



*‘Into our defense and savegarde’:
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Lordship of Edward,
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Alex Brondarbit

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Abstract: The events in the first phase of the Wars of the Roses that led to Edward, Duke of York's accession to the English throne in the spring of 1461 as Edward IV are well-established, yet Edward's personality and activity before he became king have remained opaque to historical scrutiny. How much of a role did he play in seizing the crown? Was he a cipher of Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick in the initial stages of his career? A rare signet warrant from Edward granting protection to the Lancastrian foundation of Eton College just days prior to his usurpation of Henry VI illuminates the role Edward played at this early stage of his political career. By the date of the grant, Edward was already an accomplished military leader with a substantial ducal affinity; however, he was a relative unknown figure with little experience in national politics, overshadowed by his more illustrious cousin, the “Kingmaker”. This document attests to Edward's emerging political agency, placing the duke's signet warrant within the context of earlier Yorkist rhetoric and providing a more nuanced view of events on the ground on the eve of his usurpation.

Keywords: England; Wars of the Roses; Edward IV; Henry VI; Eton College

For the historian of the medieval period, it is often a difficult, if not impossible, task to fully illuminate the machinations of the great at moments of calamity and to understand how those susceptible to the powerful reacted to the turbulence of their time. The domestic upheavals later dubbed the Wars of the Roses were marked with numerous such crises in which the events are known, but the details on the ground and the motivations of the individuals who took part remain lacking in nuance. One phase of the conflict in particular, the interlude between the Yorkists' defeat at the second battle of St Albans on 17 February 1461 and their resounding victory at Towton on 29 March has remained stubbornly opaque. This brief interval has commonly been summarised by scholars as one wholly occupied by the desperate decision of Queen Margaret of Anjou's enemies to escalate the stakes of the conflict by crowning the nineteen year old Edward, Duke of York their king.² Edward's political agency during his stay in London has been understated when

¹ I wish to convey my sincerest gratitude to Professor Emeritus Michael Hicks and Drs. James Ross and Hannes Kleineke for reading earlier drafts of this article and lending their expertise. I also offer thanks to the anonymous reviewers of the *Royal Studies Journal* for their suggestions.

² M. A. Hicks, *The Wars of the Roses* (London, 2010), 162; M. A. Hicks, *Warwick the Kingmaker* (Oxford, 1998), 216-18; R. A. Griffiths, *The Reign of Henry VI* (Stroud, 1998), 874-75; C. Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses: Politics and the Constitution in England, c. 1437-1509* (Cambridge, 1997), 149; J. R. Lander, *Government and Community: England, 1450-*

compared to the action of his illustrious cousin – Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick and Salisbury – dubbed the “Kingmaker” and credited with being the driving force that kept the Yorkist cause intact after the violent death of its leadership at the battle of Wakefield.³ In his biography of Edward IV, Charles Ross doubted such a view, suggesting the young duke had a larger hand in events leading up to his usurpation than has been supposed, yet little new analysis into the interlude has been yielded to date as records of this period remain scarce.⁴

A rare, and possibly unique, surviving signet warrant from Edward during his short-lived career as duke of York contributes to our understanding of this crucial period. It sheds new light on the business that was conducted in London prior to the establishment of the House of York on the English throne.⁵ Held at Eton College Archives, this warrant of protection demonstrates Edward's emergence as a political entity and good lord, his relationship with Henry VI's foundations, and the influence of his late father's policies on his political actions. It is known by historians of the college; however, the greater political significance has not been appreciated as these scholars were concerned with the history of Eton down the centuries rather than placing this document into the initial phase of the future king's political career.⁶

Fresh from his victory at Mortimer's Cross over the Welsh Lancastrians, the nineteen year old Edward, Earl of March and Duke of York entered London with an army of 5,000 men on 27 February 1461 to the popular acclaim of its citizens.⁷ With their armies lodged outside the city walls, the Yorkist lords “entrid Into the Cyte of London, The which was of the Cytyzens Joyously Resayvyd.”⁸ By this date the claim to the throne had been put forth by Edward's late father – Richard, Duke of York – who was acknowledged as the heir presumptive by a parliamentary accord reached on 25 October 1460.⁹ The agreement was secured at a political high-point afforded to the Yorkists after routing the royal army at the battle of Northampton the previous June and capturing the king in the immediate aftermath. Control over the sovereign allowed them to press their political agenda with renewed vigour.

