

[Transcript] The Rest Is History / 321. Hundred Years' War: A Storm of Swords

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Fair and honoured Lord, the Black Prince said to the King, again I pray you for a moment of patience. It is your word, and only yours, which can tell us what is just and right.

To whom were you graciously pleased to commit your royal person? King John looked slowly around. There was a devil of a yellow horse, said he. My poor pal Free went over like a skittle pin before a ball. As a rider I know nothing, say that he bore red roses on a silver shield. Ah, by Saint Denis, there is the man himself, and there his thrice-accursed horse.

His head swimming, and moving as if in a dream, Nigel found himself the centre of the circle of armed men.

The Black Prince laid his hand upon his shoulder. It is the little cock of Tilford Bridge.

Said he. On my father's soul I have ever said that you would win your way, and I had rather have the honour this squire has gathered than all the richest ransoms of France.

At these words, spoken before that circle of noble warriors, Nigel's heart gave one great throb, and he dropped upon his knee before the Prince. Fair Lord, how can I thank you? he murmured. These words at least are more than any ransom.

Rise up, said the smiling Prince, and he smote with his sword upon his shoulder. England has lost a brave squire, and has gained a gallant knight. Nay, linger not, I pray. Rise up, Sir Nigel.

And that, Tom Holland, is the climactic scene of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's masterwork, one of the books that he believed would be remembered long after Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson were forgotten. Sir Nigel, the book that fired your love of history all those decades ago.

And that must be very stirring for you to hear that, that reading. So stirring. Of the Battle of Poitiers, with which we ended last time. The flower of French chivalry cut down like dogs, the black Prince triumphant, Nigel having captured King Jean II of France, who was we heard last time, led in, actually not in shame, he's on a big horse, isn't he? He's led very gallantly through the crowds in London, as would happen I think today, if a similar scenes were repeated. And England have won the Hundred Years War, or have they?

Well, it certainly looks that way, because remember Dominic, it's not just the French king they have, they still have the Scottish king, David II. So they've got a stash of kings. So it's looking tremendous for England. And tremendous wealth.

So they've had to economize for years and years to fund the war. And now the loot is just flooding in. So there's a contemporary chronicler who says a woman who did not possess spoil from France, garments, furs, bed covers, silver vessels, cloth of linen was held of no account.

And John, it has to be said, the French king is absolutely leading the way when it comes to showing how to blow loads of cash. So despite the fact that France is going to be bled white to pay for his ransom, I mean, he is spending money like there's no tomorrow.

So he, we have the records of his accounts in London, and he bought an organ, he bought whale meat from Bruges, he bought not just one, but six ermine-trimmed hats for his jester.

Hold on, he's buying on this and having it shipped over to England?

Yeah, to London.

Yeah.

And of course, his youngest son Philip is there, 14-year-old boy, who'd fought very bravely at

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Poitiers.

Has he got a hat? No doubt he has.

Of course, he's got loads of hats. Yes.

So massive lavishness from John in London. And of course, there are also loads of French knights, so the flower of French chivalry, who've been taken prisoner.

So loads of tournaments. In fact, the first ever day-night tournament is held in Bristol.

A night-time tournament? Yeah.

How do they do that?

They have blazing torches.

So that is the equivalent on, this is a lovely link, that's the equivalent of the first European floodlit friendlies pioneered by wolves in the 1950s, under the lights of Mollenew, when we beat Honverd and...

I guess very similar.

...with the top team in the world in those days.

The parallel is very obvious.

I'm glad I can mention that.

Yes.

St George's Day, 1358, another great tournament is held, Order of the Garter, chivalry from across, not just England, not just France, but the whole of Europe.

And a few days later at Windsor, John signs his ransom treaty. And the ransom itself, it's a vast sum, it's about 20 times the ordinary annual revenue of the English King.

It's agreed that Edward III will rule directly over about a quarter of France, so much expanded Duchy of Aquitaine, Calais, Pontier, a few bits of Normandy, and that he will hold these sovereign, so he won't have to do homage to the French King for them.

In return, Edward III agrees to give up both his claim to the Duchy of Normandy, which he claims as inheritance from William the Conqueror, and his claim to the French Crown.

And just if I can interject, so those bits of France that Edward III will hold, they are no longer French? Is that the...?

Well, they are French.

The geographically part of France, but legally they are Edward III.

And Edward feels that these are very reasonable terms. He feels that he's behaved very well.

Meanwhile, however, France is basically disintegrating, because in the absence of the King, power has devolved upon the Dauphin, Charles, who... I mean, he is basically a weed, but he's smart.

So he's kind of weedy, he's a bit like me, he's kind of bit scrawny.

It says here he had an ill-proportioned body.

Yeah, pale and thin, he had small sharp eyes, thin lips, a long thin nose and an ill-proportioned body.

Is that how you describe yourself? I mean, that's a bit harsh.

Maybe as I was when I was 20, when I was youth.

