

Declarations of Independence

In 1320, six years after Bannockburn, King Robert I decided to try to strengthen his newly independent kingdom. He got some Scottish churchmen at Arbroath Abbey to draw up the *Declaration of Arbroath* addressed to the Pope, asking him to recognise Scotland as an independent nation. It was quite a document. "As long as but a hundred of us remain alive," it said, "never will we on any conditions be brought

under English rule". Then it added that the Scots were fighting for freedom, "which no honest man gives up but with life itself". The Irish and the Welsh came up with similar documents. This wasn't just anti-English feeling. These people were beginning to think of themselves as nations. Mind you, that didn't stop the English controlling them.

Careful! Some day your prince may come

With Isabella and Mortimer running everything, the barons soon began to feel that they'd just exchanged Edward II for a His 'n' Hers version of Gaveston or the Despensers. The young King, who was growing up fast, wasn't too happy with the arrangement either. After a year, he decided he had had enough of taking orders from his mother and her lover. He gathered some men together, and they made their way through a secret passageway into Mortimer and Isabella's chamber in Nottingham Castle and arrested them. Mortimer was hanged (English politics was beginning to look decidedly dangerous) and Isabella retired from politics. And Edward III had only just started.

Conquering France: The Hundred Years War and Edward III

Edward III decided conquering France would be fun. He had a perfectly good claim to be King of France. His mother, Queen Isabella, was the next in line, but because the rules said a woman couldn't inherit the throne, Edward came next. Instead, the throne had gone to Edward's first-cousin-once-removed, King Philip VI. So Edward III told the Bishop of Lincoln to go over to France and tell King Philip most politely to kindly get off the French throne and hand over to Edward. It's difficult to know whose face would have made the better picture – the bishop's, when Edward told him what he had to do, or King Philip's, when he heard the message!

