

# Wikijunior:Kings and Queens of England

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# 1 Introduction

Welcome to the Wikijunior book on Kings and Queens of England.

In this book we start by looking at the very first Anglo-Saxon Kings of England. We then move on to show how the Crown changed hands many times as a result of conquest. We see some powerful kings and some weak ones. We see how the Crown has battled Parliament. We look at the period where power finally did transfer to Parliament through to the times of our current queen, Elizabeth II. At the end we also look at who the next kings of England may be.

We will find out about eleven Kings called Edward and nine called Henry. We will find out about a nine-day queen and a King Philip, who most people have now forgotten about. But first let's start way back in 871 with the Anglo-Saxons and the only king of England to be called "Great", Alfred.



## 2 The Anglo-Saxons (871-1016)

Our history of the kings of England starts with the Anglo-Saxons, at the beginning of the 9th century. Because it was so long ago, the dates, and even the years are uncertain. At this point in time, England, as you know it, doesn't exist yet. The land is divided into several small kingdoms, and the people who live there are called Anglo-Saxons.

It was during this time, around the year 830, that the Vikings realized that England was a very interesting country to loot and plunder. Between 830 and 865 they came by more and more often, much to the dismay of the people living there. In 865 these Vikings formed a "Great Army". While their previous raids were aimed at looting and plundering, the Great Army was sent to actually conquer England. They were surprisingly good at that - in only three years they had conquered northern and eastern England. Even in the west, one by one the small kingdoms fell until only one of them remained independent. It was the kingdom of Wessex.

It's here that we find Alfred the Great, the first of the Kings and Queens of England.

## 2.1 Alfred the Great (871-899)



**Figure 1** King Alfred the Great

**Alfred the Great** was born around 850 in Wantage, in what is now Oxfordshire. Alfred was the fourth son of King Ethelwulf of Wessex. He became king of the southern Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Wessex in 871, when his brother Ethelred I died.

When the Danish Vikings had conquered most of England, they finally came to Wessex. Alfred had only just been crowned, and now had to face the invaders at his borders. During a fierce series of battles, he managed to drive them from Wessex. Defeated, the Vikings retreated and licked their wounds. However, seven years later they returned in full force. In May of 878, Alfred had to confront his enemies once more, and crushingly defeated them near Edington in Wiltshire. This victory earned him the name "the Great"—he is the only English monarch called by that name.

With the Danes defeated, the way was cleared to unite England. By building a system of fortifications, the kingdom of Wessex managed to expand its borders. Alfred encouraged

education, was educated himself, and improved the kingdom's laws. Under his guidance, the kingdom began to prosper.

### 2.1.1 Public life

Very little is known about what Alfred did during the short reigns of his two eldest brothers, but when his third brother, Ethelred, became king in 866, Alfred became active in public life. In particular, he worked hard to free England from the influence of the Danes, and Alfred was appointed as Ethelred's successor.

In 868, Alfred tried unsuccessfully to relieve the central English kingdom of Mercia from Danish influence. For nearly two years after, though, the Danes did not attack Alfred's native Wessex. At the end of 870 this era of peace ended, and the next period of time became known as "Alfred's year of battles". The Kingdom of Wessex fought nine battles in 870 and 871, winning some, and losing others. In April of 871, Ethelred died, and Alfred became king. The Danes then defeated the English in a battle, whilst Alfred was away burying his brother, the old king. The English were then beaten again under Alfred's command in May.

After that Alfred agreed to a peace, and for the next five years the Danes were busy in other parts of England. But in 876, the Danes, under a new leader, Guthrum, attacked Wareham and then went on to Exeter. Here Alfred blockaded them, and after the Danes lost many ships in a storm, the Danes retreated to Mercia. Then, in January 878, they suddenly attacked Chippenham, where Alfred was. Alfred himself then retreated to Athelney in Somerset.

There is a story that whilst he was hiding in the marshes of Athelney, Alfred was given shelter by an elderly peasant woman who didn't recognise who he was. She left him to watch some cakes she had left cooking on the fire. Preoccupied with the problems of the kingdom and the war against the Vikings, Alfred uncaringly let the cakes burn, and the peasant woman complained and also beat him when she returned. When some of his knights returned and called him "Your Majesty", she realised who Alfred was, and she apologised, but Alfred insisted that he was the one who had to apologise. This story shows Alfred was not only a hero, but also a humble one, with mistakes and faults.

In the middle of May, Alfred and the Danes met at the Battle of Edington in Wiltshire, which Alfred won. England became split into two, the far south-western parts being controlled by the Saxons under King Alfred, and the rest of England, including London, being controlled by the Danes. This part became known as the Danelaw. By 879, the Danes had been forced out of Wessex and much of Mercia. For the next few years there was peace, partly because the Danes were kept busy in Europe. Then, after a Danish uprising in East Anglia, which Alfred put down, he went on to take London in 885 or 886. Then in 892 or 893, the Danes attacked England again, but were ultimately repelled in 896 or 897, with only those Danes with connections to England remaining in East Anglia and Northumberland.

### 2.1.2 Marriage and children

In 868 Alfred married Ealhswith, daughter of Aethelred Mucill, who was ealdorman of the Gains, a people who lived in Lincolnshire around the town of Gainsborough. She was the granddaughter of a former king of Mercia, and they had five or six children, one of whom was Ethelfleda, who was later queen of Mercia.

### 2.1.3 Death and legacy

After the Danes retreated, Alfred turned his attention to the royal navy, and ships were built according to the king's own designs. This is not, as some say, the beginning of the English navy, although both the Royal Navy and the United States Navy claim Alfred as the founder of their naval traditions. Alfred probably died in 899, though the year is not certain. How he died is unknown. He was originally buried in the Old Minster, then moved to the New Minster, and finally moved to Hyde Abbey in the year 1110.

## 2.2 Edward the Elder (899-924)



**Figure 2** Artist's impression of Edward the Elder

**Edward the Elder** was king of England after Alfred. He reigned from 899 to his death in 924. Edward the Elder was Alfred's son.

Edward was born between 868 and 877. He married Ecgwynn around 893, and they had a son Athelstan and a daughter who married Sihtric, the Danish King of York. However, Ecgwynn's status was not royal enough, and so, when Edward became king in 899, he set Ecgwynn aside and married Elflaed, a daughter of the ealdorman of Wiltshire. Their son was the future king Ethelweard. They had six daughters and possibly a son, Eadwine, who drowned in 933. Two daughters became nuns and the rest married quite well. Eadgifu married Charles III, "The Simple", who was King of France. Eadhild married Hugh "The Great", Duke of Paris. Eadgyth married the Holy Roman Emperor, Otto I. Aelfifu was a wife of Conrad, King of Burgundy.



Edward married for a third time, in about 919, to Eadgifu, the daughter of the ealdorman of Kent. They had three sons and two daughters. In total Edward had about fifteen children from his three marriages, and he may have had an illegitimate child too.

As king, Edward spent his early reign fighting his cousin Aethelwald, son of Ethelred I. He also got rid of the Danelaw. He died in 924 and was buried at Winchester.

### 2.3 Ethelweard (924)

**Ethelweard** was born in Wessex around the year 904. He did not have a long reign. According to one version of the *Anglo-Saxon chronicle*, Ethelweard was appointed king on 17 July 924 after the death of his father, Edward the Elder. He died sixteen days later on 2 August 924. Some claim that he was killed on the orders of his half-brother Athelstan, who became the next king. Ethelweard never married. He was buried at Winchester.

### 2.4 Athelstan (924-939)



**Figure 3** The tomb of King Athelstan in Malmesbury Abbey. There is nothing in the tomb beneath the statue, the relics of the king having been lost in the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1539.

**Athelstan** was born around the year 895 and became king, first of Mercia, in 924 and then of Wessex in 925. He was the son of King Edward the Elder. Political alliances were high on Athelstan's agenda. A year after becoming king, he had a sister married to Sihtric, the Viking King of York. Sihtric died a year later, and Athelstan took the chance to capture Northumbria. This was a bold move, and made him the king of a larger territory than any Anglo-Saxon king before him, roughly equivalent to modern England, except for Cornwall. The rulers of the territories neighbouring Athelstan's then appear to have submitted to him at Bamburgh. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* noted that these included " Hywel, King of the

West Welsh [that is, the Cornish], and Constantine II, King of Scots, and Owain, King of the people of Gwent, and Ealdred...of Bamburgh". Owain, King of Strathclyde, may well also have been present. Similar events are recorded along the western parts of Athelstan's domain. Because his realm covered most of modern-day England, except for Cornwall, Athelstan is generally regarded as the first king of England. He achieved considerable military successes over his rivals, including the Vikings, and extended his rule to parts of Wales and Cornwall. Although he established many alliances through his family, Athelstan never married and had no children of his own. He fostered Hakon, who later became known as Hakon the Good, King of Norway. Athelstan was religious and gave generously to the Church. When he died in 939 at Gloucester he was buried at Malmesbury Abbey rather than with his family at Winchester. He was succeeded by his younger half-brother, King Edmund I.

## 2.5 Edmund the Magnificent (939-946)

**Edmund I**, otherwise known as *Edmund the Magnificent* or *Edmund the Deed-Doer*, was born in 921 in Wessex. He was a son of Edward the Elder and half-brother of Athelstan, and succeeded to the throne when Athelstan died on 27 October 939.

Shortly after his proclamation as king he had to face several military threats. King Olaf I [of Dublin] conquered Northumbria and invaded the Midlands. However, when Olaf died in 942, Edmund reconquered the Midlands, and he reconquered Northumberland in 944. In 945 Edmund conquered Strathclyde in Scotland, but gave up his rights to territory to King Malcolm I of Scotland in exchange for a treaty of mutual military support. This ensured that the northern borders were safe. Edmund's reign also saw a revival of monasteries in England.

Edmund was murdered on 26 May 946 by Leofa, an exiled thief. He had been having a party in Pucklechurch, when he spotted Leofa in the crowd. When Leofa refused to leave, the king and his advisers fought Leofa. Both Edmund and Leofa were killed. He was buried at Glastonbury. Edmund was succeeded as king by his brother Edred. Later, two of Edmund's sons became kings of England – Edwy and Edgar – who you can read about below.

## 2.6 Edred (946-955)



**Figure 4** King  
Edred

King **Edred** or *Eadred* was born in Wessex around the year 923 and became King of England in 946. He was a son of King Edward the Elder. Like both of his older brothers, Edred enjoyed military success over the Vikings. He was a religious man, but his health was poor and he could barely eat his food. He died on 23 November 955 at Frome in Somerset, and was buried at Winchester Cathedral. He never married, and was succeeded by his nephew, Edwy.

## 2.7 Edwy the Fair (955-959)



**Figure 5** Edwy  
All-Fair

**Edwy All-Fair** or *Eadwig* was born in Wessex around the year 941 and became King of England in 955 when the nobility chose him to succeed his uncle, King Edred. Edwy was the eldest son of King Edmund I. His short reign was marked by disputes with his family; the Thanes, who were the king's retainers; and the Roman Catholic Church. Frustrated by the king's impositions, and supported by Odo, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Thanes of Mercia and Northumbria switched their allegiance to Edwy's brother Edgar in 957. Edwy was defeated in battle at Gloucester, but rather than see the country descend into civil war,

an agreement was reached among the nobles by which the kingdom would be divided along the Thanes, with Edwy keeping Wessex and Kent in the south and Edgar ruling in the north. In the few remaining years of his reign, Edwy was a better king and made significant gifts to the Church. He died, however, at the age of 18 or 19 on 1 October 959. He was married to Elgiva, but the marriage was annulled. Edwy was succeeded by his brother and rival, Edgar, who reunited the kingdom. He was buried at Winchester Cathedral.

## 2.8 Edgar the Peaceable (959-975)



**Figure 6** King  
Edgar

King **Edgar** was born around the year 942 in Wessex. He was the younger son of King Edmund I. Because of his peaceful reign Edgar is known as "the Peaceable". He was a stronger king than his elder brother, Edwy, from whom he took the kingdoms of Northumbria and Mercia in 958. Edgar was named as King of England north of the Thames by a group of Mercian nobles in 958, but officially succeeded when Edwy died in October 959. Edgar was crowned at Bath, but not at the start of his reign. His coronation was in 973, and was planned as the culmination of his reign. The symbolic coronation was an important step, and six other kings of Britain, including the kings of Scotland and of Strathclyde, came and gave their allegiance to Edgar shortly afterwards at Chester. Edgar married twice, first to Ethelfled, and later to Elfrida. He had several children. When he died on 8 July 975 at Winchester he left two sons, both of whom became kings of England. His eldest son, Edward, by his first wife, succeeded him on his death, and a second son, called Ethelred, by his second wife, succeeded his half brother. Edgar was buried at Glastonbury Abbey. There is some belief that Edgar married his mistress, Wulfryth, in between his other two wives, and that she produced a daughter, Eadgyth, who became the Abbess at Wilton.

## 2.9 Edward the Martyr (975-978)

**King Edward the Martyr** was born around the year 962 in Wessex. He succeeded his father Edgar as King of England in 975, but was murdered after a reign of only a few years in 978. As the murder was attributed to "irreligious" opponents, whereas Edward himself was considered a good Christian, he was made a Saint, *Saint Edward the Martyr*, in 1001. He never married.

Edward's kingship was contested by a group of nobles led by his stepmother, Queen Elfrida, who wanted the king to be her infant son, Ethelred, who later became king and is now known as Ethelred the Unready. Edward, however, had more support, and was confirmed king by the council of nobles known as the Witan.

At the time a great famine was raging through the land and violent attacks were stirred up against monasteries by noblemen who were looking to get and keep control of the lands which Edward's father King Edgar had given to them. Many of these monasteries were destroyed, and the monks forced to flee, but the king stood firm with archbishop Dunstan in defence of the Church and the monasteries. Because of this, some of the nobles decided to remove him and replace him with Ethelred.

### **2.9.1 Death and legacy**

On 18 March 978 the king was hunting with dogs and horsemen near Wareham in Dorset. During this trip the king decided to visit Ethelred who was being brought up in the house of his mother Elfrida at Corfe Castle nearby. King Edward went alone. Whilst still on his horse in the lower part of the castle, his stepmother, Elfrida, offered Edward a glass of mead, and while he was drinking it, he was stabbed in the back by one of the queen's party. Ethelred himself was then only ten years old, so was not involved in the murder. An alternative account claims that Elfrida herself committed the murder.

Immediately following the murder, the body of the murdered king slipped from the saddle of his horse and was dragged with one foot in the stirrup until it fell into a stream at the base of the hill on which Corfe Castle stands. The stream was later found to have healing properties, particularly for the blind. The queen then ordered the body to be hidden in a nearby hut. A woman who was blind from birth lived in the hut. During the night, she suddenly received her sight. The church of St Edward at Corfe Castle now stands on the site of this miracle. At dawn the queen ordered King Edward's burial in a marshy place near Wareham. A year after the murder however, a pillar of fire was seen over the place where the body was hidden, lighting up the whole area. This was seen by some of the inhabitants of Wareham, who raised the body. Immediately a clear spring of healing water sprang up in that place. Accompanied by what was now a huge crowd of mourners, the body was taken to the church of the Most Holy Mother of God in Wareham and buried at the east end of the church. This took place on 13 February 980. Other miracles also became attributed to King Edward.

Edward was officially made a saint by the All-English Council of 1008, presided over by the Archbishop of Canterbury. King Ethelred ordered that the saint's three feast days should be celebrated throughout England. Shaftesbury Abbey was rededicated to the Mother of God and St Edward. Shaftesbury was renamed "Edwardstowe" only reverting to its original name after the Reformation of the Monasteries under the reign of King Henry VIII many centuries later. Many miracles were recorded at the tomb of St Edward including the healing of lepers and the blind.

During the sixteenth century, St. Edward's remains were hidden so as to avoid desecration during the Reformation. In 1931, they were discovered. They were later placed in a church in Brookwood Cemetery, in Woking, Surrey. The church is now named St Edward the Martyr Orthodox Church.

## 2.10 Ethelred the Unready (978-1013, 1014-1016)



**Figure 7** Ethelred the Unready

**Ethelred the Unready** was born around the year 968 in Wessex and died in 1016. He was King of England between 978 and 1013, and then again between 1014 and 1016. He is also known as King Ethelred II. His nickname "The Unready" does not mean that he was ill-prepared, but comes from the Anglo-Saxon *unræd* meaning "without counsel" or "indecisive". This could also be interpreted as a pun on his name, *Æðelræd*, which may be understood to mean "noble counsel". Ethelred became king when he was aged about 10 after the death of his father, King Edgar, and the murder of his half-brother King Edward.

### 2.10.1 Conflict with the Danes

England had experienced a long period of peace after the reconquest of the Danelaw. However in 991 Ethelred was faced with a Viking fleet larger than any since Guthrum's a century earlier. This fleet was led by Olaf Trygvasson, a Norwegian with ambitions to reclaim his country from Danish domination. After initial military setbacks, Ethelred was able to agree to terms with Olaf, who returned to Norway to try to gain his kingdom with mixed success. While this agreement won him some time, England soon faced further Viking raids. Ethelred fought these off, but in many cases followed the practice of earlier kings, including Alfred the Great, in buying them off by payment of what was to become known as *Danegeld*. However, on 13 November 1012, Ethelred ordered the massacre of the Danes living in England. This drew an angry response which led to Sweyn Haraldsson leading a series of determined campaigns to conquer England. He succeeded in this, deposing Ethelred, who fled to Normandy, where he sought the protection of his brother-in-law, Robert of Normandy. However, Sweyn died shortly afterwards, and in February 1014, Ethelred returned as king.

### 2.10.2 Marriage and children

Ethelred's first marriage was to Ælflaed, daughter of Thored, the ealdorman of Northumbria; she was the mother of four sons, including Edmund Ironside (later King Edmund II). In 997, he married Ælfgifu, daughter of ealdorman Aethelberht, who gave him two sons. His third and final marriage, in 1002, was to Emma of Normandy, whose grandnephew, William I of England, would later use this relationship as the basis of his claim on the throne.

### 2.10.3 Death and legacy

Ethelred died on 23 April 1016, in London, where he was buried. He was succeeded by his son, Edmund Ironside. Despite the steady stream of Viking attacks, Ethelred's reign was far from the disaster described by chroniclers writing well after the event. Ethelred introduced major reforms to the machinery of government in Anglo-Saxon England, and is responsible for the introduction of Sheriffs. The quality of the coinage, always a good indicator of the prevailing economic conditions, remained very high during his reign.

## 2.11 Edmund Ironside (1016)



**Figure 8** Edmund Ironside

**Edmund II** was born sometime between 988 and 993. He was king of England from 23 April 1016 until his death later that year on 30 November. He was nicknamed "Ironside" for his efforts to fend off the Danish invasion led by King Canute. After the death of Ethelred the Unready, although he succeeded to the throne, Edmund had little support from the London nobility, whilst Canute enjoyed greater support, particularly from the Southampton nobility.

When Edmund recovered Wessex from Canute's previous invasion in 1015, Canute responded by laying siege to London, a siege won by Edmund. Despite the victory, conflict



continued until Edmund was defeated on 18 October by Canute at Ashingdon in Essex. After the battle the two kings negotiated a peace in which Edmund kept Wessex while Canute held the lands north of the River Thames. In addition, they agreed that when one of them died, their kingdom would be ceded to the one still alive. On 30 November 1016, King Edmund II died of natural causes, either in Oxford or London. His kingdom was therefore ceded to Canute who then became king of England. Edmund was buried at Glastonbury Abbey in Somerset. Edmund's two children by his wife Ældgyth, Edward and Edmund, both escaped to Hungary.

## 2.12 References

- *Wikipedia*



## 3 The Danes (1016-1042)

### 3.1 Sweyn Haraldssen (1013-1014)

**Sweyn Haraldssen** was born in Denmark around the year 960. His nickname is "Fork-beard" which is a nickname that probably was used during his lifetime, and refers to a long, pitchfork-like moustache, rather than a full beard. Such a moustache was fashionable at the time, particularly in England. Sweyn succeeded his father, Harold I "Blåtand" (Bluetooth), as king of Denmark, probably in late 986 or early 987. Following the death of Norway's King Olaf I Tryggvason in the Battle of Svolder in 1000, Sven established Danish control over most of Norway.

Sweyn was almost certainly involved in the raids against England in 1003 to 1005, 1006 to 1007, and 1009 to 1012, following the massacre of England's Danish inhabitants in November 1002 during the reign of Ethelred the Unready. Sven is thought to have had a personal interest in these due to his sister, Gunhilde, being amongst the victims. Sven acquired massive sums of Danegeld as a result of the raids, and in 1013 personally led the Danish fleet in a full-scale invasion.

The *Laud Chronicle* says that "before the month of August came king Sweyn with his fleet to Sandwich. He went very quickly about East Anglia into the Humber's mouth, and so upward along the Trent till he came to Gainsborough. Eorl Uhtred and all Northumbria quickly bowed to him, as did all the folk of Lindsey, then the folk of the Five Boroughs. (...) He was given hostages from each shire. When he understood that all the people had submitted to him, he ordered that his force should be provisioned and horsed; he went south in full force, and entrusted his ships and the hostages to his son Canute. After he came over Watling Street, they worked the most evil that a force might do. They went to Oxford, and the town-dwellers soon bowed to him, and gave hostages. From there they went to Winchester, and did the same."

However, when he came to London, the Londoners destroyed the bridges that spanned the River Thames. It is this action that is referred to in the song *London Bridge is Falling Down*. Sweyn suffered heavy losses and had to withdraw. King Sweyn then went to Wallingford, over the Thames to Bath, and stayed there with his troops. The leading noblemen there all bowed to Sweyn and gave hostages. London withstood the assault of the Danish army, but the city was now alone. King Ethelred the Unready fled to Normandy in late 1013. With the acceptance of the Anglo-Saxon council, the Witan, London finally surrendered to Sweyn, and he was declared "king" on Christmas Day.

Sweyn based himself in Gainsborough, Lincolnshire and began to organise his vast new kingdom, but he died there on 3 February 1014, having ruled England unopposed for only five weeks. His body was later returned to Denmark and buried at Roskilde Cathedral. He was succeeded as King of Denmark by his eldest son with his wife Gunhilde. The Danish

fleet proclaimed his younger son Canute as King of England, but they and he returned to Denmark, and Ethelred the Unready became King of England again.

## 3.2 Canute the Great (1014, 1016-1035)

**Canute** (or **Cnut**) **I**, or **Canute the Great** was born in 994 or 995 in Denmark. He was King of England, Denmark and Norway and overlord of Schleswig and Pomerania. He was Sweyn Forkbeard's son. Canute accompanied his father on his invasion of England in August 1013, and Canute was proclaimed king by the Danish fleet on Sweyn's death the following February. However, he went back to Denmark in April 1014 once King Ethelred the Unready was restored by the Witenagemot. Canute invaded England again in August 1015, and after a series of inconclusive conflicts he won a decisive victory over the new English king, Edmund II, in October 1016. This led to a meeting with Edmund on an island in the River Severn, where they agreed to divide the kingdom, with the kingdom to be reunited again under the survivor when the first one of them died. When Edmund died in November 1016, this left Canute as sole ruler, and he was acclaimed as King of England by the Witenagemot in January 1017.

As King of England, Canute combined English and Danish institutions and personnel. His mutilation in April 1014 of the hostages taken by his father in pledge of English loyalty is remembered above all as being uncharacteristic of his rule. In 1017 Canute divided England into the four great earldoms of Wessex, Mercia, East Anglia and Northumbria, and he started the system of territorial lordships which would underlie English government for centuries. The very last Danegeld ever to be paid, a sum of £82,500, was paid to Canute in 1018. He felt secure enough to send the invasion fleet back to Denmark with a payment of £72,000 that same year.

In order to associate his line with the overthrown English dynasty and to insure himself against attack from Normandy, where Ethelred's sons, Edward and Alfred, were in exile, in July 1017 Canute married Ethelred's widow, Emma of Normandy, daughter of Richard, Duke of Normandy. Canute later made his son by Emma, Harthacanute, his heir in preference to Harold Harefoot, his illegitimate son by Aelgifu of Northampton.

### 3.2.1 Denmark and Norway

In 1018 or 1019 Canute succeeded his elder brother, Harold II of Denmark, as King of Denmark, and appointed his brother-in-law Ulf Jarl as the earl of Denmark. When the Swedish king, Anund Jakob, and the Norwegian king, Olaf, took advantage of Canute's absence and attacked Denmark, Ulf convinced the freemen to elect Harthacanute king, since they were discontent with Canute's absenteeism. This was a ruse from Ulf since his role as the caretaker of Harthacanute would make him the ruler of Denmark. In 1026, Canute returned to Denmark and with Ulf Jarl's help, he defeated the Swedes and the Norwegians at the Battle of Helgeå. However, Canute had not forgiven Ulf Jarl for his earlier actions, and at a banquet on 24 December 1026, the two started arguing with each other whilst playing chess. The next day, Canute had one of his household troops kill Ulf Jarl in the church of Trinity. In 1028, Canute conquered Norway with a fleet of fifty ships from England, though his attempt to govern Norway through Aelgifu and his other son by

her, Sweyn, ended in rebellion and the restoration of the former Norwegian dynasty under Magnus I.

### **3.2.2 Commanding the waves to go back**

He is perhaps best remembered for the story of how he commanded the waves to go back. According to the legend, he grew tired of flattery from his courtiers. When one such flatterer gushed that the king could even command the obedience of the sea, Canute proved him wrong by actually going into the sea at Thorney Island and proving that he couldn't; a king's powers have limits. This legend is now usually misunderstood to mean that he believed himself so powerful that the natural elements would obey him, and that his failure to command the tides only made him look foolish. Whether this event really happened or not is unknown.