However, again, like me, beneath his cyclic exterior, he possessed a hardcore of resistance and a native intelligence, which came to his aid in adversity.

Okay, that's good.

He really needs it, because he is facing multiple crises.

So the first and obvious crisis is that Charles the Bad is still very much on the scene.

I've forgotten about him.

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So listen to the previous episode, remember Charles the Bad is basically the Mr. Burns of 14th century French history, he does what he says on the tin.

I mean, he's just bad.

He does things simply because it's bad for the fun of it.

Right.

So he'd been put in prison by John.

Yeah.

He escapes.

He escapes in November 1357.

Of course he does.

He arrives in Paris, he's treated as an absolute hero and he starts bullying the Dauphin, the poor old Dauphin,

because he wants indemnity for all the lambs in Normandy that have been confiscated and he wants his associates who had been in the conspiracy,

who'd been executed on the orders of John and had been slung up in gibbets.

He wants them to be honorably buried.

Dauphin kind of plays a holding game.

And so what Charles does then is he empties the prisons of Paris and then rides off to Normandy to raise an army.

So thoroughly bad behavior.

And when he gets to Normandy, he buries his associates, Count of Harcourt and all those people down from the gibbets and buries them.

And effectively he's declaring civil war.

So that's bad.

The stuff about the prisons is like Bane in The Dark Knight Rises, Tom.

Anyway, that's by the by.

Yeah, but it's also, it's like the Wagner group, isn't it?

Yeah.

I mean, they're all prisoners, convicts.

In Ukraine.

Yeah.

In Russia, yeah.

So that's very much what Charles the Bad is doing.

Meanwhile, in Paris, 1789 is not the first revolution in Paris.

You astound me.

No.

So essentially there are revolutionary conditions in Paris in the wake of the Battle of Poitiers.

Because it's not just the authority of the monarchy, but of the nobility as well has been shot.

Because aside from the members of the Order of the Star who stood their ground, loads of them had run away, including, you may remember, the Duke of Orleans, the younger brother of the king.

And basically their authority is shot.

So it's the third, as in the French Revolution, it's the third estate.

So there are the three estates, the nobility, the clergy, and the burgers, the bourgeois.

And the bourgeois basically sees control of Paris.

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They murder two of the Dauphin's closest associates in full view of him.
And they invite Charles the Bad back to Paris.
They decide that they're going to back him rather than the Dauphin.
So the Dauphin escapes.
Charles the Bad comes back to Paris.
But meanwhile, conditions are so bad that north of Paris, there's a peasant uprising.
But the Jacquerie is this.
The Jacquerie.
So supposedly named after the leader, Jacques Bonhomme.
So Jacques, the good man, which sounds a completely made up name and probably was.
So François describes it as seeing the wrongs and oppression inflicted on them on every side and seeing the nobles gave them no protection, but rather repressed them as heavily as the enemy.
The peasants rose and took up arms against the nobles of France.
And this rebellion only lasts for two weeks.
The nightmare for the nobility is that it threatens to kind of spread through France like wildfire.
So they get pockets of peasant rebellion in Amiens throughout Normandy.
And the nobility predictably are telling awful kind of nightmarish stories about what this means.
So there's one notorious episode where they supposedly, they capture a knight, they kill him, they put him on a spit,
turning round and round in front of his wife and his children.
And then they rape the knight's lady and they try to make her and her children eat the roasted body of the knight.
And then when they refuse, they put them to death.
I mean, this sounds a wholly improbable story.
You don't think this happened?
Well, I don't know.
I mean, I don't know.
But these are the stories that are being told.
And so it redounds greatly to Charles the Bad's glory when he is the guy who effectively wipes the Jacquerie out, kind of annihilates them.
But he then makes a terrible mistake because he moves back to Paris and he tries to seize control of it by setting himself at the head of the third estate of the bourgeois.
He proclaims himself the captain of Paris.
And this immediately loses in the sport of nobility who previously had swung behind him after he just wiped out the peasants.
And so Charles realizes that basically he can't control Paris and no one can control Paris.
It's an absolute state of anarchy.
So he withdraws the Dauphins already withdrawn and essentially the city is left to its own devices.
The revolution is going to rage until it burns itself out.
So the capital is in a terrible state.
The countryside is in a terrible state.
But what makes the state of the countryside even worse is you mentioned in the third episode, is this like the 30 years war?
Where essentially the sense of coherent state entities fighting one another collapses into a kind of

more universal anarchy.

And this is kind of what happens in the wake of Poitiers.

Because as the French government disintegrates, all these companies of men who've been fighting with the English.

So not just English, but preeminently Gascons.

There's no one to hold them in check.

And they just start spilling out from Aquitaine, or indeed from Brittany, or indeed Normandy.

And they just start stripping everything bare.

So you get bands of free companies moving southwards from Normandy, northwards from Gascony.

And it absorbs so many people that it comes to be called the Great Company.