1509 (Cambridge, MA, 1980), 214-23; D. Grummitt, *Henry VI* (London, 2015), 202-204; C. A. J. Armstrong, “The Inauguration Ceremonies of the Yorkist Kings and their Title to the Throne”, *TRHS*, 4th ser. 30 (1948), 51-73.

³ C. L. Scofield, *The Life and Reign of Edward the Fourth*, 2 vols. (1923), vol. 1, 129-31. The view of Warwick's dominance stems in part from contemporary observer Francesco Coppini, Bishop of Terni and papal legate. The bishop noted that “my lord of Warwick has come off the best and has made a new king of the son of the Duke of York.” Yet such a view has been rightfully questioned as the bishop failed to acknowledge the speeches Edward made in support of his usurpation. See *The Paston Letters*, ed. J. Gairdner, 4 vols. (Edinburgh, 1910), vol. 1, 506; Hicks, *Warwick*, 218.

⁴ C. D. Ross, *Edward IV* (London, 1974), 33.

⁵ Eton College Archives, ECR 39/no. 124.

⁶ H. C. Maxwell-Lyte, *A History of Eton College (1440-1910)*, 4th ed. (London, 1911); T. Card, *Eton Established: A History from 1440 to 1860* (London, 2001).

⁷ *The Politics of Fifteenth-Century England: John Vale's Book*, eds. M. L. Kekewich, C. Richmond, A. F. Sutton, L. Visser-Fuchs and J. L. Watts (Stroud, 1995), 142; *The Great Chronicle of London*, eds. A. H. Thomas and I. D. Thornley (Gloucester, 1983), 193-195; *Historical Documents*, 285-87; *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Existing in the Archives and Collections of Milan*, ed. A. B. Hinds (Hereford, 1912), vol. 1, 54.

⁸ *Great Chronicle*, 194.

⁹ *The Parliament Rolls of England 1275-1504 (PROME)*, ed. C. Given-Wilson, 16 vols. (Woodbridge, 2005), vol. 12, 373-79.

The terms of the settlement bore familiarities with the Treaty of Troyes of 1420 for much like his maternal grandfather, Charles VI, the Accord stipulated that Henry VI would keep the crown for the remainder of his life. The king's sole heir – Prince Edward of Lancaster – was to be disinherited in favour of York. The Accord not only recognised York's *de jure* title to the crown as "king in right of the realm of England," but appointed him Protector of England for the remainder of the hapless Henry's lifetime. The flawed agreement failed to satisfy either of the interested parties.¹⁰ It certainly could not have been accepted by Queen Margaret of Anjou who naturally could not abide any measure that barred her son from his just inheritance. At the head of a northern army, she achieved two significant victories over her enemies at the battle of Wakefield on 30 December 1460 and the Second battle of St Albans on 17 February 1461. York was killed at the former, but the defeat at St Albans proved especially costly as control over Henry was ceded to their enemies when the king entered his wife's camp "be his own assent and will" as his captors fled the field.¹¹ With Henry no longer under their control the symbol that had hitherto sanctified Yorkist authority to govern and direct policy was lost. The royal cause was ascendant, but the momentum soon stalled as Margaret was unable to convince London to open its gates to her army. Missing the opportunity to occupy the capital and perhaps end the Yorkist challenge permanently, Margaret and Henry retreated north and abandoned the capital to their enemies.

The signet warrant is dated the same day Edward and his allies entered London. It is one of several fragments that contribute to our understanding of the more mundane business the young duke managed after his entry into the city, serving as a strong complement to the chronicle sources which provide little in the way of detail other than the proclamation of his title at St John's Fields by George Neville, Bishop of Exeter and his subsequent "reluctant" acceptance of the crown at Baynard's Castle.¹² Clearly, in addition to his preparation for the upcoming campaign against the queen's host, Edward remained active, taking time to receive and respond to petitioners seeking his favour. This is illuminating given the scarce evidence of government activity between the second week of February and the second week of March. Notwithstanding the earlier placement of Yorkist sympathisers in the chief administrative offices, there is precious little evidence of the business the government handled if in fact it was operating.¹³ During this period no warrants under the great seal were enrolled on the Patent Roll and only three private deeds were enrolled on the Close Roll.¹⁴ The bureaucratic machine had not ceased to function entirely, but appears to have slowed substantially in response to the political uncertainty. That Edward's signet was composed on the day of his entry suggests that

¹⁰ *John Vale's Book*, 195-202; P. A. Johnson, *Duke Richard of York 1411-1460* (Oxford, 1988), 215-18; T. B. Pugh "The Estates, Finances and Regal Aspirations of Richard Plantagenet (1411-1460), Duke of York", in *Revolution and Consumption in Late Medieval England*, ed. M. A. Hicks (Woodbridge, 2001), 71-88, at 82-3; *English Historical Documents: 1327-1485*, ed. A. R. Myers, 12 vols. (London, 1969), vol. 12, 415-18.

