

## Edward III - A Forgotten King

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Characters: Narrators 1-4, Edward III, Queen Philippa, Guards 1 & 2, Queen Isabella, Mortimer, Crier, Nobles 1-3.

**Narrator 1:** Today we're standing on the spot where over 650 years ago King Edward III ordered the building of one of England's most glorious medieval castles.

**Narrator 2:** The King had named our town Queenborough in honour of his much loved wife, Queen Philippa of Hainault and so it became a place of great importance to him.

**Narrator 3:** But who was this King? A man who ruled England for 50 years and led the English army into many great and successful battles throughout his reign?

**Narrator 4:** The king who held a magnificent court that was the envy of all of Europe?

**Narrator 2:** The king who both the mighty rulers Henry V and Henry VIII spoke of as their great hero?

**Narrator 1:** This is his story.

*(The young Edward stands centre stage in his robe, still, calm and regal. He is surrounded by courtiers and nobles)*

- Narrator 2:** Edward's father, King Edward II, died when Edward was only 14 years old.
- Narrator 1:** And so at this young age, Edward became King Edward III. *(The crown is placed upon Edward's head).*
- Narrator 4:** But things were not easy for the young King... *(Everyone exits leaving just Edward and Philippa).*
- Edward:** It's so frustrating - I'm supposed to be King and yet I'm not allowed to make any decisions. Everything is controlled by my mother and that wretched boyfriend of hers, Mortimer.
- Philippa:** She may well have been Queen Isabella once, but now I am Queen Philippa. What is more, I'm married to you, the king! There is only room for one Queen of England you know!
- Edward:** Everything I do is watched by my mother's spies. I'm not even allowed to spend any money without her say so. Something must be done!
- (Edward and Philippa remain centre stage, still. Two guards bring on Queen Isabella and Mortimer)*
- Narrator 1:** Rumours had reached the King that his mother and Mortimer were planning to claim the throne for themselves. Edward took drastic action.

- Isabella:** Unhand me! I am the mother of the King! How dare you treat me in such a way!
- Mortimer:** Just wait until the King hears of this!
- Guard 1:** You are arrested under the orders of the King, my lord.
- Isabella:** I beg your pardon?!
- Guard 2:** Your plot has been foiled, my lady.
- Crier:** The King hereby disowns both his mother and the Lord Mortimer and rejects all actions completed by them in his name and in the name of the crown. Henceforth, King Edward III will become sole ruler of England.

*(Isabella and Mortimer are led away by the guards)*

- Narrator 4:** Mortimer was executed, while Queen Isabella was banished, and Edward was at last able to rule as King.
- Narrator 3:** Unlike his father and grandfather before him, Edward involved his nobles in his projects, treating them as friends and partners.
- Edward:** *(Standing centre, surrounded by nobles)* My lords! I speak before you today as both your sovereign and your friend. To lead a nation is no small burden upon one man, and while I welcome the challenges

that lie before me, I know that I will need the help of all of you, my most trusted and able subjects. If I am to execute my duties as your king to high standards that befit this crown, I ask you, have faith in me and allow me to have faith in you!

**Nobles:** Hooray!!

**Narrator 2:** Edward became an immensely popular king. He was uncomplicated and likeable, extrovert and generous.

**Narrator 3:** He was a strong and respected military commander, leading successful campaigns in Scotland and France.

**Narrator 1:** He presided at splendid and spectacular entertainments at court, and was addicted to practical jokes and parties.

**Narrator 4:** Edward's grandest party took place in 1362 to mark his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday and 35 years on the throne of England.

*Nobles enter and mingle as if at a party. Edward stands centre stage surrounded by his friends.*

**Noble 1:** This really is the most *wonderful* party your majesty!

- Noble 2:** Indeed highness, your parties are the envy of every nobleman and woman throughout Europe!
- Noble 3:** Especially those wicked French! How I wish they could see the generosity of our king
- Edward:** Thank you friends, thank you. It is wonderful to share the celebrations with you all. And, of course, with my beautiful Queen...
- Philippa:** Do you like my new dress? I had it made especially for the occasion.
- Edward:** No Queen has ever looked lovelier my dear.
- Philippa:** Why, Edward, you really do say the sweetest things.
- Noble 3:** Such a grand celebration to mark an outstanding leader, your majesty. You truly make us proud to be English!
- Edward:** Eat, drink and be merry my friends!
- ALL:** Hooray!
- Narrator 1:** The splendour of the King's regal parties and celebrations hid a darker truth.

- Narrator 2:** Ongoing wars with France and Scotland had become expensive. Alongside lavish parties, the royal household was fast running out of money.
- Narrator 3:** As well as the financial difficulties, the threat of invasion from Europe was becoming a real possibility. Edward had castles built in Hadleigh and here at Queenborough as a precaution against French attacks.
- Narrator 4:** Edward was no longer the popular king he had once been and was fast becoming resented by many of his subjects.
- Noble 2:** (*Nervous*) Your majesty, I bring grave news. Our military campaign in France does not go well. Our troops are in desperate need of reinforcements.
- Edward:** Then send what they need!
- Noble 1:** (*Also nervous*) But highness, how should we pay for this?
- Edward:** (*Angrily*) For goodness sake, I am the King am I not? Just take what is needed from the royal purse.
- Noble 3:** (*Also nervous*) But that's just it, your majesty, there is very little money left. We can't afford...
- Edward:** (*Even angrier*) Then we shall tax the people! They will have to pay!

- Narrator 1:** As the years went by and Edward grew older, he became less and less popular and suffered more and more illness.
- Narrator 3:** He became ill-tempered and refused to listen to the advice of his noblemen.
- Philippa:** Queen Philippa died in 1369, and his eldest son, the Black Prince in 1376, after which Edward withdrew almost completely from public life.
- Narrator 4:** The outbreaks of plague throughout the 1370s alongside military defeats by the French added to the growing disapproval of the king.
- Narrator 1:** Nevertheless, Edward threw one last great celebration during his reign. On St. George's Day 1377, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his accession to the throne, the king held a dazzling pageant. It was the last time the king was seen in public and was a reminder of the glorious days of his early reign.
- Edward:** King Edward III died on 21<sup>st</sup> June 1377, leaving the throne to his 10 year old grandson, Richard.
- Narrator 3:** Richard inherited many of his grandfather's problems including the wars with France and Scotland and the massive taxation upon the

English people which would lead to him becoming a very unpopular king.

**Narrator 1:** Edward III's reign was one of great successes and bitter disappointments. While the young Edward presented England with a dynamic leader who could create a promising future, the older Edward made mistakes which would undo much of his great work.

**Edward:** We are proud to celebrate this great king's story with you today and to be a part of this community that he helped to create over 650 years ago.