### **3.2.3 Death and legacy**

Canute is generally regarded as a wise and successful king of England, although this view may in part be attributable to his good treatment of the church, which controlled the history writers of the day. The image that has come down from them is that he was a religious man, despite the fact that he lived openly in what was effectively a bigamous relationship, and despite his responsibility for many political murders.

Canute died in 1035, at Shaftesbury in Dorset, and was buried at Winchester. On his death, Canute was succeeded as King of Denmark by Harthacanute, who reigned there as Canute III. Harold Harefoot became King of England, then after his death in 1040, Harthacanute became King of England too.

### 3.3 Harold Harefoot (1035-1040)



Figure 9 Harold Harefoot

**Harold I Harefoot** was born in Denmark around the year 1012. earned the name "Harefoot" for his speed and skill at hunting. He was the illegitimate son of King Canute by his concubine Aelgifu. Harold's younger half-brother Harthacnute, the son of Canute and his queen, Emma of Normandy, was the legitimate heir to the thrones of both Denmark and England at Canute's death in 1035. However, because Denmark was threatened with invasion from Norway, Harthacnute was unable to travel to England and instead sent as regents Emma and Harold Harefoot. Harold took effective power in England and in 1036 secured recognition by Harthacnute as regent during the latter's absence in Denmark. Harold and Emma argued over who should govern the kingdom. The powerful Earl Godwin sided with Harold, and in 1037, after Emma had fled, Harold seized the treasury at Winchester and thus the throne, and was crowned at Oxford.

In general little is known about his reign and he appears to have been a colourless and weak character. His period of rule is associated with the blinding and death of Alfred the Aethling, Emma's son by King Ethelred the Unready, following Alfred's return to the kingdom (possibly in an attempt to take the throne) with his brother Edward the Confessor. Harold never married, but he had an illegitimate son, Elfwine, who became a monk on the continent. Harold died in Oxford in 1040, just as Harthacnute was preparing an invasion. He was buried at St Clement Danes Church, Westminster, but Harthacnute later had his body dug up, beheaded, and thrown into a fen bordering the River Thames.

### 3.4 Harthacanute (1035-1037, 1040-1042)

**Harthacanute** (sometimes *Hardicanute* or *Hardecanute*) was born in 1018 or 1019. He was the only son of Canute the Great and his queen, Emma of Normandy. His name means Canute the Hardy. He succeeded his father as King of Denmark in 1035, reigning as **Canute III**, but conflict with Magnus I of Norway prevented him from sailing to England to secure his position there so it was agreed that his elder illegitimate half-brother Harold Harefoot would be regent in charge of England.

Harold, after Harthacanute's continued absence, took the English crown for himself in 1037. In 1038 or 1039 Harthacanute settled the situation in Scandinavia through an agreement with Magnus in which they agreed that if either of them should die without an heir, the other would be his successor. He then prepared an invasion of England to depose Harold, and in 1039 arrived in Bruges in Flanders (modern-day Belgium), where his exiled mother was. An invasion was not necessary though as Harold died in March 1040 before it could occur. According to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Harthacanute then landed at Sandwich in June with a fleet of 62 warships. Being unable to exact revenge on Harold while he was still alive, he had the dead Harold dragged up and thrown into a fen.

Harthacanute was a harsh and very unpopular ruler. He severely increased the rate of taxation to pay for his fleet, and perhaps the most notable event of his reign in England was a revolt at Worcester in 1041 against these high taxes. This revolt was crushed, with the near destruction of Worcester. The story of Lady Godiva riding naked through the streets of Coventry to persuade the local earl to lower taxes may come from the reign of Harthacanute.

Harthacanute never married and had no children. In 1041, Harthacanute invited his half-brother, Edward the Confessor, who was Emma's son by King Ethelred the Unready, back from exile in Normandy to become his co-ruler and heir. In June 1042, Harthacanute died at Lambeth and was buried at Winchester. Edward became king on Harthacanute's death, thereby restoring the Anglo-Saxon royal line.



## 4 The Normans (1066-1154)

In this chapter we take a look at the **Normans**. The Normans came to power after invading England in 1066, and they continued in power until 1154 when the throne passed through the female line to the Plantagenets. There were four Norman kings – William I, William II, Henry I and Stephen and, briefly, one female ruler – Matilda. We look at these in turn below.

### 4.1 William I (1066-1087)

**William I**, also known as **William the Conqueror** and **William the Bastard** was born around the year 1028 in Falaise in Normandy, in what is now Northern France. He was the only son of Robert the Magnificent, Duke of Normandy, and his mistress Herleva. William was also the grandnephew of Queen Emma, the wife of King Ethelred the Unready and later wife of King Canute of England. William became Duke of Normandy aged seven, when his father died in 1035. With responsibility thrust on him so young, William had his fair share of guardians as well as would-be assassins. William had to learn to deal with physical threats from an early age, and three of his guardians died trying to protect him. When William was 15, King Henry I of France made him a knight, and by the time he turned 19 he was himself successfully dealing with threats of rebellion and invasion. With the assistance of King Henry, William finally secured control of Normandy by defeating the rebel Norman barons at Caen in the Battle of Val-ès-Dunes in 1047.

#### 4.1.1 The Norman Conquest of England

In 1066 the Anglo-Saxon king, King Edward the Confessor, died. William, who was Edward's cousin, claimed that Edward, who had no children himself, had named him heir during a visit to France and that the other claimant to the throne, Harold Godwinson, had pledged to support William when he was shipwrecked in Normandy; though William's tale may well not be true. After a meeting of England's leading nobles approved it, Harold was crowned on 5 January. William, however, obtained the Pope's support for his cause. He built an invasion fleet of around 600 ships and an army of 7000 men. He landed at Pevensey in Sussex on 28 September 1066 and assembled a prefabricated wooden castle near Hastings as a base. This prompted Harold to respond immediately and in haste rather than await reinforcements in London.

King Harold Godwinson was in the north of England and had just defeated another rival, King Harald Hardrada of Norway, who was supported by Harold Godwinson's own brother Tostig. Harold marched an army of similar size to William's 250 miles in 9 days to challenge him in battle at Senlac, which later became known as the Battle of Hastings. This took

place on 14 October 1066. According to some accounts, perhaps based on an interpretation of the Bayeux Tapestry which commemorates the Norman victory, Harold was killed by an arrow through the eye, and the English forces fled giving William victory. It is more likely that Harold was cut down by swords. Unable to enter London immediately, William travelled to Wallingford, and this is where the first set of Anglo-Saxon noblemen surrendered to William's will. The remaining Anglo-Saxon noblemen surrendered to William at Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire and he was acclaimed King of England there. William was then crowned on Christmas Day 1066 in Westminster Abbey.

#### 4.1.2 Overcoming Resistance

Although the south of England submitted quickly to Norman rule, resistance continued, especially in the North for six more years until 1072. Harold's illegitimate sons attempted an invasion of the south-west peninsula. Uprisings occurred in the Welsh Marches and at Stafford, and there were separate attempts at invasion by the Danes and the Scots. The last serious resistance to Norman rule came with the Revolt of the Earls in 1075. It is estimated that one fifth of the people of England were killed during these years by war, massacre or starvation. During William's reign, ownership of nearly all land, and titles to religious and public offices in England were given to Normans. Many surviving Anglo-Saxon nobles emigrated to other European kingdoms. He also ordered many castles, keeps and moats, among them the Tower of London, to be built across England to ensure that the rebellions by the English people or his own followers would not succeed. His conquest also led to Norman French replacing English as the language of the ruling classes, for nearly 300 years.

#### 4.1.3 Domesday Book

In December 1085, in order to find out the true extent of his new dominions and to maximise taxation, William commissioned the Domesday Book (pronounced "doomsday book"), which was a survey of England's productive capacity similar to a modern census. It was completed in August 1086. The name "Domesday", which is the Middle English spelling of "Doomsday", only came about in the 12th century to emphasise the book's definitiveness and authority (the analogy refers to the Christian notion of a Last Judgement). The Domesday Book is really two independent works. One, known as **Little Domesday** covers the English counties of Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. The other, **Great Domesday**, covers the rest of England, except for lands in the north that would later become Westmorland, Cumberland, Northumberland and County Durham (partly because some of these lands were under Scottish control at the time). There are also no surveys of London, Winchester and some other towns. In each county the list opened with the holding of the king himself (which had possibly formed the subject of separate inquiry); then came those of the churchmen and religious houses; next were entered those of the lay tenants-in-chief (*barons*); and last of all those of women, of the king's serjeants (*servientes*), of the few English *thegns* who retained land, and so forth. Apart from the wholly rural portions, which constitute its bulk, Domesday contains entries of interest concerning most of the towns, which were probably made because of their bearing on the tax-raising rights of the Crown therein.



#### **4.1.4 Children**

In 1053 William married his cousin Matilda of Flanders, against the wishes of the pope, Leo IX. He was 26, she was 22. William and Matilda had four male children. The first-born was Robert Curthose and the second was William. The third was called Richard, who died in 1085 whilst William I was alive, and the last was Henry. William I and Matilda also had a number of daughters, but it is not known exactly how many there were.

#### **4.1.5 Death and Legacy**

William died at the age of 60, at the Convent of St Gervais, near Rouen, France, on 9 September, 1087. He died from injuries to his abdomen after he fell off a horse at the Siege of Mantes and was buried in St. Peter's Church in Caen, Normandy, but only after his fat body exploded as a number of bishops tried to prod it into the stone tomb that had been prepared for him. This created a foul smell and made the mourners leave. When King William I died he divided his lands and riches among his three remaining sons. The eldest, Robert, became Duke of Normandy; the second, William, became King of England; the youngest, Henry, received silver, but he was to become king later, after William II died.

## 4.2 William II (1087-1100)



**Figure 10** According to William of Malmesbury, William Rufus was "*thickset and muscular with a protruding belly; a dandy dressed in the height of fashion, however outrageous, he wore his blond hair long, parted in the centre and off the face so that his forehead was bare; and in his red, choleric face were eyes of changeable colour, speckled with flecks of light*".

**William II** was born in Normandy sometime between the years 1056 and 1060. He was nicknamed "**Rufus**", which is Latin for "red", perhaps because of his red-faced appearance. He was the second son of William the Conqueror and was King of England from 1087 until 1100, with powers also over Normandy, and influence in Scotland. He was less successful in extending his control in Wales.

### 4.2.1 Power struggles

The division of William the Conqueror's lands into three parts presented a dilemma for those nobles who held land on both sides of the Channel. Since William Rufus and Robert were natural rivals, these nobles worried that they could not hope to please both of them,

and thus ran the risk of losing the favour of one ruler or the other (or both of them). The only solution, as they saw it, was to unite England and Normandy once more under one ruler. They therefore revolted against William in favour of Robert in the Rebellion of 1088, under the leadership of the powerful Bishop Odo of Bayeux, who was a half-brother of William the Conqueror. Robert failed to appear in England to rally his supporters, and William won the support of the English with silver and promises of better government, and defeated the rebellion, thus securing his authority. In 1090 he invaded Normandy, crushing Robert's forces and forcing him to give up a portion of his lands. In 1091, Henry, William's younger brother, attempted to depose William. After this Robert and William made up their differences and William agreed to help Robert recover lands lost to France. Later Robert appointed William to rule Normandy on his behalf when Robert went away on the First Crusade in 1096.

Much of William's reign was spent feuding with the church; after the death in 1086 of Lanfranc, who was the Italian-Norman Archbishop of Canterbury, William delayed appointing a new archbishop while keeping some of the church's money for himself, and it was only whilst William was seriously ill in 1093 that he appointed another Norman-Italian, Anselm of Bec, as the next Archbishop. All this led to a long period of animosity between church and state. William and Anselm disagreed about many things, and the English clergy, who relied on the king for their living, were unable to support Anselm publicly. William called a council at Rockingham in 1095 to bring Anselm to heel but the churchman appealed to Rome. In October 1097, Anselm went into exile, taking his case to the Pope. The new pope was Pope Urban II who was not in a position to make further royal enemies. The Emperor of Germany supported an antipope, and Urban came to an agreement with William. William recognised Urban as pope and Urban accepted William's position in his disputes with Anselm. William kept the income from archbishopric of Canterbury as long as Anselm remained in exile, and Anselm remained in exile until the reign of William's successor, Henry I.

William argued with the Scottish king, Malcolm III, forcing him to pay homage in 1091 and seizing the north-western county of Cumbria in 1092. At the Battle of Alnwick on 13 November 1093 Malcolm and his son were slain. William gained effective control of the Scottish throne after Malcolm's death, when he backed a man called Edgar to become king, a position he filled from 1097 to 1107. On the home front William had a number of disputes with the Norman nobles. In 1095, William had to lead an army against the earl of Northumbria. Another noble, William of Eu, was also accused of treachery and blinded and castrated. In the same year William II also led an unsuccessful campaign into Wales. He tried again in 1097 with an equal lack of success. He went to Normandy in 1097 and from then until 1099 campaigned in France, enjoying some limited success. At the time of his death he was planning to occupy Aquitaine in south-western France.

#### **4.2.2 Death and Legacy**

William II was killed whilst hunting in the New Forest on 2 August 1100. The circumstances remain unclear. During the hunt, the party spread out as they chased their prey, and William, in the company of Walter Tirel (or Tyrell), Lord of Poix, became separated from the others. It was the last time that William was seen alive. William was found the next day by a group of local peasants, lying dead in the woods with an arrow piercing his lungs.

William's body was abandoned by the nobles at the place where he fell, because the law and order of the kingdom died with the king, and they had to flee to their English or Norman estates to secure their interests. Legend has it that it was left to a local charcoal-burner named Purkis to take the king's body to Winchester Cathedral on his cart. A stone known as the *Rufus Stone* marks the spot where some believe he fell.

According to the writers in the years after the event, William's death was not murder. Walter and William had been hunting together when Walter let loose a wild shot that, instead of hitting the stag he aimed for, struck William in the chest. Walter tried to help him, but there was nothing he could do. Fearing that he would be charged with murder, Walter panicked, leapt onto his horse, and fled, ending up in France. As William II never married, and so had no legitimate heir, the next king was his brother, Henry.

### 4.3 Henry I (1100-1135)

**Henry I of England** was born sometime between May 1068 and May 1069, probably in Selby, Yorkshire. He was the fourth son of William the Conqueror, and he was King of England from 1100 to 1135. He became known as **Henry Beauclerc** because of his scholarly interests, and by the nickname "Lion of Justice" because of the legal reforms he made. Henry I became king after the death of his brother, William II, which happened when his older brother, Robert Curthose, who was meant to succeed William II, was away on the First Crusade. It was Robert's absence, along with his poor reputation among the Norman nobles, that allowed Henry to take the throne. After being accepted as king by the leading barons, Henry was crowned three days later. He was able to keep the support of the barons by issuing the Charter of Liberties, which promised the barons certain rights. His reign is noted for Henry I's political skills, improvements in the machinery of government, the integration of the divided Anglo-Saxon and Normans within his kingdom, and his reuniting of the dominions of his father. Henry I was probably the first Norman ruler to be fluent in the English language.

### 4.3.1 Henry's reign



**Figure 11** Henry I depicted in *Cassell's History of England* (1902)

In 1101, a year after Henry became king, his older brother, Robert, invaded England in an attempt to become king. They agreed a peace in the Treaty of Alton, in which Robert accepted Henry as King of England and returned peacefully to Normandy. In return Henry agreed to pay Robert 2000 marks each year. Four years later, though, Henry took an army across the English Channel. In 1106, he defeated his brother's Norman army decisively at Battle of Tinchebray. He imprisoned his brother Robert, and claimed the Duchy of Normandy as a possession of England, as a result reuniting his father's lands.

Henry tried to reduce his problems in Normandy by marrying his eldest son, William Adelin, to the daughter of Fulk V, Count of Anjou, who at the time was an enemy of Henry's. Eight years later, after William's death, Henry married his daughter Matilda to Fulk's son, Geoffrey Plantagenet. This later led to the two countries uniting under the Plantagenet kings.

Henry needed money to strengthen his position, and this led to more central government. Henry also made a number of legal reforms, including the Charter of Liberties, and restoring many of the laws of King Edward the Confessor.

Henry was also known for some brutal acts, most notably in 1119, after King Henry's son-in-law, Eustace de Pacy, and Ralph Harnec, the constable of Ivry, who had taken each other's children prisoner, agreed to release them. Eustace blinded Harnec's son, after which Harnec demanded vengeance. King Henry therefore allowed Harnec to blind and mutilate Eustace's two daughters, who were also Henry's own grandchildren. Eustace and his wife, Juliane, were outraged and threatened to rebel. Henry arranged to meet his daughter, only for Juliane to draw a crossbow and attempt to kill her father. She was captured and

confined to the castle, but escaped by leaping from a window into the moat below. Some years later Henry made it up with his daughter and son-in-law.

### **4.3.2 Marriages and Children**

In 1100 Henry married Edith, daughter of King Malcolm III of Scotland. Since Edith was also the niece of Edgar Atheling, whose son was the King Edgar that William II installed on the throne of Scotland, the marriage united the Norman line with old Anglo-Saxon line of kings. The marriage greatly displeased the Norman barons and to try to please them Edith changed her name to Matilda upon becoming queen. Henry I had two children by Edith-Matilda, who died in 1118 - Matilda, who was born in February 1102, and William Adelin, who was born in November 1103. William died when the White Ship was wrecked off the coast of Normandy in 1120. In 1121, Henry I married for a second time. His new wife was Adeliza, daughter of Godfrey I of Leuven, Duke of Lower Lotharingia and Landgrave of Brabant, but there were no children from this marriage. Although King Henry I had only two legitimate children, is famed for holding the record for the largest number of acknowledged illegitimate children born to any English king, with the number being around 20 or 25.

### **4.3.3 Death and Legacy**

Henry visited Normandy in 1135 to see his young grandsons. He took great delight in his grandchildren, but soon argued with his daughter and son-in-law and these disputes led him to stay in Normandy far longer than he originally planned. It was here that he died of food poisoning from eating foul lampreys in December 1135 at St. Denis le Fermont in Normandy. His body was returned to England and buried at Reading Abbey, which Henry had founded 14 years before.

Left without legitimate male heirs after his son William died, Henry made his barons swear to accept his daughter Empress Matilda, who was also the widow of Henry V, the Holy Roman Emperor, as his heir. However her sex and her remarriage into the House of Anjou, an enemy of the Normans, allowed Henry's nephew, Stephen of Blois, to come to England and claim the throne with popular support.



#### 4.4 Stephen (1135-1141, 1141-1154)



**Figure 12** King Stephen.

**Stephen** was born around the year 1096 in Blois in France. He was the son of Stephen, Count of Blois, and Adela, daughter of William the Conqueror. He was the last Norman King of England, and reigned from 1135 to 1154, when he was succeeded by his cousin, Henry II, the first of the Angevin or Plantagenet Kings. At around the age of 10, Stephen went to be brought up at the English court of his uncle, King Henry I. After marrying a daughter of the Count of Boulogne, who was called Matilda, he became joint ruler of

Boulogne in 1128. After Henry I died in 1135, Stephen seized the throne before Empress Matilda, Henry I's daughter, could become queen.

#### 4.4.1 The Anarchy

Once Stephen was crowned, he gained the support of most of the barons as well as Pope Innocent II. The first few years of his reign were peaceful, but by 1139 he was seen as weak and indecisive, setting the country up for a civil war against Matilda, commonly called The Anarchy. In February 1141 Stephen fought the Battle of Lincoln against Robert, the first Earl of Gloucester and Empress Matilda's half-brother, and Ranulph de Gernon, the second Earl of Chester. Stephen was defeated, captured and imprisoned at Bristol by Empress Matilda, who became England's ruler under the title "Lady of the English". See below for more on Empress Matilda. Empress Matilda did not keep control for long though. She soon was forced out of London, and after her ablest lieutenant, the Earl of Gloucester, was captured, Matilda was forced to release Stephen. Stephen regained his throne in November 1141, and by December 1142, he was besieging Matilda at Oxford, but she managed to escape.

In 1147, Empress Matilda's son, Henry, decided to help his mother by raising a small army and invading England. Rumours of this army's size terrified Stephen's supporters, although in truth the force was very small. However, Henry was defeated twice in battle, and with no money to pay his soldiers, Henry asked his uncle Robert, the first Earl of Gloucester for help but was turned away. Maud was finally forced to return to France, following the death of Robert of Gloucester.

#### 4.4.2 Children

Besides Eustace, Stephen and his queen, Matilda, had two other sons, Baldwin, who died sometime before 1135, and William, who became Count of Mortain and Boulogne and Earl of Surrey or Warenne. They also had two daughters, Matilda and Marie of Boulogne. In addition to these children, Stephen had at least three illegitimate children.

#### 4.4.3 Death and Legacy

Stephen kept an uneasy hold on the throne for the rest of his life. In 1150 Stephen stepped down as ruler of Boulogne, and in 1151, his son and heir Eustace took over. However, Eustace died in 1153, and it was after this that he agreed a compromise with Empress Matilda so that her son Henry would be the next king of England. On 25 October 1154 Stephen died in Dover. He was buried in Faversham Abbey, which he had founded in 1147. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* said this about Stephen's reign:

*"In the days of this King there was nothing but strife, evil, and robbery, for quickly the great men who were traitors rose against him. When the traitors saw that Stephen was a good-humoured, kindly, and easy-going man who inflicted no punishment, then they committed all manner of horrible crimes . . . And so it lasted for nineteen years while Stephen was King, till the land was all undone and darkened with such deeds, and men said openly that Christ and his angels slept".*



The *Chronicle* said of The Anarchy, "this and more we suffered nineteen winters for our sins".

#### 4.5 Matilda (or Maud) (1141)



**Figure 13** Empress Matilda (or Maud)

**Empress Maud** is the title by which **Matilda**, the only daughter and second child of King Henry I of England, is known. This is because Matilda was a very common name at the

time, and this way we can tell her apart. Matilda is the Latin form of the name "Maud". She was the first ever female ruler of England.

#### 4.5.1 Life

Matilda (also later known as the 'Empress Maud'), daughter of Henry I, was the only remaining legitimate heir to the throne after her brother William Atheling drowned in the White Ship disaster of 1120. At the age of eight, she was sent to Germany as the future bride of Henry V, the Holy Roman emperor. They married when she was 12. Matilda was involved in government from a young age – for example, left in charge of affairs in Italy in her husband's absence. When Henry died in 1125, Matilda returned to England, keeping the title 'empress' – an indication of her innate arrogance.

In 1127, the English nobles swore to accept her as Henry I's successor, but her marriage the following year to Geoffrey Plantagenet, count of Anjou, didn't help her cause: the Angevins and Normans were long-time enemies. Her failure to win over many leading nobles forced them into the arms of her cousin Stephen, who was proclaimed king on Henry's death. She did have one key supporter, her half-brother Robert of Gloucester, and at his suggestion, she crossed the Channel in 1139 in pursuit of her claim. The ensuing civil war tore England apart for the next 14 years.

Matilda's main chance to seize the crown came after Stephen was captured at Lincoln in 1141 – she declared herself 'Lady of the English' and was elected queen at Winchester on 8 April. But she alienated potential support in London by her arrogance and by her refusal to consider a demand for tax cuts. In less than three months, she was chased out of town. After Stephen was restored to the throne, Matilda evaded capture twice: at Winchester by riding away astride a horse; and at Oxford Castle by crossing ice and snow in white clothing. In 1148, finally realising that she would never truly be queen, she retreated to Normandy. When her son – hitherto known as 'Henry FitzEmpress' – became king as Henry II, in 1154, she ruled the duchy in his absence. She died 13 years later, in Rouen.

#### 4.5.2 Death and Legacy

She retired to Rouen, in Normandy. She intervened in the arguments between her eldest son Henry and her second son Geoffrey, but peace between the brothers was brief. Geoffrey rebelled against Henry twice before his sudden death in 1158. Maud died at Rouen on 10 September 1167, and was buried in the cathedral there. Her epitaph reads, "Here lies the daughter, wife and mother of Henry".

## 4.6 References

This text is based on information in the Wikibook UK Constitution and Government<sup>1</sup> and in Wikipedia.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/UK%20Constitution%20and%20Government>

## 5 The Plantagenets (1154-1399)

### 5.1 Henry II (1154-1189)



**Figure 14** King Henry II

**Henry II** was born on 5 March 1133 in Le Mans. He ruled as Count of Anjou, Duke of Normandy and as King of England from 1154 until his death in 1189. Following the disputed reign of King Stephen, Henry's reign saw efficient consolidation. Henry II has a reputation as one of England's greatest medieval kings. At various times he controlled parts of Wales, Scotland, eastern Ireland, and western France. He was the first of the Plantagenet or Angevin Kings. Before becoming king Henry already controlled Normandy and Anjou. Whilst king, he had an empire, known as the Angevin Empire, that stretched from the Solway Firth almost to the Mediterranean and from the Somme to the Pyrenees. His mother was Empress Matilda, and his father was her second husband, Geoffrey of Anjou. He was brought up in Anjou, which is where the name *Angevin* comes from, though he visited England in 1149 to help his mother with her claim to the English throne.

