A People Accustomed to Triumph
The Popularity of War in England, 1337-1399

by

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Abstract

This study examines war enthusiasm as a cultural and social phenomenon in England during the first half of the Hundred Years’ War, during the reigns of Edward III and Richard II. It deals with questions of how war ardour was shaped at all levels of society; how it was shaped by developments abroad and the active efforts to promote it at home. I have attempted to illustrate both individual and collective experiences of fighting men and the perceptions of those who commented on popular attitudes to war. My study addresses how war materially appealed to the English and seeks to tease out the subtler nuances of what moved them to wage war and support the cause of the king. I discuss this in the backdrop of the changing fortunes of the war, and examine how it materially and mentally affected people at all social levels from the monarchy to the peasantry.
Contents

Abstract...................................................................................................................2

Introduction and Literature
Review....................................................................................................................4

1  War and Profit.....................................................................................................16

2  The Spiritual Allurements of War.................................................................34

3  The Politics of Ricardian England and the Culture of War......................46

Conclusion...........................................................................................................68

Bibliography.........................................................................................................71
Introduction

By 1399, the year of his deposition, Richard II had lost the support of his nobles, in large part because of his aversion to the war in France. Richard’s decision to seek peace with that country was not merely an upset to many of his knights and nobility, who were deprived of enormous opportunities for plunder and the great wealth to be amassed from the ransom of captured French knights, as the Duke of Gloucester complained.¹ The King’s peace was contrary to the way in which the English had come to see themselves: a warlike people accustomed to triumph; a people whose culture was infused with popular imagery surrounding warfare. What can only be described as the excitement of combat—the opportunity to show gallantry, a sense of adventure, or being swept up in a flurry of national pride—had been well instilled among lords, ambitious knights and common soldiers by Richard II’s illustrious grandfather, Edward III, with his spectacular victories at Sluys, Crécy, Calais and Poitiers.

In the England of King Edward III, campaigns in France from Crécy to Poitiers captured public imagination and excitement. War abroad could promise profit and seemed to offer escape from the miseries of poverty and persecution by the law. The fledgling professionalism in the army created by the pay system could instil excitement about military service. War, as Lawrence James wrote, could allow the individual a chance to “engage in history on a grand scale.”² Warlike pastimes were part and parcel of the English sporting world in the year of Richard’s downfall. War abroad could also keep relative peace at home. In short, Edward had brought into the late medieval English

imagination the idea that war was a profitable, exciting, and possibly even redeeming experience; through war, the island nation had eclipsed France as the great power of Western Europe, and the English became disposed to see the French as their natural enemy. Small wonder then, that the popularity of war meant Richard’s peace policy was galling to the English not only in terms of threatening livelihoods, but also in cultural terms.

The allurements of warfare in England from 1337 to 1399 may be studied in three important facets. Firstly, the opportunity to gain enormous wealth and lucrative plunder enticed men at all levels of society—from archers and yeomen to ambitious gentlemen to the kingdom’s highest-ranking knights—to serve in Edward’s campaigns in France, which seemed to offer such gains far more than the Scottish wars. Ransoms were hugely profitable: the sale and trade of important prisoners became so widespread that it was subject to extensive formal regulation and custom. In the lower ranks, soldiers could be enriched by the share of the booty they took, of which plenty was to be found in the French countryside and on the battlefield. Second, there was what can best be described as a spiritual appeal of warfare. In part, this was achieved by the personal appeal of Edward himself as a warrior king, who presented himself as a miles simplex (simple knight) in the company of, and on equal terms with, his barons. He had a charismatic, romantic appeal as a force for unity and a strong nation. There was a strong connection—established by the chroniclers’ efforts and Edward’s—between his reign and the Arthurian legend. Much as the professionalism of English archers added to their fame and

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saw them popularised in stories, Edward’s skill in command and his control over troops gave him a professional appeal. In an age where warfare was seen as a divinely ordained trial by combat, Edward’s success at Crécy and those of his illustrious son, Edward the Black Prince, at Poitiers and Nájera seemed to confirm that the king’s cause was just and enjoyed God’s blessing.

The third area of study draws in the question of what appeal warfare had when the war in France was going badly. By the end of Edward III’s reign, when the Black Prince also sickened and died, England had suffered humiliating military reverses. When the boy king Richard II ascended to the throne in 1377, his early reign was dominated by memories of his eminent forbears, his father the Black Prince and his grandfather Edward. It was also dominated by the prospect of further humiliation at the hands of the French and fears of invasion. These fears seem to have given rise to renewed hatred of the French in England and a revived war enthusiasm, at least in the backdrop of sentiments that a favourable peace was difficult or impossible to achieve in this period. There was indeed some novelty in Ricardian war enthusiasm, but a grasp of warfare’s profitability and the magnates’ understanding of what they could expect to get from service in war remained extant from the reign of Edward III. They had come to expect

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6 Prestwich, 168.
7 Prestwich, 168. It is important to note that for Edward, convictions about going to war or making peace were informed by his strong attachment to perceived omens of divine providence, including violent storms as well as military victories. For more on how such convictions prefigured in his conclusion of peace at Brétigny in 1360, see Ian Mortimer, *The Perfect King: The Life of Edward III, Father of the English Nation* (London: Vintage Books, 2008), 340-343.
enormous wealth from the ransom of important prisoners and become accustomed to bonuses. The experience of war under Edward had amply inculcated this mindset.

The motives for fighting can in large part be grouped into two major periods. Between 1346 and roughly 1370, enthusiasm for the war—of which there was no shortage in this period—came from military successes that would certainly instil conviction in a just cause. Until the last years of Edward III’s reign, a medley of “patriotism, desire for chivalric renown, and hopes of financial gain” ensured a continual flow of volunteers for the king’s campaigns. When the tide of the war turned against the English, however, war enthusiasm dampened. When profits dried up, when territory was lost and military losses mounted, embitterment grew among the commons over the ruinous cost of the war. Beginning with English humbling in the early 1370s and territorial losses in the 1375 Treaty of Brétigny, continuing through invasion threats in the early years of Richard’s reign, while remaining English territories in France were threatened and raids carried out on the English coast, there arose and remained in the government a stern reluctance to fight, and the country’s economic troubles hindered the ability to do so. Parliament repeatedly refused to grant taxes for the war and England’s allies in Flanders and Brittany grew frustrated and resentful.

By the late 1380s, however, in the midst of disasters in France and further invasion fears, a very public war ardour seems to have re-emerged and caused objections to Richard’s 1389 decision to discontinue the war in France. Sentiments differed from those

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9 Prestwich, 179.
10 Prestwich, 179.
of Edward’s golden years, but war enthusiasm was still empowered by prospects of financial gain and by the sense of purpose war afforded. In part, feelings were borne of panic, but a resolute and bellicose demeanour thrived under magnates such as the Duke of Gloucester and the war party in parliament. As Desmond Seward wrote, they understood that “if the English disliked paying for the war, they liked the prospect of invasion even less.” Gloucester’s nostalgia for the years of Edward’s military glory and his hatred of the French seems to have been shared by many of his countrymen in this period of crisis, as they “began to regard the French as their natural prey.”

It may be argued that active enthusiasm for the war only existed when the war was going well, but when we consider the impact the memory of Edward III and his triumphs must have had on the highest knights and the lowliest commoners in light of the poor state of affairs in Richard’s reign, we may see that Edward had done much to turn the English into a people accustomed to fighting. This idea is further exemplified when we consider that the man who deposed Richard, Henry of Bolingbroke—afterwards Henry IV—had garnered much support in England from his repudiation of Richard’s peace policy. He was of course denied a French war by the manifold ghouls of financial penury, revolt and a full-scale war in Wales, but “everyone knew that he hoped to [campaign in France] one day.” That undertaking would be left to his son Henry V, who gave his people a smashing victory at Agincourt.

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13 Seward, 141.
14 Seward, 135-136.
15 Seward, 135.
16 Seward, 145.
Historical debate tends to favour the idea that financial allurements such as prisoners and ransoms, plunder, bonuses and compensation had greater appeal to fighting men than did the introduction of wages. Michael Prestwich argues that the introduction and expansion of the pay system instigated under Edward I and expanded on by Edward III played a far less important role in the profits enjoyed by magnates and common soldiers alike, especially as pay was so often in arrears. He posits instead that plunder was of paramount importance. It was the backbone of war’s place in commerce.\textsuperscript{17} The weight of recent and older scholarship agrees: there is little doubt about the appeal of plunder in scholarship on Edward III and Richard II. John Barnie, in \textit{War in Medieval English Society} (1974) also holds that spoils were the greatest attraction of the war’s early campaigns.\textsuperscript{18} More recent sources such as Richard Barber’s \textit{Edward III and the Triumph of England} (2013) and older ones such as H.J. Hewitt’s \textit{The Organization of War Under Edward III} (1966) both argue that soldiers’ discovery of plunder at Crécy and subsequent battles were important in revealing to men at all ranks the riches the French campaigns had to offer. Rémy Ambühl amply emphasises the extent of plunder in his 2013 work on prisoners of war.\textsuperscript{19}

What also tends to draw more consensus among historians is that in this period feudal levies—recruitment of troops serving as vassals to their lords under feudal obligation—were indeed in decline in favour of the various offers of pay and

\textsuperscript{17} Prestwich, 180.
\textsuperscript{18} John Barnie, \textit{War in Medieval English Society: Social Values in the Hundred Years’ War 1337-99} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), 34.
\textsuperscript{19} Rémy Ambühl, \textit{Prisoners of War in the Hundred Years’ War: Ransom Culture in the Late Middle Ages} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 98-100.
compensation that characterised the new contract armies.\textsuperscript{20} There is agreement, then, on the idea that warfare was taking on a new dynamic, one that saw the increased pre-eminence of the common soldier on the battlefield, and that thereby a wider basis for war support was emerging in the England of Edward III. The numbers of knights were diminishing and those of footsoldiers expanding.\textsuperscript{21} Scholarship old and new favours the idea put forth by Andrew Ayton that “there were expanding numbers of non-aristocratic professional soldiers, men drawn to war by the prospect of profit rather than birth.”\textsuperscript{22} This revolution arose from the growing use of contract armies, introduction of wages and greater independence in captains’ commands, which gave leading magnates the opportunity to distinguish themselves and their men to reap incidental profits. Historians tend to agree that this trend only gathered pace as the war progressed. Such arrangements were not as common in the early campaigns led by Edward III himself, and only came to their greatest fruition after about 1360, when armies were increasingly led by one or more of Edward’s sons.\textsuperscript{23} Historians like Michael Prestwich agree.\textsuperscript{24} This does bring into question the extent to which Edward III was personally responsible for creating an army in whose service a wider range of people took delight. N.B. Lewis outlines the heightened need to increase wages and the payment of a \textit{regard} to military leaders in order to secure wider enticement of the arms-bearing classes to fight. This, he notes, was especially the case in the backdrop of military reverses late in Edward’s reign and into

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{21}Ayton, 305.
\bibitem{22}Ayton, 312.
\bibitem{23}Ayton, 307-309.
\bibitem{24}Prestwich, 174.
\end{thebibliography}
Richard’s. Patricia DeMarco places the dashed expectation of bonuses among knights at the heart of their discontent with Richard II upon his reintroduction of the feudal levy for the Scottish war in 1385.

Another important facet of war profits was dealing in prisoners. What historians more recently appear to have questioned is what use captured prisoners had, how ransoms factored into knightly ideals of chivalry and how or to what ends the sale of prisoners was regulated. Their studies help us to define the limits of how this enormously profitable enterprise factored into popular enthusiasm for war. Was the sale of prisoners more an instrument of policy than a lucrative business elemental to a culture that loved war? Chris Given-Wilson and Françoise Bériac argue that the magnates’ desire for financial gain from the prisoners they took was different from the king’s interests. Edward III seems to have taken pains to control and centralise the sale and exchange of prisoners, demanding during the winter of 1346-47 that captors bring their prisoners to London to be given a suitable reward. According to Given-Wilson and Bériac’s 2001 article, while Edward understood the hopes of his commanders to gain enormous wealth, he himself made any profitability of prisoners subordinate to the idea of using them as pawns in order to conduct foreign policy; that is, to secure favourable peace outcomes for the realm, which certainly seems to have been the case in the sale of Charles of Blois in 1356 to secure political concessions that would end the Breton war favourably. Given-Wilson and Bériac also illustrate that at Crécy, as at Agincourt nearly seventy years later, any

28 Given-Wilson and Bériac, 823.
potential profitability of prisoners was ignored and prisoners were not spared. In the former case chances for ransoms came secondary to the promise of no quarter in response to the French display of the Oriflamme, and at Agincourt the massive number of prisoners that fell into English hands was deemed an enormous threat. In fact, Given-Wilson and Bériac consider Poitiers to be an exceptional case of prisoner-taking. However, Ambühl points out a number of other battles that produced a large tally of prisoners: Launac, Auray, Baugé, Cravant, Patay, Formigny and Castillon. He also argues that “once the English had enjoyed success in the 1340s…it was no longer possible to suppress private interests and the individual quest for profit.”