¹¹ H. Kleineke, "Robert Bale's Chronicle and the Second Battle of St. Albans", *Historical Research*, 87 (2014), 744-50, at 746, 750.

¹² *Great Chronicle*, 195; *The Crowland Chronicle Continuations: 1459-1486*, eds. N. Pronay and J. Cox (London, 1986), 113.

¹³ Following their re-capture of the king at the battle of Northampton on 10 July 1460, the Yorkist packed the government with their allies. The offices of Lord Chancellor, Lord Privy Seal, and Lord Treasurer were held by Bishop Neville, Robert Stillington, Bishop of Bath and Wells; and Henry, Viscount Bouchier respectively.

¹⁴ *CCR, 1454-61*, 495-96.

there were already a number of petitioners seeking the duke's ear or had approached him during the journey to the capital from the Welsh marches.

The warrant attests to Edward conducting himself in a royal fashion, operating an interim government contrary to the authority the queen and her council wielded in the north.¹⁵ It was issued with the purpose of placing Eton College under Edward's protection, shielding the provost, William Westbury, as well as the fellowship and servants of the college from any molestation on the provision that "thay wol have our good lordeship." Exactly whom Westbury sought protection from is unclear. There was a general fear pervading the south of the queen's northern army. Contemporary writers deplored the depredations that were committed on their march, echoing the fear Yorkist propagandists stoked against the barbarous northerners.¹⁶ In the early days of 1461, Clement Paston expressed such anxiety in a letter to his brother:

In thys cwntré, euery man is well wyllyng to goo wyth my lordys here, and I hope God xall helpe hem, fore þe pepill in þe northe robbe and stylle and ben apoyntyd to pill all thys cwntré, and gyffe a-way menys goodys and lyfflodys in all þe sowthe cwntré.¹⁷

Such emotions were further stoked by Yorkist propaganda such as the ballad, "The Rose of Rouen", which claimed:

All the lords of the north they wrought by one assent
For to destroy the south country they did all their entent
Had not the Rose of Rouen been, all England had been shent.¹⁸

Fear of the northerners played into Yorkist hands as the south rallied to resist the royal army. Nevertheless, it is doubtful that it was the northern men who were the focus of Westbury's concern. Eton College had a strong relationship with its royal founder, Henry VI, and it is highly unlikely it would have incurred any punishment in the event of their victory. In the event of a Lancastrian victory, Edward's promises of protection would offer little benefit to the provost and fellowship. It is much more likely that Westbury sought to be taken into Edward's grace immediately lest the duke (or his followers) seek some form of retribution while they occupied nearby London. Card has suggested Westbury "must have foreseen the final triumph of Edward IV" and thus wanted to establish himself on the right side of political divide as early as possible.¹⁹ Such an assertion is informed with the clarity of hindsight those involved did not possess. Edward's victory was by no means certain to his contemporaries. The conflict was far from settled at the time of the grant as the queen's sizeable army, fresh

¹⁵ M. A. Hicks, "A Minute of the Lancastrian Council at York, 20 Jan. 1461", *Northern History* 35 (1999), 214-21.

¹⁶ *Great Chronicle*, 193; *Ingulph's Chronicle of the Abbey of Croyland*, ed. H. T. Riley (1859), 422; A. King, "The Anglo-Scottish marches and the perception of the north in fifteenth-century England", *Northern History* 49 (2012), 37-50, at 43, 50; *Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries*, ed. R. H. Robbins (New York, 1959), 222-26, particularly at 224.

¹⁷ *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. N. Davis, Early English Text Society, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1971-1976), vol. 1, 197-98.

¹⁸ Scofield, *Edward IV*, vol. 1, 135-6; Ross, *Edward IV*, 31.

¹⁹ Card, *Eton*, 26.

from two victories over her enemies, was still a looming threat in the north. The fortunes of battle were also an extraordinary game of chance that could have easily swung against the duke's party. The provost's appeal to Edward is thus likely to have been made with an eye to the short-term and weathering the political storm rather than any sort of clairvoyance on Westbury's part. With the popular Yorkists in control of the capital, the provost had little recourse other than to submit and hope for leniency.