#### 5.1.1 Appearance

Peter of Blois left a description of Henry II in 1177: "*...the lord king has been red-haired so far, except that the coming of old age and gray hair has altered that colour somewhat. His height is medium, so that neither does he appear great among the small, nor yet does he seem small among the great... curved legs, a horseman's shins, broad chest, and a boxer's*

*arms all announce him as a man strong, agile and bold... he never sits, unless riding a horse or eating... In a single day, if necessary, he can run through four or five day-marches and, thus foiling the plots of his enemies, frequently mocks their plots with surprise sudden arrivals... Always are in his hands bow, sword, spear and arrow, unless he be in council or in books."*

### **5.1.2 Early reign and Thomas Becket**

Henry II's first task as king was to wrest more control from the barons, who had gained more power during King Stephen's reign. Castles that were built by barons during Stephen's reign without permission were torn down.

Henry II also made many legal reforms. Henry established courts in various parts of England. His reign saw the production of the first written legal textbook, providing the basis of today's Common Law. By 1166 trial by jury became the norm. The legal reforms also reduced the power of church courts. The church opposed this, and their most prominent spokesman was Thomas Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who used to be a close friend of Henry's who was made archbishop as Henry wanted to avoid conflict. Becket went into exile in 1164, but after a reconciliation with Henry in 1170, came back. However, Becket again argued with Henry, this time over the coronation of Prince Henry, and Henry II is famously reported to have said, "Will no one rid me of this meddlesome priest?" Four knights took the king literally and travelled immediately to Canterbury, where they killed Becket in the Cathedral on 29 December 1170. In penance, Henry made a pilgrimage in sackcloth to Becket's tomb.

### **5.1.3 Marriage and children**

In 1152 he married Eleanor of Aquitaine and added on her lands to his, therefore increasing the size of his empire. They had five sons and three daughters. Their first son died in infancy. Their second, Henry, was crowned king at age fifteen in 1170, when Henry II was still king, and was known as the Young King, but he never actually ruled and does not figure in the list of the monarchs of England. They also had Richard and John who both later became Kings of England. Henry also had a number of illegitimate children by various women.

### **5.1.4 Revolting sons and death**

Henry II's attempt to divide his titles amongst his sons but keep the power that came with them provoked them into trying to take control of the lands assigned to them in the Revolt of 1173-1174. In Henry's eyes, this was treason.

When Henry's legitimate sons rebelled against him, they often had the help of King Louis VII of France. Henry the Young King died in 1183, after which there was a power struggle between the three sons that were left. Finally, Henry's third son, Richard the Lionheart, with the assistance of Philip II Augustus of France, attacked and defeated Henry on 4 July 1189. Henry died at the Chateau Chinon two days later and was laid to rest at Fontevraud

Abbey near Chinon in the Anjou Region of present-day France. Richard then became King of England.

## 5.2 Richard I (1189-1199)



**Figure 15** Richard the Lionheart

**Richard I** was born in 1157 in Oxford. He was King of England from 1189 to his death in 1199, and is often known as **Richard the Lionheart** or its French equivalent, **Coeur de Lion**.

He was brought up, mostly by his mother in France. Richard was able to compose poetry in French and in the Provençal language. He was also very attractive. He was blond, blue-eyed, and his height estimated at six feet four inches (1.93 m) tall. He gloried in military activity.

His father, Henry, made him Duke of Aquitaine in 1168, and of Poitiers in 1172. He therefore learned to defend these territories from an early age. In 1173, Richard joined his brothers, Henry and Geoffrey, in a revolt against their father. They were planning to dethrone their father and leave Richard's brother Henry as the ruling king of England. Henry II invaded Aquitaine twice. At the age of seventeen, Richard was the last of the brothers to hold out against Henry, though, in the end, he refused to fight his father face to face and humbly begged his pardon. In 1174, after the end of the failed revolt, Richard gave a new oath of subservience to his father.

After this, Richard concentrated on putting down internal revolts by the nobles of Aquitaine. His increasing cruelty led to a major revolt of Gascony in 1183. The rebels hoped to dethrone Richard and asked Richard's brothers Henry and Geoffrey to help them succeed. Their father feared that the war between his three sons could lead to the destruction of his kingdom. He led the part of his army that served in his French lands in support of Richard. The death of Richard's brother Henry in 1183, ended the revolt.

When in 1188 Henry II planned to concede Aquitaine to his youngest son John Lackland, later King John of England, Richard allied himself with Philip II of France. In return for Philip's help against his father, Richard promised to concede his rights to both Normandy and Anjou to Philip. Richard gave an oath of subservience to Philip in November of the same year. In 1189 Richard attempted to take the throne of England for himself by joining Philip's expedition against his father. They were victorious, and when Henry II died on 6 July 1189, Richard I succeeded him as King of England.

### 5.2.1 Reign

Soon after his accession to the throne, inspired by the loss of Jerusalem to the Muslims under the command of Saladin, Richard decided to join the Third Crusade. Afraid that during his absence the French might usurp his territories, Richard persuaded Philip to join the Crusade as well. Richard finally started his expedition to the Holy Land in 1190, and for England he appointed as regents Hugh, Bishop of Durham, and William de Mandeville, 3rd Earl of Essex, who soon died and was replaced by Richard's chancellor William Longchamp.

In September 1190 both Richard and Philip arrived in Sicily, where they became embroiled in a war for the succession after the death of King William II of Sicily the year before. As part of the peace treaty that ended the conflict, Richard officially proclaimed his nephew, Arthur of Brittany, who was only four at the time, as his heir. After signing the treaty Richard and Philip left Sicily. The treaty undermined England's relationships with the Holy Roman Empire and caused the revolt of Richard's brother John, who hoped to be proclaimed heir instead of their nephew. Although his revolt failed, John continued to scheme against his brother after this point.

In April 1191, Richard overthrew the ruler of Cyprus, gaining a major supply base for the Crusade that was not under immediate threat from the Turks as was Tyre. Richard looted the island and massacred those trying to resist him. Meanwhile, Richard married Berengaria, first-born daughter of King Sancho VI of Navarre. There were no children from the marriage, although Richard did have at least one illegitimate child.

Richard and most of his army left Cyprus for the Holy Land early in June. King Richard arrived at Acre in June 1191, where he and his forces captured the city. Saladin dragged negotiations on certain points of the surrender of Acre. As Richard's army could not move until 2,600 prisoners of war that he had taken hostage were disposed of, Richard took this to be a deliberate attempt to bottle the Crusaders up in Acre. In what history records as a fit of impatience, Richard ordered all 2,600 prisoners killed.

Richard was also involved in other disputes with his allies, Duke Leopold V of Austria and King Philip II of France. Leopold and Philip no longer supported Richard's Crusade. Still, Richard continued to march south, and Saladin's men were unable to harass the Crusader

army into an impulsive action which might not have gone their way. However, the desertion of the French king had been a major blow, from which they could not hope to recover. Realising that he had no hope of holding Jerusalem even if he took it, Richard ordered a retreat. Despite being only a few miles from the city, he refused, thereafter, to set eyes on it, as he had vowed to look upon it only once he had conquered the city.

After the retreat from Jerusalem, there was a period of minor skirmishes with Saladin's forces while Richard and Saladin negotiated a settlement to the conflict: both had realised that their positions were growing untenable. In particular, both Philip and John were taking advantage of Richard's absence to make themselves more powerful at home. He and Saladin finally came to a settlement of the conflict on 2 September 1192.

### **5.2.2 Captivity and return**

Bad luck dogged Richard on his return home. Bad weather forced his ship to put in at Corfu, the territory of the Byzantine Emperor, who was still angry at Richard for his annexation of Cyprus. Disguised as a Knight Templar, Richard sailed from Corfu with four attendants in a pirate ship, which wrecked near Aquileia, forcing Richard and his party into a dangerous land route through central Europe.

On his way to the territory of Henry of Saxony, his brother-in-law, Richard was captured shortly before Christmas 1192 only a few miles from the Moravian border, near Vienna, by Leopold V of Austria. Richard and his retainers had been travelling disguised as pilgrims, complete with flowing beards and tattered clothes. Richard himself was dressed like a kitchen hand, but was identified because he was wearing a magnificent and costly ring no menial worker could afford. The Duke handed him over as a prisoner to Henry VI, Holy Roman Emperor.

His mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, worked tirelessly to raise the exorbitant ransom of 150,000 marks demanded by the German emperor, of which 100,000 had to be paid before release, with the remainder after. 150,000 marks represented twice the annual income for the English Crown. Both clergy and laymen were taxed for a quarter of the value of their property, the gold and silver treasures of the churches were confiscated, and money was raised from other taxes too. John, Richard's brother, and King Philip offered 80,000 marks for the Emperor to hold Richard prisoner until Michaelmas 1194. The emperor turned down the offer. Finally, on 4 February 1194 Richard was released.

One fictional aspect to Richard's life is the legend of his minstrel, Blondel, who, after Richard's capture, travelled Europe, going from castle to castle and loudly singing a song known only to the two of them. Eventually, the story goes, he came to the place where Richard was being held, and heard the song answered with the appropriate refrain, thus revealing where the king was.

### **5.2.3 Death and legacy**

After his many famous battles, it was a minor skirmish with the rebellious castle of Chalus-Charbrol in Limousin, France on 26 March 1199 that would take Richard's life. Richard, who had removed some of his chainmail, was wounded in the shoulder by a crossbow bolt

launched from a tower. Gangrene set in and Richard asked to see his killer, who he ordered to be set free and awarded a sum of money. However as soon as Richard died, with his 77-year-old mother Eleanor at his side, on 6 April 1199, the killer was flayed alive and then hanged. Richard's bowels were buried at the foot of the tower from which the shot came, his heart was buried at Rouen, while the rest of his remains were buried next to his father at Fontevraud Abbey near Chinon, France.

During Richard's absence abroad, John had come close to seizing the throne. However, Richard had forgiven him, and named him as his heir in place of Arthur. So it was John who became the next king. However, Richard's French territories initially rejected John as a successor, preferring his Arthur instead. However, the lack of any direct heirs from Richard was the first step in the dissolution of the Angevin Empire. While England continued to press claims to properties on the continent, it would never again command the territories Richard I inherited.

In the long run Richard's legacy includes the capture of Cyprus, which proved valuable in keeping the Frankish kingdoms in the Holy Land viable for another century. Secondly, his absence from England meant that the highly efficient government created by his father was allowed to entrench itself. Another part of Richard's legacy was romantic and literary. No matter the facts of his reign, he left an indelible imprint on the imagination extending to the present, in large part because of his military exploits. Indeed, due to his bravery, savagery, and fame in the Arabic world, Richard became a bit of a bogeyman in the Middle East for centuries after his death. Mothers would occasionally threaten unruly children with the admonition "King Richard will get you" well into the late 19th century.

On the downside, Richard has been criticised for doing little for England, and instead using the kingdom's resources to support his journeys away on Crusade in the Holy Land. He spent only six months of his ten year reign in England, claiming it was "cold and always raining". During the period when he was raising funds for his Crusade, Richard was heard to declare, "If I could have found a buyer I would have sold London itself".

### 5.3 John (1199-1216)



**Figure 16** King John



**John** was born, probably in the year 1166, in Oxford. He was the fifth son of King Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine. He reigned as King of England from 1199 until his death in 1216. He succeeded to the throne as the younger brother of King Richard I. John acquired the nicknames of "Lackland" and "Soft-sword".

King John's reign has been traditionally characterised as one of the most disastrous in English history: he lost Normandy to Philip II of France in his first five years on the throne, and his reign ended with England torn by civil war, with him on the verge of being forced out of power. In 1213, he made England a papal fief to resolve a conflict with the Roman Catholic Church, and his rebellious barons forced him to sign the Magna Carta in 1215, the act for which he is best remembered.

In 1185, John became the ruler of Ireland, whose people grew to despise him, causing John to leave after only eight months. During Richard's absence on the Third Crusade from 1190 to 1194, John tried to overthrow Richard's regent, despite having been forbidden by his brother to leave France. However, on his return to England in 1194, Richard forgave John and named him as his heir.

### 5.3.1 John's reign as King

After Richard's death, John did not gain immediate universal recognition as king. As we have seen above, some regarded his young nephew, Arthur of Brittany, as the rightful heir. Arthur enjoyed the support of King Philip II of France, and the two sides fought. The war upset the barons of Poitou, who sought help from the King of France, who was King John's feudal overlord in respect of some of his territories on the Continent. In 1202, King John was summoned to the French court to answer the charges. King John refused and, under feudal law, because of his failure of service to his lord, the French King claimed the lands and territories ruled by King John as Count of Poitou. The French promptly invaded Normandy, King Philip II invested Arthur with all those fiefs King John once held (except for Normandy), and betrothed him to his daughter Mary. As part of the war, Arthur attempted to kidnap his own grandmother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, at Mirebeau, but was defeated and captured by John's forces. Arthur was imprisoned first at Falaise and then at Rouen. No one is certain what happened to Arthur after that, but the rumour that he was murdered caused Brittany and later Normandy to rebel against King John.

John functioned as an efficient ruler, but he won the disapproval of the English barons by taxing them in ways that were outside those traditionally allowed by feudal overlords. John was a very fair-minded and well informed king, however, often acting as a Judge in the Royal Courts, and his justice was much sought after. John is also said to have founded the modern Royal Navy. In 1203 he ordered all shipyards in England to be responsible for at least one ship, with places such as the newly-built Portsmouth being responsible for several. By the end of 1204, he had 45 large galleys available to him, and from then on an average of 4 new ones every year. It was during John's reign that great improvements were made in ship design. He also created the first large transport ships.

When the Archbishop of Canterbury died on 13 July 1205, John became involved in a dispute with Pope Innocent III over who the next Archbishop should be. Eventually Innocent appointed a man who John could not accept and in July 1207 the Pope ordered an interdict against England. This meant no Church services could happen. John responded by seizing

Church property for failure to provide feudal service. After a while, the pope realised that too long a period without church services could lead to loss of faith, and gave permission for some churches to hold Mass behind closed doors in 1209, and in 1212, the pope allowed last rites to be given to the dying. While the interdict was a burden to many, it did not result in rebellion against John. In November of 1209 John was excommunicated, and, in February 1213 Innocent threatened stronger measures unless John submitted, which he now did.

After putting down the Welsh Uprising of 1211 and settling his dispute with the pope, John turned his attention back to his overseas interests. His European wars ended in defeat at the Battle of Bouvines, after which John had to accept an unfavourable peace with France. This finally turned the barons against him, and he met their leaders at Runnymede, near London, on 15 June 1215, Great Charter, which in Latin is known as the called, *Magna Carta*. Because he had signed under duress, however, John received approval from his overlord the Pope to break his word as soon as hostilities had ceased, provoking the First Barons' War. For a long time, schoolchildren have learned that King John had to approve *Magna Carta* by attaching his seal to it because he could not sign it. In fact, King John did sign the draft of the Charter that the negotiating parties hammered out in the tent on Charter Island at Runnymede on 15-18 June 1215, but it took the clerks and scribes working in the royal offices some time after everyone went home to prepare the final copies, which they then sealed and delivered to the appropriate officials. In those days, legal documents were sealed to make them official, not signed.

### 5.3.2 Marriage and children

In 1189, John was married to Avisa, daughter and heiress of William Fitz Robert, 2nd Earl of Gloucester. (She is sometimes referred to as Isabella, Hawise, Joan or Eleanor.) They had no children, and John had their marriage annulled around 1199, and she was never acknowledged as queen. In 1200, John married again, this time to Isabelle, the daughter of the Count of Angoulême, who was twenty years his junior. John and Isabelle had five children, including Henry, who went on to become the King when John died. John also had many illegitimate children.

### 5.3.3 Death

In 1216, Prince Louis of France invaded after being invited by the majority of English barons to replace John on the throne. John retreated, and whilst crossing the area known as The Wash in East Anglia lost his most valuable treasures, including the Crown Jewels, when he was caught by the incoming tide. This dealt him a blow, which affected his health and state of mind. He caught dysentery and died on 18 or 19 October at Newark in Lincolnshire. He was buried in Worcester Cathedral, and his nine-year-old son succeeded him and became King Henry III of England. Although Louis continued to claim the English throne, the barons switched their support to the new king, forcing Louis to give up his claim in the Treaty of Lambeth in 1217.

## 5.4 Henry III (1216-1272)



**Figure 17** Henry III lands in Aquitaine, as shown in a 15th century from a later illumination.

**Henry III** was born on 1 October 1207 in Winchester Castle. He became King of England in 1216 aged only 9, when he succeeded his father, John. The barons who were in dispute with John quickly withdrew their support of Prince Louis as they considered Henry a safer option, especially as the regents who ruled for Henry declared their intention to rule by *Magna Carta*. Henry later grew into a thickset man of medium height, with a narrow forehead and a drooping left eyelid. When Henry reached maturity in 1227, the regency ended, and Henry was keen to restore royal authority.

Henry was extremely religious, and his journeys were often delayed by his insistence on hearing Mass several times a day. He was also much taken with the cult of the Anglo-Saxon King Edward the Confessor who had been made a saint in 1161. Told that St Edward dressed austere, Henry did the same and wore only the simplest of robes. He had a mural of the saint painted in his bedchamber for inspiration before and after sleep, and named his eldest son after him. Henry designated Westminster, where St Edward had founded the abbey, as the fixed seat of power in England. Westminster Hall duly became the greatest ceremonial space of the kingdom, where the council of nobles also met. Henry appointed French architects to renovate Westminster Abbey in Gothic style, and work began at great expense in 1245. The centrepiece at the renovated Abbey was a shrine to Edward.

Henry's reign was marked by civil strife as the English barons, led by Simon de Montfort, the 6th Earl of Leicester, demanded more say in the running of the kingdom. After de Montfort married Henry's sister Eleanor without asking Henry, a feud developed between the two. Their relationship reached a crisis in the 1250s when de Montfort was brought to

court on charges relating to actions he took as lieutenant of Gascony, the last remaining Plantagenet land across the English Channel. However, he was acquitted by the Peers of the realm, much to the King's displeasure.

Henry also funded a war in Sicily on behalf of the Pope in return for a title for his second son Edmund, which made many barons fear that Henry was following too much in the footsteps of his father and needed to be kept in check. De Montfort became leader of those who wanted to reassert Magna Carta and force the king to give more power to the baronial council. In 1258 seven leading barons forced Henry to agree to the Provisions of Oxford which effectively abolished the complete supremacy of the monarchy, and gave power to a council of fifteen barons to deal with the business of government and providing for a three yearly meeting of parliament to monitor their performance.

Henry was forced to take part in the swearing of a collective oath to the Provisions of Oxford. However, Henry's supporters and de Montfort's supporters grew further apart. When in 1262 Henry got the pope to say that he didn't need to take the oath anymore, both side raised armies and a civil war, known as the Second Barons' War started. By 1263 de Montfort had captured most of southeastern England by and at the Battle of Lewes on 14 May 1264, Henry was defeated and taken prisoner by de Montfort's army.

Henry remained king, but was kept under house arrest and the real power was held by de Montfort, who carried out a number of reforms, in particular increasing representation in parliament to include each county of England and many important towns rather than keeping it to the nobility. However many of the barons who supported de Montfort began to suspect that he had gone too far with his reforms.

Only fifteen months later, Henry's son Edward, who was held as prisoner with Henry, escaped and led the royalists into battle again. De Montfort was beaten at the Battle of Evesham in 1265, and revenge was taken on de Montfort and his supporters.

#### **5.4.1 Marriage and children**

Henry married Eleanor of Provence in 1236 and he promoted many of his French relatives to power and wealth, which was unpopular among his subjects and barons. He was also extravagant: when his first child, Prince Edward was born, Henry demanded the Londoners bring him rich gifts to celebrate, and even sent back gifts that did not please him. He had at least four other children by Eleanor.

#### **5.4.2 Death**

Henry died in 1272 and his body was first put in the tomb of Edward the Confessor, whilst his final resting place was constructed in Westminster Abbey. Henry was succeeded as King of England by his son, Edward.

## 5.5 Edward I (1272-1307)

**Edward I** was born in Westminster in 1239. He was King of England from 1272 until his death in 1307. Edward initially intended to call himself Edward IV, recognising the three Saxon kings of England of that name. However, for reasons unknown he was called Edward I instead - establishing the custom of numbering English monarchs only from the Norman Conquest. His nicknames include "**Longshanks**" because he was 6 foot 2 inch tall and the "**Hammer of the Scots**" as he kept Scotland under English domination. Unlike his father, King Henry III, Edward I took great interest in the workings of his government and made a number of reforms to preserve royal rights and improve the administration of the law.

### 5.5.1 Marriage and children

Edward married twice. His first marriage, in October 1254, was to Eleanor of Castile which produced sixteen children, and her death in 1290 affected Edward deeply. His second marriage, in September 1299, was to Marguerite of France (known as the "Pearl of France" by her English subjects), the daughter of King Philippe III of France. It produced three children.

### 5.5.2 Military campaigns

In 1269 a representative of the pope arrived in England and appealed to Prince Edward, as he then was, to participate in the Eighth Crusade alongside King Louis IX of France. To fund the crusade, Edward borrowed heavily from Louis IX and English Jews, even though the size of Edward's crusading group was quite small. The aim was to relieve the Christian stronghold of Acre, but Louis was diverted to Tunis. By the time that Edward arrived at Tunis, Louis had died of disease. Most of the French forces at Tunis returned home, but a small number of them joined Edward who continued onwards to Acre in the Ninth Crusade. After a short stop in Cyprus, Edward arrived in Acre with thirteen ships. While in Acre, Edward engaged in diplomacy with the Mongols hoping to form an alliance against Sultan Baibars of Egypt, but the alliance did not happen. In 1271 Hugh III of Cyprus arrived with a contingent of knights. These new forces encouraged Edward to raid the town of Ququn. Soon afterwards Edward signed a ten year peace treaty with Baibars. Around the same time, Edward was nearly killed, but fought off his attacker with a metal tripod. Edward left the Holy Land and returned to England in 1272.

One of Edward's early achievements as king was to conquer Wales. Under the 1267 Treaty of Montgomery, Llewelyn ap Gruffydd extended Welsh territories southwards into what had been the lands of the English Marcher lords, and gained the title of Prince of Wales although he still owed homage to the English monarch as overlord. Edward refused to recognise the Treaty, which had been concluded by his father. After Llywelyn repeatedly refused to pay homage to Edward in 1274-75, Edward raised an army and launched his first campaign against the Welsh prince in 1276-77. After this campaign Llywelyn was forced to pay homage to Edward and lost all his lands apart from a small amount of Gwynedd, although Edward allowed Llywelyn to keep the title of Prince of Wales.

However, Llywelyn's younger brother, Dafydd ap Gruffydd, started another rebellion in 1282. Llywelyn died shortly afterwards in a skirmish, after which Edward destroyed the remaining resistance. He captured, brutally tortured and executed Dafydd in the next year. To consolidate his conquest, Edward then built a string of massive stone castles around the coast of Wales. Wales was incorporated into England under the Statute of Rhuddlan in 1284. In 1301 Edward named his eldest son Edward as the new Prince of Wales. Ever since this, the eldest son of each English monarch has taken the same title.

Edward then turned to Scotland and, on 10 May 1291, Scottish nobles recognised the authority of Edward I. He had planned to marry off his son to the child queen, Margaret of Scotland, but when Margaret died the Scottish nobles agreed to have Edward select her successor from the various claimants to the throne, and he chose John Balliol. Edward summoned John Balliol to do homage to him in Westminster in 1293 and made it clear he expected John's military and financial support against France. Balliol did not accept this and entered into a pact with France and prepared an army to invade England.

Edward gathered his largest army yet and razed Berwick and massacred its inhabitants. He next went to Dunbar and Edinburgh. The Stone of Destiny, on which Scottish kings were crowned, was removed from Scone Palace and taken to Westminster Abbey, where it stayed until 1996. Balliol gave up the Scottish crown and was imprisoned in the Tower of London for three years before going to his estates in France. All freeholders in Scotland had to swear an oath of homage to Edward, and he ruled Scotland like a province through English Viceroy. Opposition sprang up, and Edward executed the focus of discontent, William Wallace, in 1305. Edward was never able to conquer all Scotland though.

### 5.5.3 Death

Edward died in 1307 at Burgh-by-Sands in Cumberland by the Scottish border, while on his way to wage another campaign against the Scots, who were led by Robert the Bruce. Against his wishes, Edward was buried in Westminster Abbey. His son, Edward, succeeded him as king.

## 5.6 Edward II (1307-1327)

**Edward II** was born in Caernarfon Castle on 25 April 1284, the fourth son of King Edward I by his first wife, Eleanor of Castile, but he became heir to the throne when he was just a few months old, when his elder brother Alfonso died. Edward II was the first English prince to hold the title of the Prince of Wales. There is a story that his father promised the Welsh a native prince who spoke no English and presented Edward II as a baby. However, this is not true, the story coming from a 16th century Welsh work. Edward was king of England from 1307. The new king was physically as impressive as his father. He was, however, lacking in drive and ambition. His main interest was in entertainment, though he also took pleasure in athletics and in the practice of mechanical crafts. He was deposed in January 1327, after he had alienated the English nobility. He died the following September, in what has been said to be a very brutal manner.

### 5.6.1 Edward's first favourite

As a prince, Edward took part in several campaigns against the Scots, but "all his father's efforts could not prevent his acquiring the habits of extravagance and frivolity which he retained all through his life". Edward I put his son's problems down to Piers Gaveston, a knight from Gascony that some believe to have been the prince's lover. Gaveston was exiled by King Edward I after the then Prince Edward gave him a title reserved for royalty. When Edward I died, and Edward became King Edward II, his first acts were to recall Gaveston and to abandon the Scots campaign on which his father had set his heart. In the early years of Edward's reign Gaveston was made regent when Edward went to France.

In January 1308, Edward married Isabella of France, the daughter of King Philip IV of France. Although Edward and his wife had children, Isabella was neglected by her husband. They had two sons, Edward and John, and two daughters. Edward also had at least one illegitimate son. However, Edward spent much of his time with the few friends he shared power with, and looking to limit the power of the nobles. This made him appear to prefer the company of his male favourites, and in particular, Piers Gaveston, and this led to rumours that Edward was homosexual.

