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POLITICAL LIFE IN
MEDIEVAL ENGLAND,
1300–1450

W. M. ORMROD

palgrave
macmillan

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PREFACE

This book is intended as an exploration of the dimensions and concerns of political society in England during the period of the 'long' Hundred Years War. Although it draws extensively on the researches and ideas of many historians currently working in this field (and to whom apologies are immediately necessary for the brevity and therefore the inadequacy of citations), it aims not simply to synthesise and reconcile but also to provide a personal interpretation of a subject that now, more than ever, excites diverse and sometimes conflicting conclusions. My principal debt of gratitude is to my undergraduate and graduate students at the University of York, whose liveliness and intelligence has been a constant inspiration for the last few years. More immediately, Valery Rose and Maggie Jones have helped guide my text through the press. Finally, Sarah provided the space and time that I so urgently needed to complete the project; to her, my special thanks.

August 1994

W. M. Ormrod

GLOSSARY

banneret A military and social rank denoting knighthood but superior to that of ordinary knight; a banneret was entitled to carry a square banner as distinct from the knight's pennon.

chamber The king's private quarters and the household department responsible for administering them.

chancery The principal secretarial office of the English state; its senior officer, the chancellor, was the keeper of the great seal.

chevauchée From the French *chevaucher*, to ride; an extended raid through enemy territory.

common pleas The central common law court with jurisdiction over civil pleas; sat almost always at Westminster.

demesne Land held by a lord or the king in person and not let out to farm.

escheat Land and other rights reverting to a feudal lord on the death of a vassal.

exchequer The main financial department of the state, presided over by the treasurer.

eyre A judicial circuit; from the Latin *iter*, a journey.

hundred Administrative sub-division of a shire (called a wapentake in certain parts of the country).

indenture Contract written up in duplicate form and then cut along a jagged or 'indented' line, thus allowing each party to keep a copy of the agreement.

king's bench The superior common law court having criminal jurisdiction, sitting normally at Westminster but sometimes patrolling the provinces.

lollards Followers of the teachings of John Wyclif, the late fourteenth-century Oxford theologian who denied the authority of the papacy and questioned the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation.

privy seal Formerly the king's personal seal, though from the mid-fourteenth century a department of state and the main secretariat of the royal council.

signet The king's personal or 'secret' seal, held in the custody of his secretary.

vill Village or township; an administrative unit distinct from the manor (the feudal unit) and the parish (the ecclesiastical unit).

wardrobe The main financial department of the royal household.