastons, as well as Cheney and de Chandée, prove to be a useful clue to historians researching the English nobility as their actions often helped further develop some of the nobility that were in power under Henry VII. Most of the time, these gentlemen are left behind. What modern historians can now interpret are how common men from common gentrified families can

rise amongst the ranks to rival their other peers, either due to the meritocracy emplaced by Henry VII or merely the want to incorporate members from the usual banks of power.

Like John Paston III, John Cheney and Philibert de Chandée experienced similar promotions which would establish these men as essentially the new nobility within Henry VII's political society. Both Cheney and de Chandée rose from common backgrounds, a member of the gentry from England and a member from the gentry in France. Henry VII saw the potential of these men to serve the greater purpose which was consolidating power amongst the nobility. Though Henry VII did not completely eradicate the need for the nobility, his process of attainting much of the remaining nobility allowed commoners who already gained a significant amount of trust from the new Tudor king to rise to these positions. This process alone was radical and relatively new for the time, however it would more importantly prove to be an example for later societies once Europe finally exited the Middle Ages.

This project did not attempt to bring any radical conclusions to the table, but rather served as a means to revise the historical record. Each individual was explored to the fullest, with the concentration being placed on John Paston III, as he was arguably one of the more important members of the gentry who had not served Henry VII at Bosworth Field in 1485. While John Cheney and Philibert de Chandée both served greater purposes within Henry VII's court following their relatively humble beginnings, John Paston continued to serve as a prominent member of the gentry who would be entrusted by both Henry VII and John de Vere with some of the most important missions to be undertaken by a commoner. Furthermore, the example set by John Paston III would influence later monarchs and their inclusions of the gentry both in England and the rest of Europe.

In conclusion, England would forever be changed following the Wars of the Roses. It would be illogical as a historian not to include men such as Sir John Paston III, Baron Cheney and Philibert de Chandée, Earl of Bath who, as so-called “lesser” known individuals, would be a part of Henry VII’s changes. The feudal system which had been such an important part of any society within the Middle Ages would no longer have as much emphasis placed upon it, with an early modern idea of a meritocracy used to gain prominent positions of power within politics. This would not only help ease the mind of a mistrustful Henry VII, but would also help establish the Tudor Dynasty as the ruling dynasty of England for over a century.

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