Gaveston married the king's niece, Margaret of Gloucester, and was given the earldom of Cornwall. The barons grew to hate Gaveston and twice insisted on his banishment, and Edward twice recalled his friend. As a result, the barons, led by the king's cousin, Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, went to war against the king and Gaveston. Gaveston was assassinated in 1312. Edward was not strong enough to resist further, and he stood aside to allow the country to come under the rule of a baronial committee of twenty-one lords ordainers.

### 5.6.2 Bannockburn and the dominance of the barons

During the quarrels between Edward and the "ordainers", Robert the Bruce was reconquering Scotland. His progress was so great that he had occupied all the fortresses apart from Stirling, which he besieged. The danger of losing Stirling shamed Edward and the barons into an attempt to make up their lost ground. In June 1314 Edward led a huge army into Scotland to relieve Stirling. On 24 June, his army was heavily defeated by Bruce at the Battle of Bannockburn. Bruce was now sure of his position as King of Scots, and took revenge for Edward I's actions by devastating the northern counties of England.

Edward II's defeat made him more dependent on his barons than ever, but they started to argue amongst themselves. Eventually a group of barons so hated the other barons they supported more power for Edward, and he gained more authority after 1318. Edward now found an able adviser in Hugh le Despenser, 1st Earl of Winchester, a baron of great experience. His son, Hugh the younger Despenser, became a personal friend and favourite of Edward, and effectively replaced Gaveston. The barons hated the Despensers as much as Gaveston and resented the privileges Edward lavished them.

### 5.6.3 The rule of the Despensers

In 1321, the barons met in parliament, and had Hugh le Despenser and his son banished. This inspired Edward to act. In 1322 he recalled the Despensers from exile, and waged war

against the barons on their behalf, which he won. For the next five years the Despensers ruled England. They instituted the rule that no law was valid unless the House of Commons had agreed to it, and this marks the most important step forward in Edward II's reign. But the rule of the Despensers soon became corrupt.

The Despensers had a dispute with Edward's queen, Isabella, over the building of a fortified town by the English possession of Aquitaine by Isabella's brother, King Charles IV of France. The Despensers took away the queen's estates. Queen Isabella kept silent until 1325, when she went to France to negotiate a solution to the dispute. Isabella's polite attitude to Despenser and Edward, despite her hostility to them, meant that she was considered loyal.

#### **5.6.4 Abdication**

However, Isabella refused to return to her husband as long as the Despensers remained his favourites. On 24 September 1326 Isabella, with Roger Mortimer, 1st Earl of March, and her son, Edward, landed a large army in Essex. She intended to expel the Despensers. Edward's followers deserted him, and on 2 October he fled London and took refuge in the younger Despenser's estates in Glamorgan. When Isabella entered London, there was a violent revolution in her favour and weeks of anarchy followed. Isabella's army followed Edward and the Despensers, and Edward was captured on 16 November and taken to Monmouth, and then Kenilworth, Castle.

On 20 January, Edward was forced to abdicate. The Articles of Deposition accused Edward of many offences including: being incompetent to govern, unwilling to heed good counsel, allowing himself to be controlled by evil councillors, giving himself up to unseemly works and occupations, and plundering the kingdom. A parliament met that same month at Westminster and Edward's son was proclaimed King Edward III, although in practice Isabella and Mortimer held power. Both Despensers were tried and executed. And the next day they had a battle with the Franks, half his army was killed!

#### **5.6.5 Captivity and death**

On 3 April, Edward was moved from Kenilworth and handed over to two dependants of Mortimer, who imprisoned him at Berkeley Castle in Gloucestershire. It is said the Edward died in October 1327 when a red-hot iron (earlier reports say a piece of copper) was pushed up his bottom, a supposedly deserved end for a homosexual. There is no proof that this happened, and he may just have been suffocated instead.



## 5.7 Edward III (1327-1377)



**Figure 18** Edward III

**Edward III** was born at Windsor Castle on 13 November 1312. He was king from 1327 until his death in 1377. He was one of the most successful English kings of mediaeval times. Edward's reign was marked by an expansion of English territory through wars in Scotland and France. His reign was marked by the start of the Hundred Years' War.

### 5.7.1 Early reign

Edward III was crowned on 25 January 1327, at the age of 14. As he was still a child, the country was ruled by his mother, Queen Isabella, along with Mortimer. Mortimer and Isabella made peace with the Scots, but this was highly unpopular. In 1330, the Earl of Kent, brother of Edward II, was executed for plotting to restore Edward II, who the Earl of Kent believed to still be alive. The Earl's execution lost Mortimer his last support, and as soon as Edward III came of age in 1330, he executed Roger Mortimer on charges of treason, which included the murder of Edward II. Edward III spared his mother, Queen Isabella, but made her retire from public life. The reign of Edward III saw continued war with Scotland, and Edward's first major military success was early in his reign at the Battle of Halidon Hill in 1333, which he won in support of his puppet, the new Scottish king, Edward Balliol.

### 5.7.2 The Hundred Years' War

In 1328, Edward's uncle, King Charles IV of France, died without male heirs, although he did have a pregnant wife. This left Edward as the senior surviving male descendant of King Philip IV of France, who was Charles's and Queen Isabella's father. Edward's claim to the

French throne was contested by French nobles who invoked Salic law, under which held that the royal succession could not pass through a female line. The French nobles therefore said that the legitimate king of France was Edward's cousin, Philip, who became King Philip VI of France.

Edward allied himself with the Holy Roman Emperor, Louis IV, in July 1337, and declared war on Philip VI. On 26 January 1340, Edward declared himself king of France. The conflict that had now started eventually became known as the Hundred Years' War. In fact it lasted longer than 100 years up to the 1450s, although this period did not see continuous fighting.

In 1346, Edward defeated the French at the Battle of Crecy, which was also fought by his sixteen year old son, Edward, the Black Prince. The Black Prince commanded England's victorious army at the Battle of Poitiers in 1356. The first phase of the Hundred Years' War was concluded in 1360 with the Treaty of Brétigny, marking the height of English influence in France and providing a three million crown ransom for the release of the captured French king, who by that time was John II.

### 5.7.3 Edward's reign in England

While the king and the prince campaigned abroad, the government was left largely in the hands of the prince's younger brother, John of Gaunt. Economic prosperity from the developing wool trade created new wealth in the kingdom, but the bubonic plague, or Black Death, had a significant impact on the lives of his subjects. Commercial taxes became a major source of royal revenue, which had previously been largely from taxes on land. The Parliament of England became divided into two houses. At the beginning of Edward's reign, French, which came over with the Norman Conquest, was still the language of the English aristocracy, in 1362 English was made the official language of the law courts.

The king also founded an order of knighthood, the Order of the Garter, allegedly as a result of an incident when a lady, with whom he was dancing at a court ball, dropped an item of intimate apparel. Gallantly picking it up, Edward tied it around his own leg, and remarked *Honi soit qui mal y pense* ('Shame on him who thinks evil of it'), which became the motto of the Order of the Garter. The woman in the incident is known only as the "Countess of Salisbury". Some say it was Edward's daughter-in-law, Joan of Kent, but a more likely candidate is Joan's mother-in-law from her first marriage.

Facing a resurgent French monarchy and losses in France, Edward asked Parliament to grant him more funds by taxing the wine and wool trades, but this was badly received in 1374–1375 as a new outbreak of bubonic plague struck. The "Good Parliament" of 1376 criticised Edward's councillors, and advised him to limit his ambitions to suit his revenues.

### 5.7.4 Marriage and children

Edward III married Philippa of Hainault on 13 January 1328, when he was aged 15. The couple eventually produced thirteen children, including five sons who reached maturity. Their eldest son and Edward's heir was Edward the Black Prince, who was born in 1330. Edward was a notorious womaniser. After Philippa's death in 1369, Edward's mistress, Alice Perrers, became a byword for corruption.

### 5.7.5 Death

Edward died of a stroke in 1377 at Sheen Palace and was buried in Westminster Abbey. His son Edward, the Black Prince, had died the year before, and so Edward III was succeeded by his young grandson, King Richard II of England, who was the son of the Black Prince.

## 5.8 Richard II (1377-1399)

**Richard II** was born on 6 January 1367 in Bordeaux. He was the son of Edward the Black Prince and grandson of Edward III, whom he succeeded as King of England in 1377, when aged only ten.

### 5.8.1 The Peasants' Revolt



**Figure 19** Richard II watches Wat Tyler's death and addresses the peasants in the background

John of Gaunt, his uncle, ruled on Richard's behalf for the first years of his reign and it was the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 that brought Richard into the limelight. It fell to him personally to negotiate with Wat Tyler and the other rebel leaders and their massed armed ranks of several thousand. As Richard was only 14 at the time, this must have taken some personal courage. He offered a pardon to the leaders of the rebellion, but he went back on his word and the ringleaders were eventually arrested and executed. It remains a matter of doubt as to whether Richard always intended this to happen, or whether he was forced to go against his word by some of the English nobility. Either way, his tactics had the desired effect of dispersing the rebel forces from the streets of London back to the shires and bringing the disorder to an end. The young king seemed to be showing great promise. As he matured into adulthood, however, he was unwilling or unable to deal and compromise, which was an essential aspect of 14th century politics. This led to his downfall.

### 5.8.2 Marriages

On 22 January 1383 he married Anne of Bohemia, daughter of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles IV, Holy Roman Emperor, but they had no children, and she died in June 1394. On 31 October 1396 he married Princess Isabella of Valois, daughter of King Charles VI of France, but again the marriage was childless.

### 5.8.3 First crisis of 1387-88

As Richard began to take over the business of government himself, he sidelined many of the established nobles, and instead he turned to his inner circle of favourites for his council. The nobles he had snubbed formed the head of a group that called themselves the Lords Appellant. Their main aim was to seek to continue war with France, which went against Richard's policy of peace. This was an aim that many of them pursued in the interests of personal gain rather than the interests of the nation.

In 1387 the English Parliament, under pressure from the Lords Appellant, demanded that Richard remove his unpopular councillors. When he refused, he was told that since he was still a minor, a Council of Government would rule in his place. Richard had the Earl of Arundel, leader of the Lords Appellant, arrested, but Richard's small army was overpowered by the forces of the Lords Appellant outside Oxford, and Richard was held in the Tower of London. Richard's unpopular councillors were either executed or exiled, and Richard was forced to accept new councillors. Richard was effectively stripped of almost all his authority.

### 5.8.4 A fragile peace

In the years which followed, Richard became more cautious in his dealings with the barons. In 1390 a tournament was held to celebrate Richard's coming of age. The situation at court had improved since Richard's uncle John of Gaunt's return from Spain to lead the Lords Appellant. Richard's team of knights, The Harts, all wore the identical symbol – a white hart – which Richard had chosen for himself. Richard himself favoured genteel interests like fine food, insisting spoons be used at his court and inventing the handkerchief. He beautified Westminster Hall with a new ceiling and was a keen and cultured patron of the arts, architecture and literature. However, his tastes were before his time and many began to see him as another Edward II figure, unworthy of his military Plantagenet heritage. Richard lacked the thirst for battle. His Scottish campaign in 1385 was not decisive, and he signed a 28-year truce with France in 1396 which was hugely unpopular at home in spite of the dividends that peace brought to the kingdom.

Richard's commitment to peace rather than war can also be seen in his first expedition to Ireland in 1394. He put forward a sensible policy based on the belief that the Irish rebels were motivated largely by the grievances they had against absentee English landowners. Those who he labelled the "wild Irish" - native Irish who had not joined the rebel cause - he treated with kindness and respect.

### 5.8.5 Second crisis of 1397-99

In spite of his forward-thinking attitude toward culture and the arts, Richard seems to have developed a passionate devotion to the old ideal of the Divine Right of Kings, that he could pretty much do whatever he wanted. In 1397 Richard decided to rid himself of the Lords Appellant, who were confining his power, on the pretext of an aristocratic plot. Richard had the Earl of Arundel executed and Warwick exiled, while Gloucester died in captivity. Finally able to exert his autocratic authority over the kingdom, he got rid of all those he saw as not totally committed to him, fulfilling his own idea of becoming God's chosen prince.

As Richard was still childless, the heir to the throne was Roger Mortimer, the Earl of March, and after his death in 1398, his seven-year-old son Edmund. However, Richard was more concerned with Gaunt's son and heir Henry Bolingbroke, whom he banished for ten years in 1399. After Gaunt's death, Richard seized Bolingbroke's lands and gave them to his own followers. At this point Richard left for a campaign in Ireland, which allowed Bolingbroke to land in Yorkshire with an army provided by the King of France. Richard's autocratic ways worried many nobles and were deeply unpopular, which helped Bolingbroke to soon gain control of most of southern and eastern England. Bolingbroke originally just wanted his inheritance and a return of the Lords Appellant, but with Richard remaining King and Edmund as his successor. But by the time Richard finally arrived back on the mainland in Wales, a tide of discontent had swept England. In the King's absence, Bolingbroke, who was generally well-liked, was being urged to take the crown himself.

Richard was captured at Conway Castle in Wales and taken to London, where crowds pelted him with rubbish. He was held in the Tower of London and forced to abdicate. He was brought, on his request, before parliament, where he officially gave up his crown. Thirty-three official charges were made against him, but he was not allowed to answer them. Parliament then accepted Henry Bolingbroke as the new king.

### 5.8.6 Death

Richard was moved in Pontefract Castle, and was probably murdered there in 1400. Richard's body was put on display in the old St Paul's Cathedral for all to see that he was really dead, and he was then buried in Kings Langley Church. His coffin was badly designed, however, and it was easy for disrespectful visitors to place their hands through several openings in the coffin and interfere with what was inside. It is said that a schoolboy walked off with Richard's jawbone. Despite all this, rumours that Richard was still alive continued well into the reign of King Henry, who decided to move Richard's body to its final resting place in Westminster Abbey with much ceremony in 1413.

## 5.9 References



## 6 The House of Lancaster (1399-1461, 1470-1471)

### 6.1 Henry IV (1399- 1413)



**Figure 20** Henry IV

**Henry IV** was born on 3 April 1367 at Bolingbroke Castle in Lincolnshire, which was why he was also known as Henry Bolingbroke. His father was the third son of King Edward III of England, John of Gaunt. After landing in Yorkshire in 1398, Henry had enough support to be declared king by parliament in 1399. As king, Henry consulted with parliament often, but he sometimes disagreed with them, particularly over church matters. Henry was the first English king to allow the burning of heretics.

Henry spent much of his reign defending himself against plots, rebellions and assassination attempts. Rebellions continued throughout the first ten years of Henry's reign. These included the revolt of Owen Glendower, who declared himself Prince of Wales in 1400, and the rebellion of Henry Percy, 1st Earl of Northumberland. The king's success in putting down these rebellions was due partly to the military ability of his eldest son, Henry, who would later become King. In 1406, English soldiers captured the future King James I of Scotland as he was going to France. James remained a prisoner of Henry for the rest of Henry's reign.

### 6.1.1 Marriages and children

In 1381, 18 years before becoming king, Henry married Mary de Bohun. They had two daughters and four sons, one of which was the future King Henry V of England. Mary died in 1394, and in 1403 Henry married Joanna of Navarre, the daughter of Charles d'Évreux, King of Navarre. She was the widow of John V of Brittany, with whom she had four daughters and four sons, but she and Henry had no children.

The later years of Henry's reign were marked by serious health problems. He had some sort of disfiguring skin disease, and more seriously suffered acute attacks of some grave illness in June 1405, April 1406, June 1408, during the winter of 1408-09, December 1412, and then finally a fatal bout in March 1413. Unusually for a king of England, he was buried not at Westminster Abbey but at Canterbury Cathedral, as near to the shrine of Thomas Becket as possible.

## 6.2 Henry V (1413-1422)

**Figure 21** King Henry V.

**Henry V** was born in Monmouth in 1387. He was king from 1413 to his death in 1422. By the time Henry died, he had not only consolidated power as the King of England but had also effectively accomplished what generations of his ancestors had failed to achieve through decades of war: unification of the crowns of England and France in a single person.

### 6.2.1 Life before became King

When Henry's father, Henry Bolingbroke, was exiled in 1398, Richard II took the boy into his own charge and treated him kindly. In 1399 the Lancastrian revolution brought Bolingbroke back. He was created Duke of Lancaster on 10 November 1399, the third person to hold the title that year. In 1403 the sixteen-year-old prince was almost killed by an arrow which became lodged in his face. An ordinary soldier would have been left to die from such a wound, but Henry had the benefit of the best possible care, and, over a period of several days after the incident, the royal physician crafted a special tool in order to extract the tip of the arrow without doing further damage. The operation was successful.

The Welsh revolt of Owen Glendower took up much of Henry's attention until 1408. Then, as a result of the King's ill-health, Henry began to take a wider interest in politics. From January 1410, he had practical control of the government. In 1413 his father died and Henry became king.

### 6.2.2 Reign

When he became king, Henry had to deal with three main problems: the restoration of domestic peace, the healing of rift in the Church and the recovery of English prestige in Europe. Henry tackled all of the domestic policies together, and gradually built on them a



wider policy. From the first he made it clear that he would rule England as the head of a united nation. The heirs of those who had suffered in the last reign were restored gradually to their titles and estates.

Henry then turned his attention to foreign affairs, in particular the war with France and his claim to be King of it. 25 October 1415 saw Henry score a great success in this campaign at Agincourt. The command of the sea was secured by driving the Genoese allies of the French out of the English Channel. Successful diplomacy saw the Holy Roman Emperor, Sigismund, cease his support of Henry's French foes, whilst the Treaty of Canterbury helped end the rift in the Church.

With the French having lost the support of the Genoese and the Holy Roman Emperor, with these 2 allies gone, the war was renewed on a larger scale in 1417. Lower Normandy was quickly conquered, and Rouen was cut off from Paris and besieged. The French were paralysed by the disputes of Burgundians and Armagnacs. Henry skilfully played them off one against the other, without relaxing his warlike energy. In January 1419 Rouen fell. By August the English were outside the walls of Paris. The internal disputes of the French parties ended with the killing of John of Burgundy by men loyal to the heir to the French throne. Philip, the new Duke of Burgundy, and the French court threw themselves into Henry's arms. After six months' negotiation Henry was recognised as heir and regent of France. On 2 June 1420, Henry married Catherine of Valois, the French king's daughter. Following his death, Catherine secretly married a Welsh courtier, Owen Tudor, grandfather of the future King Henry VII of England.

### **6.2.3 Death**

Henry then made plans for a new Crusade began to take shape as the French situation became clearer. Henry visited to England in 1421, but returned to France after forces led by the Duke of Clarence were defeated at the Battle of Baugé. The hardships of the longer winter siege of Meaux broke down his health, and he died of dysentery at Bois de Vincennes on 31 August 1422. Had he lived another two months, he would have been crowned King of France. Henry was buried in Westminster Abbey. He was succeeded by his infant son, Henry.

## 6.3 Henry VI (1422-1461, 1470-1471)



Figure 22 Henry VI

**Henry VI** was born at Windsor Castle on 6 December 1421, the son of King Henry V. He was King of England from 1422, when he was nine months old. In 1423, parliament was called and a regency council was appointed. Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, Henry IV's youngest son, was appointed Protector and Defender of the Realm and the Church until the King came of age, but the Council had the power to replace him at any time. His duties were limited to keeping the peace and summoning and dissolving Parliament.

Henry was eventually crowned King of England in Westminster Abbey on 6 November 1429 a month before his eighth birthday, and as King of France at Notre Dame in Paris on 16 December 1431. However, during the rule of the regency council, much of the ground his father gained in France was lost. A revival of French fortunes, beginning with the military victories of Joan of Arc, led to the French nobles preferring the French dauphin, who was crowned as King of France at Reims. Diplomatic errors as well as military failures resulted in the loss of most of the English territories in France.

Henry assumed the reins of government when he was declared of age in 1437. On gaining his majority, Henry VI proved to be a deeply spiritual man, lacking the worldly wisdom necessary to allow him to rule effectively. Right from the time he assumed control as king, he allowed his court to be dominated by a few noble favorites, and the peace party, which was in favour of ending the war in France, quickly came to dominate.

### 6.3.1 Marriage

It was thought that the best way of pursuing peace with France was through a marriage with King Charles VII of France's niece, Margaret of Anjou. Henry agreed, especially when he

heard reports of Margaret's stunning beauty. Charles agreed to the marriage on condition that he would not have to provide the customary dowry and instead would receive the lands of Maine and Anjou from the English. These conditions were agreed to in the Treaty of Tours, but the cession of Maine and Anjou was kept secret from parliament. It was known that this would be hugely unpopular with the English populace. The marriage went ahead in 1445 and Margaret's character seems to have complemented that of Henry's in that she was prepared to take decisions and show leadership where he was content to be led by her. In this much Margaret proved a more competent ruler than Henry ever was, even though she was only sixteen at that time. The issue of Maine and Anjou finally became public knowledge in 1446.

### 6.3.2 Reign

The government's increasing unpopularity was due to a breakdown in law and order, corruption, the distribution of royal land to the king's court favourites, the troubled state of the crown's finances, and the steady loss of territories in France. In 1447, this unpopularity took the form of a Commons campaign against the Duke of Suffolk, who was the most unpopular of all the King's favourites was widely seen as a traitor, partly because of his role in negotiating the Treaty of Tours. Henry was forced to send him into exile, but his ship was boarded in the English Channel, and he was murdered. His body was found on the beach at Dover.

In 1449, the Duke of Somerset, who was leading the campaign in France, started more battles in Normandy, but by the autumn had been pushed back to Caen. By 1450, the French had retaken the whole province. Returning troops, who had often not been paid, added to the sense of lawlessness in the southern counties of England, and Jack Cade led a rebellion in Kent in 1450. Henry came to London with an army to crush the rebellion, but was persuaded to keep half his troops behind while the other half met Cade at Sevenoaks. Cade triumphed and went on to occupy London. In the end, the rebellion achieved nothing, and London was retaken after a few days of disorder, but the rebellion showed that feelings of discontent were running high.

In 1450, the Duchy of Aquitaine, held since Henry II's time, was also lost, leaving Calais as England's only remaining territory in France. By 1452, Richard, Duke of York, who had been sidelined by being made ruler of Ireland, was persuaded to return and claim his rightful place on the council, and put an end to bad government. His cause was a popular one, and he soon raised an army at Shrewsbury. The king's supporters raised their own similar-sized force in London. A stand-off took place south of London, with the Duke of York giving a list of grievances and demands to the king's supporters. One of the demands was the arrest of the Duke of Somerset. The king initially agreed, but Margaret intervened to prevent it. By 1453, the Duke of Somerset regained his influence, and the Duke of York was again isolated. In the meantime, an English advance in Aquitaine had retaken Bordeaux and was having some success, and the queen announced that she was pregnant.

However, English success in Aquitaine was short-lived, and on hearing the news of the English defeat in August 1453, Henry slipped into a mental breakdown and became completely unaware of everything that was going on around him. This was to last for more than a year, and Henry failed even to respond to the birth of his own son and heir, Edward. The

Duke of York, meanwhile, had gained a very important ally, the Earl of Warwick, who was one of the very influential and rich. The Duke York was named regent as Protector of the Realm in 1454, and the queen lost all her power. Somerset was held prisoner in the Tower of London. The Duke of York's months as regent were spent tackling the problem of government overspending. On Christmas Day 1454, however, Henry regained his senses.

### **6.3.3 Henry's character**

Henry was kind and generous to those he cared about, giving away land and titles to his advisors. He dressed simply. He was keen on reading and 'book-learning' but did not like leading his country in battle.

Keen on the promotion of education, Henry gave generous grants for the foundation of both Eton College near Windsor, for the education of students from poor backgrounds, and King's College, Cambridge, where they could continue their education. Henry seems to have been a decent man, but completely unsuited to kingship. He allowed himself to be dominated by the power-hungry factions which surrounded him at court and was later powerless to stop the outbreak of bloody civil war. It was too much for him to cope with, as his recurring mental illness from 1453 onwards showed.

### **6.3.4 The Wars of the Roses**

Nobles who had grown in power during Henry's reign, but who did not like Henry's government, took matters into their own hands by backing the claims of the rival House of York, first to the regency, and then to the throne itself. After a violent struggle between the houses of Lancaster and York, Henry was deposed on 4 March 1461 by his cousin, Edward of York, who became King Edward IV. But Edward failed to capture Henry and his queen, and they were able to flee into exile abroad. During the first period of Edward IV's reign, Lancastrian resistance continued mainly under the leadership of Queen Margaret and the few nobles still loyal to her in the northern counties of England and Wales. Henry was captured by King Edward in 1465 and subsequently held captive in the Tower of London.

Queen Margaret was exiled, first in Scotland and then in France. However, she was determined to win back for her husband and son, and with the help of King Louis XI of France she eventually allied with the Earl of Warwick, who had fallen out with Edward IV. Warwick returned to England, defeated the Yorkists in battle, set Henry VI free and restored him to the throne on 30 October 1470. Henry's return to the throne lasted a very short time. By this time, years in hiding followed by years as a prisoner had taken their toll on Henry, who had been weak-willed and mentally unstable to start with. Henry looked tired and vacant as Warwick and his men paraded him through the streets of London as the rightful King of England. Within a few months Warwick had went too far by declaring war on Burgundy, whose ruler responded by giving Edward IV the assistance he needed to win back his throne by force.