And it's led by a former cleric, Arnaud Sevel, who is called the Archpriest.

And basically they just strip everything bare.

So they pillaged the whole of Normandy, they head southwards, plundering as they go, and they even menace Avignon.

And the Pope has to buy them off.

Roughly how many people would you say?

Thousands. I mean, the largest company, yeah.

Yeah. So it's the size of a small army, basically.

Absolutely. And, you know, these are absolutely battle-hardened.

These are people who have often they fought with the Black Prince.

They know what it is to fight and to kill.

And they're masters of the kind of the most up-to-date arts of killing.

You know, there are archers, men-at-arms.

They are terrifying and there is no one to rein them in.

And then on top of all this carnage, of course, when John signs the treaty with Edward III, there's the obligation to pay his ransom.

And the problem is, how do you raise it?

Because there are no structures of authority.

It's just impossible to start raising money.

So basically, I mean, it's as bad a condition for France as at any point in its history.

Maybe after Agincourt, maybe wars of religion in the 16th century.

But France is in an absolutely terrible condition.

And for the king in London, looking across the channel at this process of disintegration, it's a nightmare.

And basically, for them, the real enemy isn't Edward III, it's Charles the Bad.

They're desperate to leave London, get over and, you know, start trying to sort everything out.

So the measure of this is that by spring 1359, John is basically ready to sign away everything.

And so a fresh treaty is signed in which he basically gives up half the territory of France, including Brittany, including Normandy to Edward.

All of Charles the Bad's territory in Normandy is given to Edward.

And when the news of this reaches Paris, the Dauphin is so desperate that he enters into a completely insane plot with the king of Denmark to invade England.

The Danes haven't invaded England at this point for some considerable time.

Yes. So it's kind of very retro, you know, appealing to the Vikings.

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The plan is to kind of, you know, rescue John from London and bring him back.
And of course, it doesn't work.
So but it's not just the Dauphin who rejects it.
The estates general do as well.
So the estates general, this is the French equivalent to the parliament.
They're French going to the parliament.
Does the estates general, I mean, do they have any genuine power or are they purely consultative?
Pretty much consultative. But in this condition, they do have power because their ability to refuse it, which they do.
They say the terms are unacceptable, impossible, effectively dooms it because they would be responsible for rubber stamping.
Well, for raising the money, presumably, there's no presumably very strong state bureaucracy.
So it must be entirely dependent on local elites to raise the money for the ransom.
If they say no, you know, you're sunk.
I mean, mind you, if I was John looking at this situation, I'd probably stay in the Savoy or something.
Do a Victor Hugo.
Well, Dominic, it's interesting you say that bear that thought in mind.
Because of course, yes, I mean, the condition is terrible.
Who would want to take command of a kingdom in this state of Anarchy?
Well, one person who does is Edward.
Basically, when the estates general on the Dauphin throw the treaty that he's agreed with the French king back in his face,
he decides, well, I'm going to have to go and invade.
So that's what he does.
And so this is the last time he will lead an expedition to France.
He crosses the Calais, he heads south to Reims, which is traditionally where French kings are crowned.
And it's pretty obvious that his aim is to have himself crowned in Reims.
So he puts the city under siege, but he fails to take it.
And so that's a dent in his prestige at a crucial time.
This is the first time I think he's had a bit of a reverse.
Why don't they take France?
Why don't they take it?
Because it's actually very difficult to take cities.
This is the last point, really, where cities can be put under siege and expect to hold out.
So people are starting to use Canon, but it's still pretty rough.
Our producer, who was gutted in the last episode about the anti-Frenchness,
because he claims to be French, he's delighted by the differing pronunciations of R-E-I-M-S in this podcast, Tom.
Well, I am speaking the English way here.
You are.
And I've actually revealed myself.
I've made a terrible error.
You have with your regus and your French-ified ways.

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Thank God one of us is here to articulate the bulldog spirit.
Anyway, listen, that's a complete tangent.
So basically, it's very hard to take a well-defended city.
And actually, it's interesting, there haven't been many sieges in this story.
Right. The only one really has been Calais, and that took over a year.
And that's why it's so difficult then for the French to take it back.
Understood.
So when Edward III has failed to take...
I don't want to say it now, because I'll give myself away.
When Edward III has failed...
Stuart Sanbrook...
Has failed to take ass.
What's he going to do now?
Well, he has a massive strop.
Yeah, he has a massive strop and goes off of a hose like a hooligan.
So he launches a massive chevrochet right the way up to Paris,
where the dauphin is hunkering down,
and it's designed to humiliate the dauphin to demonstrate that he won't dare come out,
which he doesn't.
And actually, Petrarch, the famous Italian humanist,
he comes to Paris shortly after this,
and he records what he sees.
He says that everywhere was grief, destruction and desolation
and cultivated fields filled with weeds,
ruined and abandoned houses.
The ruins go right up to the gates of Paris.
A bit like Paris today.
Don't think that you can redeem your reputation
with that kind of language.
I know, I know.
I'm afraid your copy book is so blotted.
Yeah.
The battoey butty.
So that's humiliating for the dauphin,
but it's also a kind of score draw,
because Edward can't capture Paris,
his inability to capture Paris proclaims to everybody
that he can't even now, with France's prostrate as she is,
he can't really hope to conquer the kingdom outright.
And this is a point that is made to him by his greatest lieutenant,
the Duke of Lancaster,
that great, great warrior,
the second knight of the Order of the Garter.
So the Duke of Lancaster has been riding with Edward on this chevrochet,