David Green questions how the popularity of ransoms, an enterprise limited to the capture of important knightly prisoners, fared against changes in the nature of armies. Though the late fourteenth century, the role of projectile warfare and novel tactics centred on the growing importance of infantry meant that the number of mounted men-at-arms decreased on the battlefields, and the presence of valuable prisoners declined accordingly. The devastation of the new warfare, he suggests, created an increasing number of situations where mercy, a tenet of chivalry and useful commodity in the search for ransoms, became a luxury in the face of military emergencies on the battlefield.

There is other, often-older scholarship that waxes more sanguine about the consistent appeal of ransoms, such as the work of May McKisack, which details at length the intense regulation surrounding the practice of ransoms that speak to their growing

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29 Given-Wilson and Bériac, 804-806.
30 Ambühl, 102.
31 Ambühl, 102.
32 Green, 76.
ubiquity and popularity. Denys Hay takes a similar line, drawing on the evidence from contemporary accounts such as Froissart’s Chronicles and the Chroniques of Jean le Bel wherein there is frequent mention of the value of prisoners taken, or which could have been taken. The story of the Duke of Gloucester’s complaint to Richard II that ending the war in France would deprive the warring classes of their livelihood, found in Froissart, appears in Hay’s argument. Similar stories, or at least invectives that Richard was dishonouring the legacy of his grandfather and abrogating his duty as king by not making war with France, all involving Gloucester, are found in Desmond Seward’s 1978 work on the Hundred Years’ War, and that of Patricia DeMarco. To Hay’s mind, like McKisack, there is little doubt that ransoms, like any other spoils of war, were an integral part of war’s financial allurement. Additionally, the lively objections that prevailed among both the commons and the magnates in Ricardian England that peace was destructive to their livelihood is mentioned by Seward and DeMarco and corroborated by one of Richard’s most prominent biographers, Nigel Saul. Throughout his discussions of the political coups Richard dealt with in the late 1380s and his difficulties securing peace with France in the early 1390s, not only do the objections of Gloucester and his companions appear yet again, but much is also made of the protests of commoners in Cheshire, one of the heartlands of military recruitment at that time.

Lastly, another bone of contention among historians has been what role Edward III played as a paragon of the Arthurian legend he is widely believed to have popularised.

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33 McKisack, 247-248.
35 Seward, 141
36 DeMarco, 471.
37 Saul, 221.
The image of this king as a new-made Arthur who founded a fourteenth-century Round Table in the form of the Order of the Garter is bound up with the personal charisma he exuded. As mentioned, he showed professional appeal through his skill in command and a personal charm, an apparent sense of camaraderie with his closest circle of knights. This image speaks in volumes to the accusations of magnates in Ricardian England that Richard failed to live up to the achievements of the colossus that had been his grandfather; that his preference for peace was galling to a political elite who had learned, either by their own experience or from their fathers, of the English military prowess built by Edward III, which many now hoped to restore. Saul writes, “Richard was always to pay conventional homage to the memory of his father…nonetheless, father and son were men of very different temper and outlook.”

In their discussions of how a poem such as the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* reflected a literary culture that made parallels between the legendary Arthur and either Richard or Edward, DeMarco and George R. Keiser both illustrate how the poet alludes to a longing among the knights in Arthur’s court for a restoration of past glories. This predilection echoes the grievances of Gloucester yet again. They also discuss the idea that Arthur, like Richard or Edward, is stirred out of complacent peace by a pressing need to defend his just rights and inheritances. While DeMarco notes the clear parallels between Arthur and Richard, Keiser’s argument is that there are no real explicit parallels between Arthur and Edward apart from the aforementioned traits.

Neither argument is really at odds with Richard Barber’s recent assertion that Edward III had no active fascination with Arthur. As is explained below, he is believed to

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38 Saul, 9.
have revived the Arthurian legend in order to foster popular support both for his kingship and upcoming campaign in France in the 1340s. Barber is adamant “it was the chroniclers who were eager to see him as the reincarnation of King Arthur.”\(^{40}\) (Emphasis mine) What makes it hard to determine whether Edward as Arthur was a parallel bound up with Edward’s fame as a military conqueror is the fact that when chroniclers like Jean le Bel compare him to the mythical king, it is less for his military prowess than his social life, and the colourful environment at his court.\(^{41}\) “These great feasts and tourneys and jousts and assemblies of ladies earned him such universal esteem,” Le Bel notes, “that everyone said he was the second King Arthur.”\(^{42}\) Nonetheless, works such as the *Morte* poem present too striking a parallel for us to ignore the idea that Edward’s conquests were likened to Arthur’s.

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\(^{40}\) Barber, *Edward III*, 157.
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War and Profit

Richard II’s discontinuation of the war in France was anathema to the prevailing martial spirit in England. Of course, that discontinuation was also depriving ambitious men of a chance for enormous profit. According to Froissart, the Duke of Gloucester complained to the King in 1390 that peace deprived of livelihood the “poor knights and squires and archers of England whose comforts and station in society depend upon war.”43 The financial allurements of war that prevailed in the reigns of Edward III and Richard II were appealing to Englishmen during a period when military organization based on obligatory duty was being superseded by the promise of pay and profit, but also by the realization during campaigns of the lucrative plunder that was to be had from war.

By the time of the Battle of Crécy in 1346, the English army had changed from its former self. Edward’s reign saw an amalgam of old and new systems of raising an army working together. In several ways, reforms made by Edward I paved the way for his grandson to establish an effective system of military organization that could muster appeal to magnates and soldiers. Edward’s reign saw the rise of contractual agreements between the king and his knights as well as the offer of pay and other incentives to common soldiers. While money was by and large the main instrument of fourteenth-century warfare, “for the rank and file of an expeditionary force it was still necessary to rely on the ancient obligation of the shires and boroughs to raise men for a national defence.”44 Up to at least the campaign of 1359-60, an English army headed by the king himself still very much relied on traditional methods of recruitment such as summons rather than contracts, and this was certainly the case for the army that served in the Crécy

43 Quoted in Hay, 91.
44 McKisack, 237.
and Calais campaign, for which no contracts were drawn up.\textsuperscript{45} That force was principally financed and organized by the household department of the royal wardrobe, much in the way household knights had served with their retinue under Edward I in Scotland in 1300.\textsuperscript{46} As I shall elaborate below, the limits of novel recruitment methods, together with the relatively limited effect of the pay system, calls into question what impact these factors had on war’s popularity compared with plunder.

What system did Edward III inherit from his grandfather, and what was altered during his own reign? Since 1285, a principle of selection had been in place to “satisfy the requirements of a great war.”\textsuperscript{47} This was the commission of array, whereby the most able-bodied men of each hundred, township and liberty within a shire between the ages of sixteen and sixty were selected by appointed Crown officials “to serve at the king’s wages.”\textsuperscript{48} A pay system prominently emerged under Edward I, who appears to have brought about the novel practice of offering pay to all but the highest-ranking men in the army.\textsuperscript{49} Obligatory service had proved problematic during his campaigns in Wales and Scotland—it was insufficient and the discipline unsatisfactory.\textsuperscript{50} The continued rearrangement of the recruitment system into one functioning on money and contracts, and on the advertisement of financial allurements altogether, arose in part from Edward III’s poor situation in France shortly before the Crécy campaign. Only Flanders was a viable ally on the Continent, and it seemed the army would almost entirely have to be raised in England. Further, the volatile situation in Brittany made it an unreliable ally,

\textsuperscript{45} Prestwich, 174.  
\textsuperscript{46} Prestwich, 174.  
\textsuperscript{47} McKisack, 236.  
\textsuperscript{48} McKisack, 237.  
\textsuperscript{49} McKisack, 234.  
\textsuperscript{50} H.J. Hewitt, \textit{The Organization of War Under Edward III} (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966), 33.
Richard Barber argues that the tenuous military situation in France would appear unconvincing to those Edward had to ask for funding and support of the war. Chief among these was parliament, which had to vote him taxes for the war. Thus, “in 1345, when the Crécy campaign was being planned, [Edward] introduced a special bonus for the English men at arms who fought overseas, while on the other hand he introduced a new method of assessing the military liabilities of landowners by relating it to their income.” In the same vein, the pay due to magnates was expressly related to the cost of maintaining the troops they had raised. For example, for the Scottish campaign of 1347, the Earl of Angus had raised thirty men at arms,

   each of whom has 7s 8d, 4 knights, 25 squires, 30 archers on horseback, taking wages as before, which amount per day to 49s 8d and for a quarter to £223 10s.

Knights and nobility in arms were most certainly lured by the stipulations of contractual agreements with the Crown, which might be hugely advantageous to them. The use of contract armies was ubiquitous in the Hundred Years’ War, with the first major deployment of such a force having been in Scotland in 1337, while Edward himself was in the Low Countries. The indenture drawn up between Edward and the earl of Northampton in 1345 for his command in Brittany made the King responsible for “all expenses incurred as a result of military undertakings.” Furthermore, the earl would be compensated for lost horses. He would be given aid if besieged, and he and his men

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51 Barber, Edward III, 156.
52 Barber, Edward III, 156.
54 Prestwich, 173.
55 McKisack, 236.
would have rights to all prisoners valued at less than £500. In that same year, Henry of Grosmont agreed to serve in Gascony with 500 men-at-arms, 500 mounted archers and a thousand footsoldiers. Magnates drew up indentures among themselves. Sir Ralph, Baron Stafford and Sir Hugh fitz Simon stipulated that “Sir Hugh is to remain as a banneret with the aforesaid Sir Ralph” for a year, drawing wages from Sir Ralph, “and concerning the prisoners which may be taken by the aforesaid Hugh, or by his men…Sir Ralph shall have half the profits of their ransom, etc.” If captains agreed to provide troops for a fixed sum, the unpopular idea of compulsion could be avoided. So, once again, the importance of contracts in at least overcoming a lack of war ardour cannot be overlooked.

The change from obligatory service and feudal duty to the use of a pay incentive and the drawing up of contracts for service ultimately had more to do with a change toward effective military organization, and less to do with the creation of successful inducements to fight. Offering pay was aimed at increasing the army’s voluntary element. Fielding armies mustered by royal contracts with magnates, however, which became increasingly common during the war, also reflected devolution of military command to the king’s captains, which they appreciated. This arrangement did create conditions for profitable and enterprising activity on the part of anyone involved in the war, starting with distinguished fighting men who were not always of the highest social rank. These included Thomas Dagworth and Walter Bentley, given command of the army.

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56 McKisack, 236.
57 Prestwich, 174.
59 Prestwich, 173.
60 Hewitt, 33.
in Brittany, the skilled Hainaulter Walter Mauny, and Robert Knollys, of knightly and not baronial rank. As a result, Prestwich illustrates, it is sometimes argued that the Hundred Years’ War saw the birth of the professional commander.\(^6^1\) This is not entirely true, as such emerging military talents had gained commands in the wars of Edward I. However, one of them, Brian FitzAlan of Bedale, reflected common attitudes when he refused Edward I’s offer of a command in Scotland as he felt he was not wealthy enough. The ethos in the Hundred Years’ War was different: Dagworth, Bentley, Mauny and Knollys felt that “they could win enough riches in war to maintain the roles for which the king selected them.”\(^6^2\)

The contract system can explain why, because of the numerous commands and levies, forces were smaller in the Hundred Years’ War than they were in Scotland or Wales. Because the king’s receiver of victuals at Portsmouth was responsible only for minimal supply of the troops, and more business was instead conducted with merchants, they were more reliant on living off the land. Naturally such self-reliance would inculcate looting, and there is plenty of evidence that soldiers took great delight in it. The doctrine of self-sufficiency coupled with the experiences from the Scottish war, where soldiers had learned the strategic efficiency of the plundering raid.\(^6^3\) The result of this logic in the French countryside was devastating. The prior of Chantecocq experienced considerable miseries when English troops came to his village in November 1355. According to his account, they “spoiled all the furniture of my house, drank four casks of my wine, carried

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\(^{6^1}\) Prestwich, 170.
\(^{6^2}\) Prestwich, 170.
\(^{6^3}\) Prestwich, 174-178.
off a peck of oats…took all my clothes and drove off the horses. On two occasions they stole all my money, and they ate up my pigeons.”

