

February 1<sup>st</sup>

**Memory verse:**

Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.

Luke 11:35

See the lesson for 30<sup>th</sup> January for information about this memory verse.

**Something to read from History<sup>1</sup>**

King Edward III was crowned on 1<sup>st</sup> February 1327. The picture on the right is of his bronze monument in Westminster Abbey. It shows him as an old man. He was only 14 years old when he was crowned king and the circumstances were not pleasant.

Edward III's father, Edward II was one of the most vile and immoral kings England has had to endure. His two obnoxious favourites, Gaveston and Despensers were hated by all his decent subjects. Queen Isabella, Edward III's mother got parliament to depose Edward II and make his son Edward III. With the aid of a Baron, Roger Mortimer, she captured Edward II and imprisoned him. He was murdered in his dungeon a few months later.

While Edward III was young, Queen Isabella, his mother, and Baron Roger Mortimer, who had helped Isabella get rid of Edward II, ruled for him. Mortimer's behaviour soon made him as unpopular as Gaveston and Despensers had been during the reign of Edward II. In 1330 Edward III threw off the control of Mortimer and his mother and took power himself.

The hundred Years' War began in Edward III's reign. Edward was able to appeal to the patriotic feelings of English people when asking parliament to grant taxes to pay for war against foreign countries. The war with France was popular, this made it easy for Edward to get the money he needed from parliament.

At the beginning of the war the most important fighting was at sea. The English navy was good and gained command of the sea. For the land campaign Edward called for volunteers to fight for him in France. Many English Yeomen were eager to come forward to fight for the king in France. They were allowed to plunder in France and so came home from the wars very well off. Even during lulls and truces in the war, they formed



<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *The Story of God's Dealings with our Nation* Volume 2 which is available here: <https://www.creationresearchstore.com/s/search?q=The%20Story%20of%20Gods%20Dealings%20with%20our%20Nation> A version of this chapter also appears on *The Mothers' Companion Flashdrive* available here: <https://motherscompanion.weebly.com>.

themselves into Free Companies. These lived like bandits in France on whatever they could lay their hands on by force. The French king had no yeomen to fight for him, as the feudal system left all the peasants in France bound to work on the land as serfs.

English peasants were encouraged to become skilled with the long bow. They practised constantly as their chief pastime in their villages and became very strong and accurate with this deadly weapon, which could pierce through mail armour. The French did not use the long bow. The result was that the French, though they had a larger army, were defeated at Crecy (1346) and the town of Calais fell to the English after a siege. Edward wanted Calais as a central market for English wool exported to the continent. After the siege of Calais there was an eight year truce but unofficial warfare continued all the time as the Free Companies raided and plundered. As the war progressed habits of lawlessness and violence learned by the Free Companies spread from France to England itself. Life in England became more violent and dangerous.

Edward III had for his confessor while fighting in France a wise and learned cleric named Thomas Bradwardine. Bradwardine had a remarkable mind and was known as Doctor Profundus, the profound Doctor. He seems to have been converted while listening to the reading of today's memory verse. Bradwardine had discovered the truth of the Gospel, that it is God that saves sinners; we cannot save ourselves by our own good deeds. This was so contrary to what the church of Rome teaches that it must have seemed revolutionary. Bradwardine wrote "... They [the Roman church] pretend not to receive grace freely but to buy it... Alas! nearly the whole world is walking in error." People listened to his lectures (he studied and taught at Merton College, Oxford) and they were circulated throughout Europe. Bradwardine's godliness was recognised among his contemporaries. Edward's victories in France were often considered to be the result of Bradwardine's prayers for his king and his country.

Although the king of France had signed a treaty promising many French lands and a huge sum of money as a ransom to Edward, the French nobles would still not accept Edward's rule. The French began to fight back against the English. They formed their own bands of men to combat the English Free Companies who raided the countryside. They destroyed the English fleet and changed their battle tactics, avoiding the pitched battles which gave the English longbowmen such an advantage. The Black Prince, King Edward III's valiant and popular son became ill with a slow wasting disease. The French found a new hero, Du Guesclin, to lead them to victory. The result of all this was that a new truce was signed in 1372. The only parts of France which now remained under English rule were the districts round Calais and Bordeaux.

One reason for the lull in the fighting after the victories of Crecy and Calais was the arrival in England of an illness known as the Black Death.<sup>2</sup> This plague was so severe that between one third and one half of the population of England died. The effects of this catastrophe on the country were very far reaching.