as they move, they leave Paris at the spring of 1360.
The Duke of Lancaster urges Edward III to negotiate,
and again, François records the conversation,
probably, I mean, it's probably not verbatim,
but it clearly articulates the essence of Lancaster's argument.
And Lancaster says to Edward,
you now have a choice,
you can press on with your struggle
and pass the rest of your life fighting,
or you can make terms with your enemy
while you can still come out of it with honour.
My advice is to accept the offers which have already been made to you.
You know perfectly well that in one day,
we could lose all that we have gained in 20 years.
That's remarkably sensible advice,
because he knows that thing that we talked about in the first couple of episodes,
that the English are still in the game while they're winning battles,
but because of France's huge advantage in men and in financial power,
I mean, once France is back on its feet,
once France starts to win, England doesn't have the reserves and the resources, presumably.
So he's basically saying, you know, while the going is good,
get out now rather than keep gambling,
because ultimately you'll lose.
You'll lose one battle and then that will be it.
And what he also knows is that England has been incredibly lucky
to have the chance to fight three decisive battles,
so Sluys, Crécy and Poitiers, and they've won them all,
but the likelihood is that the French will not risk battle again.
And that means that the English, if the war continues,
will be fighting one that they can't possibly win,
because it will be all about capturing castles, that kind of thing.
And the English simply don't have the resources to win a war of that kind.
And Edward appreciates this.
He accepts the force of what Lancaster is saying.
And so May 1360, so only a few weeks after he'd been menacing Paris,
he and the Dauphins meet up at Brittany and negotiations are opened
and they last three days.
And basically the terms are the same as those that Edward had negotiated
with the Dauphins' father at Windsor 18 months previously.
So it leaves Edward with this vastly expanded Duchy of Aquitaine.
So it looks as though Aquitaine is now kind of impregnable.
And Aquitaine is to be accepted by the French crown as sovereign
and in return Edward will give up his claim to the French throne.
So this seems to be the end of the war.

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It's a decent result, I would say.

It is a decent result, but of course there are two shadows over it.

And the first is that it is less than Edward had been aiming for

and that he thought that he'd had within his grasp.

So that's a disappointment for him.

And the other is the resonance of that comment made by the Duke of Lancaster.

You know perfectly well that in one day we could lose all that we have gained in 20 years.

So this is like, I mean back me up if I'm wrong here Dominic, but this is like a football manager.

First half your team are 8-0 up and he's saying we've got to concentrate on defence

because we could still go into halftime, could still be a draw, they could still pull this back.

Well I'll tell you what it is Tom, to pick up the reference earlier in this episode

to Wolves pioneering European football.

It's like one of those European Champions League games where away goals count double.

You could be winning a home and given the permutations, it might just take one goal by the

opponents

and suddenly it will all be for nothing and you're out of the tournament.

And that sort of is the position that the English are in, isn't it?

Because they cannot come back in the way that the French.

So they're sitting on a lead, they're sitting on a lead here, but they know that it's precarious.

And fans of England should be warned that the final episode, the final kind of chunk of this series

it's all been going so well but what is to come I'm afraid will be very traumatic.

Conversely, if you're French or Scottish, you're going to love what's coming up.

Okay, well it's good for the soul Tom.

I think sometimes we need to, it's all been wine and roses so far.

Sometimes a bit of thin gruel can be good for you.

So return after the break for the thin gruel of a French comeback.

Yes.

Welcome back to the Restless History.

We ended the last half with England apparently on top in the Hundred Years' War after the Treaty of Bretany.

Edward III hasn't quite got everything that he wanted but he's got a lot of it.

The French very much on their uppers.

Tom, this is not quite the end of the story though, is it by any means?

No, it's not.

And it looks in the aftermath of the Treaty of Bretany so everything is going well for England and specifically for the Black Prince

because he becomes Duke of Aquitaine and so he is the sovereign ruler of this great expanded duchy and his renown is like nobody else's in Europe.

He holds the most extravagant court.

This is Camelot, they all loved and honoured him as their lord, Frasar writes about his courtiers.

They proclaimed his realm to be the greatest in the world and the richest in valiant men at arms.

And so the Black Prince is absolutely preeminent as the model, not just of chivalry but of a kind of earthly rule

because by now Edward III is starting to get old but the Black Prince is absolutely in his prime.