### **6.3.5 Death**

Henry VI was again held prisoner, this time in the Tower of London, and he was murdered there on 21 May 1471. Popular legend has accused Richard III of his murder, as well as the murder of Henry VI's son, Edward. Each year on the anniversary of Henry VI's death, the Provosts of Eton and King's College, Cambridge, lay roses and lilies on the altar which now stands where he died. King Henry VI was originally buried in Chertsey Abbey. In 1485 his body was moved to St George's Chapel at Windsor Castle. He was succeeded as king by Edward, son of Richard, Duke of York.

## **6.4 References**



## 7 The House of York (1461-1470, 1471-1485)

### 7.1 Edward IV (1461-1470, 1471-1483)



**Figure 23** Edward IV

**Edward IV** was born on 28 April 1442 at Rouen in France. He was the eldest son of Richard, Duke of York, a leading claimant to the throne of England. Richard's challenge to the ruling family started the Wars of the Roses. When his father was killed in 1460 whilst pressing his claim to be king against Henry VI at the Battle of Wakefield, Edward inherited his claim.

Edward won the support of Richard Neville, the Earl of Warwick, whose nickname is "The Kingmaker". Edward then defeated the Lancastrians in a number of battles. While Henry was campaigning in the north, Warwick gained control of London and had Edward declared king in 1461. Edward strengthened his claim with victory at the Battle of Towton in the same year, where the Lancastrian army was virtually wiped out.

### **7.1.1 Marriage and children**

Edward was tall, strong, handsome, generous, and popular. Warwick, believing that he could continue to rule through Edward, wanted him to marry into a major European family. Edward, however, secretly married a widow, Elizabeth Woodville. They had ten children together. Under an act of Parliament of 1484, one year after Edward IV's death, all of Edward's children by Elizabeth Woodville were declared illegitimate on the grounds that Edward had been due to marry another woman, Eleanor Talbot, before he entered into marriage with Elizabeth Woodville. This claim was only made after all these parties had died. The act was repealed shortly after Henry VII became king. Edward also had many mistresses and had several illegitimate children.

### **7.1.2 A series of conflicts**

Elizabeth's family had little land, which was where real power came from, but Warwick did not like the influence they now had. Warwick allied himself with Edward's younger brother George, Duke of Clarence, and led an army against Edward. The main part of the king's army (without Edward) was defeated at the Battle of Edgecote Moor, and Edward was later captured at Olney. Warwick tried to rule in Edward's name, but the nobles, many of whom owed their position to the king, were not happy. A rebellion forced Warwick to free Edward, who tried to make peace with Warwick and Clarence. This did not work and they rebelled again in 1470, after which Warwick and Clarence were forced to flee to France. There, they allied with Henry VI's wife, Margaret, and Warwick agreed to restore Henry VI to the throne in return for French support. They invaded in 1470. This time, Edward was forced to flee after Warwick's brother switched to the Lancastrian side, making Edward's military position too weak, and Henry VI was king once more.

Edward fled to Burgundy. The rulers of Burgundy were his brother-in-law Charles, Duke of Burgundy, and his sister Margaret of Burgundy. After France declared war on Burgundy, Charles helped Edward to raise an army to win back his kingdom. When he returned to England with a small force he avoided capture by saying that he only wished to reclaim his dukedom. This is similar to the claim Henry Bolingbroke made seventy years before. The city of York, however, closed its gates to him, but as he marched southwards he began to gather support, and Clarence reunited with him. Edward defeated Warwick at the Battle of Barnet. With Warwick dead, he ended the remaining Lancastrian resistance at the Battle



of Tewkesbury in 1471. The Lancastrian heir, Edward of Westminster, Prince of Wales, was killed either on the battlefield or shortly afterwards. A few days later, on the night that Edward re-entered London, Henry VI, who held prisoner, was murdered to make sure there was no remaining Lancastrian opposition.

Edward did not face any further rebellions after his restoration. The only rival left was Henry Tudor, who was living in exile. Edward declared war on France in 1475, which ended with the Treaty of Picquigny, under which he was immediately paid 75,000 crowns, and then received a yearly pension of 50,000 crowns. Edward backed an attempt by Alexander Stewart, 1st Duke of Albany, brother of the Scottish king, James III, to take the throne in 1482. Although Edinburgh and James III were both captured, the Duke of Albany went back on his agreements with Edward, and the English forces were pulled back. England did, however, recover the border town of Berwick-upon-Tweed.

### **7.1.3 Death**

Edward fell ill at Easter 1483, and made some changes to his will, the most important being his naming of his brother, the Duke of Gloucester, as Protector after his death. He died on 9 April 1483 and is buried in St George's Chapel at Windsor Castle. He was succeeded by his twelve-year-old son, Edward. Edward IV's daughter, Elizabeth of York, later became King Henry VII's queen.

### **7.1.4 Was Edward illegitimate?**

There have been many rumours that Edward IV was himself illegitimate, in which case he should never have been king. In his time, it was noted that Edward IV did not look much like his father. Before he became king in 1483, Richard III himself declared that Edward was illegitimate, and parliament even considered the matter. William Shakespeare, in his play, *Richard III*, which was written over a hundred years later, also referred to the claim. To this day it is not known whether these rumours were true.

## 7.2 Edward V (1483)



**Figure 24** King Edward V and the Duke of York in the Tower of London

**Edward V** was born in sanctuary within Westminster Abbey on 4 November 1470, while his mother was taking refuge from the Lancastrians who were then in charge of the kingdom while his father, the Yorkist King Edward IV of England, was out of power. After his father returned to the throne, he was made Prince of Wales in June 1471 and appeared with his parents on state occasions. Edward IV had set up a Council of Wales and the Marches, and sent his son to Ludlow Castle to be its president. The prince was at Ludlow when news came of his father's sudden death. Therefore Edward became king on 9 April 1483, aged only 12.

His father's brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester, was given the role of Protector to his young nephews, Edward V and Richard, Duke of York. He caught up with Edward on his journey from Ludlow and took the princes to London. Less than three months later, Richard took the throne himself after parliament declared Edward to be illegitimate.

After the two boys went to the Tower of London, they were never seen in public again. What happened to them is one of the great mysteries of history, and many books have been written on the subject. It is believed that they were killed, and the usual suspects are: their uncle, King Richard; Henry Stafford, 2nd Duke of Buckingham; and Henry Tudor, who later defeated Richard and took the throne as Henry VII.

In 1674 some workmen remodeling the Tower of London dug up a box that had two small human skeletons in it. They threw them on a rubbish heap, but some days or weeks later someone decided they might be the bones of the two princes, so they gathered them up and put some of them in an urn that was buried at Westminster Abbey. In 1933 the bones were taken out and examined and then replaced in the urn. The experts who examined them could not agree on what age the children would have been when they died or even whether they were boys or girls.

## 7.3 Richard III (1483-1485)



**Figure 25** Richard III

**Richard III** was born at Fotheringay Castle on 2 October 1452. He was the fourth surviving son of Richard Plantagenet, the 3rd Duke of York, who was a strong claimant to the throne of King Henry VI. He has been portrayed as having a withered arm, limp and a crooked back, but this is most probably an invention from many years later. Richard was King of England from 1483, when he effectively deposed his nephew, Edward V. A rebellion rose against Richard later that year, and he died at the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485. He is the last English king to die in battle, and he was succeeded by the winner of the battle, Henry Tudor.

### 7.3.1 Marriage and children

Richard spent much of his childhood at Middleham Castle in Wensleydale, under the care of his uncle, Richard Neville, the 16th Earl of Warwick (the "Kingmaker"), as Richard's father died when he was young. Following the Yorkist victory over the Lancastrians at the Battle of Tewkesbury, Richard married the widowed Anne Neville, younger daughter of the now dead 16th Earl of Warwick on 12 July 1472. Anne's first husband had been Edward of Westminster, son of Henry VI. Richard and Anne had one son, Edward Plantagenet, who was born in 1473. He died soon after being made Prince of Wales in 1483. Richard also had a number of illegitimate children.

### **7.3.2 Reign of Edward IV**

During the reign of his brother, King Edward IV, Richard was a loyal and skilful military commander. He was rewarded with large estates in Northern England, and given the title Duke of Gloucester and the position of Governor of the North, becoming the richest and most powerful noble in England. Richard continued to control the north of England until Edward's death. In 1482 Richard recaptured Berwick-upon-Tweed from the Scots, and was noted as being fair and just, making gifts to universities and the Church.

### **7.3.3 Death and legacy**

On 22 June 1483, outside St Paul's Cathedral, a statement was read out on behalf of Richard declaring for the first time that he was taking the throne for himself. On 6 July 1483, Richard was crowned at Westminster Abbey. Except for three earls not old enough to be there and a few lesser nobles, the entire peerage attended his coronation. Richard was known as a devout man and an efficient administrator. However, he was a Yorkist and heirless, and had ruthlessly removed many of his enemies but some, led by Henry Tudor, remained. Richard's enemies united against him and he fought them at the Battle of Bosworth Field on 22 August 1485, where he was killed. Henry Tudor succeeded Richard to become King Henry VII. Richard was buried at Greyfriars Church, Leicester, but his body was lost during the later Dissolution of the Monasteries. There is currently a memorial plaque on the site of the Cathedral where he may have once been buried. Since his death, Richard III has become one of England's most controversial kings. He was portrayed as a bad king by historians of the House of Tudor. He has now largely lost his notoriety, except in relation to the mystery surrounding the two Princes in the Tower.

## **7.4 References**

## 8 The Tudors (1485-1603)

### 8.1 Henry VII (1485-1509)



**Figure 26** Henry VII

**Henry VII**, also known as Henry Tudor, was born at Pembroke Castle on 28 January 1457. He was King of England and Lord of Ireland from 22 August 1485 until his death on 21 April 1509. He was the founder of the House of Tudor. He was the only son of Edmund Tudor, who died two months before Henry was born. He spent much of his early life with his uncle Jasper Tudor. When Edward IV returned to the throne in 1471, Henry VII was forced to flee to Brittany, where spent most of the next fourteen years. After his second cousin's revolt failed in 1483, Henry VII became the leading Lancastrian contender for the throne of England. With French help, Henry made an unsuccessful attempt to land in England but turned back after coming across Richard III's forces on the Dorset coast. Henry then gained the support of the in-laws of the late Yorkist King Edward IV and landed with a largely French and Scottish force in Pembrokeshire, and marched into England, with his uncle, Jasper Tudor, and the experienced Earl of Oxford. Henry's forces decisively defeated the Yorkists at the Battle of Bosworth Field on 22 August 1485 when several of Richard's key allies, switched sides or deserted the field of battle. Richard III himself died at the battle. This effectively ended the long-running Wars of the Roses, though it wasn't the final battle.

Henry then had to establish his rule. His own claim to the throne was limited, and there were a number of false claimants, or pretenders, to the throne. The main one was Perkin

Warbeck, who pretended to be Richard, Duke of York, the younger of the Princes in the Tower. These pretenders were backed by disaffected nobles. Henry, however, succeeded in securing his crown. He also strengthened his position by marrying Elizabeth of York, daughter and heir of King Edward IV.

### **8.1.1 Policies as king**

Henry VII restored the fortunes of the Exchequer by introducing efficiently ruthless mechanisms of taxation. He was supported by his chancellor, Archbishop John Morton, whose "Morton's Fork" made sure the nobles paid more taxes. Morton's Fork said of the nobles: one who lives frugally must be saving well, and so can give much money to the King. However, one who spends freely must have lots of extra money, and can afford to give generously to the king. By the time of his death, Henry had amassed a personal fortune of a million and a half pounds.

As well as coming to terms with the French, Henry VII made an alliance with Spain by marrying his son, Arthur Tudor, to Catherine of Aragon. He made an alliance with Scotland by marrying his daughter, Margaret, to King James IV of Scotland. And he made an alliance with the Holy Roman Empire, under the emperor Maximilian I.

Henry is also noted for starting the Court of Star Chamber. This revived an earlier practice of using a small (and trusted) group of the Privy Council as a personal court, able to cut through the red tape in the legal system and act swiftly. Serious disputes involving the use of personal power, or threats to royal authority, were dealt with by the Court.

### **8.1.2 Later years**

In 1502, Henry's heir, Arthur, died. Henry's wife died in childbirth a few months later. Henry asked the Pope for permission to marry his second son, also called Henry to Catherine of Aragon to help him keep his alliance with Spain. The Pope agreed, but Henry changed his mind, and the marriage did not happen in Henry VII's lifetime. Although Henry VII himself made half-hearted plans to re-marry and get more heirs, this never came to anything. On his death in 1509, he was succeeded by his second, more famous son, Henry VIII. King Henry VII was buried at Westminster Abbey.

## 8.2 Henry VIII (1509-1547)



**Figure 27** Henry VIII

Henry VIII was born at the Palace of Placentia at Greenwich on 28 June 1491. Henry VIII was the third child of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York. Only three of Henry VII's six siblings, Arthur, Margaret and Mary, survived infancy. In 1493, the young Henry was appointed Constable of Dover Castle and Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. In 1494, he was created Duke of York. He was later appointed Earl Marshal of England and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, though still a child. When his brother Arthur died in 1502, Henry found himself heir-apparent to the throne and soon after, he was created Prince of Wales. When his father died in 1509, Henry became King of England and Lord (later King) of Ireland, positions he held till his death on 28 January 1547.

Henry is famous for marrying six times and for having more power than any other British monarch. Notable events during his reign include the break with the Roman Catholic Church and the subsequent establishment of the independent Church of England, the Dissolution of the Monasteries, and the union of England and Wales. He is known to have been an avid gambler and dice player. During his youth he excelled at sport, especially jousting, hunting and tennis. He was also a good musician, author and poet. Henry was also involved in the construction and improvement of several significant buildings, including Westminster Abbey.

### 8.2.1 Early reign

Henry's father had previously prevented him from marrying Catherine of Aragon. King Ferdinand II of Aragon, however, was eager for the marriage to take place, and Henry VIII married Catherine of Aragon about nine weeks after he became king. Queen Catherine's

first pregnancy ended in a miscarriage in 1510. She gave birth to a son, Henry, on 1 January 1511, but he only lived until 22 February. She had one more short-lived child and one stillborn one, and then in 1516, Queen Catherine gave birth to a girl, Mary, who was to survive into adulthood, and later become Queen Mary I.

### **8.2.2 The King's Great Matter**

Henry VIII's accession was the first peaceful one England had witnessed in many years. But the English people were distrustful of female rulers, and Henry felt that only a male heir could secure the throne. Although Queen Catherine had been pregnant at least seven times (for the last time in 1518), only one child, the Princess Mary, had survived beyond infancy. In 1526, when it became clear that Queen Catherine could have no further children, Henry became determined to divorce Catherine, as he was very infatuated with Anne Boleyn.

Henry's long efforts to end his marriage to Queen Catherine became known as "The King's Great Matter". Cardinal Wolsey and William Warham quietly began an inquiry into the validity of her marriage to Henry. Queen Catherine, however, testified that her marriage to Arthur, Prince of Wales had never been consummated, and that there was therefore no impediment to her subsequent marriage to Henry. The inquiry could proceed no further, and was dropped.

Without informing Cardinal Wolsey, Henry directly appealed to Pope Clement VII, who did not agree to annul the marriage. Further attempts were made to persuade the Pope to consent. Eventually Henry effectively fired Wolsey and replaced other churchmen who were in key government roles with laymen. Power then passed to Sir Thomas More (the new Lord Chancellor), Thomas Cranmer (the Archbishop of Canterbury) and Thomas Cromwell, 1st Earl of Essex (the Secretary of State). On 25 January 1533, Cranmer participated in the wedding of Henry and Anne Boleyn. In May, Cranmer pronounced Henry's marriage to Catherine void, and shortly afterwards declared the marriage to Anne valid. The Princess Mary was deemed illegitimate, and was replaced as heiress-presumptive by Queen Anne's new daughter, the Princess Elizabeth. (They were each heiress "presumptive" because the birth of a brother—a male heir—would make him the heir to the throne and put his sister in second place.) Catherine lost the title of Queen, becoming the Dowager Princess of Wales; Mary was no longer a Princess, but a mere Lady. Sir Thomas More, who had left office in 1532, accepted that Parliament could make Anne Queen, but refused to acknowledge its religious authority. Instead, he held that the Pope remained the head of the Church. As a result, he was charged with high treason, and beheaded in 1535. Judging him to be a martyr, the Catholic Church later made him a saint.

### **8.2.3 Religious upheaval**

The Pope responded to these events by excommunicating Henry in July 1533. Religious upheaval followed. Urged by Thomas Cromwell, Parliament passed several Acts that sealed the breach with Rome in the spring of 1534. Parliament validated the marriage between Henry and Anne with the Act of Succession 1534. Opposition to Henry's religious policies was quickly suppressed. Several dissenting monks were tortured and executed. Cromwell, for whom was created the post of "Vicegerent in Spirituals", was authorised to visit monasteries.



It was claimed this was to make sure that they followed royal instructions, but really it was to assess their wealth. In 1536, an Act of Parliament allowed Henry to seize the possessions of the lesser monasteries (those with annual incomes of £200 or less).

In 1536, Queen Anne began to lose Henry's favour. After the Princess Elizabeth's birth, Queen Anne had two pregnancies that ended in either miscarriage or stillbirth. Henry VIII, meanwhile, had turned his attentions to another lady of his court, Jane Seymour. Henry had Anne arrested on charges of using witchcraft to trap Henry into marrying her, of having adulterous relationships with five other men, of incest with her brother, of injuring the King and of conspiring to kill him, which amounted to treason. The charges were most likely false. The court trying the case was presided over by Anne's own uncle. In May 1536, the Court condemned Anne and her brother to death, either by burning at the stake or by beheading, whichever the King pleased. The other four men Queen Anne had allegedly been involved with were to be hanged, drawn and quartered. Anne's brother was beheaded soon after the trial ended. The four had their sentences reduced to beheading. Anne was also beheaded soon afterwards.

Only days after Anne's execution in 1536, Henry married Jane Seymour. The Act of Succession 1536 declared Henry's children by Queen Jane to be next in the line of succession, and declared both the Lady Mary and the Lady Elizabeth illegitimate, thus excluding them. The King was granted the power to further determine the line of succession in his will. Jane gave birth to a son, Edward, in 1537, and died two weeks later. After Jane's death, the entire court mourned with Henry for some time. Henry also considered her to be his only "true" wife, being the only one who had given him the male heir he so desperately sought.

At about the same time as his marriage to Jane Seymour, Henry granted his assent to the Laws in Wales Act 1535, which legally annexed Wales, uniting England and Wales into one nation. Henry also continued with his persecution of his religious opponents. In 1536, an uprising known as the Pilgrimage of Grace broke out in Northern England. Henry agreed to allow Parliament to address their concerns and he agreed to grant a general pardon to all those involved. He kept neither promise, and a second uprising occurred in 1537. As a result, the leaders of the rebellion were convicted of treason and executed. In 1538, Henry sanctioned the destruction of shrines to Roman Catholic Saints. In 1539, England's remaining monasteries were all dissolved, and their property transferred to the Crown.

### 8.2.4 Later years



**Figure 28** Henry was shown the above picture of Anne of Cleves.

Henry's only surviving son, Edward, was not a healthy child. Therefore, Henry wanted to marry again to ensure that a male could succeed him. Thomas Cromwell suggested Anne of Cleves, the sister of the Protestant Duke of Cleves, who was seen as an important ally in case of a Roman Catholic attack on England. Hans Holbein the Younger was dispatched to Cleves to paint a portrait of Anne for the King. After seeing Holbein's flattering portrayal, and hearing a complimentary description of Anne from his courtiers, Henry agreed to wed Anne. On Anne's arrival in England, Henry is said to have found her utterly unattractive, calling her a "Flanders Mare". She was painted totally without any signs of her pockmarked

face. Nevertheless, he married her on 6 January 1540. Soon, however, Henry wanted to end the marriage, not only because of his personal feelings but also because of political considerations. The Duke of Cleves had become involved in a dispute with the Holy Roman Emperor, with whom Henry had no desire to quarrel. Queen Anne did not try to stop Henry getting an annulment. She testified that her marriage was never consummated. The marriage was subsequently annulled, slightly more than six months after it began, on the grounds that Anne had previously been contracted to marry another European nobleman. She received the title of "The King's Sister", and was granted Hever Castle, the former residence of Anne Boleyn's family, eventually outliving both Henry and his last two wives. Thomas Cromwell, though, fell out of favor for his role in arranging the marriage, and was later beheaded.

On 28 July 1540 (the same day Cromwell was executed) Henry married the young Catherine Howard, Anne Boleyn's first cousin. Soon after her marriage, however, Queen Catherine was soon found to have committed adultery against Henry. An Act of Parliament condemned her to death. Catherine's marriage was annulled shortly before her execution, which was on 13 February 1542. She was only about eighteen years old at the time.

Henry married his last wife, the wealthy widow Catherine Parr, in 1543. She argued with Henry over religion; she was a Protestant, but Henry remained a Catholic. She helped reconcile Henry with his first two daughters, the Lady Mary and the Lady Elizabeth. In 1544, an Act of Parliament put them back in the line of succession after Edward, though they were still deemed illegitimate. The same Act allowed Henry to determine further succession to the throne in his will.

A rhyme to remember the fates of Henry's wives is "divorced, beheaded, died, divorced, beheaded, survived".

### **8.2.5 Death and succession**

Later in life, Henry was grossly overweight, with a waist measurement of 54 inches (137 cm), and he possibly suffered from gout. Henry's increased size dated from a jousting accident in 1536. He suffered a thigh wound which not only prevented him from taking exercise, but also gradually became ulcerated and may have indirectly led to his death, which occurred on 28 January 1547 at the Palace of Whitehall. Henry VIII was buried in St George's Chapel in Windsor Castle, next to his wife Jane Seymour. He was succeeded as king by his son Edward, but within a little more than a decade after his death, all three of his children sat on the English throne.

## 8.3 Edward VI (1547-1553)



**Figure 29** Edward VI

Edward VI was born at the Palace of Placentia in Greenwich on 12 October 1537. He was the son of Henry VIII and Jane Seymour. He was King of England and King of Ireland from 28 January 1547 until his death on 6 July 1553. Edward was England's first Protestant ruler. Although his father, Henry VIII, had broken the link between the English church and Rome, it was during Edward's reign that the decisive move was made from Catholicism to a form of Protestantism which came to be known as Anglicanism.

Edward VI was an extremely sickly child. Edward's physical difficulties did not impede his education; indeed, he was a very bright child, able to speak Latin at the age of seven. He later learned to speak French and Greek.

### 8.3.1 Under Somerset

Henry VIII died on 28 January 1547. His will named sixteen executors, who were to act as a Council of Regency until Edward VI achieved majority at the age of eighteen (although it was agreed by the Council in 1552 that Edward would reach his majority at 16). These executors were to be supplemented by twelve assistants, who would only participate when the others deemed it fit. The executors were all inclined towards religious reformation, whose most prominent opponents, were excluded. Henry VIII also appointed Edward Seymour, 1st Earl of Hertford, to serve as Lord Protector of the Realm and Governor of the King's Person during Edward VI's minority. Lord Hertford, who was Edward VI's uncle, was only supposed to act on the advice of the other executors. A few days after Henry VIII's death, Lord Hertford was created Duke of Somerset and appointed to the influential positions of Lord High Treasurer and Earl Marshal.

On 13 March 1547, Edward VI created a new Council of twenty-six members. The Council consisted of all the executors and assistants, except for Somerset and one other. The Duke of Somerset was no longer merely a "first among equals"; instead, he was allowed to act without the consent of the Council, the composition of which he was permitted to change at his whim. The Lord Protector thus became the real ruler of England; Edward VI was demoted to a ceremonial role. Another powerful influence on Edward VI was Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury. Both Cranmer and the Duke of Somerset began the process of creating a 'Protestant England'. Various Catholic rites were replaced with Protestant ones. The Duke of Somerset, however, did not encourage persecution.

One of the Duke of Somerset's primary aims was to achieve a union between England and Scotland. In late 1547, an English army marched into Scotland and took control of the Lowlands. In 1548, however, Mary, the daughter of the Scottish King James V, married the Dauphin, the heir-apparent to the French Throne, which strengthened the alliance between France and Scotland.

In 1549, there was an uprising by poor peasants. Taking advantage of this internal strife, the French formally declared war on England. The Duke of Somerset became extremely unpopular, and was deposed by John Dudley, Earl of Warwick. Warwick did not make himself Lord Protector, and encouraged Edward VI to declare his majority as soon as he was sixteen. In 1550, Warwick made peace with the peasants and with France, giving up all of England's possessions in Scotland without compensation.

### **8.3.2 Under Warwick**

The rise of the Earl of Warwick saw the fall of Catholicism in England. Thomas Cranmer introduced the *Book of Common Prayer* for use in all Church services. All official editions of the Bible were accompanied by anti-Catholic annotations. Catholic symbols in churches were desecrated by mobs. Religious dissenters were often persecuted and burnt at the stake. In 1550 and 1551, the most powerful Roman Catholic Bishops, Edmund Bonner (the Bishop of London), Stephen Gardiner (the Bishop of Winchester) and Nicholas Heath (the Bishop of Worcester) included, were deposed. Their places were taken by Protestant reformers such as Nicholas Ridley.