There were so few peasants left on the land as a result of the black death that the lords of the manor found it difficult to run their estates. Food prices rose. Those peasants who survived demanded higher wages for their work. This may seem natural to us, but in those days things were regarded as having a fixed value and it was considered wrong to ask more for something (even your labour) just because it was in short supply. Once the worst of the black death was over, Parliament met and passed the Statute of Labourers (1351) making it illegal for anyone to either ask for or pay more than the old wages. It was not possible to enforce this law. Landlords did not want to lose their crops altogether and were therefore forced to pay what the surviving peasants demanded. One result of this labour shortage was that landlords gave over more land to grazing for sheep. Sheep required less labour to look after than arable fields.

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<sup>2</sup> More about the Black death in the lesson for June 10<sup>th</sup>.

Edward III realised that if woollen cloth could be woven in England this would be a more valuable product for export than raw wool. Since the Flemish weavers did not get on with their feudal overlord Edward invited them to come and live in England. Many of them accepted the invitation and settled in East Anglia. East Anglia was the nearest part of England to Flanders and most similar to Flanders in its landscape. They taught English people the arts of weaving, **carding**, **fulling**, spinning and dyeing. The trade grew and flourished.

Parliament was becoming more powerful. Edward III fully participated in this process. He worked through parliament and used Acts of Parliament to promote all the important measures of his reign. We have already seen how Edward III's great need of money to fight the war in France had involved parliament in approving taxes. The representatives from the boroughs (merchants from the richer towns) and those from the shires began to withdraw apart from the other members to consider the voting of taxes. This was the beginning of the House of Commons. The other members, the nobles, formed the House of Lords. One of the most important Acts passed by parliament during Edward's reign was the "Treason's Act." This was designed to give more protection against arbitrary arrest and imprisonment. The other important **statutes** involved the powers of the pope.

In 1305 the King of France had contrived that a Frenchman should be made pope. The papacy moved from Rome to Avignon in France where the pope was under the control of the King of France. The English already felt angry that the pope had so much power in their own country. Things were even worse now that the pope was controlled by their enemy, France. Parliament therefore passed two laws. The first, the "Statute of Provisors" (1351), was intended to stop the pope appointing his personal friends to benefices in England so that they could receive the revenues. The second, the "Statute of Praemunire" (1353), made it illegal to bring law-cases before papal courts or to bring papal bulls into the country without the King's permission.

Edward improved the system of justice in England by extending it from the shire court to every parish in the land. Each county now had Justices of the Peace. These were unpaid and appointed from the lesser land owners. Their job was to deal with all minor offences and to regulate wages and prices.

Edward III was the last king who spoke French as his mother tongue. Two languages were spoken in England, Anglo-Saxon and French. The common people spoke various dialects of Anglo-Saxon while the nobles spoke French. Thus it happened that in the army that fought in France against the French, the bowmen spoke Anglo-Saxon and the knights spoke French. As the war went on the knights and nobles began to think it strange that they spoke the language of their enemies and not that of their fellow-countrymen who were fighting for them. A new mixed language came into use in France based on Anglo-Saxon but including many French words. In England itself this change continued and was hastened by the Black Death. Upper class children were usually educated in French by the clergy. So many clergy died of the Black Death that their vacant posts had to be filled hurriedly, often by the sons of villeins who could not speak French. A generation of children therefore grew up speaking no French.

Clergy such as Thomas Bradwardine were the exception rather than the rule at this time. Most had little idea of the true gospel. There was no Bible in the language of the people and the priests often could not read Latin. The religious life of the nation had largely sunk into superstition. The people were exploited by the priests who were greedy for money and whose lives were often immoral. The monks were no better. The begging friars who had been sent out to preach were as greedy and wicked as the rest. Between 1378 and 1417 there were two rival popes, one at Avignon in France and the other in Rome. They hurled insults at each other and both claimed to be the true successor of Peter. This state of affairs showed up the true nature of the papacy even to people who had not read the Bible and had little idea of its teaching.

The Master of Balliol Hall, Oxford towards the end of Edward III's reign, was a priest named John Wycliffe.<sup>3</sup> Bradwardine had been at Oxford and it is probable that Wycliffe read his work. He began to write and preach against the things that were happening in the church. Wycliffe saw how rich the church was and how it swindled poor people. He began to teach that the clergy ought to live as the apostles of old had done and give up all their property. He began to compare the rest of the church's teaching with Scripture too.