With Edward and his allies massed in the south, it was natural for Westbury to seek assurances for the lives and goods of the college's inhabitants lest they incur some form of retribution in response to the disaster at Wakefield. Desecrating the property was a well-established method of undermining the lordship of a rival. Such a tactic had been used during the numerous feuds that occurred throughout the 1450s.²⁰ Westbury naturally had cause for fear and his petition for assurance was not unique as the civil conflict naturally forced individuals or foundations to act in a politic fashion and make peace when wheel of fortune turned unfavourably. During the brief Lancastrian restoration in 1471, a similar grant of protection was issued by George, Duke of Clarence for the benefit of Walter Blount, Lord Mountjoy. Clarence publicly took Mountjoy, a staunch servant of the House of York, into his good lordship. Clarence promised to protect the baron's manors of Elvaston and Barton (Derbys.) from retribution.²¹ Like Mountjoy, Westbury saw the value in flexibility when the tides of politics demanded the need to ingratiate oneself with the ascendant party. It was a necessary balancing act between survival instincts and loyalty. The scheme worked to perfection for Mountjoy who rode out Henry's restoration only to lend his support to Edward's successful re-conquest in 1471.²² The tenuous situation of the Lancastrian restoration gave way to royal favour that Mountjoy enjoyed for the remainder of his life. A similar outcome was surely Westbury's desire in 1461, but the provost's hope was dashed with the exile of the college's generous royal patron following the defeat of the royal army at Towton.

The fellowship of Eton had strong reasons for anxiety by reason of the exceptional favour it received from its patron, Henry VI, who had founded it by royal charter on 11 October 1440, making the institution his personal project for the remainder of his troubled reign.²³ The charter provides the interest Henry took in the college:

Wherefore we...have considered in zealous contemplation, in what manner, how, or by what kind of royal gift, according to our devotion and custom of our elders, we can make suitable honour to the same lady and our most holy mother, to the satisfaction of her spouse; and finally, having contemplated such things in

²⁰ Notable attacks on property to symbolically damage the lordship of a regional or political opponent occurred with the sacking of Walter Blount's manor of Elvaston in which his arms were quartered, alluding to the traitor's death his enemies felt Blount deserved. The Percy-Neville feud also featured similar attacks as both sides sought to demonstrate the ineffective lordship of the other by displaying the inability to protect one's own property and servants. See, H. Castor, "Walter Blount was gone to serve traytours": The Sack of Elvaston and the Politics of the North Midlands in 1454", *Midland History*, 19 (1994), 21-35; R. A. Griffiths, *Kings and Country: England and Wales in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1991), 321-66.

²¹ M. A. Hicks, *False, Fleeting, Perjur'd Clarence: George, Duke of Clarence 1449-78* (Gloucester, 1980), 96.

²² *Historie of the arrivall of Edward IV in England and the final recoverye of his kingdoms from Henry VI, A.D. 1471*, ed. J. Bruce, Camden 1st ser. (1838), 20.

²³ ECR, 39/3.

intimate mediation, it was settled in our heart that, in honour and support of such and so great a holy mother, we will found a college in the parish church of Eton near Windsor, which is not far from our place of birth.²⁴

The school later served as a great source of pride for its founder. In 1446 Henry boasted that "it surpasses all other such schools whatsoever of our kingdom...it ought in prerogative of its name, and be named henceforth the king's general school, and be called lady mother and mistress of all other grammar schools."²⁵ The unpopular method by which it was endowed was also a significant cause for concern. Eton had already been publicly criticized in parliament for the generous grants it had received and Edward's father had been openly hostile to the college during his second protectorship in the summer of 1455.²⁶ Attacking such lavish royal projects was part of the Yorkist populist platform to bring good governance to the realm and restore the depleted resources of the Crown. Westbury took a proactive stratagem by attempting to curry favour with the new duke immediately as it would have been a logical fear that the son would continue the policies of his father.

