

# The man who could have been Henry VIII

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Arthur Tudor, Prince of Wales, brother of Henry VIII.

(PhysOrg.com) -- This year has seen the 500th anniversary of Henry VIII's accession, and the start of the third television series of *The Tudors* -- yet we might so easily have been celebrating King Arthur I instead of arguably England's most famous monarch.

When Henry VII died 500 years ago, he should have been succeeded by his eldest son, Arthur, who was born 523 years ago this month. Arthur died in 1502, Henry married his brother's widow, and the rest is history.

But what kind of king would Arthur have been and what do his life and death tell us about the Tudors? Dr Steven Gunn, Lecturer in Modern

[History](#) at Merton College, is one of the editors of Arthur Tudor, Prince of Wales: Life, Death and Commemoration, a new book published today.

'There would not have been the problem of the king's debatable marriage and subsequent divorce, for one thing, so maybe no break with Rome and no [Church of England](#),' Dr Gunn said. 'There might also have been a less confrontational, less metropolitan style of rule.'

'As Prince of Wales, Arthur lived at Ludlow and was surrounded by servants from Wales, Ireland, Cornwall and the Channel Islands. He had a much better sense than Henry, who once described Warwick as in "the most distant quarters of our realm", of what most of his territories were like and what he could and could not get away with. So he might have been less prone to revolutionary and provocative change.'

However, Dr Gunn says Arthur's reign might not have been perfect by any means. He said: 'The same brand of hard-faced lawyers and taxmen who gave his father Henry VII a bad reputation worked for Arthur, so maybe he would have found it harder than his brother did to start his reign in a blaze of generosity by disowning his father's style of rule.'

With the The Tudors back on our screens, combined with the celebrations, Henry VIII is certainly back in the limelight. But Dr Gunn and his colleagues believe his family, such as Arthur and Henry VII, should not be forgotten. Particularly because as well as the anniversary of Henry VIII's accession, it is also the 500th anniversary of Henry VII's death.

Dr Gunn concluded: 'Arthur living was the hope of the Tudors, glorified in pageantry and poetry. But Arthur dead was rather an embarrassment. What did that say about God's providential favour to the new royal family that joined York and Lancaster to end the Wars of the Roses?'

Perhaps that is why he was buried not at Westminster or Windsor but at Worcester Cathedral, in a chapel covered in Tudor badges, but apparently unfinished and rather neglected from that day till this.'

Provided by Oxford University ([news](#) : [web](#))

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