Edward's reign ended miserably. The effects of the black death had left England too weak to hold on to her conquests in France. The Black Prince, heir to the throne and popular with the people, was dying, leaving a young son, Richard. Edward was old and suffered from dementia. He was unable to control affairs as he had once done. An evil woman named Alice Perrers beguiled the king so that he did everything she wished. Two rival groups began to struggle for power in the government. One group were supporters of the Black Prince. The other group was headed by the king's fourth son, John of Gaunt. John of Gaunt, the Duke of Lancaster, was enormously rich. The old king considered him his favourite son. A powerful and ambitious man, he used his power in government to increase his own wealth. The illness of the Black Prince helped John of Gaunt to gain power since he was able to take the sick prince's place in the Council. As the Black Prince's illness worsened John of Gaunt's power increased. The Black Prince feared what would happen to his young son, Richard (the heir to the throne after the Black Prince himself) when he died. Would John of Gaunt seize the throne himself, saying that Richard was too young to rule? Would Richard suffer the same fate as the young Arthur at the hands of King John?<sup>4</sup>

The pope called on Edward III to recognise him (the pope) as his feudal head. He also required that Edward pay him the annual tribute imposed on England in the reign of King John. When parliament, known as The Good Parliament, assembled in 1376, this was one of the important questions which it had to consider. As the matter was debated it became clear that Wycliffe's ideas had been taken up by many members of parliament. In the House of Lords especially there were many who thought that the pope was an ordinary man with no right to demand money from England. Parliament decided that the pope had no sovereignty over England. Parliament also threatened all the agents of the pope with death and pronounced the same penalty on any English man who served the pope in his court at Rome. Edward had Wycliffe made one of his chaplains. The Black Prince died in 1376 and his father, Edward III died the following year. The Black Prince had feared John of Gaunt but the young Richard succeeded to the throne without opposition.

You can read more about Edward III in the Optional Resources Files for today which include an extract from H E Marshall's *Our Island Story*.

### Something to do

We have been reading about Crecy so... If you have, or can make, a bow and arrow(s), today would be a good time to go out and have some fun with them. There are a number of bow and arrow making tutorials on the internet, some harder than others, if you want to have a go at making your own. Even a home made toy bow and arrow set is a weapon so here are some safety rules:

Never point your bow and arrow at anyone.

Never shoot your arrow directly upwards.

Ensure that your bow is pointing towards the ground whenever you "nock" your arrow, i.e. put it on the string ready to fire.

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<sup>3</sup> More about Wycliffe on 22<sup>nd</sup> May and 10<sup>th</sup> June.

<sup>4</sup> Arthur (1196-1203), nephew of King John, was heir to the throne and King John imprisoned him. The king is believed to have been responsible for Arthur's death.

Always check that the path to your target is clear of bystanders before you shoot.

Do not “dry fire” your bow. That is pull back and releasing the bowstring without an arrow nocked.

If you are shooting with others make sure someone is in charge.

### Something to write and draw<sup>5</sup>

On 1<sup>st</sup> February 1884 The first volume (*A to Ant*) of the *Oxford English Dictionary* was published. It was in 1857 that the Philological Society of London had decided that there was a need for a new English dictionary. If you read the lesson for April 15<sup>th</sup> last year you will remember Samuel Johnson, who made the very first English dictionary. The Philological Society's was a more ambitious project than Johnson's– more ambitious, as it turned out, even than they had anticipated. Not only did the first volume not appear in print until almost 27 years had passed but the final volume (*Ti to Z*) did not come out until 1928. Originally planned to be 4 volumes and 6,400 pages, in the end it comprised 10 volumes and 15,490 pages and had taken 70 years instead of the proposed 10!

As I mentioned on 15<sup>th</sup> April, everyone should be able to use a dictionary and to do that you need to know the alphabet well. If you find saying the alphabet hard or if there are younger children in the family learning it, you might like to make a wall chart to help. Use 13 pieces of A4 paper folded or cut in half to give 26 A5 pieces – one for each letter. Put the letters, capital and lowercase (small) in large writing and bright colours in the centre and draw pictures of objects beginning with the relevant letter round the edges. Then you can join the sheets together to form a frieze or poster.

I have highlighted some words in the story from history above that you could look up in a dictionary if you have one.

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5 Information from <https://public.oed.com/history/> and other sources.