Edward, Duke of York's good lordship was given, but it was not given freely. The payment of £266 13s. 4d., nearly a quarter of the total annual revenue for the college prior to the outbreak of the war, was delivered by Westbury into the exchequer in September and recorded as a gift (*dona*).²⁷ Throughout the first phase of the war, the Yorkist leadership relied heavily upon substantial loans from their servants, the clergy, and the London magistrates in particular.²⁸ Between July 1460 and April 1461, Edward received £11,066 from the city leaders who were noted to have provided their money "unto us by waye of prest for the weel of us and the good publique of alle this oure reamne."²⁹ This purchase of favour provides a fuller picture of how Edward funded his campaign. Loans were an undeniably crucial source of cash, yet *quid pro quo* arrangements further supplemented the duke's finances. Westbury's payment was a substantial sum for a favour which cost Edward nothing. It could be argued that he had little else to give at this stage of the conflict. Regardless, such a grant was not only cost-effective, but it was non-binding, resting entirely on Edward's good will. It was a sound stratagem that continued well into the foundation years of the reign. Following Edward's accession, the citizens of Canterbury incurred *diversis expensis* for the king's confirmation of their civic liberties.³⁰ Winchester College paid £166 13s. 4d. for the confirmation of its charters on 26 July 1461 in addition to a grant of the alien priory lands at Andover.³¹ That Winchester

²⁴ *PROME*, vol. 11, 345.

²⁵ *English Historical Documents*, IV, 918.

²⁶ The sum of £1,000 from the issues of the Duchy of Lancaster were diverted away from the college endowment in a move that played to the financial platform and political motives of the Duke of York. It is discussed in greater detail in B. P. Wolffe, *Henry VI* (London, 1981), 297-98.

²⁷ TNA, E 401/877 m.1. Mr. Card has suggested this money was given by Westbury specifically for the expenses of Edward IV's coronation, but I have found no evidence to support this claim. See Card, *Eton*, 26-28.

²⁸ TNA, E 404/72/1 nos. 16, 18, 19, 83; E 404/73/1 nos. 13, 19.

²⁹ Scofield, vol.1, 145; TNA, E 404/72/1 nos. 22-23.

³⁰ Historical Manuscripts Commission, *9th Report* (1883), 140.

³¹ Winchester, Winchester College Archive, Charters, Domus I, 717; Bursar's Account Rolls, Domus III, 221-34; T. F. Kirby, *Annals of Winchester College, from 1382 to the present time* (1892), 211. Mr. Kirby mistakenly substituted *restauracionis* for *resumpcionis*, interpreting Baker's intentions as one of combatting the restoration of the priory in Andover.

College, an educational establishment akin to Eton, was able to secure an exemption to the resumption act demonstrates Edward's lack of support for the latter was not merely the consequence of a universal policy, but rather a personal unwillingness to continue his rival's pet projects. There was a market for royal favour and Edward IV proved accommodating to any petitioner capable of offering him something tangible in return. He was also entirely capable of forgetting his past assurances if the situation suited him.

Edward's harsh treatment toward his predecessor's foundation after his accession has often been recounted as his resumption of the college's grants severely reduce its income before attempting to suppress it entirely.³² His attitude and behaviour toward Eton that must be evaluated. Why did Edward reverse his stance toward the college so soon after granting his protection? Although minor grants were initially conceded (suggesting that his grant of protection was made in good faith at the time) neither Eton nor King's College Cambridge were included with the other foundations to receive a proviso of exemption to the act of resumption in the new king's parliament held in November 1461.³³ Such a move seems contrary to the sometime illogical clemency the affable king offered to even staunch Lancastrians. This was a product of his drive to win support and acceptance to the validity of his right to the throne, yet Simon Payling has recently expounded that there were limits to Edward's conciliatory nature.³⁴ Many were forgiven and many were punished in 1461. The college was not exceptional in the revocation of favour and the refusal to extend an olive branch. The round of executions following the battle of Towton in which the earls of Wiltshire and Devon in addition to forty-two Lancastrian knights establish the king's unwillingness to offer clemency to certain individuals.³⁵ The motivation behind Edward's shift in attitude toward Eton has been attributed to his jealousy of his predecessor or a complete and utter disregard for education which appears more attractive as the king was not a great patron of scholarship.³⁶ Rather than envy of Henry or distaste for the arts, it is much more likely that the decision was reached for reasons pertaining politics, finance, and personal duty.

Allowing Eton to thrive was surely an impolitic prospect. The college served as a physical reminder of a man the new ruling regime could not view to be a king by right. The new regime exerted significant energy suppressing Henry's memory and lauding Edward's legitimacy in their propaganda and court ritual. Curbing the oppositional imagination was a

³² Ross, *Edward IV*, 269; Maxwell-Lyte, *Eton College*, 62-72; Lander, *Government and Community*, 109; A. Crawford, *The Yorkists: The History of a Dynasty* (London, 2007), 59; Card, *Eton*, 26-35.

