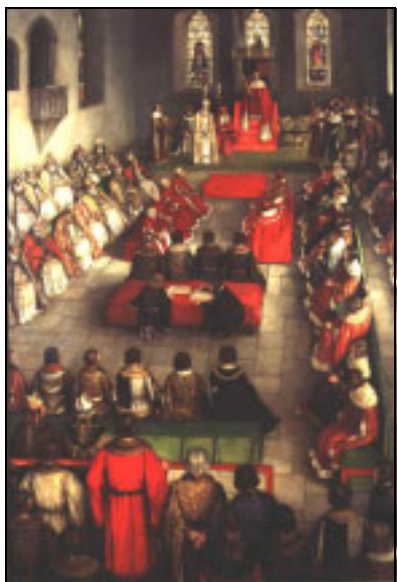


Parliament of Henry VI at Reading Abbey, 1453

Painted by Stephen Reid (1873 - 1940)

Object No. 1926. 50. 1

Location - Reading: People & Place Gallery, Museum of Reading



The painting depicts the Parliament which opened on 6 March 1453. It is based on an illustration of the English Parliament dated 1523 and shows Henry VI heading the House of Lords in the Refectory of Reading Abbey. This session of Parliament was cut short by an outbreak of plague.

Henry VI succeeded to the throne when he was nine months old. He was King of England between 1422 and 1461, when he was deposed by his cousin Edward, son of Richard of York, who became Edward IV. Henry was restored to the throne in 1470 but was again defeated by Edward IV in 1471 and was murdered in the Tower of London in that year.

In October 1422 Henry also became King of France. During his reign he visited France just once and, after suffering humiliating military defeats during the closing years of the Hundred Years War, lost all his French lands, except Calais.

The Parliament shown here took place in the Refectory of the Abbey and shows the Lords spiritual and temporal and the Commons in their places. The Archbishop of Canterbury is shown in the painting but did not actually attend. The session of Parliament was short. A few taxes were granted to the king and a force of 20,000 archers to be maintained by 'the countries, cities and towns according to their substance'.