

The Marriage of John of Gaunt and Blanche of Lancaster, 1359

Painted by Boardman Wright (d. 1915), 1914

Object no. 1931. 275. 1

Location - Foot of the main staircase, Museum of Reading



This painting shows the marriage of John of Gaunt to Blanche of Lancaster in Reading Abbey on 19 May 1359.

In this painting John of Gaunt and his bride walk from beneath a gilded canopy towards the officiating Bishop of Salisbury. Four lords support the wedding canopy. The one nearest to Blanche is her father, Henry Duke of Lancaster. Close by is the poet Chaucer, clothed in black and bearing a scroll.

On the throne is John's father, King Edward III, beneath a crimson canopy decorated with the lions of England. Beside the King are two of the royal princes, Edward the Black Prince and Prince Lionel.

This was an important marriage in English History. Blanche was the heiress to the duchy of Lancaster and John of Gaunt was made Duke of Lancaster after her father's death. The Lancastrian dynasty descended from John of Gaunt who was the fourth son of Edward III. John's son Henry was to depose Richard II in 1399 and then reigned as Henry IV.

The Yorkists, such as Edward IV, claimed the throne through their descent from Edward III's third and fifth sons. The two parties were finally united when Henry VII, a descendent of John of Gaunt through an illegitimate line, married Elizabeth of York, the eldest daughter of Edward IV.