

## **THE BLACK PRINCE**

by Mary Somerville,

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Edward of Woodstock, The Black Prince (1330-1376) was the eldest son of Edward III. His head can be seen on your left as you enter the Quire, through the pulpitum arch. He was regarded by his English contemporaries as a model of chivalry, a great military tactician and one of the greatest knights of his age. In contrast the French remember him for his brutality and the massacres he ordered.

Edward was created Prince of Wales in 1334. At the age of 16 he played a key role in the defeat of the French army at the Battle of Crecy. In 1355, he was appointed his father's lieutenant in Gascony and the following year he led another significant victory against the French at Poitiers, taking the French king prisoner.

In October 1361 Edward married Joan, known as the Fair Maid of Kent, and was created Prince of Aquitaine and Gascony. He and his wife went to live in his new French domains. In 1367, Edward led an expedition to Spain, to restore the deposed King Pedro of Castile, and proved himself again with victory at the Battle of Najera in northern Castile. On his return to Aquitaine, he made himself unpopular with the nobility by levying taxes to pay for his Spanish expedition. They rose in revolt against him and in 1370 Edward besieged the city of Limoges. When it fell, 3,000 of its inhabitants were massacred. A year later, Edward returned to England.

During his lifetime he was known as Edward of Woodstock. The sobriquet of 'Black Prince' does not appear in written records until the 16<sup>th</sup> century, nearly two centuries after his death. However, as a nickname it may date back to his lifetime and may refer to the black armour that he wore at the Battle of Crecy. It may also stem from his black jousting shield emblazoned with three white ostrich feathers. The three feathers on his shield signify peace. There are two stories about why the feathers were chosen. The first is that they were part of his mother, Philippa of Hainault's family crest. The second is that at the Battle of Crecy Edward was so impressed by the bravery of the King of Bohemia that he adopted his crest. We do know that he inherited The King of Bohemia's motto *Ich Dien* - 'I serve'. However, there is no concrete evidence that Edward also took his crest. To this day three ostrich feathers remain the emblem of The Prince of Wales and *Ich Dien* is his motto. Until recently the two pence piece had three feathers on its back.

Edward died aged 45, shortly before his father. He was buried in great splendour in Canterbury Cathedral. His young son, Richard, inherited the throne from his grandfather as Richard II.