Edward found a good environment for proffering his incentives to the common soldier, and his appeal was soon strengthened by soldiers’ discoveries of what was to be had from serving the king. In an age when it was held that murder “could be expiated by notable service,” there was no shortage of violent crimes, and so the king offered pardon for men who joined the army or manned his ships. A number of offers were made in proclamations at the beginning of a campaign, which drew men to foreign service. Wages were only one of them, alongside pardons and “a share in the incidental profits of war.”

Double rates were promised to soldiers in the campaign of 1338-39, and at least amidst early English triumphs in the French war, the government was willing to strain the treasury, to the point that payment was delayed.

Pay and the offer of any bonus altogether can only account for part of the inducement to fight, however. The will of English soldiers to fight was abundant even when wages were not being paid, as Jean le Bel remarked in 1339. The fact that payment was very often in arrears particularly calls into question how much inducement it offered. This delay in payment was true for common soldiers and leading magnates like John of Gaunt alike. He and his companions contracted in 1373 to provide troops for a promise of payment, including a payment of £12,000 after six months. He and his troops received no money in France, and a paltry sum when they returned home, though in 1377

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64 Quoted in Prestwich, 178.
65 Hewitt, 29.
66 McKisack, 237.
67 Prestwich, 179.
68 Prestwich, 179.
Gaunt did receive some £6,000 arrears.\textsuperscript{69} Willingness to fight despite the arrears in wages most aptly demonstrates the prevalence of financial gain over obligatory service as the reason for service in war. This is further evidenced by the ways in which reactions to defeats were in the language of monetary loss, and lament over losses in the field was ruthlessly subjected to arguments concerning spoils and money. In 1385, when the English had to kill their prisoners at Aljubarotta, Froissart bemoaned that it was a pitiful disaster because “they killed good prisoners from whom they could have had 400,000 francs.”\textsuperscript{70}

For gentlemen, campaigns brought hopes of capturing prisoners from which English knights might prosper due to an enormous ransom. In short, profit was just as strong an encouragement for a knight to fight under the king’s banner as it was for the common soldier. Indeed the rank and file soldier, the magnates and the crown attached equal importance to spoils.\textsuperscript{71} More evidence for soldiers’ desire for spoils, prisoners, horses and equipment and moveable wealth is found in sources from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries than from the early Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{72} In Edward’s England, the crown was just as enlightened as the magnates as to how war was profitable. The emphasis on money as the impetus behind service was what made this new system of military organization workable, and informs war ardour in spite of the enormous costs of the war in France. It became apparent during the reign of Edward III that the lure of profit could negate the need for a king to levy subsidies and would help the war pay for itself.\textsuperscript{73}

\textsuperscript{69} Prestwich, 180.
\textsuperscript{70} Quoted in Hay, 92.
\textsuperscript{71} Hay, 91.
\textsuperscript{72} Hay, 91.
\textsuperscript{73} McKisack, 248.
Ransoms were at the top of the hierarchy as forms of plunder went, and brought enormous profit.\textsuperscript{74} They not only yielded monetary reward, but also prized items. Ransoms could turn the captors into businessmen. Prisoners were tradable and marketable commodities that could be sold at extortionate prices or at a bargain.\textsuperscript{75} They were also part of a categorized system—value and reward depended on what sort of prisoner was being held. By the end of Edward III’s reign, there was a considerable regulation surrounding the sale and trade of ransoms.\textsuperscript{76} A large body of laws and customs dictated how prisoners should surrender and how a captor could enforce his claims. The laws were understood and acknowledged by captor, captive, the rest of the army and lawyers.\textsuperscript{77} This level of formality speaks to the wide extent of the practice and popularity of dealing in prisoners. By the time Richard came to the throne, there was modification of the royal monopoly, the ancient custom that long dictated the crown should take charge of all prisoners of war.\textsuperscript{78} McKisack wrote, “all men…had their price. A burgess taken in war might be ransomed for axes, swords, coats, doublets or hose; knights and esquires for money or horses; a poor gentleman with nothing to give might buy his freedom with a term of service with his captor.”\textsuperscript{79} The financial stability brought to the crown by the £500,000 ransom of King John II of France\textsuperscript{80}, which allowed Edward to “build lavishly at

\textsuperscript{74} McKisack, 247. \\
\textsuperscript{75} McKisack, 247. \\
\textsuperscript{76} McKisack, 247. \\
\textsuperscript{77} Barber, \textit{Edward III}, 397. \\
\textsuperscript{78} McKisack, 247. \\
\textsuperscript{79} McKisack, 247. \\
Windsor and elsewhere,” illuminated the importance of prisoners of war to the wealth of the state.\(^81\) The capture of prisoners could also mean incidental profits that enriched those who brought news of their capture, or delivered them to England. John Cok of Cherbourg received £16, 3s. 4d. “for bringing the first intelligence of the capture of King John and others, at Poitiers.”\(^82\) Thomas de Brynchesley was given 100s. yearly from the king for bringing news of the capture of Charles of Blois and of the Scots’ defeat at Durham.\(^83\) Roger de Bello Campo “and other Knights” received payments of £123 6s. 8d. “for the safe custody of [King John] at the Savoy.”\(^84\) Le Bel notes that the squire John Copeland, who had captured David II of Scotland, was granted by the king “a revenue of five hundred pounds sterling in land, right by your home, on condition that you deliver [David] to London…and present him to my queen.”\(^85\)

The forfeiture of prisoners to the crown became a valued form of royal patronage in this period that earned the king the support he needed for war, particularly when a sale resulted in a magnate’s acquisition of another valued commodity, land. In 1337, Hugh Audley, who was owed £100 worth of land, forfeited his prisoner Robert de Stutevile and acquired the manors of Eckington in Derbyshire and Kirkby in Nottinghamshire.\(^86\) Grants of land resulting from captured territory also featured as a type of war forfeiture when hostilities opened in France. Henry of Grosmont was granted the lordship of Bergerac in

\(^{81}\) Prestwich, 181.
\(^{82}\) Issue Roll of Thomas de Brantingham Bishop of Exeter, Lord High Treasurer of England; Containing Payments Made Out of His Majesty’s Revenue in the 44th year of King Edward III. Ad. 1370, transl. Sir John Newport (London: John Rodwell, 1835), xxxvii.
\(^{83}\) Issue Roll, xxxix
\(^{84}\) Issue Roll, xxxviii
\(^{85}\) Le Bel, 191.
1347. However, parceling out of lands forfeited by the enemy was not practiced on a large scale until the reign of Henry V.87

The value of prisoners grew as the war progressed, and knights could (and did) demand extortionate prices.88 Sir Thomas Dagworth was offered £4,900 for the return of Charles of Blois, the French candidate for claim to the duchy of Brittany, in 1347.89 Thirty years before the end of Edward’s reign, the sum of Charles’ ransom was accepted as modest enough.90 Furthermore, the reward was enough to offset the arrears in Dagworth’s wages.91 A king’s ransom was the most exceptional case, as illustrated above in the case of John II, while David II of Scotland’s captor asked for 100,000 marks sterling.92 Nevertheless, according to McKisack “ransoms running into four figures were not uncommonly demanded for important prisoners…Sir John Harleston’s share in the ransom of a French knight taken in Normandy amounted to £1, 583. 6 s. 8 d.”93 As mentioned, a ransom could be sold to another captor, as when Edward the Black Prince sold his father the king some prisoners taken at Poitiers for £20,000; Sir Thomas Holland sold the Count of Eu, taken at Caen, for 20,000 marks.94

Ransoms could conflict with the ethos of chivalry, that important facet of knightly participation in war, but not overtly so as the taking and holding of prisoners remained subject to the knightly code.95 It is true that the cult of chivalry, which stressed honour,

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87 Bothwell, 1117.
88 McKisack, 247.
89 McKisack, 247.
90 Hay, 92. Hay notes the sum at 200,000 nobles (92)
91 Prestwich, 180.
93 McKisack, 247.
94 McKisack, 247. For other figures for these ransoms, and for additional ones, see Prestwich, 179-181.
95 Prestwich, 184.
loyalty and courtesy, did not recognize gain.\textsuperscript{96} As the case of Charles of Blois’ ransom demonstrated, some extortionately high ransoms strained the convention that “a gentleman would not unduly embarrass his captive.”\textsuperscript{97} Such a notion may have prefigured in the mind of the poet John Gower (d. 1408), who saw avarice as fighting men’s greatest motive. Condemning knights’ excessive materialism became a new criticism of warfare in this period, and added to the accusation that knights “did not live up to the high standards expected of them.”\textsuperscript{98} It can certainly also be accepted that important prisoners from the nobility were considered too valuable to be killed.\textsuperscript{99} However, it is not true that monetary value alone saved them, and there seem to have been occasions where captors were averse to humiliating their prisoners. Behaving dishonourably towards a knight was considered courting disaster, a chivalric concept that had the weight of the law and contemporary scholarship behind it.\textsuperscript{100} It is accounted for in chronicles. Le Bel tells of courteous behaviour on the part of the victors after Poitiers, which also reflects the importance attached to oaths.

Many [prisoners] ransomed themselves that night, and truly, the Gascons and the English treated them most courteously, making no stringent demands; they merely asked them to say, on their honour, how much they could afford to pay without ruining themselves, and readily believed what they told them...they all said they had no wish to impose such excessive demands that those knights and squires would be unable to serve their lords in a manner befitting their station.\textsuperscript{101}

\textsuperscript{97} Hay, 92.
\textsuperscript{98} Ambühl, 100.
\textsuperscript{99} Hay, 92.
\textsuperscript{100} Prestwich, 184.
\textsuperscript{101} Le Bel, 229
Dishonour towards knights was answered harshly, and the English saw the Scots’ defeat at Neville’s Cross as just retribution for the unwarranted execution of Walter of Selby.  

If the archer, the yeoman, the squire, the knight and the prince had anything in common on the battlefield, it was that they could all benefit handsomely together in the spoils of war. In a chevauchée led by the Black Prince in Languedoc in 1355, all in his army reaped the rewards. According to Le Bel, “Chevaliers, escuiers, brigants, garchons” helped themselves to “leurs prisonniers et leurs richesses.” Captains could also profit from their soldiers’ spoils of war. The established custom at the end of Edward’s reign was that a captain should have at least one-third of his soldiers’ takings. He then turned over one-third of the soldier’s spoils to the king along with a third of his own. As McKisack notes, this did not apply to royal prisoners or captured commanders-in-chief, over which the king had charge, “though the actual captor would be handsomely rewarded for his services.” Thus, for everyone except the king, a share of the spoils had to be turned over. In practice, of course, through much of Edward’s reign, spoils were commonly divided evenly between the captain and the soldier who had looted. The French custom was less generous and a captain typically only kept a tenth of the spoils, and so “the incentive to loot was therefore much greater for the English.”

