

EDWARD, THE BLACK PRINCE

Archival Sources

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Methodology

I decided to use The National Archives, Kew, London (<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk>) as my first point of contact for searching relevant archives. The Black Prince was not known by that soubriquet during his lifetime so it would be necessary to use his name and titles. These were: Edward of Woodstock, The Earl of Chester, The Duke of Cornwall, The Prince of Wales and the Prince of Aquitaine. I was interested in investigating local archives relating to his titles as Earl of Chester, Duke of Cornwall and Prince of Wales so I intended to search archives in these places. In addition to documents, I wished to include also objects related to the Black Prince and decided that those assembled and displayed at his tomb in Canterbury Cathedral were also worth investigating.

I quickly realised that there exists a huge number of document archives so I decided, for this exercise, to research as wide a range as possible of different types to demonstrate the extent of the Black Prince's duties and actions.

For each archive indicated in the following list, I will include a brief description of its content and its significance in my research. I intend to use footnote references only for other sources or archives referred to in my text.

List of Archives

Berkeley, Gloucestershire
Berkeley Castle Muniments
BCM/D/1/23/7

Commission of the peace according to the statute of Winchester for various counties

Dated August 12th 1338

This is significant because it is recorded as being witnessed only by Edward, Duke of Cornwall and Earl of Chester. He was just 8 years old at the time.

Manchester
University of Manchester Library
RYCH/1333

Writ of Edward, prince of Wales requiring a forester in Wyrhale [Wirral] to levy certain fines. The writ includes a long list of offences and fines.

Dated: Jan 26th 1351

This is significant because of concessions made by Edward III shortly after the death of the Black Prince, but at his request, in which the Wirral was to be freed of the burden of forest dues and taxation forever.¹

Redruth
Archives and Cornish Studies Service
BHEL/454

Dated 1354

Charter by Edward, Duke of Cornwall to Helston Borough.

This document of minor significance but it is included to extend the range of the location of available archives and to give an example of Edward's responsibilities as Duke of Cornwall (the first Duke ever created in England).

¹ M.Jones. *The Black Prince* Head of Zeus Ltd, 2017, P393

Aberystwyth
The National Library of Wales
GB 0210 THORNE (Basil Thorne Collection of North Wales Deeds)
Series 1298-1543
File 303²

Dated March 12th 1358/9 [old style/new style year]

This is a pardon of alienation [related to property transactions] granted by Edward, Prince of Wales to Howell ap Gronw on payment of a fine of 20 marks in respect of land at Trefgoelyth which had been acquired without licence.

This document, in Latin, is an example of the Black Prince's duties as Prince of Wales.

Kew, London
The National Archives
C 61

Dated 1317-1468

This archive is a huge and detailed record of writs, requests, confirmations, petitions and other documents relating to the royal lands and subjects in Gascony. They consist of parchment rolls, mostly in Latin, and are collectively known as 'The Gascon Rolls'. The massive task of extracting useful information from this archive has been made simple for historians by the extraordinary project by a vast international team of academics. Access to the result of this project is freely available for the public on the website of 'The Gascon Rolls Project'.³

The individual archives are sub referenced by calendar reference using the National Archives reference of C61/ with a sub reference between 32 and 144 indicating the years range of years covered and an additional reference used within the projects indexing system of the 'membrane' number.

² National Library of Wales, Basil Thorne Collection of North Wales Deeds.
<<https://archives.library.wales/index.php/pardon-of-alienation-granted-by-edward-prince-of-wales-black-prince-to-howell-ap-gronw-on-payment-of>>
[Accessed 20th October 2021].

³ The Gascon Rolls Project.
2019 <<http://www.gasconrolls.org/en/>>
[Accessed during October 2021]

I have decided to list 3 example archives which relate to the preparations for the campaign leading up to the battle of Poitiers. The archives are therefore dated in the spring of 1536.

Kew, London
The National Archives
C61/68

Gascon Rolls Project Membrane Number: 06f (face)

Item number: 24

Dated: 7th April 1356

Appointment of sheriff of Gloucester and others to choose 100 archers mounted on horses from the best and stronger archers of Gloucestershire to serve in the retinue of Edward, Prince of Wales, in the wages of the king. Included are full powers to arrest and imprison any who resist.

This is one of very many similar documents.

Item Number: 29

Dated: 15th March 1536

Letters of Protection with clause *volumus*, until December 25th 1536 granted to Robert Missenden who is going to Gascony in the retinue of Edward, Prince of Wales.

This is also one of very many documents which afford security and protection to knights or others crossing to serve with Edward, the Black Prince. The 'volumus' clause freed them from any existing legal actions.

Item Number: 42

16th April 1536

Appointment of Philip de Whitton to arrest all ships of a capacity of 40 tuns or more in the ports of Bristol or other Western ports and bring them to Plymouth for the passage to Gascony of Richard de Stafford and his men-at-arms and archers. They have to be ready by the 'octave of Easter' (the Sunday after Easter Sunday).

This appointment also included powers to arrest and detain any who resisted.

Kew, London
The National Archives
E27/8

Dated: 1360

This archive is a wooden chest in which the Treaty of Calais (following the battle of Poitiers) was stored.

A description of this treasure by The National Archives, is available.⁴



The treaty produced a temporary lull (about 9 years) in the Anglo-French hostilities and although no territory or territorial claims were conceded, King John II of France who had been captured was obliged to pay a huge ransom of 3,000,000 crowns.

⁴ The National Archives, *Treasures from the National Archives*.
https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/museum/item.asp?item_id=7
[Accessed 20th October 2021].

Kew, London
The National Archives
E30/225

September 23rd 1366

This is a notarial obligation by Peter II, the deposed king of Castile, to pay 440,000 gold florins for the wages of troops brought to his assistance by Edward, Prince of Aquitaine and to surrender his three daughters as hostages.

This is an archive related to the Treaty of Libourne⁵ of the same date by which Edward agreed to help Peter II in his fight against his half-brother Henry of Trastamare. The debt ended up at over 1,100,000 gold florins, but was never paid. ⁶

Canterbury
Canterbury Cathedral

Tomb of Edward, the Black Prince.

Edward was buried in Canterbury Cathedral, after his death in September 1376, close to the shrine of Thomas Becket. Displayed by his tomb are his shield, helm and crest, Jupon (a type of tunic), his scabbard and belt and his Gauntlets.

His shield 'of peace', consisting of three ostrich feathers and the motto 'Ich diene' [sic], with the spelling corrected, is still the heraldic emblem of the Prince of Wales to this day. ⁷

⁵ Kew, London. The National Archives (hereafter TNA).
E30/230

⁶ TNA.

E30/1085. See also E30/231 and E30/228.

⁷ Canterbury Historical and Archaeological Society
2015 < <http://www.canterbury-archaeology.org.uk/bp-tomb/4590809630>>

Conclusion

The objective of this exercise was intended to illustrate the range of archival sources available associated with Edward, The Black Prince. Within the limitations of this exercise I have been able only to scratch the surface of the vast resources available. I did not attempt to focus only on those archives which are of the greatest significance but the research shows that there exist abundant records of his activities throughout England, Wales, France and Spain.

Further archival Searches

To study aspects of the Black Prince's life and activities in France and Spain, the Gascon Rolls Project contains a wealth of archival information all neatly indexed and translated. A serious student of the subject might also investigate archive sources in France or Spain. However, without doubt a comprehensive study of this subject is the work of a decade or more.