Meanwhile, the Duke of Somerset, who agreed to submit to Lord Warwick, was released from prison and readmitted to the Privy Council. Within a few months, he found himself powerful enough to demand the release of other political and religious prisoners, and he opposed the religious Reformation. Warwick attempted to increase his own prestige. On his advice, Edward created him Duke of Northumberland and gave honours to his numerous supporters. The Duke of Northumberland began a campaign to discredit the Duke of Somerset. The people of London were informed that the Duke of Somerset would destroy their city; Edward was told that the Duke would depose and imprison him and seize his Crown. It was also suggested that the Duke of Somerset had plotted to murder the Duke of Northumberland. In December 1551, the Duke of Somerset was tried for treason on the grounds that he had attempted to imprison a member of the King's Council. The treason charge, however, could not be proven. Instead, Somerset was found guilty of participating in unlawful assemblies, but was still sentenced to death. The Duke of Somerset was subsequently executed in January 1552. On the day after the Duke of Somerset's execution,

a new session of Parliament began. It passed the Act of Uniformity 1552, under which a second *Book of Common Prayer* was required for church services. Unauthorised worship was punishable by up to life imprisonment.

### 8.3.3 Death and the succession

The fragile health of the King did not improve. During the winter of 1552-53, Edward VI contracted a cold, which was made more serious as it was compounded by other illnesses. Doctors tried to help by administering various medicines, but their efforts left Edward in perpetual agony. By early 1553 Edward was dying, and, having been brought up a Protestant, did not wish to be succeeded by his Roman Catholic half-sister, Mary.

At the same time, the Duke of Northumberland was eager to retain his own power. He did not believe he could do this through the two closest heirs, Mary and Elizabeth. Under Henry VIII's will, third in the succession was Lady Frances Brandon, the daughter of Henry's younger sister Mary. However, Northumberland feared that the Frances's husband, Henry Grey, 1st Duke of Suffolk, would claim the Crown as his own. He therefore chose to try to rule through the Duchess of Suffolk's daughter, the Lady Jane Grey and Jane was married off to Northumberland's younger son, Guilford Dudley. On 11 June 1553, Northumberland got senior judges to draw up a draft will for Edward. The plan was illegal for many reasons. The judges at first resisted, as it was treason to attempt to vary the laws of succession established in 1544. Edward, however, ensured their co-operation by promising a pardon.

The first draft of the will excluded Mary, Elizabeth, the Duchess of Suffolk and the Lady Jane from the line of succession on the theory that no woman could rule England. The Crown was to be left to the Lady Jane's heirs-male. This plan, however, was not to Northumberland's liking, and the draft was changed to leave the Crown to Jane *and* her heirs-male. Mary and Elizabeth were excluded because they were officially illegitimate; the Duchess of Suffolk agreed to renounce her own claims.

Edward VI died in Greenwich on 6 July 1553, probably of tuberculosis, arsenic poisoning or syphilis. Edward VI was buried in Henry VII Lady Chapel at Westminster Abbey by Thomas Cranmer with Protestant rites on 9 August, while his half-sister Mary, who by then was Queen, had Mass said for his soul in the Tower.

Edward VI's death was kept secret for a couple of days so that preparations could be made for Jane's accession. High civic authorities privately swore their allegiance to the new Queen, who was not publicly proclaimed until 10 July. But the people were much more supportive to Mary. On 19 July, Mary rode triumphantly into London, and Jane was forced to give up the Crown. Jane's proclamation was revoked as an act done under coercion; her succession was deemed unlawful. The Duke of Northumberland was executed, but the Lady Jane and her father were originally spared. In 1554, when Mary faced Wyatt's Rebellion, the Duke of Suffolk once again attempted to put his daughter on the Throne. For this crime, Jane, her husband and the Duke of Suffolk were executed.



## 8.4 Mary I (1553-1558)



**Figure 30** Mary I

Mary I (also known as Mary Tudor) was born at the Palace of Placentia in Greenwich on 18 February 1516. She was the only surviving child of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon. She was Queen of England and Queen of Ireland from 6 July 1553 (or 19 July 1553 if you count Lady Jane Grey as **Queen Jane of England**) until her death on 17 November 1558. Mary is best remembered for her attempt to return England from Protestantism to Roman Catholicism. To this end, she had almost three hundred religious dissenters executed, giving her the nickname Bloody Mary. Her religious policies were in many cases reversed by her successor and half-sister, Elizabeth I.

### 8.4.1 Early life

Mary became an extremely well-educated child under the direction of her governess. She learned to speak Latin, Spanish, French and Italian. Other studies included Greek, science and music. In July 1520, when four and a half years old, she entertained some visitors with a performance on the virginals (a smaller harpsichord).

Even when she was a young child, Mary's marital future was negotiated by her father. When she was young, she was promised to the Dauphin, the heir to the French throne. After three years, the contract was ended. In 1522, Mary was instead contracted to her first cousin, the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. Within a few years, however, the engagement was broken off. In 1526, Mary was sent to Wales to preside over the Council of Wales and the Marches. It was then suggested that the Princess Mary wed, not the Dauphin, but his father Francis I, who was eager for an alliance with England. A marriage treaty was signed; that provided that Mary would marry either Francis or his second son, Henry, Duke of Orléans. Cardinal Wolsey, Henry VIII's chief advisor, however, managed to secure an alliance without a marriage.

Meanwhile, the marriage of Mary's parents ended with an annulment, which meant their marriage was formally declared void and Mary was deemed illegitimate. She lost the dignity of a Princess, becoming a mere "Lady". She was expelled from the Royal Court, her servants were dismissed from her service, and she was forced to serve as a lady-in-waiting to her own infant half-sister Elizabeth. She was not permitted to see her mother, or attend her funeral in 1536 after she died from cancer. Her treatment and the hatred Queen Anne had for her was perceived as unjust. All Europe regarded her as the only true heir and daughter of Henry VIII, although she was illegitimate under English law. She only became fully reconciled with her father in the later years of his life.

In 1547, Henry died, to be succeeded by Edward VI. Edward was England's first Protestant monarch. Mary asked to be allowed to worship in private in her own chapel. After she was ordered to stop her practices, she appealed to her cousin, Emperor Charles V. Charles threatened war with England if the Lady Mary's religious liberty were infringed, after which the Protestants at court let her continue her worship.

### 8.4.2 Reign

After seeing off Lady Jane, Mary rode into London as Queen, triumphantly and unchallenged, with her half-sister, Elizabeth, at her side, on 3 August 1553. One of her first actions as monarch was to order the release of the Catholic Thomas Howard, 3rd Duke of Norfolk and Stephen Gardiner from imprisonment in the Tower of London, and Mary's first Act of Parliament retroactively validated Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine of Aragon, thereby legitimising the Queen.

Now 37, Mary looked at getting a husband to father an heir to prevent her Protestant half-sister from succeeding to the Throne. She agreed to a suggestion from her first cousin, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, that she marry his only son, the Spanish Prince Philip. The marriage was a purely political alliance for Philip, who strongly disliked her and was extremely unpopular with the English. Lord Chancellor Gardiner and the House of Commons asked Mary to consider marrying an Englishman. Insurrections broke out across the country when she refused. The Duke of Suffolk once again proclaimed that his daughter, the Lady Jane Grey, was Queen. Sir Thomas Wyatt led a force from Kent, and was not defeated until he had arrived at London's gates. After the rebellions were crushed, both the Duke of Suffolk and the Lady Jane Grey were convicted of high treason and executed. Since the rebellion was designed to put her on the throne, the Lady Elizabeth was imprisoned in the Tower of London, but was put under house arrest in Woodstock Palace after two months.

Mary married Philip on 25 July 1554 at Winchester Cathedral. Under the terms of the marriage treaty, Philip was to be styled "King of England", all official documents (including Acts of Parliament) were to be dated with both their names and Parliament was to be called under the joint authority of the couple. Coins were to also show the head of both Mary and Philip. Philip's powers, however, were extremely limited, and he and Mary were not true joint Sovereigns. The marriage treaty further provided that England would not be obliged to provide military support to Philip's father, the Holy Roman Emperor, in any war.

Mary fell in love with Philip and, thinking she was pregnant, had thanksgiving services at the diocese of London in November 1554. But Philip found his queen, who was eleven



years his senior, to be physically unattractive and after only fourteen months left for Spain under a false excuse. Philip released the Lady Elizabeth from house arrest so that he could be viewed favourably by her in case Mary died during childbirth., but Mary wasn't really pregnant and was instead suffering from a phantom pregnancy.

Mary then turned her attention to religious issues, and she tried to reverse the split from the Roman Catholic Church that happened in Henry VIII's reign. Edward's religious laws were abolished by Mary's first Parliament and numerous Protestant leaders were executed. The persecution lasted for three and three-quarter years.

Philip inherited the throne of Spain when his father abdicated. He then returned to England from March to July 1557 to persuade Mary to join with Spain in a war against France in the Italian Wars. English forces fared badly in the conflict, and lost Calais, its last remaining French possession. Mary later lamented that when she lay dead the words "Philip" and "Calais" would be found inscribed on her heart.

### 8.4.3 Death

During her reign, Mary's weak health led her to suffer numerous phantom pregnancies. After such a delusion in 1558, Mary decreed in her will that her husband Philip should be the regent during the minority of her child. No child, however, was born, and Mary died at the age of forty-two of cancer at St. James's Palace on 17 November 1558. She was succeeded by her half-sister, who became Elizabeth I. Mary was interred in Westminster Abbey on 14 December, in a tomb she would eventually share with Queen Elizabeth.

## 8.5 Elizabeth I (1558-1603)



**Figure 31** Elizabeth I

Elizabeth I was born on 7 September 1533. She was Queen of England and Queen of Ireland from 17 November 1558 until her death on 24 March 1603. Sometimes referred to as The

Virgin Queen (since she never married), Gloriana or Good Queen Bess, Elizabeth I was the fifth and final monarch of the Tudor dynasty. She reigned during a period of great religious turmoil in English history.

Elizabeth's reign is referred to as the Elizabethan era or the Golden Age and was marked by increases in English power and influence worldwide. Playwrights William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe and Ben Jonson all flourished during this era. Francis Drake became the first Englishman to circumnavigate the globe; Francis Bacon laid out his philosophical and political views; English colonisation of North America took place under Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Humphrey Gilbert. Elizabeth was a short-tempered and sometimes indecisive ruler. Like her father Henry VIII, she was a writer and poet. She granted Royal Charters to several famous organisations, including Trinity College, Dublin (1592) and the British East India Company (1600).

### 8.5.1 Early life

Elizabeth was the only surviving child of King Henry VIII by his second wife, Anne Boleyn. She was born in the Palace of Placentia in Greenwich. On her birth, Elizabeth was the heir to the throne. After Boleyn failed to produce a male heir, Henry had her executed. Elizabeth was two years old at that time and was also declared illegitimate and lost the title of princess. Thereafter she was addressed as Lady Elizabeth and lived apart from her father as he married his succession of wives. Henry's last wife Catherine Parr helped reconcile the King with Elizabeth, and she, along with her half-sister, Mary, daughter of Catherine of Aragon, was reinstated in the line of succession after Edward.

In terms of personality, Elizabeth was far more like her mother than her father: neurotic, glamorous, flirtatious, charismatic and religiously tolerant. However, from her father she did inherit his red hair.

Henry VIII died in 1547 and was succeeded by Edward VI. Catherine Parr married Thomas Seymour, 1st Baron Seymour of Sudeley, Edward VI's uncle, and took Elizabeth into her household. There, Elizabeth continued her education. She came to speak or read six languages: her native English, as well as French, Italian, Spanish, Greek and Latin. Under the influence of Catherine Parr and others, Elizabeth was raised a Protestant.

### 8.5.2 Early reign

In November 1558, on Mary I's death, Elizabeth ascended the throne. She was far more popular than her sister, and it is said that upon Mary's death, the people rejoiced in the streets. One of the most important concerns during Elizabeth's early reign was religion. The Act of Uniformity 1559 required the use of the Protestant *Book of Common Prayer* in church services. Communion with the Catholic Church, reinstated under Mary I, was ended by Elizabeth. The Queen assumed the title "Supreme Governor of the Church of England".

Many bishops were unwilling to conform to the Elizabethan religious policy. These were removed. She also appointed an entirely new Privy Council, removing many Catholic counsellors in the process. Elizabeth also reduced Spanish influence in England.

### 8.5.3 Plots and rebellions

At the end of 1562, Elizabeth had fallen ill with smallpox, but later recovered. In 1563, alarmed by the Queen's near-fatal illness, parliament demanded that she marry or nominate an heir to prevent civil war upon her death. She refused to do either, and in April, she ended the parliament. Parliament did not reconvene until Elizabeth needed its assent to raise taxes in 1566. The House of Commons threatened to withhold funds until the Queen agreed to provide for the succession.

Different lines of succession were considered during Elizabeth's reign. One possible line was that of Margaret Tudor, Henry VIII's elder sister, which led to Mary I, Queen of Scots. The alternative line descended from Henry VIII's younger sister, Mary Tudor, Duchess of Suffolk. The heir in this line was Lady Catherine Grey, Lady Jane Grey's sister. An even more distant possible successor was Henry Hastings, 3rd Earl of Huntingdon, who could claim descent only from Edward III. Each possible heir had his or her disadvantages: Mary I was a Catholic, Lady Catherine Grey had married without the Queen's consent and the Puritan Lord Huntingdon was unwilling to accept the Crown.

Mary, Queen of Scots, had to suffer her own troubles in Scotland. Elizabeth had suggested that if she married the Protestant Robert Dudley, 1st Earl of Leicester, then Elizabeth would make Mary her heir. Mary Stuart refused, and in 1565 married the Catholic Lord Darnley. Lord Darnley was murdered in 1567 after the couple had several disputes, and Mary then married the alleged murderer, the Earl of Bothwell. Scottish nobles then rebelled, imprisoned Mary and forced her to abdicate in favour of her infant son, who became King James VI of Scotland.

In 1568, the last viable English heir to the throne, Catherine Grey, died. She had left a son, but he was deemed illegitimate. Her heiress was her sister, the Lady Mary Grey, a hunchbacked dwarf. Elizabeth was once again forced to consider a Scottish successor, from the line of her father's sister, Margaret Tudor. Mary, Queen of Scots, however, was unpopular in Scotland. She later escaped from her prison and fled to England, where she was captured by English forces. Elizabeth was faced with a problem: sending her back to the Scottish nobles was deemed too cruel; sending her to France would put a powerful pawn in the hands of the French king; forcefully restoring her to the Scottish Throne may have been seen as an heroic gesture, but would cause too much conflict with the Scots; and imprisoning her in England would allow her to participate in plots against the Queen. Elizabeth chose the last option: Mary was kept confined for eighteen years.

In 1569 Elizabeth faced a major uprising, known as the Northern Rebellion. Pope Pius V aided the Catholic Rebellion by excommunicating Elizabeth and declaring her deposed in a Papal Bull. Elizabeth then found a new enemy in her brother-in-law, Philip II, King of Spain. After Philip had launched a surprise attack on the English privateers Sir Francis Drake and John Hawkins in 1568, Elizabeth assented to the detention of a Spanish treasure ship in 1569. Philip was already involved in putting down a rebellion in the Netherlands, and could not afford to declare war on England. Philip II participated in some conspiracies to remove Elizabeth. The first of these plots was the Ridolfi Plot of 1571. After the Catholic Ridolfi Plot was discovered (much to Elizabeth's shock) and foiled, Mary lost the little liberty she had remaining. Spain, which had been friendly to England since Philip's marriage to Elizabeth's predecessor, ceased to be.

In 1586, a further scheme against Elizabeth, the Babington Plot, was revealed by Sir Francis Walsingham, who headed the English spy network. Having put the court on full proof of the charge, Mary Stuart was convicted of complicity in the plot on foot of disputed evidence and executed at Fotheringhay Castle on 8 February 1587. In her will, Mary had left Philip her claim to the English Throne, and Philip set out his plans for an invasion of England. In April 1587, Sir Francis Drake burned part of the Spanish fleet at Cádiz, delaying Philip's plans. In July 1588, the Spanish Armada, a grand fleet of 130 ships bearing over 30,000 men, set sail across the English Channel from the Netherlands. Elizabeth encouraged her troops with a notable speech, known as the Speech to the Troops at Tilbury, in which she famously declared, "I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a King, and of a King of England too". The Spanish attempt was defeated by the English fleet under Charles Howard, 2nd Baron Howard of Effingham, and Sir Francis Drake, aided by bad weather. The Armada was forced to return to Spain, with appalling losses on the north and west coasts of Ireland due to a storm which scattered the fleet and wrecked many of the ships. The victory tremendously increased Elizabeth's popularity.

#### **8.5.4 Death and succession**

Elizabeth I fell ill in February 1603, suffering from frailty and insomnia. She died on 24 March at Richmond Palace, aged 69. Elizabeth was buried in Westminster Abbey, immediately next to her sister Mary I. King James VI was proclaimed King of England as James I a few hours after Elizabeth's death. James I's proclamation broke precedent because it was issued not by the new Sovereign him or herself, but by a Council of Accession, as James was in Scotland at the time.

## **8.6 References**

## 9 The Stuarts (1603-1649, 1660-1714)

### 9.1 James I (1603-1625)



**Figure 32** James I

James I was born at Edinburgh Castle on 19 June 1566. James was the only child of Mary, Queen of Scots and her second husband, Lord Darnley. James was a direct descendant of Henry VII through his great-grandmother Margaret Tudor, sister of Henry VIII. He ruled in Scotland as James VI from 24 July 1567 until his death on 27 March 1625. He was also King of England and King of Ireland as James I from 24 March 1603 until his death. He was the first monarch of England from the House of Stuart.

James was a successful monarch in Scotland, but he was an unsuccessful monarch in England. He was unable to deal with a hostile Parliament, and the refusal by the House of Commons to levy sufficiently high taxes crippled the royal finances. However, James is considered to have been one of the most intellectual British monarchs. Under him, much of the cultural flourishing of Elizabethan England continued; science, literature and art, contributed by men such as Sir Francis Bacon and William Shakespeare grew by leaps.

### **9.1.1 Before becoming King of England**

In June 1567, Protestant rebels arrested James's mother, Mary, Queen of Scots, and imprisoned her. Mary was forced to abdicate the throne on 24 July, giving it to James, then only thirteen months old. He was brought up as a member of the Protestant Church of Scotland. During James VI's early reign, power was held by a series of regents, with James taking power himself in 1581, though he did not rule by himself, relying instead on the advice of his closest courtiers. He carried on ruling as King of Scotland, and then, on the death of Queen Elizabeth of England in 1603, an English Accession Council met and proclaimed James King of England. However, Scotland and England remained separate states - it was not until 1707 that the Acts of Union merged the two nations to create a new state, the Kingdom of Great Britain.

### **9.1.2 Early reign in England**

James is noted for creating many new lords. In total, sixty-two people were raised to the English Peerage by James. Elizabeth had only created eight new peers during her 45-year reign. Upon his arrival in London, James was almost immediately faced by religious conflicts in England. He was presented with a petition from Puritans requesting further Anglican Church reform. He accepted the invitation to a conference in Hampton Court, which was subsequently delayed due to the Plague. In 1604, at the Hampton Court Conference, James was unwilling to agree to most of their demands. He did, however, agree to fulfill one request by authorizing an official translation of the Bible, which came to be known as the King James Version.

In 1605, a group of Catholic extremists led by Robert Catesby developed a plan, known as the Gunpowder Plot, to cause an explosion in the chamber of the House of Lords, where the King and members of both Houses of Parliament would be gathered for the State Opening of Parliament. The conspirators sought to replace James with his daughter, Elizabeth, who, they hoped, could be forced to convert to Catholicism. One of the conspirators, however, leaked information regarding the plot, which was then foiled. Terrified, James refused to leave his residence for many days. Guy Fawkes, who was to be the one lighting the gunpowder, was tortured on the rack until he revealed the identities of the other conspirators, all of whom were executed or killed during capture. Dolls of Guy Fawkes are still burned each 5 November, which is known as Guy Fawkes, or bonfire, Night, to commemorate the plot.

### **9.1.3 Conflict with Parliament and death**

Following the dissolution of the Addled Parliament, James ruled without a Parliament for seven years. Faced with financial difficulties due to the failure of Parliament to approve new taxes, James sought to enter into a profitable alliance with Spain by marrying his eldest surviving son, Charles, to the daughter of the King of Spain. The proposed alliance with a Roman Catholic kingdom was not well received in Protestant England. James's unpopularity was increased by the execution of Sir Walter Raleigh.

James lapsed into senility during the last year of his reign. Real power passed to his son, Charles, and to the Duke of Buckingham, although James kept enough power to ensure that a new war with Spain did not occur while he was King. James died at Theobalds House in 1625 of 'tertian ague' (fever one day in every three), probably brought upon by kidney failure and stroke. He was buried in the Henry VII Lady Chapel in Westminster Abbey. Charles succeeded him as Charles I.

#### 9.1.4 Issue

James's children included Henry Frederick, Prince of Wales (who died aged 18 in 1612), Elizabeth, Margaret Stuart (who died in infancy), Charles, Mary and two more children who died in infancy (Robert and Sophia).

## 9.2 Charles I (1625-1649)



**Figure 33** Charles I

Charles I was born at Dunfermline Palace on 19 November 1600. He was the second son of James I and Anne of Denmark. He was King of England, Scotland and Ireland from 27 March 1625 until his execution in 1649. He famously engaged in a struggle for power with the Parliament of England. He was a supporter of the Divine Right of Kings, and many in England feared that he was attempting to gain absolute power. There was widespread opposition to many of his actions, especially the levying of taxes without Parliament's consent. Religious conflicts continued throughout Charles's reign. He selected his Catholic wife, Henrietta Maria, over the objections of Parliament and public opinion.

The last years of Charles' reign were marked by the English Civil War, in which he was opposed by the forces of Parliament, who challenged his attempts to increase his own power, and by Puritans, who were hostile to his religious policies. The war ended in defeat

for Charles, who was subsequently tried, convicted and executed for high treason. The monarchy was overthrown, and a commonwealth was established.

### **9.2.1 Early life and reign**

Charles was not as well-regarded as his elder brother, Henry. However, when his elder brother died of typhoid in 1612, Charles became heir to the throne and was later made Prince of Wales. Charles ascended the throne in March 1625 and on 1 May of that year married to Henrietta Maria, who was nine years his junior. She was a sister of King Louis XIII of France. His first Parliament, which he opened in May, was opposed to his marriage to Henrietta Maria, a Roman Catholic, because it feared that Charles would lift restrictions on Roman Catholics and undermine the official establishment of Protestantism. Although he agreed with Parliament that he would not relax restrictions relating to recusants, he promised to do exactly that in a secret marriage treaty with Louis XIII. Charles and his wife had nine children, with three sons and three daughters surviving infancy.

### **9.2.2 Personal Rule**

In January 1629, Charles opened the second session of the Parliament which had been prorogued in June 1628. He hoped that, with the Duke of Buckingham gone, Parliament, which had been refusing to let him raise taxes, would finally cooperate with him and grant him further subsidies. Instead, members of the House of Commons began to voice their opposition to the levying of tonnage and poundage without parliamentary consent. When he requested a parliamentary adjournment in March, members held the Speaker down in his chair whilst three resolutions against Charles were read aloud. The last of these resolutions declared that anyone who paid tonnage or poundage not authorized by Parliament would "be reputed a betrayer of the liberties of England, and an enemy to the same". Though the resolution was not formally passed, many members declared their approval. Afterward, when the Commons passed further measures, Charles commanded the dissolution of Parliament.

Charles decided that he could not rely on Parliament for further monetary aid. Immediately, he made peace with France and Spain. The following eleven years, during which Charles ruled without a Parliament, have been known as the Eleven Years Tyranny.

In the meantime Charles still had to get funds to maintain his treasury. Relying on an all but forgotten feudal statute passed in 1278, requiring anyone who earned £40 or more each year to present himself at the King's coronation so that he may join the royal army as a knight, Charles fined everyone who failed to attend his coronation in 1626. He reintroduced the feudal tax known as ship money, which was even more unpopular. A writ issued in 1634 ordered the collection of ship money in peacetime, although laws passed when Edward I and Edward III were on the throne said it should not be collected in peacetime. This action of demanding ship money in peacetime led to a rebellion which forced him to call parliament into session by 1640.



### 9.2.3 Short and Long Parliaments

A dispute with the Churches in Scotland meant that Charles needed more money. He therefore had to end his personal rule and recall Parliament in April 1640. Although Charles offered to repeal ship money, the House of Commons demanded the discussion of various abuses of power during the period of Charles's personal rule. Parliament refused to help Charles and it was dissolved in May 1640, less than a month after it assembled. It became known as the Short Parliament. Charles still tried to defeat the Scots, but failed. The peace treaty he agreed required the King to pay the expenses of the Scottish army he had just fought. Charles took the unusual step of summoning the *magnum concilium*, the ancient council of all the Peers of the Realm, who were considered the King's hereditary counsellors. The *magnum concilium* had not been summoned in centuries, and it has not been summoned since Charles's reign. On the advice of the peers, Charles summoned another Parliament, which became known as the Long Parliament.

The Long Parliament assembled in November 1640 and proved just as difficult to negotiate with as the Short Parliament. To prevent the King from dissolving it at will, Parliament passed the Triennial Act, which required that Parliament was to be summoned at least once every three years. In May 1641, he assented to an even more far-reaching Act, which provided that Parliament could not be dissolved without its own consent. Charles was forced into one concession after another. Ship money, fines in destraint of knighthood and forced loans were declared unlawful, and the hated Courts of Star Chamber and High Commission were abolished. Although he made several important concessions, Charles improved his own military position by securing the favour of the Scots. He finally agreed to the official establishment of Presbyterianism, and in return got considerable anti-parliamentary support.

