

Edward, II Biography

Edward, II

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Biography

Edward II (1284-1327) was king of England from 1307 to 1327. His reign witnessed the decline of royal power and the rise of baronial opposition.

Edward II was born on April 25, 1284, the fourth son of Edward I and Eleanor of Castile. He acted as regent during his father's absence in Flanders in 1297-1298, signing the Confirmatio Cartarum. He was created Prince of Wales and Earl of Chester in 1301.

One of his first acts upon succeeding to the crown on July 8, 1307, was to recall his favorite, Piers Gaveston, who had been banished by Edward I, and to make him Earl of Cornwall on August 6. He also appointed Gaveston regent of Ireland and custos of the realm. In January 1308 Edward married Isabella, the daughter of Philip IV of France. These two acts aroused such baronial opposition that 21 "lords ordainers" were appointed to administer the country.

Under the pretense of attacking the Scottish rebels, Edward marched north in 1310. His real aim, however, was to avoid the ordainers and Thomas of Lancaster, the leader of the barons. Civil war broke out. The strife ended with the murder of Gaveston by the Earl of Warwick on June 19, 1312. The following year an amnesty was granted.

Hoping to win popular support, Edward resumed the war against the Scots. His sound defeat by Robert Bruce at Bannockburn in 1314 caused him to lose what little remaining influence he had. Edward's high-handed treatment of the Mortimers and other nobles alienated many of the nobility.

Edward offended his wife by his fondness for the younger Hugh le Despenser. After sending Isabella to France to negotiate a dispute between himself and her brother, he had to deal with her attempt to dethrone him when she returned in 1326 with troops and the support of Roger Mortimer. Unable to count on the support of his barons, whom he had offended by his unwillingness to consult with them, Edward fled to the west and was captured on Nov. 16, 1326, at Neath in Glamorgan. On June 20, 1327, he was forced to resign the throne. Imprisoned in Berkeley Castle, Edward was poorly treated. He was murdered on Sept. 21, 1327, and then buried at Gloucester Abbey.