For the common soldier, probably more so than men of the knightly and noble classes, service in war promised an opportunity for adventure and the prospect of self-enrichment. The archer, hobelar and man-at-arms were all well paid in the mid-fourteenth century English army (when they were paid), and even the 2 d. a day paid to the Welsh

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102 Prestwich, 184.
103 Hay, 91.
104 Quoted in Hay, 91.
105 McKisack, 248.
106 Barber, Edward III, 397.
footman was decent in a time when an acre of land could well be sold for 4 d., but still plunder was the real hope for enrichment.\textsuperscript{107} When soldiers arrived in France, and the skill of English and Welsh archers was “displayed in the devastating march through Normandy,” they discovered the extent of plunder France had to offer.\textsuperscript{108} Furs, finery, marvelous gold and silver objects and beautiful leatherwork were all accumulated, and “wine was so abundant that looters smashed the vats and let the precious liquid drain away.”\textsuperscript{109} On the battlefield at Poitiers, some archers from Cheshire found a large silver ship belonging to the French king, which they sold to the Black Prince.\textsuperscript{110} Froissart’s astonishment at the value of goods and prisoners taken at that battle, according to Rémy Ambühl, surpasses that of any other writer.\textsuperscript{111} The soldiers, Froissart writes, “became rich in honour and possessions, not only because of the ransoms but also thanks to the gold and silver which they captured. They found plate and gold and silver belts and precious jewels in chests crammed full of them, as well as excellent cloaks.”\textsuperscript{112} When Robert Knollys took Auxerre in 1359, goods estimated at a value of five thousand \textit{moutons d’or} (some £1,000) were taken, and the town itself was ransomed for forty thousand pearls and forty thousand \textit{moutons d’or}.\textsuperscript{113}

Like ransoms, looting could inform the idea that fighting was in many ways taken up for profit rather than principle. As Barber notes, looting was entirely at odds with Edward’s “efforts to win over, rather than terrify, the French people he claimed to

\textsuperscript{107} McKisack, 246.
\textsuperscript{108} Hewitt, 32.
\textsuperscript{109} Hewitt, 32.
\textsuperscript{110} Hewitt, 32.
\textsuperscript{111} Ambühl, 98.
\textsuperscript{113} Prestwich, 180.
rule.”  

While according to the chronicler Moisant, Edward proclaimed at Caen that “no one should imprison women, children, nuns, monks or harm their churches or houses,” he was not always obeyed. The Parisian Carmelite Jean de Venette recorded in his *Chronicle* the scale of devastation wreaked on the countryside: “The English destroyed, burned, and plundered many little towns and villages in this part of the diocese of Beauvais, capturing or even killing the inhabitants. The loss by fire of the village where I was born, Venette near Compiègne, is to be lamented, together with that of many others near by.” Such outrages contrasted with the orderly discipline seen in battle. In the same vein, the lure of profits necessitated that Edward threaten penalties in order to avoid disruption of the Peace of Brétigny during the cessation of formal hostilities between 1360 and 1369. Nevertheless, English soldiers in France readily took advantage of the collapsing, disordered state of the country, and continued to plunder. Their unconfined rapacity is described in the *Scalacronica*.

Numbers of Englishmen who lived by the war invaded Normandy, plundered castles, seized manors, and carried on such warlike operations in the country by help of those of the English commonalty, who flocked to them daily against the King’s prohibition. It was astonishing how they went in bands, each on their own account, without an appointed captain, and wrought much oppression in the country.

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115 Prestwich, 179.
116 Quoted in Hewitt, 97.
118 Prestwich, 179.
Captains were involved, of course. Edward fined captains engaged in such behaviour, such as Thomas Fogg, Gregory Sais, Matthew Gournay and John of Saint-Loo, but when war resumed in the 1370s they were back in favour.\textsuperscript{120}

Civilians seem to have profited handsomely from the good fortunes reaped by members of their household who served in war. As Barnie notes, there were those who profited from the English repopulation of Calais after 1347, when the town was partly resettled with English families.\textsuperscript{121} Froissart says that Edward sent there “thirty-six wealthy and responsible citizens with their families, and more than three hundred men of lesser standing. Their numbers grew continually because the King granted them such great liberties and privileges that many became eager to settle there.”\textsuperscript{122} Household luxuries abounded in the years of Edward’s success. The chronicler Thomas Walsingham famously noted, and probably with only scant exaggeration, that “there were few women who did not have something from Caen, Calais and other overseas towns; clothing, furs, bedcovers, cutlery. Tablecloths and linen, bowls in wood and silver were to be seen in every English house.”\textsuperscript{123}

The Crécy campaign seems to have been pivotal in revealing the riches plunder promised. Campaign letters of 1346 bear out the extent of the spoils, and made a splendid contribution to the corpus of propaganda that flowed into England, particularly in the war’s early stages when there was still a need to convince the public that the war was

\textsuperscript{120} Ambühl, 101.
\textsuperscript{121} Barnie, 37.
\textsuperscript{122} Froissart, 110.
\textsuperscript{123} Quoted in Prestwich, 180.
worthwhile. Michael Northburgh stressed the great quantities of goods found in Normandy’s towns, and implicit in his account is an attempt to convey the hugeness of France—in town sizes and the extent of the country—and, accordingly, the plethora of places to find goods. He wrote on 27 July that

at least a thousand barrels of wine and much in the way of other goods was found [at St. Lô] The town is larger than Lincoln...and wine, food and goods and chattels in great quantities were found in [Caen], which is larger than any in England except for Lincoln.125

Another diarist giving a day-to-day account of the campaign suggests there were seemingly boundless opportunities for plunder in Picardy: “The English...found a quantity of goods, both from the town [of Poix] and the surrounding countryside, including horses and fine jewellery. For whoever wanted spoils could find them there to take.”126 The campaign also illustrated the contrast between the paucity of spoils in the Scottish wars and the riches to be had in France. The hope of war profits do not seem to have prefigured in the minds of the men who signed up to join the campaign in 1346. Spoils were few and far between on the Scottish campaigns of Edward’s early reign, and “apart from Henry of Grosmont’s victory at Auberoche, previous English expeditions abroad had not produced any notable spoils, and there was no reason to think that this occasion would be any different.”127 The few trophies and rare ransoms yielded up by the capture of an important prisoner or the sacking of a town were not hugely important to the ordinary knight, and when Edward declared in 1327 and again in 1334 that anyone

127 Barber, Edward III, 191.
who took part in the Scottish wars was allowed to keep any booty he gained, “it looks more like revenge for the Scottish raids on the English border counties than a serious prospective source of income.” Profit was scarcely more of an inducement during campaigns in the Low Countries.

The spoils of the Crécy campaign were so lucrative that the ‘profits of war’ factored regularly into contracts for service, and after 1350 the practice of granting one-third of the spoils to the captain and the king seems to have become part of established custom. An arrangement of this type had been evident in the Scottish and Welsh border wars, but was simpler, stemming from an ancient Welsh law that prescribed one-third of profits should go to the king. Now, a wider range of formal laws governing distribution of spoils and payment of ransoms were laid down in military courts and became the focus of legal scholarship. The surfeit of riches that prompted these changes was fodder for propagandist efforts, but it cannot be dismissed as a mere fiction created by the campaign letters to popularize the war.

Huge profits were gained at sea, and the capture of enemy ships directly strengthened English sea power. Plunder at sea assumed similar dimensions to its counterpart on land. With a mix of admiration and disapproval, Walsingham writes of the courage of the men of Portsmouth and Dartmouth in 1385, when they crossed the Channel with a small force and sailed into the Seine. There they easily sank four enemy ships and sailed off with four other ships and the barge of the lord [Olivier] of Clisson, to which there was no equal in the kingdoms of England or France. Even the most avaricious of the

128 Barber, Edward III, 191.
129 Barber, Edward III, 191.
130 Barber, Edward III, 192.
131 Barber, Edward III, 192.
132 Prestwich, 185.
Englishmen were deservedly able to satisfy their greed and relieve their need with wine, weapons and other booty that they had obtained from these ships.¹³³

The Westminster Chronicle notes that along with Clisson’s barge, “21 other ships heavily laden with Flemish goods and plunder” were captured.¹³⁴

Far more than any intangible romanticism surrounding war, more than nobles’ recognition of war’s propensity to give them a chance to show their worth through feats of arms, the chance for profit was open to men at all levels. Bringing about this realisation required a king’s efforts to give his planned campaigns in France a wider appeal, as well as the organization of victory in order that those profits might materialize. As we shall find in the next chapter, however, seeking profit—especially plunder—was an integral part of the wider range of pleasures soldiers took from fighting.

2. The Spiritual Allurements of War

In the England of Edward III and Richard II, war was certainly known to provide enormous opportunities for profit, but as McKisack wrote, “medieval warfare held deeper and subtler allurements.”¹³⁵ A culture of warfare was ubiquitous, particularly in sport but also in later literature, such as the work of Froissart. In many respects, Edward enthusiastically spurred the transformation of English culture into a warlike one, although some aspects such as the culture surrounding archery were extant from the time of Edward I. So too, it seems, was the intimate connection between sporting culture, especially jousting, and warfare, in which one of those two pastimes could bring about the other by gauging martial spirit. In one respect, Edward’s feeling at the end of his reign can sum up the motive of his efforts. As Mortimer illustrates, in his last years Edward reflected on the legacy of his grandfather Edward I, who, though he died in his litter on the way to Scotland, “would always be remembered as the king who had died in arms, fighting for his kingdom…That was how Edward III wanted to be remembered too.”¹³⁶ Looking at the early part of Edward’s reign, Barber argues that the popularity of warfare was partly due to the king’s active efforts to gain support for the war before the Crécy campaign. In addition to promising bonuses to soldiers and building on his grandfather’s money-based system of military organization, Edward “enlisted knightly ideals” and sought to revive the Arthurian legend—out of which the Order of the Garter was to emerge.¹³⁷ These measures were meant to achieve the loyalty of the barons and rally them, and to give not only credence but also an aesthetic appeal to his claim to the

¹³⁵ McKisack, 249.
¹³⁶ Mortimer, 376.
¹³⁷ Barber, Edward III, 156.
French throne. Further, the sheer success of his campaigns ensured that, almost up to the very end of Edward’s reign, there was no shortage of enthusiasm for the war. Men fought willingly, were happy to plunder the French countryside with riotous abandon, and to serve even without regular pay.\textsuperscript{138} They did so out of love for their country, a desire for profit and to distinguish themselves. Especially in the early years of the Hundred Years’ War, marked by spectacular English victories, the nation gained a sense of its own military prowess. The attitudes prevailing in Edward’s England, as Michael Prestwich observes, marked an about-face from attitudes of the thirteenth century, when “the knights of England did not give a bean for all of France.”\textsuperscript{139}

Part and parcel of the enlistment of knightly ideals was the cultivation of loyalty to the king and a sense of national unity through tournaments. Like the Arthurian legends in which Edward I had been so engrossed, and which his grandson would capitalize on, the tournaments created for Edward III a cultural milieu conducive to his war aims. He aptly perceived how alluring they were. As Barber writes, they were “good publicity, a means of rallying the great lords and wealthy citizens behind him; and this harmony between the king and his magnates was to last until the very end of his reign.”\textsuperscript{140} In these tournaments—of which there were three in 1342—the king seems to have had success in emphasising his solidarity with his knights, portraying himself as one fighting in the company of his men on equal terms.\textsuperscript{141} He had capitalised on a popular sport, had delved into the imagery surrounding it and harnessed it. He had made himself the great promoter of the sport, and in this way cultivated the loyalty of the barons. He turned jousting from

\textsuperscript{138} Prestwich, 174.
\textsuperscript{139} Prestwich, 179.
\textsuperscript{140} Barber, \textit{Edward III}, 151.
\textsuperscript{141} Barber, \textit{Edward III} 151.
a potential medium for political dissent into an instrument of national unity.\textsuperscript{142} A culture of martial spirit was organized around the royal body politic, and could satisfy its political aims.