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However, that said, the foundations of English rule remain precarious and that's because France remains in a terrible way.

So the territories that England has absorbed, they've been ravaged and plundered.

So the sense of social instability in these new lands that are now constituting the Duchy of Aquitaine is very pronounced

and it's telling that the Prince of Wales finds it as hard to rein in the free companies as the French crown does.

So Frasar, he thinks that Edward III deliberately encourages English soldiers who've been left unemployed by the Treaty of Brittany

to stay in France because he doesn't want them coming back to England

because he's worried about the instability that they will spread and there may well be truth to that.

But of course the knock on effect of that is that they remain and they destabilise the Black Prince's Duchy.

I mean, lots of them go to Italy where the Italians are absolutely kind of devastated by the arrival of all these.

So the most famous one of these is John Hawkewood.

There's a wonderful book, I think, by Francis Stonno Saunders about Hawkewood's company just rampaging across Tuscany and northern Italy

and here, there and everywhere, pillaging.

And this is basically, this is a bit like one of these Middle Eastern Iraq and Syria where the war spills over the borders

and neighbouring states are kind of dragged into it.

Absolutely. And for England, there's blowback because lots do, of course, go back to England.

And these are men who are absolutely honed in the art of pillaging and intimidating.

And so not as bad as France, but social order in England starts to break down because of the return of these members of the company.

And there is something there that is, you know, it's foreshadowing the possibility of a kind of peasant revolt

of the Order of the Jackery that France has already suffered.

So that's something that perhaps is starting to brew at this point.

And I think it is true to say that despite the kind of the aura of glamour that surrounds the Black Prince and the Order of the Garter,

there's no question that people in England are aware that ultimately, English victories have been won by the Longbowmen.

And this does seem to have had, I think, a knock on effect on the confidence of the commons.

So the first record we have of the commons meeting separately from the Lords is in 1341, which is the year after the Battle of Sleuths.

1351, so a decade on, they're taking control of the wool trade, so from the monarch.

And the class of people who had been providing the Longbowmen in England start to be enfranchised.

You have to have a Longbow, is it?

If you have 40 shillings of land, income and property, so you're legally obliged to own a bow. Is that right?

That's right.

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And that also, however, means that you are legally entitled to vote.

Yeah. And so that gives a certain degree of voting power to the classes who won Cressy and Poitiers.

So England has become a political nation of Longbowmen.

Well, in the long run, the reign of Edward III will be remembered as much for the growing autonomy of parliaments as for the victories in France.

So it's having unexpected consequences in England as well as in France.

Yeah. I think also there is, certainly on the part of the Black Prince, there is a measure of overconfidence.

You know, everything has gone so well for him since he was 16, that he can't contemplate the possibility that things might go wrong.

So the herald of Sir John Shandos, Sir John Shandos is there with the Black Prince in Aquitaine.

He describes the rule of the Black Prince as being marked by good sense, moderation, righteousness, reason, justice and restraint.

The truth is that none of these descriptions really apply to the rule of the Black Prince.

He's all about extravagance. And this has to be paid for.

So the Black Prince has begun to tax his lands in England quite heavily to fund his court in Bordeaux.

But he also starts to impose taxes in a way that they've never been exacted before.

Right.

Not just on Gascony, but on the lands beyond Gascony that have been brought in by the terms of the Treaty of Bretony into his duchy.

And, you know, his subjects don't like this. And they start to grumble.

And they start to think, well, is there someone else, you know, is there someone we can appeal to?

And of course, the obvious person that they can appeal to is the French King, even though legally by the terms of the Treaty, they're not allowed to.

But that's a kind of possibility that he's starting to bubble away.

And meanwhile, the Black Prince is, you know, he's always looking for opportunities to burnish his glory yet more.

And the chance comes in 1366 when there's a kind of Spanish adventure involving various rivals for the throne of Castile.

He leads an expedition there, including lots of the free companies.

He meets with the French army, defeats the French army yet again.

So this absolutely sets the seal on England's reputation for military prowess.

But the long-term consequences are disastrous for the Black Prince on a personal level, because he contracts a very debilitating illness, perhaps malaria, I don't know.

But he's double-crossed by his Spanish allies, the guy who he's been kind of backing as King of Castile.

And so he's left very heavily in debt, comes back to acquitain, raises taxes even higher.

And this is a real problem now because John II, the world's most useless king, is dead.

John's record coming back from London.

So after the Treaty of Bretonny, he and his young son, Philip, come back to France.

Everything he does continues to be disaster.

So he tries to hire the Archpriest, the leader of the most favorite, the great company.

That goes wrong, unsurprisingly.

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You know, he gets double-crossed.

Then he decides, oh, hang this, I'm going to go on a crusade.

That goes wrong.

And basically, everything seems to be going so badly that you said earlier, why did he ever leave England?

Well, he goes back to England.

And his explanation for this is that he's unable to keep the terms of the treaty because he can't pay the ransom.

