

Archival Assessment

When beginning this archive assessment, I chose to look for documents relating to Edward the Black Prince as I knew little about him. I initially did a 'google' search and accessed several websites where I read several biographies. I used these as framework to find primary sources and the documents that I have chosen come from a variety of archives, all of which I have found by using the search terms Edward the Black Prince, Edward of Woodstock, Edward Duke of Cornwall or Edward Earl of Chester. I have also searched using the names of his wife, Aquitaine, and the names of chroniclers. I have also refined my searches by year and I begin with a document that dates from before his birth.

Dispensation for Edward's parents to marry

London

The National Archives

SC 7/24/5

As Edward's parents, Edward III and Phillipa of Hainault were related in the third degree of consanguinity, they required a dispensation from the Pope John XXII to allow them to marry. This meant that any future children would be legitimate and would be entitled to inherit the throne of England. This document confirms the dispensation was granted on 30th August 1327, in Avignon.

I would like to have included a primary source to support Edward's birth at Woodstock on 15th June 1330 and his creation as Earl of Chester on 18th March 1333.

Constituted as Prince of Wales

London

The National Archives

SC 6/1221/4

This document confirms that Edward was constituted as Prince of Wales on 12th May, 17 Edward III's reign (1343). This is important as he was known thereafter as the Prince of Wales. Before this time, he was known as the Earl of Chester or Edward of Woodstock.

Furthermore, Edward was created Duke of Cornwall on 16th March 1337, and documents exist which refer to him by his full titles, for example the following document.

Letters Patent by Edward, Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall and Earl of Chester

Chester

The Chester Archives

ZCH/17

This document is an example of Letters Patent by Edward, Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall and Earl of Chester concerning the rent at Fee Farm. It requires the rent to be paid annually to Richard, Earl of Arundel. It is dated 11th November, 25 Edward III (1351). Whilst a minor document, it does provide evidence of all the titles he holds.

In 1294, Edward was made Prince of Aquitaine following which he would have been expected to pay homage to his father.

Homage done by the Prince of Wales to Edward III for the Principality of Aquitaine

London

The National Archives

E 30/1106

This document dated 19th July 1362 records the homage paid by Edward the Black Prince to his overlord, in this case Edward III, at Westminster and confirms his further title of Prince of Aquitaine.

At this point, I will now turn to the chronicles which give us further information about the life of Edward the Black Prince.

The manuscripts and autographed letters of 'Chandos the Herald'

London

University of London

B.056/Ull/Cat

This is the catalogue of the manuscripts and autograph letters of 'Chandos the Herald', on permanent loan to the University of London by HRH, the Prince of Wales. The collection of 181 manuscripts and 119 letters contains the poem that describes the actions of Edward of Woodstock, during the Hundred Years War, including the Castilian civil war, the Battle of Crecy and the Battle of Poitiers, although the latter are believed to have been added after the Prince's death. Whilst little is known of the author, Sir John Chandos was a close friend of the Prince and was with him on campaign in Castile, including the Battle of Najera, which is described in the poem. It benefits therefore from being mainly contemporaneous and written by someone close to the Prince's companions. However, this also means that it is partisan to the royal cause and is certainly written in praise of him.

The Chronicles of Adam Murimuth

London

The British Library

Harley MS 3836

This is the 'Coninuato Chronicarum' in Latin, by Adam Murimuth. It is believed that he wrote much of this text after his retirement from ecclesiastical service as legal adviser, in 1331.

It is a narrative of the years 1302-1347 and references documents from this later period that are not mentioned elsewhere. The chronicle contains more detail from 1340 onwards, covering the achievements of Edward III in the French wars. Whilst Edward was a minor during much of this period, it does cover the Battle of Crecy, where he commanded the right flank of the English forces.

As well as the chronicler's accounts of the events in his lifetime we also have a letter from Edward to his wife Joan.

Letter from Edward, Prince of Wales and Aquitaine, to Joan of Kent, his wife

London

The National Archives

SC 1/42/33

This letter is an account of the battle of Najara, and dates from 5th April 1367. This would be an excellent document to examine, as it would be interesting to compare Edwards account, with those of the chronicles. It would also give an insight into the relationship between Edward and Joan, to see what other information it contains, the style of the language and the style and form of the handwriting of the day.

Royal Seals of Edward the Black Prince

London

The National Archive

DL 25/3590/3143 & DL 25/3590/3144

Also of importance, when examining the life of Edward the Black Prince are his royal seals. This item is a seal of Edward of Woodstock from the period 1362-1376 when he was Prince of Wales and Prince of Aquitaine. Royal seals provided a guarantee of authenticity to important documents and are therefore a useful tool to the historian. The seal also illustrates the two aspects of sovereignty; to provide justice as represented by the image of Edward on a throne holding a sceptre and military prowess, mounted on horseback in armour, carrying a sword. Usefully, it is available as digitised images.

Other information about Edward's life can be found in the following document.

'Engleterre' register of letters, warrants, writs, deeds, charters, petitions, etc concerning the lands and subjects of the lands of the Prince of Wales

London

The National Archives

E 36/278 (Exchequer Memoranda Rolls)

These documents are described as the 'Engleterre' register of letters, warrants, writs, deeds, charters, petitions, etc concerning the lands and subjects of the lands of the Prince of Wales. It includes documents from the Office of First Fruits and Tenths and the Court of Augmentation and is of particular interest because it includes confessions about the taking of prisoners at the battle of Poitiers. It also includes chamber accounts, inventories of jewels, horses and other items and covers the period January 1349 to January 1366.

During this period Edward was made Lieutenant of Gascony, fought in the battle of Poitiers and was made Prince of Aquitaine. It is therefore valuable as a source of information concerning a wide range of issues during a pivotal period of Edwards life.

Prince of Wales' Lands: Valor.

London

The National Archives

SC 12/427

The final document I have chosen is the valuation of Edward the Black Princes' lands. This document would be interesting in that it would show all the lands and wealth that he had accumulated through his royal titles, grants and inheritances. This one dates from 47-49 Edward III (Jan 1373 - Jan 1376) Edward was to die in 1376 and this gives a picture of his worth shortly before his death.

References:

Fryde, E.B., Greenway, D.E., Porter, S. and Roy, I. *Handbook of British Chronology*, Third Edition, Bury St Edmund's, St Edmundsbury Press, Suffolk (1986).

Shaw, I. P., *Encyclopædia Britannica*, (2020)
<<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Edward-the-Black-Prince>>, [accessed 04/11/20]

Wikipedia, *Edward the Black Prince*, (2020)
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_the_Black_Prince> [accessed 03/11/20]