³³ *CPR, 1461-7*, 73, 196-7. The resumed estates held by the college prior to 1461 were divided amongst Edward's supporters. Sir John Fogge, the treasurer of the household, was provided the manors of Preston and Hooe in Sussex. Sir John Pilkington and John Gogh, both household men with ties of service to Richard, Duke of York, received a hospice and four shops at Aldersgate in London (Pilkington) and the manor of Horned Weir (Gogh). Foundations favoured by the king were also included in the division of the spoils. The college of Fotheringhay received the manor of Charlton Magna in Wiltshire and St George's Windsor was granted the reversion of the manor of Grovebury in Bedfordshire. *ECR* 60/13/3/1-4; 39/140; *CPR, 1461-7*, 139. The college's remaining lands were protected from subsequent acts of resumption, see *PROME*, vol. 13, 147-48.

³⁴ S. J. Payling, "Edward IV and the Politics of Conciliation in the Early 1460s", in *The Yorkist Age: Proceedings of the 2011 Harlaxton Symposium*, eds. H. Kleineke and C. Steer (Donington, 2013), 81-94.

³⁵ *Great Chronicle*, 197; "Gregory's Chronicle: 1461-1469", in *The Historical Collections of a Citizen of London in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. J. Gairdner (London, 1876), 217.

³⁶ Maxwell-Lyte, *Eton College*, 62; Crawford, *The Yorkists*, 59.

chief concern in the early foundation years of Edward's reign in light of the continued resistance on the fringes of his realm. The Lancastrian court in exile, offering safe-haven to any committed opponents of Edward's rule, only compounded matters and increased the sense of insecurity of the regime. This desire is especially evident in the language of both the signet warrant and the later Yorkist government records discussed in greater detail below.

Secondly, aside from the political considerations, the fiscal benefit of suppressing Eton proved too attractive to ignore. Despite acquiring land from the attainted Lancastrians on a scale unprecedented since the aftermath of the battle of Boroughbridge in 1322, the prizes of the first war were quickly granted away again by the king to reward his supporters' loyalty and expand the clique that had helped bring him to power.³⁷ Edward thus remained cash-strapped in the early years of his reign which made the resumption of the foundations' estates a fiscally savvy move which appealed to popular sentiment given the demands of the Commons to curb wasteful spending. In 1451, Eton had been a source of complaint in parliament as the grants for the foundation were deemed to have "been to youre highnesse prejudiciall, and over chargefull and noyus," and it was thus asked that such grants be made "voide and of non effect."³⁸

The third and final source for the loss of favour is that it was a clear extension of Richard, Duke of York's earlier policies. During his second protectorship in the summer of 1455, the duke had intended to satisfy the Commons demand to rebuild the finances of the royal household by resuming the king's generous provisions such as the Duchy of Lancaster lands that had been alienated from the crown by Henry in 1448 to provide an annual payment of £2,000 for the benefit of his twin foundations.³⁹ Edward portrayed his decision as one designed to set past wrongs right, citing the numerous priories in England and Wales that were despoiled so that Eton might be endowed by Henry VI.⁴⁰ It was soon conceived that the institution be suppressed entirely and annexed to St George's Windsor which Edward favoured, intending to turn it into the royal mausoleum of his dynasty. Pope Pius II was petitioned in 1463 for permission to absorb the college and a Bull of Union was issued on 13 November. Surviving indentures provide meticulous lists of the goods such as jewels, plate, vestments, and furniture which were removed from the college for its nearby rival.⁴¹ The loss of the bulk of the college's estates radically reduced the revenue from £1,133 8s. 6d. in 1461 to a mere £321 10s. 11d. by 1467 which necessitated severe cut-backs.⁴² Fortunately for the

³⁷ Edward II's confiscations are discussed at length in N. Fryde, *The Tyranny and Fall of Edward II* (Cambridge, 1979), 69-86.

³⁸ *PROME*, vol. 12, 187-188; Wolffe, *Henry VI*, 8, 245, 297. The request from the Commons was ultimately unsuccessful as both Eton and King's College Cambridge were amongst the exemptions to the act of resumption, see *PROME*, vol. 12, 193-194.

³⁹ Wolffe, *Henry VI*, 297; Hicks, *Warwick*, 125; Carpenter, *Wars of the Roses*, 140; R. Willis and J. W. Clark, *The Architectural History of the University of Cambridge and of the Colleges of Cambridge and Eton*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1886), vol. 1, 350-80.

⁴⁰ *CPR*, 1467-77, 66.

⁴¹ Ross, *Edward IV*, 269; Coll/Inv/4-5. The record of goods transferred from Eton to Windsor undermines Virginia Davis's claim that there was little effort made to enforce the suppression once the bull was issued. See V. Davis, *William Waynflete: Bishop and Educationalist* (Woodbridge, 1993), 52.