No sport in England was more conducive to generating that spirit than jousting. It held an existing appeal to knights who wished to display feats of arms, and Edward capitalised on that. Jousting typified the “aesthetic, almost spiritual satisfaction which [war] might afford.”\textsuperscript{143} Knights lived for fighting and trained extensively in the use of arms, and the skills demonstrated in tournaments showed on the battlefield.\textsuperscript{144} This last point is something David Green contends against, arguing rather for the paramount importance of battlefield experience, as we find below.\textsuperscript{145} However, Juliet Barker argues that the distinction between jousting and fighting on the battlefield was nonetheless often blurred. Just as jousting could spur men into a real battle, fighting on campaigns could bring about jousts. Opposing knights from armies in close proximity to each other might find in a challenge the opportunity to raise morale if they won, and to prove their skill and worthiness to their commander in a trial of strength.\textsuperscript{146} Morale and personal satisfaction could thus be kept up without fighting and imperiling the day’s fortunes for an army. Under such circumstances, and for such purposes, did English and Scottish knights meet and engage in ‘jousting of war’ in 1336 and 1340.\textsuperscript{147}

Adventure-seeking and spectacle were part of battle scenes. In 1360, when Edward was ravaging the suburbs of Paris, thirty knights rode to the gates of the city, where they

\textsuperscript{142} Barber, \textit{Edward III}, 151.
\textsuperscript{143} McKisack, 249.
\textsuperscript{144} McKisack, 249.
\textsuperscript{145} Green, 41.
\textsuperscript{147} Barker, 30.
encountered some sixty French spearmen. To great acclaim, the new-made knights put
the enemy to flight. Froissart’s accounts frequently mention incidents of this kind.\footnote{Barker, 30.}
When applied on the battlefield, acts of chivalry like those seen in tournaments might
involve certain understandings between enemy forces. There was a respect for any vows
made. An English knight vowed to strike the walls of Paris, succeeded in his task, and
was waved off by French knights, who shouted “Alés, ales, vous vos estes bien
acquittés.”\footnote{Barker, 30.} Such vows are echoed in Edward’s challenge to Philip VI of France. After a
veiled threat of invasion, as well as expressing a hope for their quarrel to be ended soon,
Edward declares the feud is a personal one and offers, if they cannot settle matters
between themselves personally, “this battle should be brought to completion by yourself
and 100 of the most suitable people on your side, against ourself and the same number of
liegemen.”\footnote{“Edward Sends a Challenge to Philip,” in \textit{The Wars of Edward III: Sources and Interpretations}, ed.
Clifford J. Rogers (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1999), 91-92.} Despite its terrible violence and enormous costs, which were well
understood and are hardly whitewashed in the pages of Froissart and other chroniclers,
war was in many ways taken as a colourful venture encompassing brave feats of arms to
impress, and the performance of vows as a show of honour. Through tournaments, the
pomp and pageantry of deeds in arms, something in which Froissart took delight, spoke
to the desire for prestige, adventure and romance that “were the rewards of fighting
men.”\footnote{McKisack, 250.}
Edward understood this passion and made full use of it.

Edward had personal appeal that served his image as a war leader, and the revival
of the Arthurian legend at his court did much to confirm the esteem in which he was held.

In January 1344, during a tournament at Winsdor, Edward “declared that he would
announce a new knightly institution on the model of King Arthur’s Round Table.” The true purpose of this foundation is a matter of conjecture among historians, but Barber is convinced that

The weight of evidence is in favour of the idea that this was all part of a campaign to establish his rights in France, and that, just as his grandfather had used Arthur in support of his claim to overlordship of Scotland, so Edward was invoking the idea of Arthur to be found in the chronicles of the time as the conqueror of France. There is little to suggest that Edward III himself shared Edward I’s fascination with the legendary king. He appears to have only identified himself with Arthur when the need arose, out of concerns for war support. However, it is apparent that the myth of Arthur was important to England’s popular views of itself as a warlike state. In her study on the parallels between Richard II and Arthur in the Alliterative Morte Arthure (written around 1400), DeMarco explores the cultivation or revival of the Arthurian myth to serve as part of the imagery extolling Edward’s past English conquests in the Ricardian period. However, we must remember that the Morte conveys a clearer parallel to Richard than to Edward, and this parallel is to be discussed in the next chapter. Still, even if only employed to reflect on the past glories of Edward’s reign in light of the reverses England had suffered by the time Richard became king, we cannot deny that the Morte poem does draw some similarities between Edward III and Arthur. The most prominent is the idea that “both kings responded with force to a challenge to their sovereignty, and through their wars both kings eventually brought their land to a position of enormous strength.”

152 Barber, Edward III, 156.
153 Barber, Edward III, 167.
154 Barber, Edward III, 156.
155 Keiser, 45
The chivalric ideals championed by Edward drew in the notion of chivalric love, which certainly added to the appeal of those ideals. The lady occupied a central place in the concept of knighthood. The actions of magnates in tournaments and on the battlefield were frequently influenced by efforts to win her favour. Froissart tells of the exploits of Sir Eustace d’Aubrecicourt, a knight in Edward’s service, and of Isabel de Juliers, with whom he was deeply in love. She was the widow of the Earl of Kent, and her aunt was Edward’s queen, Philippa of Hainault. According to Froissart,

she had fallen in love with Sir Eustace for his great exploits as a knight, of which accounts were brought to her every day. While he was in Champagne, she sent him several hackneys and chargers, with love-letters and other tokens of great affection, by which the knight was inspired to still greater feats of bravery and accomplished such deeds that everyone talked of him.\textsuperscript{156}

The queen’s role in bolstering the publicity surrounding knightly ideals, together with the founding of the Order of the Garter, allowed Edward to “give fuller expression to his romance-driven ideal of knighthood.”\textsuperscript{157} Both Edward and Philippa loved romances and were familiar with the characters in them: the queen’s New Year gift to her husband in 1333 was a silver cup, ewer and basin, with the ewer featuring the figures of Julius Caesar, Charlemagne, King Arthur and Lancelot. Romance figures also featured in court plays.\textsuperscript{158} Edward’s family had a long tradition of involvement with Arthurian romances “stretching back to the first appearance of the stories in the twelfth century,”\textsuperscript{159} and his mother seems to have enthusiastically collected and read huge numbers of Arthurian romances.\textsuperscript{160} There is, then, evidence that Edward was imbued with a measure of

\textsuperscript{156} Froissart, 161-162.
\textsuperscript{158} Hilton, 305.
\textsuperscript{159} Barber, \textit{Edward III}, 161.
\textsuperscript{160} Barber, \textit{Edward III}, 160.
enthusiasm for the Arthurian legend. He and his wife were part of an enthusiasm at court for romances filled with tales of gallantry and deeds of arms, and had a role in cultivating this enthusiasm further.

The war was altogether popular with people of all classes. To the minds of most all of them good leadership, enterprise and victory had primacy over peace. This enthusiasm had much to do with a vast proliferation of public knowledge about the war. In fourteenth-century England there was a firm grasp of the power of propaganda. In the finest years of Edward’s successes in France, the flood of dispatch letters from commanders on campaign were far more ubiquitous than they had been in the past, and much greater efforts were made than ever before to inform people of the war’s progress. Letters were written for public consumption, such as the two sent by Bartholomew Burgersh to the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1346. These were recorded by the chronicler Adam Murimuth (d. 1347). “The king with his host advanceth into the land to conquer his right,” Burgersh wrote, “as God shall give him grace.” Edward III capitalised on the myth introduced by Edward I that the French sought to stamp out the English language, “and much play was made with every threat of French invasion.” In the archives of Caen in 1346, English troops discovered an agreement drawn up in 1338 between Philip VI and the Duke of Normandy that committed to a conquest of England. The document was taken back to England by the Earl of Huntingdon and read publicly in

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161 McKisack, 253.
162 Prestwich, 186.
163 Prestwich, 186.
165 Prestwich, 187.
the cemetery of St. Paul’s. Proclamations announcing the victory at Crécy were read out in every county court and major town, and writs sent to the bishops asking them to bless the king’s ventures. Poets such as Laurence Minot drew parallels between Edward and Arthur in his works, which celebrated victories such as Halidon Hill and Guines in 1352. Military success itself remained the most effective medium of spreading enthusiasm however, as returned soldiers brought home news of their feats.

Another facet of the appeal of war is found in the wider presence of warlike culture throughout England, among commoners. It could also underscore a divorce between ideals of chivalry and the English culture of war. The keystone of this wider culture was the practice of archery, whose popularity Edward capitalised on and further pressed home. Here, as with the pay system, Edward III built on developments that had emerged during the reign of his grandfather. Archery had become “the national sport par excellence” under Edward I. Attaining skill required long training, but practice was open to the ordinary civilian, and skilled archers might be produced by constant practice at the town or village butts. The common archer seems to have shared in the knightly classes’ war enthusiasm. The archers exemplified the English military prowess displayed in Normandy, and made the Crécy campaign favourable to recruitment, as H.J. Hewitt wrote, and inspired “confidence in the hearts of men.” Like other lowly footsoldiers, archers at Crécy witnessed the result of Edward’s military innovations, his “new way of

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166 Prestwich, 187.
167 Prestwich, 189.
168 For more on war propaganda in Edward’s England, see Barnie, 8.
169 McKisack, 241.
170 McKisack, 241.
171 Hewitt, 31.
doing things.”\textsuperscript{172} The devastating power of well-ordered infantry skilled in concentrated projectile warfare allowed peasants and yeomen to overcome the traditional masses of expensively armoured knights arrayed against them.\textsuperscript{173} As David Green posits, “the significance of archery is evident in official records and in popular stories.”\textsuperscript{174} Legislation, in one respect, can speak to the omnipresence of archery. Two laws enacted in 1357 and 1369 forbade the export of bows and arrows, and in 1365 a law forbade archers to leave England without royal licence.\textsuperscript{175} According to Froissart, “it was…decreed that no one in the realm of England, on pain of decapitation, should practise any game or sport other than that of shooting with bow and arrows, and that all craftsmen making bows and arrows should be exempted from all debts.”\textsuperscript{176} The extensive involvement of bowmen in the growing English war machine before and following the Crécy campaign may well also have inspired the Robin Hood legends.\textsuperscript{177}

The professionalism that showed on the battlefield, that seems to have left so strong an impression in English culture, was, according to Green, emphatically not chivalrous. He argues that the French successively lost to the Black Prince because the enemy’s chivalry dictated a dangerous level of knightly individualism that impeded coordination, which contrasted with the “collective, disciplined infantry and archers” that were behind English victories at Crécy and Poitiers.\textsuperscript{178} Campaigns in Scotland had produced experienced, battle-hardened soldiers. They seem to have been far better prepared for battle than knights who found slight foretaste of war in tournaments and

\textsuperscript{172} Mortimer, 396.  
\textsuperscript{173} Mortimer, 396.  
\textsuperscript{174} Green, 40.  
\textsuperscript{175} Green, 41.  
\textsuperscript{176} Froissart, 58.  
\textsuperscript{177} Green, 41.  
\textsuperscript{178} Green, 42.
individual training, though the latter were certainly important for making men hardy and bellicose. These footsoldiers were “accustomed to fighting to certain strategic and tactical plans.” However, while these tactics emphasized the growing importance of the archer and hobelar on the battlefield, chivalric display and its attendant tactics remained sacred to the fourteenth-century knight.

Chivalry was an exceedingly violent way of life that embraced personal shows of prowess and any opportunity to rout the enemy with no shortage of enthusiasm or reckless abandon. Among the favourite tactics in the chivalric ideal was the chevauchée, a type of warfare marked by violent raids and a good deal of personal liberties taken by the knights. While it was a strategy that had fallen out of use in wars of the Ricardian period, it was seen as chivalric in that it afforded knights the opportunity to show honour through bravery, and to confront their enemy directly. Such acts of chivalry on the field were well praised in chronicles. The Anonimalle Chronicle names chivalry as the leading force behind victories of the Black Prince, such as his capture of Rennes in 1356: “There were many moments of fine chivalry; and in the end [Edward] gained [the city] through the nobility of his chivalry.” Generally only other knights received merciful treatment, spared by an army to avoid execution of captured knights from its own side. We see then that there were strong contrasts between the ways in which common soldiers and magnates saw opportunities to partake in the joy of war. For the archer, a carefully executed, strategically prudent victory appealed to his image of

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179 Green, 41.
180 Green, 41.
181 Green, 77.
182 DeMarco, 479.
184 Prestwich, 184.
himself as a crucial element in that victory, however minor his rank. For a knight, the valour of a direct engagement and the satisfaction gained from a rout of the enemy was all-important.

The question of how the conduct of war, such as the most brutal incidences of raiding condoned by chivalry, or the chivalric tolerance of ransoms, could be justified is also bound up with contemporary religious arguments. One would think that canon law in the fourteenth century would not see any morality in going to war against another Christian knight, to say nothing of profiting from his loss of liberty. In taking up arms, a knight was entering God’s service just as his foe was.\textsuperscript{185} However, as Prestwich argues, by the fourteenth-century, the canon lawyers could see no reason why a knight, like Chaucer’s “perfect gentle-knight,”\textsuperscript{186} should not find a just cause in Christian lands as well as “heathen” ones.\textsuperscript{187} They adopted novel conceptions of the just war, and with them they allowed the kind of enthusiasm held for crusades in the past to be channeled into the French war.\textsuperscript{188} This justification was key to legitimation of the pleasure men took in fighting Edward’s wars.