He can't control the free companies.

And so therefore, he's going to go back to London.

And he gives this kind of high-sounding declaration that if good faith and honor to be banished from the world,

still let them be found in the hearts and words of princes.

But everybody in France is kind of screaming at him, don't do this.

So he goes back to London and within four months he's dead.

So he's dead in April, 1364.

His body is returned to France with all honor.

But this means that the Dauphair, Charles, is now king.

And he's the ill-proportioned fellow.

So he looks like Blackadder in the very first Blackadder series.

But he's very shrewd.

He has lots of cunning plans and they genuinely are cunning.

And his chief cunning plan is basically to take back the lands that his father ceded.

Okay.

I mean, you don't have to be that cunning to think of that.

That's surely an obvious goal.

But he plays a long game.

He delayed gratification.

Because he realizes that, you know, as you've been pointing out throughout these episodes, that France has much, much greater resources.

And the requirement is to marshal them and to apply them where it will hurt the English.

And so what he does is, as he starts to reintroduce order, as revenues start to increase, he deploys these increased revenues essentially in winning back the loyalty of lords and castelans in English-occupied regions of France.

Right.

And the other thing he does is he appoints as Constable.

So in other words, military supremo in France.

He appoints a Constable not on the basis of aristocratic pedigree, but on raw ability.

And the man he appoints is a professional captain, the most famous of all the leaders of kind of armed bands in France, a man who'd already fought and actually lost the back prince in Spain, but whose reputation is beyond compare in France.

And this is a man called Bertrand Duguescler.

Right.

And by the time that he's appointed Constable, he has made himself the richest of all the kind of the various soldiers of fortune who've been profiting from the atmosphere of chaos in France. He's not a great tactician in the way that Sir John Chandos is or the black prince, but he's a brilliant, brilliant strategist. I mean, he's the equal, if not the superior to Edward III, because he absolutely recognizes that there can be no question of meeting the English in an open battle. And he understands that it's got to be a war of attrition and that if they stick to that discipline, the English can't possibly win that. Right. And so he exercises absolute control. He plans everything. And he essentially is completely adept at moving pieces on the chessboard in a way that increasingly comes to kind of put English positions in France, increasingly into a kind of condition of checkmate. And by 1368, Charles V, the former dauphin, is ready to make his move because an appeal comes to him from all the people in Aquitaine who were being taxed by the black prince and Charles summons the black prince to answer for this. And of course, the black prince refuses because he's sovereign. He has no answerable to the French king. Absolutely. And so Charles V, in response to this, he doesn't declare war, but he launches troops against English possessions in Aquitaine and they promptly start to collapse. And Edward III in London, who's still very confident of his ability to impose terms, promptly rips up the treaty and reclaims the French throne. But this time, it all goes tits up. It's an absolute disaster. And the English positions just disintegrate and implode. And I mean, rather than kind of describe each process by which this happens, because it's a long and frankly, if you're English, rather depressing story, I would describe what happens to some of the lead players, the people who've been taking the starring roles in the story so far. Just before you do that, Tom, the war was being over 30 years at this point, hasn't it? So just sort of generationally, I suppose, some of those characters, Edward III, you know, Chandos or whatever, they must be slightly past their prime by this point. Is there a sense of that? They are. Yeah. So John Chandos, he dies quite early in this campaign. There's a French incursion. It's fought but on a riverbank.

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He wins the battle because he always wins his battles.
But he's going up a riverbank.
He slips on his surcoat, falls to his knees and gets stabbed through the face.
Oh, that's a very unglamorous end for a glamorous man.
And he dies few years later without ever regaining consciousness.
And the English recognize that they've lost their best soldier,
their best strategist, their best tactician.
And it's bad for the black prince because he's lost his lieutenant.
The fate of the black prince is, I mean, people who feel that he deserves
a measure of retribution for his readiness to slaughter and kill his social inferiors.
Well, what happens to him is that once war has been declared again between England and France,
lots of cities that have been given to the black prince in his role as Duke of Aquitaine
throw off their loyalty to him.
One of them is the city of Limoges in central France.
The black prince is furious.
He's incredibly ill by this point.
He still seems to have, you know, suffering from malaria.
But he leads an expedition against Limoges.
He captures it and he wipes it out.
And this is, you asked, well, you know, our people worrying about the scale of the atrocities.
At this point, Frasad does.
Right.
You know, he says of the people who were slaughtered by the black prince,
let the Lord receive their souls for they were all martyrs.
And he writes this kind of incredibly moving passage, very unusual in the context of medieval
chroniclers,
kind of saying that, you know, this is the fate visited on Limoges was terrible.
Although Tom, I have to say, I read online that the black prince has been greatly maligned.
The historian Richard Barber says probably only a tenth of the number of people that Frasad says
were killed were in fact killed.
It was fake news. The black prince was a tremendous fellow.
It's not entirely fake news because even a tenth of the population is still in enormous proportion.
And it's designed to be salutary.
That's what the black prince is all about.
It's about giving public lessons.
Oh, no, this is chivalric.
It's perfectly acceptable.
But it is, well, black, you might say, it feeds to his reputation as a black prince.
And the effort of conducting this campaign is such that he has to be carried back to Bordeaux in a
litter.
And a few months later, early 1371, he goes back to England and gives up his duchy.
He can't cranky.
You know, he's kind of, he's a broken man.
Is this because of malaria, basically?

