

## The Black Prince

Edward III's son, the Black Prince, is one of those heroes of history who don't bear too close an inspection. His nickname comes from his black armour, though no-one seems to have called him the Black Prince in his lifetime. There's no doubt that the Black Prince was a fearsome fighter. When the prince was in a tight spot in one battle and people were urging King Edward to go and help him, the King is supposed to have shaken his head and said, "No, let him win his spurs". The Black Prince became England's first duke, fought a war in Spain and won that one too. He even married for love. But then things get less glamorous.

Edward III left his son in charge of his lands in Aquitaine, but before long the people of Aquitaine were appealing to the King of France against the high taxes the Prince was making them pay. The French King tried to confiscate the Prince's lands, which triggered the war off again. The Prince was sick with dysentery by this time, but he was so angry with the French that he got off his sick bed to supervise the destruction of the city of Limoges and the massacre of some 3,000 of its people. Not such a nice guy.

The French just didn't give in: Edward found he couldn't get into Rheims, where all French kings are crowned, because the city wouldn't surrender, and the French kept up an exhausting guerrilla war against Edward's men (they were too canny to risk another open battle). In the end, Edward and the French signed a peace treaty, which said:

- ✓ Edward would give up his claim to the French throne and to Henry II's old lands of Anjou and Normandy
- ✓ In return, Edward got to keep Calais and a much bigger Aquitaine.

If it seems like Edward gave in rather easily, bear in mind that while all this was going on, the Black Death was ravaging Europe. Any sort of peace looked very attractive. All that was left of Edward's French adventure were some French fleurs-de-lis on his coat of arms to show that he ought to be King of France really.

## Conquering France again

Just when the French thought they were safe, a new English King came to the throne: Henry V. Henry became King at a very dangerous time in England. His father Henry IV had seized the throne quite illegally, and there had been a major rebellion against him (see the following section "Lancaster vs. York: The Wars of the Roses – a User's Guide" for details). Now there was a plot to kill Henry V. A war in France seemed just the thing to take people's minds off thoughts of rebellion.