⁴² Maxwell-Lyte, *Eton College*, 65; ECR, AR/C/1, 2. Under Edward IV, the revenues of the college reached their lowest point in 1467. The king softened his stance toward the foundation thereafter and the income began to

college, Provost Westbury was able to resist the annexation until the king softened his stance after 1467, allowing the foundation minor grants and abandoning the decision to suppress the college.⁴³ Provost Westbury's efforts to avoid the suppression of Eton were successful although by what means remains unclear.⁴⁴ Eton recovered some of the losses incurred in 1461, but the claim that it thrived would be to overstate the extent of its recovery.⁴⁵ While signs that connection between the college and Crown had certainly improved in the brief reign of Richard III,⁴⁶ many of the lands alienated at the onset of Edward's reign were not returned to the foundation and its revenues did not reach a level on par with its initial grants under the Lancastrian regime.⁴⁷

Edward's grant to Westbury in February shows the duke was quite willing to work with anyone capable of providing a tangible benefit to his cause; however, his later political action was influenced by concerns that were far greater than his earlier assurance of protection. Eton was a personal project of the new king's greatest enemy and it possessed valuable resources that could be better allocated for the new regime. These factors combined with any possible sense of duty Edward felt toward his father's policies rendered the college wholly expendable.

Delving beyond its contents, the language of the letter is quite revealing in regards to the transformation of the newly-minted duke's identity. The sign manual is perhaps the only surviving original signature from Edward as duke of York or as an adult earl of March. The "E York" appears practised and steady, contrasting well with the "E Marche" found in the letter composed to Richard, duke of York when Edward was still a child based at Ludlow.⁴⁸ The manner in which the duke is styled as "Edward by þe grace of god of Englande Fraunce and Irland vray and just heire Duc of York Erl of the March and ulvestre" refrains from labelling Edward as king, but nevertheless the tone and language fits with the agreement made in the Accord which specified Richard, Duke of York and his male issue were heirs to the throne after Henry VI.⁴⁹ Edward's decision to abandon his allegiance to the king can be similarly determined in the dating clause which employs the year of grace rather than the regnal year.

show signs of recovery; however, the majority of lands in 1461 were never regained and the highest annual receipts under the Yorkists remained well under the average income the school had received under Henry VI, see ECR, AR/C/3; AR/D/1, 2.

⁴³ Thomas Bouchier, Archbishop of Canterbury was selected by Pope Paul II to adjudicate the matter and annul Pius II's previous bull issued on 13 November 1463. Bouchier's decision was made on 30 Aug. 1476 in favour of Eton, see ECR, 39/135; Maxwell-Lyte, *Eton College*, 66. For grants to the provost, see CPR, 1467-77, 328, 394.

⁴⁴ Scofield, *Edward IV*, vol. 2, 434-9; Davis, *Waynflete*, 51-3.

⁴⁵ A. F. Sutton and L. Visser-Fuchs, "As dear to him as the Trojans were to Hector:" Richard III and the University of Cambridge', in *Richard III and East Anglia: Magnates, Gilds and Learned Men*, ed. L. Visser-Fuchs (2010), 105-42, at 111.

⁴⁶ Richard III's chaplain, John Dokett (or Doggett), was a scholar of Eton and King's College, Cambridge. The latter institution fared well under the king and similar gains may have been forthcoming for Eton had the reign progressed. See C. D. Ross, *Richard III* (1981), 134; W. G. Searle, *The History of the Queens' College of St Margaret and St Bernard* (1867), 87n.

⁴⁷ TNA, E 135/2/25; PROME, vol. 16, 68-70. The provosts and scholars of Eton and King's Cambridge successfully petitioned the king at parliament in 1489 for the creation of a council comprised of several peers and bishops to inquire into titles of the individuals holding the resumed lands.

⁴⁸ *Excerpta Historica: or, Illustrations of English History*, ed. S. Bentley (1833), 8-9; *Original Letters Illustrative of English History*, ed. H. Ellis, 3 vols. (London, 1824), vol. 1, 9-10.

⁴⁹ ECR, 39/124; Scofield, *Edward IV*, vol. 1, 127.

Such a move followed the precedents of Henry Bolingbroke prior to his usurpation of Richard II in 1399 as well as Edward's father upon his return from Ireland in July 1460. Omitting the king's regnal year was a clear signal of the belief that the reign had run its course.