The England of Edward III was a nation accustomed to war; accustomed to training for it, fighting it and profiting from it. The fact that chivalric display on the battlefield, in its extolling of bravery and impressive deeds of arms, in many ways probably ran counter to the colourful aesthetics surrounding jousts and popular romances at home. Nevertheless, professionalism, like its counterpart profit, was integral to the spiritual allurements of war. There were, altogether, novel elements of war enthusiasm

\textsuperscript{185} Prestwich, 186.
\textsuperscript{187} Prestwich, 186.
\textsuperscript{188} Prestwich, 186.
that emerged in Edward’s England that blended in many respects with the conservative magnates’ love of chivalric display on the battlefield. Other novelties were found in the romantic imagery surrounding Edward himself, created by his revival of the Arthurian legend and that new manifestation of the Round Table, the Order of the Garter. Through his professional and romantic appeal, Edward succeeded in accommodating the penchants of fighting men in all ranks of society. Like his son, Edward III had made his personal mark as a commander, a paragon of military prowess. He had formed a strong sense of brotherhood, rallying around him a loyal assembly of magnates who had become accustomed to greater involvement in planning and leading campaigns.
Throughout his reign, Richard II was never allowed to cast off the memory of Edward III and Edward the Black Prince or their splendid conquests. Magnates who had known and served with the two Edwards dominated at court and in government. The council formed in October 1378—the last of three ‘continual councils’ that would govern the country until 1380—was filled with men who had served with the Black Prince and been close to him. Richard was ever surrounded by his father’s old companions, and “exhorted to become the great king that the Black Prince had never been allowed to be.” The king ruled over a parliament that was repeatedly loathe to pay for the war in France and a peasant class that rose in revolt when taxation for the conflict was raised. It is difficult to deny that the war was costing too much. Nonetheless, Edward III had left on his nobles, those natural leaders in the profession of arms, an indelible impression that would not go away. It was the impression of war’s profitability and of the opportunities it afforded men to show leadership, and gain personal distinction in deeds of arms. Despite the military reverses that blighted the end of Edward’s reign, the magnates during Richard’s were still disposed to perceive the king’s duties in light of what Edward had made them out to be—to restore a kingdom in disarray, to regain lost territory, to prove a great commander and certainly not to align himself close to the French. Furthermore, it was evident that Richard’s peace policies were neither effective nor keeping England safe. Instead, they seemed to promise humiliation, invasion threats and a disgraceful loss

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189 Saul, 31.
191 Jones, 446.
of Continental allies. In the backcloth of turmoil both in England and on the Continent—
with political dissent at home and defeat abroad—the arguments for war and the cultural
tendencies favouring it were able to flourish, even though it would not be until 1415 that
England would again truly experience a triumph in France on the scale of Crécy or
Poitiers.

At the end of Edward III’s reign, England’s military fortunes were in severe decline.
The lands ceded to Edward at the 1360 Treaty of Brétigny had been lost one after
another. By 1375, following a truce negotiated at Bruges, only Calais and its surrounding
marches and the Gascon coastal strip remained. 192 Richard II inherited this poor situation
in 1377, and French bloodlust had not abated. Further humiliation of the English had only
been prevented when Pope Gregory XI intervened to force a truce. On 24 June, three
days into Richard’s reign, the truce expired. Both sides had been preparing for this
eventuality, but French preparations were far more extensive than the English, who were
“entirely without forces to field against the enemy.” 193 The French were particularly
superior in naval strength. While the French were able to raise between 40-50 ships, the
English council was “hampered by an embarrassing shortage of money” 194 and the fleet
had catastrophically declined. There were no more than five of the king’s ships available
for service in 1378 and there was a paucity of ships available for impressment. 195 As Saul
argues, England’s lack of military preparedness became evident immediately after the
truce expired, when the French carried out a series of coordinated coastal and land raids

192 Saul, 19.
193 Saul, 32.
194 Saul, 31.
195 Saul, 32.
on the English south coast, Aquitaine and Calais.\textsuperscript{196} Perhaps, it seemed, England had already earned too much enmity from France, and the early signs were showing that the country’s ill-preparedness made peace difficult if not impossible to achieve.

The swift, devastating nature of these attacks spurred the English council out of reluctance, at least momentarily, to finance defences in France and into finding the means for active defense preparation. Faced with crisis, council set about granting the taxation that might revive the English war machine—by late 1378 it “had made a generous grant of a double fifteenth and tenth (the tax on moveable property).”\textsuperscript{197} Bedeviled by exhaustion of the royal treasury and unable to service large loans for defense, parliament reluctantly granted the poll tax of 4d. a head, the consequences of which would return to haunt the country in the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381.\textsuperscript{198} A new shipbuilding programme was also begun. These measures reflected the hope that “the government could match the French for the first time in the scale of its military planning,” and plans for an ambitious expedition to match those of the recent past seemed to be in the offing.\textsuperscript{199} Such planning was dictated only by the emergency at hand, and if the threat died down, so would the plans, for the treasury was severely strained. This war preparation did not yet reflect to its full extent the idea that if the English hated paying for the war, they hated more the prospect of military humiliation and the threat of invasion.\textsuperscript{200} That would come in later years, when bellicosity and hatred of the French would be galvanized to a greater extent amidst invasion fears in 1386.

\textsuperscript{196} Saul, 33.
\textsuperscript{197} Saul, 34.
\textsuperscript{198} Seward, 128.
\textsuperscript{199} Saul, 34.
\textsuperscript{200} Seward, 136.
The argument of magnates pressing for war was strengthened by the consequences of government policy in the 1380s, when the dangers of détente were illustrated. The fact remained that parliament remained reluctant to grant taxes for the war—it refused to do so in 1381, 1382 and 1383. Its reluctance no doubt had a great deal to do with an absence of convincing victories. Between 1378 and 1380 the Council directing military policy for Richard sought to secure territory for him by besieging key strongholds at Harfleur and Nantes and establishing a chain of English fortresses along the French coast, all without success. Between 1377 and 1381 over £250,000 was spent on the war, and yet, as Nigel Saul illustrated, “there were no victories at sea or in the field, and no territorial gains, to show for it.”

Under Sir Michael de la Pole, who was Chancellor by 1383, a policy of appeasement was adopted. Pole was right about the ruinous costs of the war, which he perceived were sinking England deeper into debt, and he was right about the danger of power slipping away from the monarchy and more into the hands of parliament. However, the manner in which the policy was carried out was disastrous, executed in such a way that incurred further French enmity and made England appear weak at the same time, not only to France but also the Scots who were raiding northern England. Pole made some effort to show strength—he sent a paltry force of 400 men to help England’s Flemish allies in Ghent and install Sir John Bourchier as ruwaert (regent) there. However, at the end of 1385 the city surrendered to Philip, Duke of Burgundy, son of John II. Philip gained control of most of the Low Countries and brought on England

201 Seward, 132.
202 DeMarco, 468.
203 Saul, 48.
204 Seward, 133.
205 Seward, 133.
the threat of economic blockade and hindrance of the wool trade for helping his enemies.\textsuperscript{206} Pole’s attempt to placate France by releasing the Blois claimant to the Duchy of Brittany from captivity incurred the fury of Edward III’s protégé, Duke John IV of Brittany, who sent his troops to invest the English garrison at Brest in 1386. The peace policy had cost England her most important allies, and in 1386 it brought on England “the greatest invasion threat of the century.”\textsuperscript{207}

The panic that resulted among the public exemplified the change in the type of hatred the English felt for the French. While the most poisonous invective had always been directed against the Scots, the French were a perennial target of contempt from the outset of the Hundred Years’ War. However, during Edward’s reign the propensity to ridicule them reflected a greater confidence than that found in Ricardian England.\textsuperscript{208} In the backdrop of invasion fears in the 1380s, hatred lost its jocular nature and the former cruel humour gave way to a medley of unmitigated fear and animosity. Hostility became a “habit of mind” to Englishmen.\textsuperscript{209} This loathing maintained another important facet that had existed in the country since the outbreak of the war: antipapal feeling. Mistrust of the papacy predated 1337, but the war gave it a new impetus that persisted in Richard’s reign. An “unbroken succession of popes from Benedict XII to Gregory XI were French by birth,” and the belief prevailed among Englishmen, despite papal attempts to mediate the conflict, that the papacy favoured France.\textsuperscript{210} If it did not impel active war enthusiasm per se, this multifaceted complex of fear and hatred was an impetus for the English to formulate a fledgling form of patriotism, an “awareness of common identity and

\begin{footnotes}
\item[206] Seward, 133.
\item[207] Seward, 133.
\item[208] Barnie, 47.
\item[209] Barnie, 47.
\item[210] Barnie, 52.
\end{footnotes}
purpose,” Barnie posits, “which in times of crisis overruled regional and class differences.”

The disasters attending on Ricardian England led the magnates to dwell on Edwardian glory. Both the works of contemporary writers and the voices of great lords spoke to that nostalgia. Froissart conveys frustration at the ineptness of Ricardian military commanders in language harking back to Edward’s reign. He has the populace decry in 1387, “What has become of the great undertakings, the proud deeds, and all the brave men of the kingdom of England?” The Westminster chronicler offers similar language, writing contemptuously of the northern English population, who to his mind had grown fickle at the time of the Scottish invasion in 1385. “for whereas in the old days,” he writes,

> our Northerners used to be very active and vigorous, they have now changed their tack and become lazy and spiritless, disdaining to protect their homeland against the wiles of the enemy by keeping watch and ward, so that as a result of their neglect and slackness they were fated to lose their homes and possessions.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the implicit accusation leveled at Richard from works such as the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, was that his peace policy was an upset to those lords who wished to emulate their fathers’ military glories in France. There is a parallel here to the opening scene of the *Morte*, where Arthur’s past conquests of territories is catalogued. They are spectacularly described, presenting the reader with a panorama of the fruits of conquest and illustrating war’s “capacity to generate wealth and

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211 Barnie, 55.
212 Quoted in Barnie, 25.
213 *The Westminster Chronicle*, 139.
214 DeMarco, 469.
honor.” Following this, the poet describes a long period of military inactivity and details the king’s penchant for the hunt and keeping knights in his train as they revel in leisurely pursuits at court in Caerlion. Then the Romans demand a humiliating tribute, whereupon the most militant of Arthur’s knights, Cador—a clear parallel to the Duke of Gloucester—“delivers a poignant speech on the plight of those who have endured the shame of past inactivity.” He calls on the lords to embrace the “dedez of armes” that will bring them a recovery of their honour and pre-eminence as fighting men.

Arthur’s initial reluctance to answer the challenge from the Romans in the poem can be taken as an implicit condemnation of Richard for not answering to his own challenges. Ambitious magnates were certainly frustrated by “protracted periods of military inactivity” and the ill success of those few campaigns that were undertaken in the Ricardian era. The pitiful forays were always measured against the great victories of Edward III’s reign—Crécy, Calais Caen, Poitiers. Popular urging of the king to answer slights from his enemies was to come to the fore in light of the quandary about liege homage Richard faced during negotiations with the French in the 1390s, a period when opposition to peace was still vociferous and fears were rife among the commons about the prospect of English submission to France. Arthur’s readiness to grant a truce with the Romans to the frustration of Cador and the other knights is akin to Richard’s search for diplomatic accords with France, an idea repulsive to magnates such as Gloucester and others. The poet has a skeptical view on King Arthur’s “centralizing and often self-aggrandizing military policies” which parallels Richard’s disregard for the knights who

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215 DeMarco, 468.
216 DeMarco, 468.
217 DeMarco, 468.
218 DeMarco, 468.
219 DeMarco, 468.
sought to recover the central role in military leadership that captains in Edward III’s armies had enjoyed.²²⁰ It is evident, then, that the Morte poet sympathises with the frustrated aristocratic elite and expresses a popular anxiety: an anxiety both to return to war and fend off invasion.

The Morte poet quite probably portrays Arthur as a representation first of Edward and then Richard. In the first two hundred lines of the poem the king transforms from a conquering hero, to a celebrated king with a lifetime of martial glory behind him, to an unshakeable exemplar of might who can stare down the threatening Roman emissaries, to a pliant man ready to succor to and placate them. At the same time, the poet may be expressing from the start a wish that Richard would emulate the deeds of his forbears, writing that Arthur “had overcome in war/Castles and kingdoms and countries in plenty/And regained rule over all the fine realms that Uther [Arthur’s father] had owned on earth in his time.”²²¹ After his great conquests, and after dubbing knights and bestowing new dukedoms on worthy lords, Arthur basks in the glory of his past, as Edward did especially after 1360. Complacency sets in—a gesture to both Edward’s aging and Richard’s sedentary pleasures. Arthur establishes his court at Caerlion, and there settles down to feasting. The Romans arrive, and we see at first a bellicose Arthur ready for a fight, his eyes “flamed like coals fiercely, so furious was he/ His cheeks’ colour changed…And he looked like a lion, on his lips biting.”²²² This makes the Romans cringe in terror, and alludes to what Richard is supposed to have done. Instead, in the face

²²⁰ DeMarco, 468.
²²² “Alliterative Morte Arthure,” 37.
of the affront he suffers, because “so great was regard for the grandeur of Rome,”

Arthur says to the Romans, resonant of Richard to the French, “No thane ever threw such big threats at me! But come! Let crowned kings counsel me…Thus shall I be advised the views of valiant men…see what life we lead in these lowly parts/Beside the royalty of Rome, the greatest ever.”