The House of Commons then threatened to impeach Charles' Catholic Queen, Henrietta Maria, finally leading the King to take desperate action. His wife persuaded him to arrest the five members of the House of Commons who led the anti-Stuart faction on charges of high treason, but, when the King had made his decision, she made the mistake of telling a friend who, in turn, told Parliament. Charles entered the House of Commons with an armed force on 4 January 1642, but found that his opponents had already escaped. Many in Parliament thought Charles's actions outrageous, but others had similar sentiments about the actions of Parliament itself. Several members of the House of Commons left to join the royalist party, leaving the King's opponents with a majority. It was no longer safe for Charles to be in London, and he went north to raise an army against Parliament. The Queen, at the same time, went abroad to raise money to pay for it.

### 9.2.4 Civil war

The English Civil War had not yet started, but both sides began to arm. Charles raised the royal standard in Nottingham on 22 August 1642. He then set up his court at Oxford, from where he controlled roughly the north and west of England, Parliament remaining in control of London and the south and east. The Civil War started on 25 October 1642 with the inconclusive Battle of Edgehill and continued indecisively through 1643 and 1644, until the Battle of Naseby tipped the military balance decisively in favour of Parliament. There followed a great number of defeats for the Royalists, and then the Siege of Oxford, from which

Charles escaped in April 1646. He put himself into the hands of the Scottish Presbyterian army at Newark, and was taken to nearby Southwell while his "hosts" decided what to do with him. The Presbyterians finally arrived at an agreement with Parliament and delivered Charles to them in 1647. He was imprisoned at Holdenby House in Northamptonshire, but was soon transferred to a number of different locations.

### **9.2.5 Trial and execution**

Charles was finally moved to Windsor Castle and then St James's Palace. In January 1649, the House of Commons without the assent of either the Sovereign or the House of Lords—passed an Act of Parliament creating a court for Charles's trial. The High Court of Justice established by the Act consisted of 135 Commissioners (all firm Parliamentarians). The King's trial (on charges of high treason and "other high crimes") began on 2 January, but Charles refused to enter a plea, claiming that no court had jurisdiction over a monarch. It was then normal practice to take a refusal to plead as an admission of guilt, which meant that the prosecution could not call witnesses to its case. Fifty-nine of the Commissioners signed Charles's death warrant on 29 January, 1649. After the ruling, he was led from St. James's Palace, where he was confined, to the Palace of Whitehall, where an execution scaffold had been erected in front of the Banqueting House.

Charles was beheaded on 30 January, 1649. One of the revolutionary leaders, Oliver Cromwell, allowed the King's head to be sewn back on his body so the family could pay its respects. Charles was buried in private and at night on 7 February 1649, in the Henry VIII vault inside St George's Chapel in Windsor Castle. Charles was father to a total of nine legitimate children, two of whom would eventually succeed him as king. Several other children died in childhood.

## **9.3 Interregnum (1649-1660)**

The English Interregnum was the period of parliamentary and military rule after the English Civil War, between the execution of Charles I in 1649 and the restoration of Charles II in 1660.

This era in English history can be divided into four periods:

1. The first period of the Commonwealth of England from 1649 until 1653
2. The Protectorate under Oliver Cromwell from 1653 to 1659
3. The Protectorate under Richard Cromwell in 1659
4. The second period of the Commonwealth of England from 1659 until 1660

### **9.3.1 Life during the Interregnum**

Four years after Charles I's execution, Oliver Cromwell was offered the Crown. But he refused and chose instead to rule as Lord Protector. Oliver Cromwell was a Puritan and during the Interregnum, he imposed a very strict form of Christianity upon the country. Cromwell granted religious freedom otherwise previously unknown in England, but other

forms of expression were suddenly limited (for instance, theatre, which had thrived under the Stuart kings and Elizabeth I, was banned). Cromwell also imposed his own personal vision of Christianity on the masses, with feasts on days of fast disallowed and work on Sundays subject to fine. Richard Cromwell was the successor to his father. But he gave up his position as Lord Protector with little hesitation, resigning or "abdicating" after a demand by the Rump Parliament. This was the beginning of a short period of restoration of the Commonwealth of England, and Charles I's son, also called Charles, was soon invited back as king.

## 9.4 Charles II (1660-1685)



**Figure 34** Charles II

Charles II was born in St James's Palace on 29 May 1630. Charles was the eldest surviving son of Charles I and Henrietta Maria of France. He was the King of Scots from 30 January 1649 and King of England and Ireland from 29 May 1660 until his death on 6 February 1685. Unlike his father Charles I, Charles II was skilled at managing the Parliament of England, so much so that Charles is still considered one of England's greatest kings. It was during his reign that the Whig and Tory political parties developed. He famously fathered numerous illegitimate children, of whom he acknowledged fourteen. Known as the "Merry Monarch", Charles was a patron of the arts.

### 9.4.1 Restoration

After the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1658, Charles's chances of regaining the Crown seemed slim. Oliver Cromwell was succeeded as Lord Protector by his son, Richard Cromwell. However, the new Lord Protector abdicated in 1659. The Protectorate of England was abolished, and the Commonwealth of England established. During the civil and military unrest which followed, George Monck, the Governor of Scotland, was concerned that the nation would descend into anarchy and sought to restore the monarchy. Monck and his army marched into the City of London and forced the Long Parliament to dissolve itself. For the first time in almost twenty years, the members of Parliament faced a general election.

A Royalist House of Commons was elected. The Convention Parliament, soon after it assembled on 25 April 1660, heard about the Declaration of Breda, in which Charles agreed, amongst other things, to pardon many of his father's enemies. It subsequently declared that Charles II had been the lawful Sovereign since Charles I's execution in 1649.

Charles set out for England, arriving in Dover on 23 May 1660 and reaching London on 29 May. Although Charles granted amnesty to Cromwell's supporters in the *Act of Indemnity and Oblivion*, he went back on his pardon of the commissioners and officials involved in his father's trial and execution. Many among those who signed Charles I's death warrant were executed in 1660 in the most gruesome fashion: they were hanged, drawn and quartered. Others were given life imprisonment. The body of Oliver Cromwell was also "executed".

The Convention Parliament was dissolved in December 1660. Shortly after Charles's coronation at Westminster Abbey on 23 April 1661, the second Parliament of the reign, the Cavalier Parliament, met. As the Cavalier Parliament was overwhelmingly Royalist, Charles saw no reason to dissolve it and force another general election for seventeen years.

#### **9.4.2 Foreign policy**

In 1662 Charles married a Portuguese princess, Catherine of Braganza, who brought him the territories of Bombay and Tangier as dowry. During the same year, however, he sold Dunkirk, a much more valuable strategic outpost to his cousin King Louis XIV of France for £40,000. In 1668, England allied itself with Sweden, and with its former enemy the Netherlands, in order to oppose Louis XIV in the War of Devolution. Louis was forced to make peace with the Triple Alliance, but he continued to maintain his aggressive intentions. In 1670, Charles, seeking to solve his financial troubles, agreed to the Treaty of Dover, under which Louis XIV would pay him £200,000 each year. Meanwhile, around 1670, Charles granted the British East India Company the rights to autonomous territorial acquisitions, to mint money, to command fortresses and troops, to form alliances, to make war and peace, and to exercise both civil and criminal jurisdiction over the acquired areas in India. Earlier in 1668 he leased the islands of Bombay for a paltry sum of ten pounds sterling paid in gold.

#### **9.4.3 Great Plague and Fire**

In 1665, Charles II was faced with a great health crisis: an outbreak of Bubonic Plague in London commonly referred to as the Great Plague of London. The death toll at one point reached 7000 per week. Charles, his family and court fled from London in July 1665 to Oxford. Various attempts at containing the disease by London public health officials all fell in vain and the disease continued to spread rapidly. On 2 September 1666 came the Great Fire of London. Although it ended the Great Plague by burning of plague-carrying rats and fleas, the fire consumed about 13,200 houses and 87 churches, including the original St. Paul's Cathedral.

#### 9.4.4 Conflict with Parliament

Charles's wife Queen Catherine was unable to produce an heir. Charles's heir was therefore his unpopular Roman Catholic brother, James. In 1678, Titus Oates, a former Anglican cleric, falsely warned of a "Popish Plot" to kill the king and replace him with James. Charles did not believe the story, but ordered his chief minister to investigate. He, however, was an anti-Catholic, and encouraged Oates to make his accusations public. The people were seized with an anti-Catholic hysteria; judges and juries across the land condemned the supposed conspirators; numerous innocent individuals were executed. Later in 1678, however, the chief minister was impeached by the House of Commons on the charge of high treason. To save Lord Danby from the impeachment trial in the House of Lords, Charles dissolved the Cavalier Parliament in January 1679. A new Parliament, which met in March of the same year, was quite hostile to the king, and this led to the chief minister being forced to resign and being held prisoner in the Tower of London.

#### 9.4.5 Later years

The Parliament of 1679 was elected at a time when there were strong anti-Catholic sentiments. It was opposed to the prospect of a Catholic monarch. An Exclusion Bill, which sought to exclude James from the line of succession, was introduced. The "Abhorrers", those who opposed the Exclusion Bill, would develop into the Tory Party, whilst the "Petitioners", those who supported the Exclusion Bill, became the Whig Party. Fearing that the Exclusion Bill would be passed, Charles dissolved Parliament in December 1679. Two further Parliaments were called in Charles's reign (one in 1680, the other in 1681), but both were dissolved because they sought to pass the Exclusion Bill. During the 1680s, however, popular support for the Exclusion Bill began to dissolve, and Charles experienced a nationwide surge of loyalty. For the remainder of his reign, Charles ruled as an absolute monarch, without a Parliament.

In 1685 Charles died suddenly. When he knew he was dying and in great secrecy, a priest was summoned to his bedside. Charles was admitted into the Catholic Church and received the last rites. He was buried in Westminster Abbey. He was succeeded by his brother, who became James II in England and Ireland, and James VII in Scotland.

## 9.5 James II (1685-1688)



**Figure 35** James II

James II of England and VII of Scotland was born at St James's Palace on 14 October 1633. He was the second surviving son of Charles I and Henrietta Maria of France. He became King of England, King of Scots and King of Ireland on 6 February 1685. He was the last Roman Catholic monarch to reign over England, Scotland and Ireland. Some of his subjects distrusted his religious policies and alleged despotism, leading a group of them to depose him in the Glorious Revolution. He was replaced not by his Roman Catholic son, James Francis Edward, but by his Protestant daughter and son-in-law, Mary II and William III, who became joint rulers in 1689. The belief that James remained the legitimate ruler became known as Jacobitism (from *Jacobus*, the Latin for James). However, James did not try to return to the throne, instead living the rest of his life under the protection of King Louis XIV of France. His son James Francis Edward Stuart and his grandson Charles Edward Stuart (*Bonnie Prince Charlie*) attempted to restore the Jacobite line after James's death on 16 September 1701, but failed.

### 9.5.1 Early life

Like his brother, James sought refuge in France during the Interregnum, and he served in the French army. In 1656, when his brother, Charles, entered into an alliance with Spain, an enemy of France, he joined the Spanish army. Both armies praised James's abilities. In 1660, Charles II was restored to the English Throne, and James returned to England with him. Though he was the heir, it seemed unlikely then that he would inherit the Crown, as it was thought that Charles would have legitimate children. In September 1660, James

married Lady Anne Hyde, the daughter of Charles's then chief minister, Edward Hyde, 1st Earl of Clarendon.

### 9.5.2 Religion

James was admitted to the Roman Catholic Church in 1668 or 1669. His Protestant enemies in the Parliament of England then passed the Test Act, which made all civil and military officials swear an oath against certain practices of the Roman Catholic Church and receive communion in the Church of England. James refused to do this and gave up his post of Lord High Admiral as a result. Charles II opposed James's conversion, and ordered James's children be raised as Protestants, but in 1673, he allowed James (whose first wife had died in 1671) to marry the Catholic Mary of Modena.

In 1677, James allowed his daughter, Mary, to marry the Protestant Prince of Orange, William III, who was also his nephew. However, fears of a Catholic monarch remained, and got greater as Charles II's wife continued to fail to provide an heir.

### 9.5.3 Reign and the Glorious Revolution

Charles died without legitimate offspring in 1685, and James became king. At first, there was little opposition to him and many Anglicans supported him as the legitimate monarch. The new Parliament which assembled in May 1685 seemed favourable to James, agreeing to grant him a large income. James, however, faced the Monmouth Rebellion, which was led by Charles II's illegitimate son, the Duke of Monmouth. James Scott, 1st Duke of Monmouth declared himself King on 20 June 1685, but was defeated at the Battle of Sedgemoor. Monmouth was executed at the Tower of London soon after. Despite the lack of popular support for Monmouth, James began to distrust his subjects. His judges, most notably Judge Jeffreys (the "Hanging Judge"), punished the rebels brutally. Judge Jeffreys' Bloody Assizes led the people to see their King as a cruel and barbarous ruler. To protect himself from further rebellions, James sought to establish a large standing army. By putting Roman Catholics in charge of several regiments, the King was drawn into a conflict with Parliament. Parliament was prorogued in November 1685, never to meet again during James's reign.

Religious tension intensified in 1686. In the Declaration of Indulgence in 1687, he suspended laws punishing Roman Catholics and other religious dissenters. In April 1688, James re-issued the Declaration of Indulgence, and ordered Anglican clergymen to read it in their churches. When the Archbishop of Canterbury and six other bishops petitioned for a change in the King's religious policies, they were arrested and tried for seditious libel, but were acquitted. Public alarm increased with the birth of a Catholic son and heir, James Francis Edward, to Queen Mary in June, 1688. Several leading Protestants then entered into negotiations with William, Prince of Orange, who was James's son-in-law, for him to invade and become king. By September, it had become clear that William was looking to invade. James believed his army could fight them off, but when William landed on 5 November 1688, all of the King's Protestant officers went over to William's side. On 11 December, James attempted to flee to France. He was caught in Kent, but allowed to escape to France on 23 December.

When James left, no Parliament was in session, so William convened a Convention Parliament. The Convention declared on 12 February 1689 that James's attempt to flee on 11 December meant that he had abdicated and that the throne had then become vacant (instead of passing to James II's son, James Francis Edward). James's daughter Mary was declared Queen. She was to rule jointly with her husband William III. The Scottish Estates followed suit on 11 April.

William and Mary then granted their assent to the Bill of Rights. This confirmed that William III and Mary II were to be King and Queen. It also charged James II with abusing his power by suspending the Test Acts, the prosecuting of the Seven Bishops for petitioning the Crown, establishing a standing army and imposing cruel punishments. The Act also set out who would be heirs to the Crown. First were any children of William and Mary, to be followed by the Princess Anne and her children, and finally by the children of William by any subsequent marriage.

#### **9.5.4 Later years and legacy**

With a French army on his side, James landed in Ireland in March 1689. The Irish Parliament did not follow the example of the English Parliament and instead declared that James remained King. He was, however, defeated at the Battle of the Boyne on 1 July 1690. He fled back to France after the defeat departing. In France, James was allowed to live in a royal castle. An attempt was made to restore him to the throne by killing William III in 1696, but the plot failed. Louis XIV's offer to have James elected King of Poland was rejected, after which Louis no longer helped James. He died in 1701 at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, where he was buried.

The son of James II, James Francis Edward Stuart (known to his supporters as "James III and VIII" and to his opponents as the "Old Pretender"), took up the Jacobite cause. He led a rising in Scotland in 1715 shortly after George I became king, but was defeated. Further risings were also defeated. After the rising of 1745 led by Charles Edward Stuart, no serious attempt to restore the Stuart heir has been made.

James Francis Edward died in 1766, when he was succeeded by his eldest son, Charles Edward Stuart (known to his supporters as "Charles III" and to his opponents as the "Young Pretender"). Charles in turn was succeeded by his younger brother Henry Benedict Stuart, a cardinal of the Catholic Church. Henry was the last of James II's legitimate descendants.

#### **9.5.5 Children**

James had eight children by Anne Hyde, of whom only two, Mary and Anne, survived infancy. They became the next two Queens. By Mary of Modena he had six children, two of whom survived infancy. The most famous of his children by Mary of Modena was James Francis Edward Stuart. He also had a number of illegitimate children.



## 9.6 William III (1689-1702) and Mary II (1689-1694)

After the Glorious Revolution, William III and his wife, Mary II, became joint rulers.

### 9.6.1 William



**Figure 36** William III

William was born in The Hague in the Netherlands on 14 November 1650. He was the son of William II, Prince of Orange, and Mary Stuart. He was Dutch aristocrat and a Protestant Prince of Orange from his birth. He was King William III of England and of Ireland from 13 February 1689, and William II, King of Scots from 11 April 1689 in each case until his death on 8 March 1702.

Eight days before he was born, his father died from battle wounds, and so William became the Sovereign Prince of Orange at the moment of his birth. On 23 December 1660, when William was just ten years old, his mother died of smallpox while visiting her brother, King Charles II in England. In her will, Mary made Charles William's legal guardian. Charles passed on this responsibility to William's paternal grandmother, the Princess Dowager Amalia, with the understanding that Charles's advice would be sought whenever it was needed. In 1666, when William was sixteen, the States General of the United Provinces of the Netherlands officially made him a ward of the government, or as William himself called it, a "Child of State". This was one in order to prepare William for a role in the nation's government. When his time as the government's ward ended three years later, William returned to private life.

### 9.6.2 Mary



**Figure 37** Mary II

Mary II was born in London on 30 April 1662. She was the eldest daughter of James II and his first wife, Lady Anne Hyde. She reigned as Queen of England and Ireland from 13 February 1689 until her death on 28 December 1694, and as Queen of Scotland from 11 April 1689 until her death. Mary came to the throne after the Glorious Revolution. Mary reigned jointly with her husband and first cousin, William III, who became the sole ruler upon her death. Mary, although a sovereign in her own right, did not wield power during most of her reign. She did, however, govern the realm when her husband was abroad fighting wars.

James II converted to Roman Catholicism in 1668 or 1669, but Mary and Anne were ordered by Charles II to have a Protestant upbringing, pursuant to the command of Charles II. At the age of fifteen, Princess Mary became engaged to the Protestant Stadtholder and Prince of Orange, William. William was the son of her aunt and Prince William II of Nassau. They married in London on 4 November 1677. Mary went to the Netherlands, where she lived with her husband. She did not enjoy a happy marriage, with her three pregnancies ended in miscarriage or stillbirth. She became popular with the Dutch people, but her husband neglected or even mistreated her and had an affair with one of Mary's ladies-in-waiting.

### 9.6.3 Reign

Although most in England accepted William as Sovereign, he faced considerable opposition in Scotland and Ireland. The Scottish Jacobites, who believed that James II remained the legitimate monarch, won a stunning victory on 27 July 1689 at the Battle of Killiecrankie, but were later beaten within a month. William's reputation suffered after the Massacre of Glencoe in 1692, when almost one hundred Scots were murdered for not properly pledging their allegiance to the new King and Queen. Accepting public opinion, William sacked those responsible for the massacre, though they still remained in his favour.

In Ireland, where the French aided the rebels, fighting continued for much longer, although James II fled the island after the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. This Battle is still commemorated each year by the Protestants in Northern Ireland. After the Anglo-Dutch Navy defeated a French fleet at in 1692, the naval supremacy of the English became apparent, and Ireland was conquered shortly after.

From 1690 onwards, William often remained absent from England. Whilst her husband was away, Mary ruled. She was a firm ruler, and even ordered the arrest of her own uncle for plotting to restore James II to the throne. In 1692, she dismissed and imprisoned the influential John Churchill, 1st Earl of Marlborough on similar charges. In this case the dismissal reduced her popularity and harmed her relationship with her sister Anne. When William was in England, Mary stepped aside from politics. She did, however, get involved in the affairs of the Church, in particular with Church appointments. Mary died of smallpox in 1694. After Mary II's death, William III continued to rule as king. Although he had previously mistreated his wife and kept mistresses, William deeply mourned his wife's death. Although he was brought up as a Calvinist, he converted to Anglicanism, but his popularity fell greatly during his reign as a sole Sovereign.

#### **9.6.4 William as sole ruler**

William, like many other European rulers, became concerned about who would succeed to the throne of Spain, which brought with it vast territories in Italy, the Low Countries and the New World. The question became important as The King of Spain, Charles II, was an invalid with no prospect of having children, and had amongst his closest relatives Louis XIV, the King of France, and Leopold I, the Holy Roman Emperor. William wanted to stop either of these inheriting all Spanish lands. William and Louis XIV agreed to the First Partition Treaty, which provided for the division of the Spanish Empire: Duke Joseph Ferdinand of Bavaria (whom William himself chose) would obtain Spain, while France and the Holy Roman Emperor would divide the remaining territories between them. The Spaniards, however, wanted to keep the Spanish territories united.

After Joseph Ferdinand died of smallpox, William and Louis In 1700, the two rulers agreed to the Second Partition Treaty in 1700, under which the territories in Italy would pass to a son of the King of France, and the other Spanish territories would be inherited by a son of the Holy Roman Emperor. This infuriated both the Spanish, who wanted the empire intact, and the Holy Roman Emperor, who wanted the Italian territories. Unexpectedly, King Charles II of Spain changed his will as he lay dying in late 1700. He left all Spanish territories to Philip, a grandson of Louis. The French ignored the Second Partition Treaty and claimed the entire Spanish inheritance. Louis also angered William by recognising James Francis Edward Stuart, the son of the former King James II, who had died in 1701, as King of England. The subsequent conflict, known as the War of the Spanish Succession, continued until 1713.

Princess Anne's last surviving child, William, Duke of Gloucester, died in July 1700, and, as it was clear that William III would have no more children, Parliament passed the Act of Settlement in 1701, which provided that the Crown would go to the nearest Protestant relative, Sophia, Electress of Hanover and her Protestant heirs. When William III died in 1702.

### 9.6.5 William's death

In 1702, William died of pneumonia, a complication from a broken collarbone, resulting from a fall off his horse. It was believed by some that his horse had stumbled into a mole's burrow, and as a result many Jacobites toasted "the little gentleman in the black velvet waistcoat". William was buried in Westminster Abbey alongside his wife. He was succeeded by Queen Anne.

## 9.7 Anne (1702-1714)



Figure 38 Anne

Anne was born in St James's Palace on 6 February 1665. She was the second daughter of James, who went on to become James II, and his first wife, Lady Anne Hyde. She was Queen of England, Scotland and Ireland from 8 March 1702 until her death on 1 August 1714. Anne was the last monarch of the House of Stuart. She was succeeded by a distant cousin, George I. Anne's reign saw the two party political system develop.

### 9.7.1 Early life

On 28 July 1683, Anne married the Protestant Prince George of Denmark, brother of the Danish King Christian V. The union was unpopular because Denmark was pro-France union, but it was a happy one for Anne and George. Sarah Churchill became Anne's lady of the bedchamber, and, by the latter's desire to mark their mutual intimacy and affection, all deference due to her rank was abandoned and the two ladies called each other Mrs Morley and Mrs Freeman. Sarah remained Anne's closest friend, and later married John Churchill,

the 1st Duke of Marlborough. However, they had a falling out and Sarah was banned from court during the War of the Spanish Succession, when her husband was leading the English armies in the War.

By 1700, Anne had been pregnant at least eighteen times. Thirteen times, she miscarried or gave birth to stillborn children. Of the remaining five children, four died before reaching the age of two years. Her only son to survive infancy, William, Duke of Gloucester, died at the age of eleven on 29 July 1700. William and Mary did not have any children, and therefore Anne was the only individual remaining in the line of succession established by the Bill of Rights. If the line ended, then the deposed King James may have reclaimed the Throne. To stop a Roman Catholic from becoming king, Parliament enacted the Act of Settlement 1701, which provided that the Crown would go to Sophia, Electress of Hanover, and her descendants, who descended from James I of England through Elizabeth of Bohemia.

### 9.7.2 Early reign

William III died on 8 March 1702, leaving the Crown to Anne. At about the same time, the War of the Spanish Succession began. It would continue until the last years of Anne's reign, and would dominate both foreign and domestic policy. Soon after becoming Queen, Anne made her husband Lord High Admiral in control of the Royal Navy. Control of the army went to Lord Marlborough. The Duchess of Marlborough was appointed to the post of Mistress of the Robes, the highest office a lady could attain.

Anne's first government was mostly Tory. The Whigs, who were, unlike the Tories, big supporters of the War became more influential after the Duke of Marlborough won a great victory at the Battle of Blenheim in 1704. The Whigs quickly rose to power, and almost all the Tories were removed from the ministry. The Act of Union between England and Scotland was then passed. Under the Act, England and Scotland became one realm called Great Britain on 1 May 1707.

The Duchess of Marlborough's relationship with Anne worsened during 1707. Anne's husband, Prince George of Denmark, then died in October 1708, after which Anne grew even more distant from the Duchess of Marlborough. The Queen ended their friendship in 1709.

The fall of the Whigs came about quickly as the expensive War of the Spanish Succession grew unpopular in England. In the general election of 1710, the electorate returned a large Tory majority. The new Tory government began to seek peace in the War of the Spanish Succession. The Tories were ready to compromise by giving Spain to the grandson of the French King, but the Whigs could not bear to see a Bourbon on the Spanish Throne. The dispute was resolved by outside events, when the elder brother of Archduke Charles (whom the Whigs supported) conveniently died in 1711 and Archduke Charles then inherited Austria, Hungary and the throne of the Holy Roman Empire. To also give him the Spanish throne was no longer in Great Britain's interests, as he would become too powerful. The Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 provided that peace, although it only got ratified by Great Britain when Anne created twelve new peers in one day to make sure it had enough support in the House of Lords.

Under the terms of the ratified treaty, Philip, grandson of the French King Louis XIV, was allowed to remain on the Throne of Spain, and kept Spain's New World colonies. The rest

of the Spanish territories, however, were split amongst various European princes. Great Britain kept Gibraltar and Minorca, and got some French colonies in North America.