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Yeah, malaria.

Yes, it seems to be.

And so he moves to his great manor, Kennington, which is about 30 minutes walk from where I'm sitting now.

Yeah, the oval.

And so the coat of arms, the badge of Surrey Cricket Club is the ostrich feather, which derives ultimately from the black prince who owned the land on which the oval now stands.

And that ostrich feather, of course, ultimately derives from John the blind king of Bohemia.

And to this day, Surrey Cricket Club are the tenants of the Prince of Wales.

So that's all very sad.

And he then contracts dysentery.

Yeah.

A very humiliating way to go.

And he dies in 1376 and is buried in Canterbury Cathedral next to the shrine of Thomas Beckett, the great martyred saint.

And if you go to Canterbury, you can see his shield, his coats of arms, his helmet.

Wikipedia tells me, Tom, that his dysentery had become so violent on occasion that he would faint from weakness.

Yeah.

If we have French or Scottish listeners, they may feel that a certain degree of poetic justice there. Right.

Obviously, we don't, as patriotic Englishmen, we don't think that at all, of course.

And if that's an awful fate that's visited on the Prince of Wales, the black prince,

then in a way, the fate of Edward III, the greatest lad ever to sit on the throne of England,

the ladies' man, the supreme strategist of his generation, is even worse because he becomes very senile.

He ends up with dementia.

He becomes the plaything of a woman called Alice Peres, who, Philippa, by this point, has died.

So he comes under the thumb of Alice Peres, who is predictably not treated well by the chroniclers of the age.

And he ends up dying in Sheen, which one would wish on anyone.

Is Sheen a terrible place?

I mean, I don't think that's...

It's where you'd want to go if you were a great warrior.

Isn't Sheen where you and I went and had a dinner for charity?

It's more like the same place?

Yeah.

Just down from there.

Those places on the Thames all blur into one in my mind.

Yeah.

Well, anyway, he died there, and that's the end of him.

Well, no.

I mean, so shortly before he dies, the measure of how this great warrior is that a group of representatives from London come to visit him.

Yeah.

And they have to kind of swaddle him up like a baby in cloth of gold, and they nail him into the throne.

So they kind of hammer down the cloth so that he can stay upright.

And he kind of sits there like a kind of doll.

But he wasn't that old.

He was 64 when he died.

Yeah.

Very sad.

Okay.

Very sad.

And so he dies a year after the Black Prince and his last words are, Jesus, you have pity.

And, you know, he dies.

He's lost all his lands in France by this point.

So the Duke of Lancaster's warning has proved true.

Now, you may be wondering, of course, it's not just the English leaders who come to horrible ends.

Because, of course, you will remember Charles the Bad, who is your friend of the show?

I'm not sure.

I don't think he's a friend of the show, but he's definitely...

It's a character of the show, isn't it?

Yeah.

If I was employing a plotter, I'd look to him.

Yeah.

Definitely.

Basically, he gets outsmarted by his old enemy, Charles V.

Okay.

And he gets pursued absolutely relentlessly.

And by the final decade of his life, he's lost all his holdings in France.

He has to retreat to Navarre.

Every so often, the French will come barging into Navarre and loot it.

So he's in a very bad way.

And in 1387, so that's 10 years after the death of Edwin III, he is in the Pamplona.

And he's in a very bad way physically.

So his physician orders him to be wrapped up in a kind of linen cloth, which for some reason, the physician says has to be dipped in brandy.

I'm just reading the description.

It's absolutely hilarious.

Hold on.

Hold on.

Hold on.

So he's like a kind of massive baby wrapped up in swaddling clothes, this cloth that's been soaked in brandy right the way up to his neck.

So he can't actually move.

He can't move his legs.

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He can't move his arms.

This is done to him every night and then in a very Game of Thrones way, one of the kind of, you know, the chambermaids whose duty it is to attend to him, she accidentally drops a candle onto this brandy impregnated cloth that he's wrapped in.

And it goes whoosh.

And the chambermaid goes, oh my God, what have I done?

She runs out in panic.

And Charles the Bold is horribly burned to death.

What a way to go.

Crikey.

Yeah.

So that's all bad.

But there are survivors.

So one of the survivors is John of Gaunt, Edward III's second son.

Oh yeah.

So he's only been mentioned in this podcast of the capacity of being born.

Born again.

Born again.

Yeah.

He's the great survivor from that golden age of English cavalry and victory.