Scholarship by Larry Benson and Mary Hamel has dated the poem to between 1399 and 1403 at the latest, after Henry IV deposed Richard. The work can possibly therefore be taken as Lancastrian propaganda. If so, it would reflect popular hopes that Henry IV would renew the war, which I mentioned at the introduction. The poem at any rate reflects the anxieties surrounding the crisis of the Hundred Years’ War at the turn of the fifteenth century, when the event that paved the way for the later conflict between the Yorkists and Lancastrians—Richard’s deposition—occurred. In that backdrop, Edward III’s military successes came to be of increased importance, as the Yorkists championed a position, central to their identity, as “the true heirs of Edward.”

By the same token, it can be said that the Lancastrian supporters under Henry IV were just as eager to justify the usurpation in language that reflected on the past strength of the monarchy and military prowess embodied in Edward III’s reign.

Denunciation of Richard’s peace policy was both implicit in literature and explicitly voiced by discontented lords. Such criticism mounted in the backdrop of

223 “Alliterative Morte Arthure,” 38.
224 “Alliterative Morte Arthure,” 38.
225 DeMarco, 465. The depth of these scholars’ work is too detailed for the length of this paper, but the dating is owing to the poem’s parallels to political crises of the period and the unmistakable borrowing from late fourteenth-century works such as the Siege of Jerusalem. For more on Hamel’s evidence for the dating, see Mary Hamel, ed., Morte Arthure: A Critical Edition (New York: Garland, 1984). For a review of her work, see John Finlayson, “Review,” Speculum 63 (1988): 936-939.
enormous threats from France in the late 1380s. These attacks took a line similar to that of the *Morte* poet: Richard, in seeking peace and confraternity with the king of France, was sulllying the memory of his grandfather and abrogating the country’s arduous efforts to become a dominant power in Europe. Among the most notable attacks are the excoriation given to Richard by his uncle the Duke of Gloucester, youngest son of Edward III, in late 1386 over the king’s desire for close alignment with France.\textsuperscript{227} At that time, the great lords opposed to Richard came to dominate what became known as the Wonderful Parliament. Many were later to become the Lords Appellant, the men known as the “war party,”\textsuperscript{228} chief among them Gloucester and the earls of Arundel, Derby, Warwick and Nottingham, who would destroy the prominent members of Richard’s inner circle in 1388 and rebel against the king.\textsuperscript{229} When the Wonderful Parliament launched its attack on Michael de la Pole, the peace policy and grossly incompetent handling of the war, the king claimed his people were in rebellion,\textsuperscript{230} and remarked that he would enlist the aid of his cousin the king of France. Gloucester and Arundel were alarmed.\textsuperscript{231} Gloucester told him,

\begin{quote}
The King of France is your chief enemy, and the mortal foe of your realm…Recall to your memory therefore how your grandfather King Edward III and your father Prince Edward worked untiringly all their lives, in sweat and toil, in heat and cold, for the conquest of the realm of France, which was their hereditary right and is yours by succession after them.\textsuperscript{232}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{227} Seward, 136.
\textsuperscript{228} DeMarco, 471.
\textsuperscript{229} Saul, 195.
\textsuperscript{230} Seward, 136.
\textsuperscript{231} Saul, 158.
The magnates made an unmitigated reference to the fate of Edward II, entreat ing him to remember an old statute that said if the king did not govern on the advice of his lords and alienated himself from his people, they had the right to depose him.\textsuperscript{233}

An invective such as Gloucester’s went beyond merely condemning the king’s inaction. Richard was unable to prove a figure of leadership, and he was unable to grasp the rudiments of the monetary incentives and compensation that Edward had established to entice his magnates to war. Nor did he seem to understand the need to make warfare appeal to ideals of chivalry. Certainly Richard faced a serious problem in that there was no way of paying for an expedition to France in the first place.\textsuperscript{234} However, recall the willingness of both magnates and common soldiers to fight even when wages were far in arrears. They had rallied behind Edward III and other equally monumental figures such as the Black Prince. Richard failed to live up to the personal charisma that had made his warrior grandfather a leading force for war enthusiasm. Edward III had a grasp on what his nobles’ ambitions were. Through the Company of the Garter and Arthurian cult he had succeeded in building around him a company of loyal friends and servants with whom he could garner at least a feel of solidarity and brotherhood. Richard could not, and had no such comprehension of his magnates’ interests. He was, as Nigel Saul notes, “unable to project a vision in which they could share.”\textsuperscript{235} The Westminster chronicler notes that several of the magnates at court complained the king listened only to those of his own view, and shunned the advice and company of those men who had “brought prosperity to the realm in the past.”\textsuperscript{236} These men no doubt included those who had

\textsuperscript{233} Saul, 158.
\textsuperscript{234} Saul, 158.
\textsuperscript{235} Saul, 129.
\textsuperscript{236} Saul, 129.
served with the Black Prince that had dominated the council of 1378. Fortified with the thinly-veiled references to the deposition of Edward II, the lords’ grievances were enough to frighten the king and make him straightaway dismiss those ministers the magnates had inveigled against.\(^\text{237}\)

It is not a fair judgment to say that Richard was entirely opposed to war. The allurements of warfare in late fourteenth-century England, however, did not just come from fighting a war, but fighting the \textit{right} war. It was about planning and leading campaigns with a grasp of how important the offer of financial reward and compensation had become to the English warring classes since the reign of Edward III. It was about conquering lands that promised lucrative spoils of war. When in 1385 a French fleet threatened the English coast and Scottish armies threatened the northern borders, Richard at least understood that a show of martial strength was imperative. It was needed both to stave off the external danger and the internal peril he faced from the infighting of his lords as well as to prove himself a great commander. However, when parliament granted him taxes to defend the north against the Scots, Richard had to be goaded into personally leading his army. He was certainly not the adventurous king his grandfather was. The Scottish war held enormous promise for hopes of accruing riches and healing the rift between Richard and his magnates. The campaign, at least, seemed to offer “much-desired profits from military contract, ransom and plunder,” precisely what magnates like Gloucester, Arundel and Henry Percy wanted.\(^\text{238}\) Instead it widened the rift, because Richard did not understand that war’s growth in popularity under Edward III had owed much to the introduction of such inducements to fight as the offer of bonuses, wages and

\(^{237}\) Saul, 129.  
\(^{238}\) DeMarco, 473.
compensation. Such offers had become even more important to English soldiers and their leaders as military successes in the Hundred Years’ War waned and the Black Death decimated the available numbers of men to fight. Those crises had called for increased wages and an increased payment to the leaders known as “regard.” Richard, however, raised his army by invoking knights’ tenurial duties of service. No summons to a feudal levy had been proclaimed since 1332. The reintroduction of this system meant that at least for the first month of the campaign, the king was not bound to offer wages or bonuses. It had come to be accepted that bonuses and regard were essential conditions for magnates’ participation and leadership.

Richard’s campaigns in Ireland and Scotland do not seem to have attracted the popular enthusiasm that Edward’s wars had. They did not yield anything close to the enormous opportunities for plunder that the French campaigns afforded. Froissart records the grievances of the Duke of Gloucester, who complained in 1397 of the beginning of a new Irish campaign after Richard secured a truce with France. “He’s been [in Ireland] before,” Gloucester says in this account, “and gained very little, for Ireland is not a place where there’s anything worth winning. The Irish are a poor and nasty people, with a

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239 Lewis, 12.
240 DeMarco, 473.
241 Lewis, 1.
242 DeMarco, 473.
243 DeMarco, 473.
miserable country that is quite uninhabitable.” The wars in Ireland drew the disdain of magnates at various levels not only for their unprofitability but because the Irish were regarded as unchivalrous, unworthy opponents compared to French knights. In the backdrop of the Irish campaigns of 1394-95, Froissart recounts what a squire named Henry Crystede told him. Crystede scorns the way the Irish fight, saying “they hide in the woods and forests, where they live in holes dug under the trees, or in bushes and thickets, like wild animals…[they] attack the enemy as it suits them…no mounted man-at-arms, however good his horse, can ride so fast that they cannot catch him.” As ever, hopes of plunder and chivalric display both took primacy in the arguments of the arms-bearing classes.

The nobles took other slights from Richard’s actions. Part of the chivalric display on the battlefield that knights so loved came from the chance to engage in violent action, such as the chevauchée. In the Scottish campaign of 1385, Richard refused to allow such ventures once the English had crossed into Scottish territory and gained a secure, formal victory. While this was prudent, and while such action was commonplace in Ricardian military campaigns, denying magnates the chance to indulge those chivalric allurements of war they considered sacred was enough of a blow to their ethos to offend them. As the typical campaign of Edward III’s wars, the chevauchee, or cavalry raid, had, furthermore, been “ruthlessly efficient.” The desire to raid was, however, an older, deep-rooted and more conservative element of magnates’ love of war. What was more galling on Richard’s part was his denying the lords those material benefits they had

245 Froissart, 422.
246 Froissart, 410.
247 DeMarco, 479.
248 DeMarco, 475.
249 Barnie, 10.
gotten accustomed to since Edward’s time and, as we shall find, his apparent flirting with the idea of giving in to French demands, succumbing to France’s power.

Threat of invasion, the failure to find an acceptable peace and fears that peace meant the end of fighting men’s livelihood all strengthened the arguments of Richard’s opponents in the late 1380s and 1390s. The councillors echoed Gloucester’s accusation and attacked the king’s failure to reconquer his inheritance in France.\textsuperscript{250} In the backdrop of opposition to the king, the wider basis of the anti-peace crusade would be revealed, as Englishmen believed the prospect of French overlordship over England would be the likely result of peace, and to an extent the fear of a loss of livelihood was also apparent. One of the angriest invectives was against Michael de la Pole. His downfall in 1386 at the hands of the Wonderful Parliament was the first great attack on appeasement and peace with France by the war party. The parliament that met in October 1386 in the wake of the invasion fears that still hung over the state impeached and prosecuted the chancellor with little hesitation. As far as the commons was concerned, Pole had been completely discredited, and a major motive behind his indictment was the failure of his foreign policy, as illustrated by the invasion threat and loss of allies.\textsuperscript{251}

A central concern of Gloucester and the new councillors was to renew the war. They vetoed a peace initiative Richard had sanctioned weeks before and committed themselves to preparing for war. The earl of Arundel prepared to launch a naval expedition against the French, intending to harry them along the Flemish coast and provoke a rising against Burgundian rule.\textsuperscript{252} Gloucester and Arundel gained enormous popularity with the successes they enjoyed, probably in part because they were eager to bestow the fruits of

\textsuperscript{250} Saul, 166.
\textsuperscript{251} Saul, 161.
\textsuperscript{252} Saul, 167-168.
their victory on the commons in recompense for their financial contribution to the undertaking. At one engagement, Arundel captured over a hundred ships, filled with over 19,000 casks of wine. The Earl, Walsingham writes, declared “justius esse, ut hii his gauderent vinis, qui expensas fecerant pro sua profectione versus mare, scilicet communes Angliæ.” 253 This was a very well-received gesture, as he had “præposit communem utilitatem privato commodo.” 254 After victories in battles such as Cadzand, where superior English armaments and manpower triumphed decisively, the magnates were bedevilled by defeat. Arundel managed to threaten Sluys, but instead of capturing it, which may have provoked the rebellion he sought, chose to pillage the countryside around it. The English seized booty worth 200,000 francs, clearly intending to make the war pay for itself, but fever and bad water forced a retreat. 255 Ultimately the expedition failed to make any change in the balance of power between England and France. 256 Richard, though frustrated by the coup of the war party and reluctant to fight a French war, was forced to cooperate with his lords, showing his displeasure all the while. 257 The military reverses suffered by the Appellants finally served to discredit them. Adding to the failures they encountered in France, another Scottish invasion under the earl of Douglas wreaked havoc on the northern countryside. 258

255 Saul, 169.
256 Saul, 169.
257 Saul, 170.
258 Saul, 198.
support of the commons, the king was able to recover much of his authority by 1389.\(^{259}\) Just as defeat on the Continent had brought down Michael de la Pole, it had forced the Appellants to quieten down and return to harmony with Richard.

