

RICHARD NEVILLE, EARL OF WARWICK “THE KINGMAKER”

source: Britannia

Richard Neville was the son of the first Earl of Salisbury (who was also named Richard Neville), and he became the Earl of Warwick through marriage to Lady Anne de Beauchamp in 1449. His new title came with large estates throughout the country, which helped make him one of the most powerful men in England. Through Neville's manipulations, Edward IV achieved the throne in 1461, and the deposed Henry VI regained it, briefly, in 1470. For his significant political influence, Neville became known as "Warwick the Kingmaker" (or King-Maker or King Maker).

In 1453 Warwick and his father joined with Richard, Duke of York (whose wife, Cecily Neville, was young Richard's aunt), in a power struggle against Henry VI's chief minister, the Duke of Somerset. The duke was supported by one of the Yorkists' greatest rivals, Henry's wife, Margaret of Anjou. The conflict turned violent, and in May 1455 Warwick distinguished himself with a striking victory for the Yorkists at the Battle of St. Albans. For this he was appointed captain of Calais, France.

In 1460 Warwick crossed to England from Calais; in July he defeated the Lancastrian forces at Northampton and captured the king. Warwick may have had some influence on York and Parliament, who decided to allow Henry to keep his crown, for the idea of an easily-manipulated king appealed to him. However, after York and Salisbury died in an ambush by Lancastrian forces at Wakefield in December, a second battle took place at St. Albans at which Warwick was defeated, and Henry was recaptured by his supporters.

But Warwick was not down for long; he joined with York's son Edward and proceeded to London, where Edward proclaimed himself king. To validate his claim, Edward and Warwick won a decisive battle at Towton. For the next three years, Warwick wielded power through Edward. He attempted to negotiate a marriage for Edward to a French noblewoman in hopes of creating an alliance with France, but Edward thwarted the plan by marrying Elizabeth Woodville in 1464. When Edward began to bestow important state offices on Woodville relatives, the relationship between him and Warwick grew strained.

Warwick then cultivated a relationship with Edward's brother George, the Duke of Clarence, and in 1469 the two joined forces to seize Edward, temporarily, and execute Elizabeth's father and one of her brothers. A year later they engineered a revolt in northern England and Edward, after dealing with the incident, went after Warwick and Clarence, who both fled to France.

In France, Warwick and his long-time enemy Margaret of Anjou were reconciled, and he returned to England allied with the Lancastrians. In September of 1470 he drove Edward into exile and put Henry VI back on the throne. Once again he had "made" a king and controlled England through his figurehead.

But Warwick's power was short-lived. Six months later Edward returned to England, and in April his troops engaged Warwick at the Battle of Barnet, where the Kingmaker was killed.

NOTES:

The “kingmaker’s” steward murdered Sir John Brome of Baddesley Clinton and Brome’s son later retaliated by murdering the steward.

After the death of Warwick at the Battle of Barnet, and Edward IV was again on the throne, both George, Duke of Clarence, and Richard, Duke of Gloucester, divided up his properties and Richard, thus, moved to Middleham.

Below is what is said to be the portrait of the Earl of Warwick, Richard Neville.