And he's actually the person who in 1373 leads the last great chevrolet.

So he goes from Calais all the way to Bordeaux, but it's a bit of a Pyrrhic march.

Because even though he does successfully cross the whole of France, by the time he reaches Bordeaux, most of his troops have been wiped out.

And that's effectively the last of the great chevauchers that are launched in this stage of the Hundred Years War.

And John of Gaunt becomes increasingly unpopular because the blame for the collapse of England's positions in France are laid at his door.

The person who really comes out of it well is Charles V, who ends up being called Charles V otherwise.

He dies in 1380 and his achievements are absolutely manifest.

He's basically picked France up from being utterly prostrate, kind of set it back on its feet again.

He's retaken most of the conquests made by the English with the striking exception of Calais, which remains in English holds.

He's defeated Charles the bad.

And basically he's done as well as any French king could have hoped to do.

However, both France and England remain in very bad ways.

They're both very badly scarred by the experience of the war.

England is in a position of increasing instability because of English men-at-arms who are returning from the war, kind of embittered, hard to control, contemptuous of authority.

France likewise, France remains very, very scarred by the free companies, by the depredations of English armies.

Both countries remain very, very heavily taxed.

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And both countries in the wake of the death of, respectively, Edward III and Charles V have very young and inexperienced kings.

So the king who succeeds Edward III is the son of the Black Prince, Richard, who'd been born in Bordeaux.

So Richard of Bordeaux becomes Richard II.

He's 10 when he succeeds to the throne.

Charles V is succeeded by his son, Charles VI, who is 11.

And both of these young boys stand in the shadow of very, very imperious and ambitious uncles.

So Richard II obviously has his uncle, John of Gaunt.

But Charles VI has his uncle, who is Philip.

And Philip is the young boy who had fought at the Battle of Poitiers by the side of his father, King John, who had been taken to London, who had lived there, who had then come back with his father after the Treaty of Brittany, come back to France, and his father, John, as a reward for his courage at the Battle of Poitiers and for serving by his side throughout his captivity in London, makes him the Duke of Burgundy.

And Philip is the Duke who will come to be known as Philip the Bold and the father of the line of dukes, who are the theme of the episode that we did on the Dukes of Burgundy with Bart Van Loo.

One of our best episodes.

So if you haven't heard that, that episode is a kind of sequel to this episode.

So if you want to know what the Dukes of Burgundy did, their origins in this stage of the Hundred Years War, but they also play a key role in the second stage of the Hundred Years War, which is initiated by Henry V, who wins the Great Battle of Agincourt, the English again, as they'd done under Ed of the Third seem almost poised to subdue the whole of France, but they then lose their position because of the emergence of perhaps the most extraordinary figure not just in the Hundred Years War, but in the whole of French history, Joan of Arc.

And hopefully that's a story that we'll come back to.

We'll definitely come back to that story, Tom.

But this is half time.

So you know, it's England 8, France 8, they've both retired to lick their wounds, be pepped up by the manager, and the second half remains to be played.

So Tom, that was, we sometimes do say this on the rest of this history, but I think we can say it, or I can say it, with real feeling this time, because that was a genuine tour de force.

A chevrolet.

Four tremendous episodes as you pillaged your way across the fields of medieval history. So that's the first stage of the Hundred Years War, because the great mistake is to think of the Hundred Years War as one thing, I suppose.

I mean, maybe the strategic context is always the same, but the characters are so different and there are such big hiatuses, aren't there?

I mean, it's basically a 20, 30 year hiatus.

Well, we've got Rich the Second and Henry the Fourth, part one and two.

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Exactly.

It's all to come.

Still to come before Henry the Fifth.

So that was wonderful.

I knew nothing about the Hundred Years War, really, before we started, so I've learned an awful lot.

But the thing that I've most appreciated is you introducing me, and by extension the listeners, to the glories of St. Igel.

So I think it would only be right to end with a final reading from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Masterwork, a work compared with which the sign of four, the hair of the Baskervilles, a study in Scarlett, are as nothing.

So these are the final lines of Tom Holland's favourite book, one of his favourite books when he was just a boy in Wiltshire, and you can imagine the young Tom listening to this and his heart stirring with pride.

So here we go.

The years pass, the old wheel turns and ever the thread runs out, the wise and the good, the noble and the brave, they come from the darkness and into the darkness they go, whence wither and why, who may say, so lie the dead leaves, but they and such as they nourish forever that great old trunk of England, which still sheds forth another crop and another each as strong and as fair as the last.

The body may lie in mouldering chancel or in crumbling bolt with a rumour of noble lives, the record of valour and truth can never die but lives on in the soul of the people.

Our own work lies ready to our hands and yet our strength may be the greater and our faith the firmer if we spare an hour from present toils to look back upon the women who were gentle and strong, or the men who loved honour more than life, on this green stage of England, where for a few short years we play our little part.

Oh.

Goodbye.

Goodbye.

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