The use of "vray and just heire" is particularly striking as it is consistent with the terms of the Accord. The consistent rhetoric highlights the determination to uphold the agreement in the face of the violations they perceived to have been committed.⁵⁰ Moreover, the title was not without precedent. It was a continuation of his late father's practice after he publicly presented his claim to the crown before parliament. York began referring to himself as 'true and legitimate heir of the kingdoms of England and France and of the lordship and land of Ireland' for the remainder of his life.⁵¹ An even earlier example was established forty years prior in the Treaty of Troyes. Henry V's anticipation of his inheritance to the French throne was evident in his adoption of the title of "heir and regent of the rewme of France."⁵² This may have been the model which informed Richard, Duke of York's language in 1460, yet there was a significant departure with the inclusion the just nature of the title. The emphasis on the *de jure* right to the throne was prevalent in Yorkist rhetoric to explain why the *de facto* Lancastrian kings were not truly kings despite their possession of the crown. The grand title employed by Cecily Neville, Dowager Duchess of York as "the king's mother and late wife unto Richard in right king of England and of France and lord of Ireland" attests to the consistent need to portray the righteousness of a claim that had been suppressed. The language with which Edward referred to himself shows a committed continuation of his father's rhetoric which he carried into his own reign. Government records would label Henry VI as formerly in fact and not in right king of England *nuper de facto et non de jure rege Anglia*. Referring to himself as the just heir was Edward's tactic for presuming the validity of the accord and the legitimacy of his title. This was a warrant issued by a man who shortly expected to become king, and was ready to offer his grace in such a fashion.

The signet letter of Edward, Duke of York is a remarkable document, revealing a young man possessing a deep conviction of his right to the English crown. It survives in the archive of its intended recipient where it has been consulted by historians of Eton College; however, previous studies have paid scant attention to the significance of this document as it pertained to the immediate activity of the future king during his brief stay in London. The document granting protection for Westbury and the fellowship of Eton College sheds light on Edward's actions on the ground beyond the assertion of his title and the subsequent coronation. It provides a fuller picture of the *quid pro quo* manner in which Edward financed his fledgling regime as he began to actively take up the reins of government. This would become a favoured method for raising money and foreshadows the hated benevolences that marked his later reign. Additionally, the language employed in the warrant appears to have been heavily influenced by the rhetoric Edward's father used after his title was accepted in the

⁵⁰ The king's liberation after second St Albans was later condemned in the first parliament of Edward IV's reign as the violation of the Accord which justified Henry's deposition in favour of York's heir. "Be it announced and judged, by the said advice, assent and authority, considering the foregoing, that the said usurper, Henry, late called Henry VI, against good faith, truth, conscience and honour, broke the said treaty and agreement, and out of wilful malice abandoned them." See *PROME*, vol. 13, 466-67.

⁵¹ Hicks, *Clarence*, 16; TNA, C 81/1486 no. 85.

⁵² *CCR*, 1419-22, 108, 119.

Accord. This influence, compounded by equally pressing political and financial concerns, explains Edward's decision to reverse his stance toward the college and shows his ability to make (and reverse) his own policy. His signet warrant is markedly valuable given the little evidence of government and the circumspect chronicle sources during the Yorkist occupation of London. Though young and inexperienced, Edward was no cipher even at this early stage of his career. His grant to Eton shows the assertive nature that had been so conspicuously absent in his predecessor's reign.

Appendix: Edward, Duke of York's Grant of Protection to Eton College (Eton College Archives, Royal Patents, ECR 39/no. 124).

In the following, common abbreviations have been silently expanded, capitalisation modernised, and a degree of punctuation introduced. Editorial interventions, such as lost text supplied, are indicated by square brackets [], interlinear insertions in the original MS by pointed brackets < >.

Be it knowen that We, Edward by the grace of god of Englande, Fraunce, [and] Irland vray and just heire, Duc of York, Erl of the March, and Ulvestre, have by these our lettres taken and recyved the Provoste and felaship of the Collage of Eyton into our defense and savegarde. Therefor We desir and pray al thoos persouns to whom theese our letteres shal bee shewed, and evry of tham, that thay ne noon of tham hurte, trouble, ne vexe the said Provost or felaship, their tenaunts or servaunts, neithre tham or their lyveloods, goods, or catalles, robbe despoyle ner vexe otherwise than by ryght <lawe> and good conscience be, ev thay wol have our good lordeship. Geven undre our signet at London the xxvij day of Feverer the yere of our Lord mccccx.

E. York

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