

THE LANCASTRIANS:

1399-1461

Because Henry Bolingbroke was legal heir to the duchy of Lancaster before he became king, the name House of Lancaster is applied to a dynasty that included Henry IV, V and VI - father, son and grandson - who occupied England's throne for the next sixty-odd years. These were often years of rebellion and instability, interspersed by short-lived victories against France and rival claimants to the throne. This was the dynasty that gave England success at Agincourt, yet later pitched the nation into the Wars of the Roses to test whether the succession should keep to the male line or could pass through females. This was also the dynasty that burned Joan of Arc and finally lost all but Calais as its Continental possessions.

HENRY IV: 1399-1413

He spent the early part of his reign defending his crown. In 1403 the Percys of Northumberland, turned against him and conspired with Owen Glendower. But Henry defeated them at the Battle of Shrewsbury and later executed many of the rebels. By 1408 he had gained firm control of the country.



Throughout Henry IV's reign currency smuggling continued until a serious shortage of bullion in 1412 obliged the king to order a reduction in the weight of his coins - by 16% in the case of silver. So we have heavy and light coinages in this reign, though no groats were struck until the light period of 1412-1413.



*A light groat of 1412.
Note the cross pattée in
the obverse legend
right at the top. Most
Henry IV coins have
this mintmark.*