As a whole, resentment at the appeasement policy underlay the October crisis.\(^{260}\) However, it must be conceded, or at least considered, that if channels for procuring peace existed that might have been to England’s benefit had ever existed, they would have been taken.\(^{261}\) Edward III concluded peace on that premise in 1360, but he had enjoyed an excellent position at negotiations of the Treaty of Brétigny, far better than any the Appellants could claim in 1386. Edward had agreed to relinquish his claim to the French throne, at least in principle, in return for recognition of his rights and inheritance as a vassal and all the territory he had conquered.\(^{262}\) He had ended a costly war at the height of his power, having achieved his great purpose: building up the prestige of England through war. The Appellants could only wish for such a legacy: a peace arrangement that might have secured any little jot of a fruitful position for England proved elusive. It would have to be nothing less than the settlement with the king of France that stipulated simple homage, not liege homage, to Charles VI as a condition for securing the Duchy of Aquitaine against French claims. Simple homage was only an acknowledgement of overlordship and did not limit the freedom of a vassal in any real way. Liege homage was an implicit right of the French king to exercise ressort, to have the position of emperor in his own realm. He was final arbiter of all legal disputes. He restricted the freedom of the English king in his capacity as duke; he could summon the duke for service, including

\(^{259}\) Saul, 199.
\(^{260}\) Saul, 166.
\(^{261}\) Saul, 167.
\(^{262}\) Mortimer, 342.
military service, even if it was anathema to his interests as king. By the early 1390s the war party had lost an important figure of support when John of Gaunt’s interests in France led him to favour peace. Richard made his uncle Duke of Aquitaine in March 1390. In order to secure the borders of the duchy and expand its territory, Gaunt needed an end to French military action in the south-west and an end to the war on the whole.

It was plain that the French were not going to agree to a performance of simple homage. The willingness to accept liege homage, however, had fallen away since Edward III abrogated it in 1337. Henry III had had no qualms in conceding it in 1259, but by the 1390s it had become “a humiliating condition no English king could happily endure.” There was a credible fear among the commons that English foreign policy would be subordinated to the French and that the French may have the right to demand English military service.

To the magnates and common folk whose country had been in conflict with France throughout their living memory, to those who had fought, the idea of Richard paying liege homage was just as unacceptable a situation as it was to those closest to the king. Not only the legacy of the war ensured this sentiment, but the legacy of Edward III himself. In their arguments against homage and ressort, which they applied to the king and his subjects, the commons invoked a principle echoing a parliamentary petition agreed to by Edward in 1340. The wording of the statute could give the impression that the king’s and the people’s liberty were intertwined:

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263 Saul, 217.
265 Saul, 223.
266 Saul, 217.
267 Saul, 223.
268 Saul, 223.
Know that whereas some people do think that by reason that the realm of France has devolved to us\textsuperscript{269} as rightful heir of the same, and for as much as we are King of France, our realm of England should be put in subjection to the king and to the realm of France…our realm of England and the people of the same, of what estate or condition they be, shall not in any time to come be put in subjection or obedience to us, nor our heirs or successors as kings of France.\textsuperscript{270}

Reasserting this petition, made at the beginning of the war, was humbug. Edward’s claim to the French throne had only ever served the \textit{ad hoc} purpose of a powerful instrument to give the king clout in negotiating treaties, a claim that could be shelved or brought out when the king needed it or got what he needed.\textsuperscript{271} He was willing to give up the claim if he was granted territory in France that he held outright independent rule over, rather than as a fiefdom.\textsuperscript{272} The claim had helped him secure allies in Flanders, as Le Bel notes: “The Flemings…finally agreed that if the King of England called himself King of France in his letters, they would accept him as such and obey him as their sovereign lord.”\textsuperscript{273} There is little question, however, that the imagination of Edward as having been the rightful king of France was a popular claim, and the argument the commons put to Richard also seemed to echo those of Gloucester. To their minds, the rights and duties of the crown that Richard was bound to protect were integral to his freedom from liege homage to France. They had refused to compromise even after the English reverses that

\textsuperscript{269} ‘Us’: the king, not the people; the king uses the customary plural pronoun invoked in royal proclamations and formal communication.


\textsuperscript{271} Mortimer, 342.


\textsuperscript{273} Le Bel, 82. According to Le Bel, swearing allegiance to Edward was in the Flemish interest as they could avoid a legal complication. The Flemish had “made a pledge to the papal camera that they wouldn’t go to war with the French king or act in any way against him; if they did so they would forfeit a great sum of money…they felt [Edward] being king would absolve them of their pledge and their money wouldn’t be forfeit.” (82)
followed the Treaty of Brétigny in 1360, and they tied their own liberties to the king’s. The Westminster writer certainly expressed popular sentiment in saying that “every single Englishman having the king of England as his lord would pass under the heel of the French king and be kept for the future under the yoke of slavery.”

At a glance, it is difficult to see how the magnates’ firm stance on this issue had been solidified by the military achievements of Edward III. However, it certainly meant that lordship of Aquitaine had acquired a significance beyond the parameters of kingship alone; that it had taken on a wider dimension that involved the interests of the magnates and indeed the country altogether. In the end, unable to accept liege homage, the English instead concluded a 28-year truce with France in 1396. Neither side was entirely pleased with the settlement. The legacy of the war, the legacy expressed in the magnates’ groveling at Richard’s unwillingness to fight, had rendered it unthinkable that the monarch of a nation which thirty years earlier had been at the height of its power, looming dominant over France, should now submit to the authority of that country’s ruler.

The issue of liege homage was at the crux of opposition to the king between 1390 and 1394, when the peace process was suspended altogether. It drew in the arguments of men whose livelihoods were at risk of being ruined by peace, as well as those alarmed by the prospect of their king’s and, as a result, their own potential submission to French rule. Among the commons and the magnates, the issue reflected both the ethos of passive rejection of peace, considering the threat of humiliation by France, and that of an active

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274 Saul, 221.
275 The Westminster Chronicle, 519.
276 Saul, 227.
277 Saul, 218.
desire for war. In the 1390s opposition to Richard’s desire for peace was still strong among the nobility. According to Froissart in his description of the 1392 peace negotiations at Amiens, the arms-bearing classes all preferred war, as peace was anathema to the livelihood of all fighting men: archers, squires and chevaliers alike. They had become accustomed to “being leisured,” and war was their customary means of supporting the estates they had gained. Their anger flared in 1393. With the outbreak of a rebellion of the commons in Cheshire, the government became aware of the extent of popular resentment of peace. Under the leadership of two war veterans, Sir Thomas Talbot and Sir Nicholas Clifton, the rebels accused the peace negotiators of seeking to deprive the king of his French title, which they tied to “the ancient liberties of their country.” Cheshire had been a major base of recruitment since the time of Edward I, when he had recruited 1,000 archers there for his campaign in Wales in 1277. This was double the number recruited in any other county, and in 1361 Cheshire sent three times the number of any other county to fight in Ireland. By the 1360s Edward the Black Prince had held the earldom there, and the county thus developed a personal connection to the flower of chivalry and finest soldier in England. Other counties did not have Cheshire’s military importance, and admittedly the blow to livelihoods would not be as hard hit by peace, but still their populations believed that the king’s quarrel was just and that he should recover his legitimate inheritance.

278 DeMarco, 472.
279 DeMarco, 472.
280 Saul, 219.
281 Saul, 219.
282 Saul, 221.
283 Saul, 221.
War enthusiasm in the Ricardian era can, admittedly, be summed up as a dichotomy. In one respect, ambitious lords, apt to see warfare as among their natural professions, grumbled that Richard’s peace policy deprived them of the chance to win the kind of distinctions won by their forbears and that it dampened their hopes of great financial gain. We have also seen that soldiers were willing to fight even if they had to supplement their infrequent and relatively meager pay with looting.\(^{284}\) Furthermore, we find that poets and chroniclers during Richard’s reign sympathised with the plight of the magnates, and there is good evidence that those exhorting the king to measure up to his father and grandfather were prominent in Ricardian society and culture. On the other hand, a feeling of the need to fight and criticism of policies of appeasement arose in large part from the relentlessness of French attacks. The apparent impossibility of achieving peace in this period—and a peace from which a strong England might emerge at that—permeated among the political elite and spurred the desire to fight. It may be argued that the feelings among those men who overthrew Richard amounted more to contempt for peace than a vigorous love of war. However, the fact that the memory of Edward III and the Black Prince so constantly emerge in critique of Richard convincingly points to the weight of their legacy in this period.

\(^{284}\) Saul, 156.
Conclusion

In many ways, enthusiasm for conflict in the Ricardian era was not as energetic or sanguine as it was in the reign of Edward III, and was subject to a widely different range of circumstances from those that characterized the beginning of the Hundred Years’ War. This was true both in England and abroad. Edwardian war enthusiasm was characterized by novel views of conflict, by innovation and dynamism. The king impelled that dynamism. Ricardian war enthusiasm was invoked directly by the changed fortunes of the war, marked by appeasement and defeat. It was characterized by reaction rather than military revolution: reaction against the king, against the appeasers, and against the French. Though support for war assumed different dimensions in these two periods, it was almost always marked by an awareness of conflict’s financial and chivalric allurements and maintained the ability to have personal appeal to fighting men, a consciousness instilled by Edward III and his leading magnates.

Edward’s search for effective means to wage war and cultivate the necessary loyalty he needed to fight it, and to drum up support for his territorial claims in France, ensured that, up to the last years of his reign, English society was never short of enthusiasm for the war. Edward had created a war machine built on novel strategy and organization that proved conducive to the needs, desires and ambitions of his commanders, men-at-arms and footsoldiers alike. As it became more formalized, the idea of monetary gain for service in war took on dimensions different from those of Edward I’s reign, when the fledgling tenets of professional soldiery, primacy of infantry, bonuses and military contracts were just emerging. It took victories in France to demonstrate the extent of profiting from conquered lands. Edward also fully promoted the cult of chivalry loved by
the magnates. Battle and the canon of chivalric—we may say quasi-religious—ideals surrounding feats of arms also moved knights to serve in France. The scale of Edward’s victories and those of his son were in and of themselves important inducements for men to fight, in that they convincingly spoke to the country’s military greatness and spurred men of knightly and common classes to join in it.

The England of Richard II was starved of finances, and grappled with the recent memory of losing territory and prestige in France. The threat from France caused alarm and fatalism seems to have abounded both at Richard’s court, in the lives of the barons and among peasants. The entire country was frustrated, and it was that frustration which helped to generate bellicosity. Out of fractiousness, expressed in the king’s relation with his barons in the Scottish war and the malcontent of the Cheshire veterans, there emerged a desire for a cause for national unity. A variety of sentiments both nascent and longstanding, age-old desires for chivalric renown and newfound love of profit, all reflected in the works of Froissart, the Westminster chronicler and the Morte poet, and by people at all echelons of power and position in the nation, which concerned themselves with developments both at the court level and abroad, combined to constantly cast Richard in his father’s and grandfather’s light. Taken together, this corpus of opinions found the king wanting. Richard did not live up to the image of a warlike monarch as Edward and the Black Prince had done and, to popular frustration, his realm was no longer the triumphant warlike state it had been. It was no longer a dominant power in western Europe, as Richard’s forbears had built it up to be.

Despite an understanding that England was in no position financially to continue the war, the dynamics of Edward’s reign had inculcated an indelible memory of war’s
potential profitability from ransoms and looting, and of the sheer joy any military triumph
brought to England. The romanticism of Edward himself was as inexorable to aspiring
Ricardian magnates as it had been to their fathers who had served Edward. Little wonder,
then, that those in Richard’s inner circle who sought peace were condemned as fickle,
and in the eyes of the Lords Appellant their appeasement of France looked so pliant as to
be treasonous. Like the king, the conduct of war by men like Michael de la Pole, where
and when war was waged, was unsatisfactory. In Ricardian England, the legacy of
Edward’s culture of war ensured that anyone who was unable to grasp the crucial, almost
sacred need for England to return to its dominant position, and to act on it, was in peril.
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