

# John of Gaunt, 1st Duke of Lancaster



John of Gaunt

**John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster** (March 6, 1340 – February 3, 1399) was the third surviving son of King Edward III of England and Philippa of Hainault. He gained his name "John of Gaunt" because he was born at Ghent in 1340. The fabulously wealthy Gaunt exercised tremendous influence over the throne during the minority reign of his nephew, Richard II, and during the ensuing periods of political strife, but took care not to be openly associated with opponents of the King.

John of Gaunt's legitimate male heirs, the Lancasters, included Kings Henry IV, Henry V, and Henry VI. John of Gaunt's illegitimate descendants, who ultimately became legitimate by his marriage to Katherine Swynford in 1396, the Beauforts, later married into the House of Tudor, which ascended to the throne in the person of Henry VII. In addition, **Gaunt's legitimate descendants included his daughters Philippa of Lancaster, Queen consort of John I of Portugal** and mother of King Edward of Portugal, Elizabeth, Duchess of Exeter, the mother of John Holland, 2nd Duke of Exeter, and Katherine of Lancaster, Queen consort of Henry III of Castile, a grand-daughter of Pedro of Castile and the mother of John II of Castile.

When John of Gaunt died in 1399, his estates were declared forfeit to the crown, as Richard II had exiled John's less diplomatic heir, Henry Bolingbroke, in 1398. Bolingbroke returned and deposed the unpopular Richard, to reign as King Henry IV of England (1399–1413), the first of the descendants of John of Gaunt to hold the throne of England.

John of Gaunt was buried in the nave of Old St. Paul's Cathedral in an alabaster tomb designed by Henry Yevele (similar to that of his son in Canterbury Cathedral).