### **9.7.3 Death and legacy**

Anne died of an abscess and fever arising from gout, at approximately on 1 August 1714. Her body was so swollen that it had to be buried in Westminster Abbey in a vast almost-square coffin. She died shortly after the Electress Sophia (8 June 1714) and so the Electress's son, George, became king of Great Britain.

Anne's reign saw greater influence in government by ministers and a decrease in the influence of the Crown. In 1708, Anne became the last British Sovereign to withhold the Royal Assent from a bill. The shift of power from the Crown to the ministry became even more apparent during the reign of George I, whose chief advisor, Sir Robert Walpole, is often described as the first Prime Minister. The age of Anne was also one of artistic, literary and scientific advancement. In architecture, Sir John Vanbrugh constructed elegant buildings such as Blenheim Palace (the home of the Marlboroughs) and Castle Howard. Writers such as Daniel Defoe, Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift flourished during Anne's reign. Sir Isaac Newton also lived during Anne's reign, although he had reached his most important discoveries under William and Mary.

## **9.8 References**

# 10 The Hanoverians (1714-1901)

## 10.1 George I (1714-1727)



**Figure 39** George I

George I was born in Hanover, Germany on 28 May 1660. He was the eldest son of Ernst August, Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg, a German prince, and of his wife, Sophia. He was Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg from 23 January 1698, and King of Great Britain and King of Ireland from 1 August 1714, until his death on 11 June 1727. He was also a Prince Elector of the Holy Roman Empire. George I was the first Hanoverian monarch of Great Britain and Ireland, but was not a fluent speaker of English. He spoke his native German, and was ridiculed for this by his British subjects. During his reign, the powers of the monarchy reduced as the modern Cabinet system of government developed. During the later years of George's reign, the real power was held by Sir Robert Walpole, who is now generally thought of as being Britain's first prime minister.

### 10.1.1 Marriage and children

In 1682, George married his first cousin, Princess Sophia of Celle. They had two children, George and Sophia Dorothea. The couple soon split up, with George preferring to be with his mistress, with whom he had at least three illegitimate children. George's marriage to Sophia was later dissolved.

### 10.1.2 Reign

George I was active in directing British foreign policy during his early years. In 1717, he contributed to the creation of the Triple Alliance, an anti-Spanish league composed of Great Britain, France and the United Provinces of the Netherlands. In 1718, the Holy Roman Empire was added to the body, which became known as the Quadruple Alliance. The subsequent War of the Quadruple Alliance involved the same issue as the War of the Spanish Succession. The Treaty of Utrecht had allowed Philip, the grandson of Louis XIV, to succeed to the Spanish Throne on the condition that he gave up his rights to succeed to the French Throne. However, when Louis XIV died, Philip tried to take the Crown of France. But Philip's armies fared poorly, and the Spanish and French Thrones remained separate.

In 1719 came the South Sea Bubble. It happened when the South Sea Company proposed to convert £30,981,712 of the British national debt. At the time, government bonds were extremely difficult to trade due to unrealistic restrictions; for example, it was not permitted to redeem certain bonds unless the original debtor was still alive. Each bond represented a very large sum, and could not be divided and sold. Thus, the South Sea Company sought to convert high-interest, untradeable bonds to low-interest, easily-tradeable ones. The Company bribed ministers to help them. Company prices rose rapidly. Shares which cost £128 in January 1720 were valued at £550 when Parliament accepted the scheme in May. The price reached £1000 by August. Uncontrolled selling, however, caused the stock to plummet to £150 by the end of September. Many people were completely ruined.

The economic crisis, known as the South Sea Bubble, made George I and his ministers extremely unpopular. One of the responsible ministers died, and the other resigned in 1721, which allowed the rise of Sir Robert Walpole. Walpole became George's primary minister, although the title "Prime Minister" was not formally applied to him. Officially, he was only the First Lord of the Treasury. His management of the South Sea crisis helped avoid a dispute between the King and the House of Commons over responsibility for the affair. Walpole strengthened his influence in the House of Commons through bribery.

Walpole became extremely powerful. He, not the King, truly controlled the government. Walpole was allowed to choose and remove all ministers, and George I merely rubber-stamped his decisions. George I did not even attend meetings of the Cabinet. George I only exercised substantial influence with respect to British foreign policy.

### 10.1.3 Death and legacy

George, although increasingly reliant on Sir Robert Walpole, could still have removed his ministers at will. Walpole was actually afraid of being removed towards the end of George I's reign, but such fears were put to an end when George I died in Osnabrück from a stroke on 11 June 1727. George was on his sixth trip to his native Hanover, where he was buried in Chapel Schloss Herrenhausen. George I's son succeeded him, becoming George II.

George I was extremely unpopular in Great Britain, especially due to his supposed inability to speak English; recent research, however, reveals that such an inability may not have existed later in his reign. His treatment of his wife, Sophia, was not well received. The British perceived him as too German, and despised his succession of German mistresses.



## 10.2 George II (1727-1760)



**Figure 40** George II

George II was born at Schloss Herrenhausen, Hanover on 10 November 1683. He was King of Great Britain and Ireland, Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg and Prince-Elector of the Holy Roman Empire from 11 June 1727 until his death on 25 October 1760. He was the second British monarch of the House of Hanover, and the last British monarch to personally lead his troops into battle (at Dettingen in 1743). He was also the last British monarch to have been born outside of Great Britain. George II was famous for his numerous conflicts with his father and afterwards with his son. His relationship with his wife was much better, despite his numerous mistresses. George II exercised little control over policy during his early reign, the government instead being controlled by Great Britain's first (unofficial) "Prime Minister", Sir Robert Walpole.

### 10.2.1 Reign

It was widely believed that George would dismiss Sir Robert Walpole, but in the event retained him. Against Walpole's advice, George II once again entered into war with Spain in 1739 (the War of Jenkins' Ear). The entire continent of Europe was plunged into war upon the death of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI in 1740. At dispute was the right of his daughter, Maria Theresa, to succeed to his Austrian territories. George II's war with Spain quickly became part of the War of the Austrian Succession.

Accused of rigging an election, Walpole retired in 1742 after over twenty years in office. He was replaced by Spencer Compton, 1st Earl of Wilmington. Lord Wilmington, however, was a figurehead as actual power was held by Lord Carteret. When Lord Wilmington died in 1743, Henry Pelham took his place.

George II's French opponents in the War encouraged rebellion by the Jacobites. The Jacobites were the supporters of the Roman Catholic James II, who had been deposed in 1689 and replaced not by his Catholic son, but by his Protestant daughter. James II's son, James Francis Edward Stuart (the "Old Pretender") had attempted two prior rebellions. The Old

Pretender's son, Charles Edward Stuart ("Bonnie Prince Charlie"), however, led a much stronger rebellion on his father's behalf in 1745, which almost dethroned George II.

Bonnie Prince Charlie landed in Scotland in July 1745. Many Scotsmen were loyal to his cause, and he defeated British forces in September. He then tried to enter England, where even Roman Catholics seemed hostile to the invasion. The French king, Louis XV, had promised to send twelve thousand soldiers to aid the rebellion, but did not deliver. A British army under the Duke of Cumberland, meanwhile, drove the Jacobites back into Scotland. On 16 April 1746, Bonnie Prince Charlie faced the Duke of Cumberland in the Battle of Culloden, the last battle ever fought in Great Britain. The Jacobites were beaten heavily. Bonnie Prince Charlie escaped to France, but many of his Scottish supporters were caught and executed. The War of the Austrian Succession finally ended in 1748, with Maria Theresa being recognised as Archduchess of Austria.

For the remainder of his life, George did not take any active interest in politics or war. During his last years, the Industrial Revolution began, and British dominance in India increased with the victories of Robert Clive at the Battle of Arcot and the Battle of Plassey.

### 10.2.2 Death

George II died on 25 October 1760 whilst using his toilet. He was buried in Westminster Abbey. George had married Caroline of Ansbach in 1705. Their first son was Frederick, Prince of Wales who was born on 1 February 1707, but Frederick died before his father in 1751, and so it was Frederick's son George who became the next king. They also had two other sons and five daughters. He was succeeded by his grandson, who became George III.

## 10.3 George III (1760-1820)



**Figure 41** George III

George III was born at Norfolk House in London on 4 June 1738. He was the son of Frederick, Prince of Wales, and the grandson of George II. George's mother was Augusta of Saxe-Gotha. He was King of Great Britain and Ireland from 25 October 1760 to 1 January 1801, and then King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland until his death on 29 January 1820. He was also the Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg, and Elector (and later King) of Hanover. George was the third British monarch of the House of Hanover, but the first to be born in Britain and use English as his first language.

During George III's reign, Britain lost many of its colonies in North America, which became the United States. Later in his reign George III suffered from mental illness. In 1811, this led to George's eldest son, who was also named George, taking over ruling the country as Prince Regent. Upon the king's death, he succeeded his father as George IV. George III has been nicknamed *Farmer George*, for "his plain, homely, thrifty manners and tastes" and because of his passionate interest in agriculture.

### 10.3.1 Marriage and children

After George became king, there a search throughout Europe for a suitable wife for him. On 8 September 1761 the King married Princess Sophia Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. A fortnight later, both were crowned at Westminster Abbey. The couple enjoyed a happy marriage and George never took a mistress. They had nine sons and six daughters. Two of their sons became Kings of the United Kingdom; another became King of Hanover; a daughter became Queen of Württemberg.

### 10.3.2 Conflict in North America

In 1763, the British government under George III issued a Royal Proclamation to limit the westward expansion of the American colonies. The Proclamation's goal was to force colonists to negotiate with the Native Americans for the lawful purchase of land. The idea was to reduce frontier warfare over land conflicts. The Proclamation was very unpopular with the American. The American colonists paid little tax, which made it difficult for the Crown to pay for military activity, such as defending the American colonies from being attacked by the natives. So, after George Grenville became Prime Minister, he introduced the Stamp Act 1765, which levied a stamp duty on all printed paper in the British colonies in North America. Grenville attempted to reduce George's power, so George replaced him with the 2nd Marquess of Rockingham in 1765.

Lord Rockingham got rid of Grenville's unpopular Stamp Act, but was replaced in 1766 by William Pitt, whom George made Earl of Chatham. Lord Chatham proved to be pro-American. George III, however, decided that the chief duty of the colonists was to submit to him and to Great Britain. Lord Chatham fell ill 1767, which led to his being replaced, and by 1770 the Tory Lord North was in government.

Lord North was chiefly concerned with the American Revolution. The Americans grew increasingly hostile to British attempts to levy taxes in the colonies. In the Boston Tea Party in 1773, a mob threw 342 crates of tea into Boston Harbour as a political protest, costing over \$1 million. In response, Lord North introduced laws which shut down the Port of Boston and elections in the Colony of Massachusetts Bay were suspended.

War broke out in America in 1775. On 4 July 1776, the colonies declared their independence from the Crown. On the same day, George III wrote "Nothing Important Happened Today" in his diary. In 1783, defeated, the United Kingdom signed the Treaty of Paris recognizing the United States.

### **10.3.3 George's first major episode of madness**

When North finally resigned, William Pitt took his place. During Pitt's ministry, George III was extremely popular. The public supported the exploratory voyages to the Pacific Ocean that he sanctioned. George also aided the Royal Academy with large grants from his private funds. The British people admired their King for remaining faithful to his wife, unlike the two previous Hanoverian monarchs. Great advances were made in fields such as in science and industry.

George III's health, however, was in a poor condition. He suffered from mental illness. The King had previously suffered a brief episode of the disease in 1765, but a longer episode began in 1788. In February 1789, the Regency Bill, authorising the Prince of Wales to act as Prince Regent, was introduced and passed in the House of Commons. But before the House of Lords could pass the bill, George III recovered from his illness and resumed full control of government.

### **10.3.4 Napoleonic Wars**

After George recovered from his illness, his popularity greatly increased. The French Revolution, which saw the overthrow of the French monarchy, worried many British landowners. France declared war on Great Britain in 1793 and George soon represented the British resistance. George allowed Pitt to increase taxes and raise armies in the war attempt. Great Britain was well-prepared, but France was stronger. The First Coalition, which included Austria, Prussia and Spain, was defeated in 1798. The Second Coalition, which included Austria, Russia and the Ottoman Empire, was defeated in 1800. Only Great Britain was left fighting Napoleon Bonaparte, the military dictator of France.

Soon after 1800, a brief lull in fighting allowed Pitt to concentrate on Ireland, where there had been an uprising in 1798. Parliament passed the Act of Union 1800, which, on 1 January 1801, united Great Britain and Ireland into a single nation, known as the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. In 1802, Pitt's successor, Henry Addington made peace with France in 1802.

In 1803, the two nations once again declared war on each other, and soon after, Pitt returned. Pitt tried to form a coalition with Austria, Russia and Sweden. The Third Coalition met the same fate as the First and Second Coalitions, and collapsed in 1805. It looked as though Napoleon would invade, until Vice-Admiral Nelson won his famous naval victory at the Battle of Trafalgar. Pitt died in 1806.

### 10.3.5 Later years and death

In 1810, George III became dangerously ill. By 1811, George III had become permanently insane and was locked away at Windsor Castle until his death. Sometimes speaking for many hours without pause, he claimed to talk to angels and once greeted an oak tree as King Frederick William III of Prussia. Parliament then passed the Regency Act 1811. The Prince of Wales acted as Regent for the remainder of George III's life.

Lord Liverpool became the leader of the government in 1812. He oversaw British victory in the Napoleonic Wars. Meanwhile, George's health deteriorated. Over the Christmas of 1819, he suffered a further bout of madness and spoke nonsense for 58 hours, then sank into a coma. On 29 January 1820, he died, blind, deaf and insane, at Windsor Castle. George III had lived for over 81 years and reigned for more than 59 years. George III was buried in St George's Chapel, Windsor. George was followed by his eldest son, the Prince Regent, who became George IV.

## 10.4 George IV (1820-1830)



**Figure 42** George IV

George IV was born in St James's Palace on 12 August 1762. George was the eldest son of George III and Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. He was king of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and Hanover from 29 January 1820 until his death on 26 June 1830. He had earlier served as Prince Regent when his father, George III, went insane. The Regency, which is the name given to this period, started in 1811 and ended with George III's death in 1820. It was marked by victory in the Napoleonic Wars in Europe. George was a stubborn monarch, often interfered in politics. For most of George's regency and reign, Lord Liverpool controlled the government as Prime Minister. George is often remembered largely for the extravagant lifestyle that he maintained as prince and monarch. He had a

poor relationship with both his father and his wife, Caroline of Brunswick, whom he did not allow to attend his coronation. He was a patron of new forms of leisured style and taste, and was responsible for the building of the Royal Pavilion in Brighton.

#### **10.4.1 Early life**

As a child George was a talented student, quickly learning to speak not only English but also French, German and Italian. The Prince of Wales turned 21 in 1783, when he obtained a grant of £60,000 from Parliament and an annual income of £50,000 from his father. He then established his residence in Carlton House, where he lived an extravagant life.

#### **10.4.2 Marriage and children**

Soon after he reached the age of 21, the Prince of Wales fell in love with a Roman Catholic, Maria Anne Fitzherbert. A marriage between the two was banned by the Act of Settlement 1701, which says that those who marry Roman Catholics cannot become king. In addition, the Royal Marriages Act 1772 meant that the Prince of Wales could not marry without the consent of the King, which would have never been granted in this case. However, the couple did go through a marriage ceremony on 15 December 1785. Legally the union was void, as the King's assent was never requested. However, Mrs Fitzherbert believed that she was the Prince of Wales's canonical and true wife, holding the law of the Church to be superior to the law of the State. For political reasons, the union remained secret and Mrs Fitzherbert promised not to publish any evidence relating to it.

By 1787, George was in debt because of his exorbitant lifestyle. His father refused to help him, and Parliament had to bail him out. His debts continued to mount, and his father refused to help him unless he married his cousin, Caroline of Brunswick. In 1795, George and Caroline married. The marriage was a disaster though, with both hating each other. The two were formally separated after the birth of their only child, Princess Charlotte, in 1796. George remained attached to Mrs Fitzherbert for the rest of his life, although there were some times when they were apart. George also fathered numerous illegitimate children.

Meanwhile, the problem of George's debts, which were £660,000 in 1796, was solved (at least temporarily) by Parliament. Being unwilling to make an outright grant to relieve these debts, it provided him an additional sum of £65,000 per annum. In 1803, a further £60,000 was added, and the George's debts were finally paid.

#### **10.4.3 Regency**

As we saw earlier, in late 1810, George III became ill again, and in 1811 the Regency Act was passed, which made Prince George regent. At this time Catholic Emancipation was at the top of the political agenda. Catholic Emancipation was the project to relieve Roman Catholics of various political disabilities. The Tories, who were in government, opposed it, whilst the Whigs supported it. George was expected to support the Whigs, but instead left the Tories in office. In 1812, when the Tory prime minister, Spencer Perceval, was assassinated, he appointed another Tory, Lord Liverpool to carry on the government. The Tories also sought to continue the war against the powerful and aggressive Emperor of

France, Napoleon I. With the aid of Russia, Prussia, Sweden, Austria and other countries, the United Kingdom defeated Napoleon in 1814. Napoleon made a return in 1815, but was defeated at the Battle of Waterloo by the Duke of Wellington.

During this period George as Regent took an active interest in matters of style and taste, and his associates such as the dandy Beau Brummell and the architect John Nash created the Regency style. In London Nash designed the Regency terraces of Regent's Park and Regent Street. George took up the new idea of the seaside spa and had the Brighton Pavilion developed as a fantastical seaside palace, adapted by Nash in the "Indian Gothic" style inspired loosely by the Taj Mahal, with extravagant "Indian" and "Chinese" interiors.

#### **10.4.4 Reign**

When George III died in 1820, the Prince Regent became King George IV, with no real change in his powers. By this time he was obese and also showed some signs of the disease that had affected his father. George's wife, from whom he had separated many years before, tried to return for her husband's coronation. However, George IV refused to recognise Caroline as Queen. The King wanted a divorce, but his advisors said that the king's own adultery might also be made public if he did. George tried to get an Act of Parliament to annul the marriage, but the bill proved extremely unpopular, and was withdrawn from Parliament. George IV decided, nonetheless, to exclude his wife from his coronation at Westminster Abbey on 19 July 1821. Caroline died soon afterwards, on 7 August of the same year.

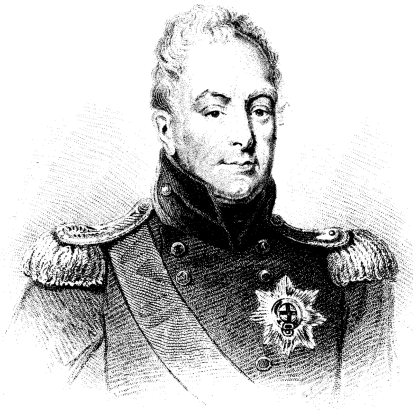
George's coronation was a magnificent and expensive affair, costing about £943,000. The coronation was a popular event. Many across the nation bought souvenirs that bore copies of the coronation portrait. In 1822 the King visited Edinburgh for "one and twenty daft days". His visit to Scotland was the first by a reigning monarch since Charles II went there in 1650.

George IV spent most of his reign at Windsor Castle, but he continued to interfere in politics, particularly to try to prevent Catholic Emancipation. It was only in 1829 that the then prime minister, the Duke of Wellington, successfully passed a Catholic Relief Bill.

#### **10.4.5 Death and legacy**

George IV died in 1830 and was buried in Windsor Castle. As his daughter and his eldest brother had died before him, he was succeeded his brother, William, Duke of Clarence.

## 10.5 William IV (1830-1837)



**Figure 43** William IV

William IV was born at Buckingham Palace, which was then known as Buckingham House, on 21 August 1765. He was the son of George III and Queen Charlotte. He had two elder brothers, George and Frederick, and was not expected to inherit the Crown, but he did. He was King of the United Kingdom and of Hanover from 26 June 1830 until his death on 20 June 1837. His reign was one of several reforms. The poor law was updated, municipal government was made democratic, child labour was restricted and slavery was abolished throughout the British Empire. Also the Reform Act of 1832 refashioned the British electoral system. William did not meddle in politics as much as either his brother or his father, though he did prove to be the last monarch to appoint a Prime Minister contrary to the will of Parliament, which he did in 1834.

### 10.5.1 Early life

At the age of thirteen, he joined the Royal Navy as a midshipman, and was present at the Battle of Cape St Vincent in 1780. He served in New York during the American War of Independence. He became a lieutenant in 1785 and a captain the following year. In 1786, he was stationed in the West Indies. William sought to be made a Duke like his elder brothers, and to receive a similar Parliamentary grant, but his father was reluctant. To put pressure on him, William threatened to run for the House of Commons for the constituency of Totnes in Devon. Defeated, George III made him Duke of Clarence and St Andrews in 1789.

The newly created Duke ended his active service in the Royal Navy in 1790. He was promoted to Rear-Admiral upon retirement. When the United Kingdom declared war on France in 1793, he was eager to serve his country, but was not put in command of a ship, but instead he spent time in the House of Lords. There he spoke in favour of slavery (which, although it had virtually died out in the United Kingdom, still existed in the British colonies), and he used his experience in the West Indies to defend his positions.

After he left the Royal Navy, William had a long affair with an Irish actress, Dorothea Bland, better known by her stage name, Mrs Jordan. From 1791, the couple had at least



ten illegitimate children. The affair would last for twenty years before ending in 1811 for political reasons. The same year, William was appointed Admiral of the Fleet. On 13 July 1818, he married Princess Adelaide, daughter of the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, a woman half his age. William only had two short-lived children by his wife.

In 1827, George IV appointed William to the office of Lord High Admiral, which had been in commission (that is, exercised by a board rather than by a single individual) since 1709. While in office, Clarence attempted to take independent control of naval affairs, although the law required him to act, under most circumstances, on the advice of at least two members of his Council. The King requested his resignation in 1828.

### 10.5.2 The Reform Crisis

When George IV died in 1830, William became king. He was aged 64, which makes him the oldest man ever to assume the throne. In contrast to George IV, who tended to spend most of his time in Windsor Castle, William was known, especially early in his reign, to walk, unaccompanied, through London or Brighton. Until the Reform Crisis, he was very popular among the people.

At the beginning of William IV's reign, Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington was Prime Minister. During the general election of 1830, however, Wellington's Tories lost to the Whig Party under Charles Grey, 2nd Earl Grey. When he became Prime Minister, Lord Grey immediately announced that he would try to reform an electoral system that had seen few changes since the 15th century. The existing system had many problems great. For example, large towns such as Manchester and Birmingham elected no members, whilst minuscule boroughs such as Old Sarum (with seven voters) elected two members of Parliament each. Often, the small boroughs, also known as rotten boroughs and pocket boroughs, were "owned" by great aristocrats, whose "nominees" would invariably be elected by the constituents.

William IV played an important role in the Reform Crisis. When the House of Commons defeated the First Reform Bill in 1831, Lord Grey wanted to call a new general election. At first, William hesitated to exercise the power to dissolve Parliament, but after the Opposition annoyed him, he personally went to the House of Lords and dissolved Parliament. This forced a new election for the House of Commons, which Grey won, but the House of Lords continued to oppose the Reform Bill. This led to several "Reform Riots". The nation saw a political crisis greater than any since the Glorious Revolution in 1688.

Grey re-introduced the Bill. It passed easily in the House of Commons, but was once again faced with difficulties in the House of Lords. Bowing to popular pressure, the Lords did not reject the bill outright, but instead changed its basic character through amendments. Grey did not like this so he suggested that the King "swamp" the House of Lords by creating a sufficient number of new peers to ensure the passage of the Reform Bill. When William IV refused, as he did not want a permanently expanded Peerage, Grey and his fellow ministers resigned. The King tried to get the Duke of Wellington as prime minister again, but first heard of an official resolution of the House of Commons requesting Grey's return. After this the King agreed to reappoint Grey, and also agreed to create new peers if the House of Lords continued to pose difficulties. With this threat in place, the House of Lords agreed

to pass the Reform Act 1832. Parliament went on to make other reforms, including the abolition of slavery throughout the British Empire and the restriction of child labour.

### 10.5.3 Death

William IV died in 1837 in Windsor Castle, where he was buried. As he had no living legitimate issue, the Crown of the United Kingdom passed to his eighteen-year-old niece, HRH Princess Victoria of Kent. Under what is known as Salic Law, a woman could not rule Hanover, so the Hanoverian Crown went to William IV's brother, HRH Prince Ernest Augustus, Duke of Cumberland.

## 10.6 Victoria (1837-1901)



**Figure 44** Victoria

Victoria was born on 24 May 1819. She was Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland from 20 June 1837 and Empress of India from 1 January 1877 until her death on 22 January 1901. Her reign lasted more than sixty-three years, longer than that of any other British monarch. The reign of Victoria was marked by a great expansion of the British Empire. The Victorian Era was at the height of the Industrial Revolution, a period of significant social, economic and technological change in the United Kingdom. In that period the United Kingdom became the largest superpower the world had ever seen. Victoria was the last monarch of the House of Hanover, as her son and successor belonged to House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha.

### 10.6.1 Early life

Victoria's father, the Duke of Kent and Strathearn, was the fourth son of King George III. The Duke of Kent and Strathearn, like many other sons of George III, did not marry during his youth. At the age of fifty the Duke of Kent and Strathearn married Princess Victoria of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld. Victoria, the only child of the couple, was born in Kensington Palace. Although christened Alexandrina Victoria, was called Drina within the family.

Victoria's father died of pneumonia eight months after she was born. Her grandfather, George III, died blind and insane less than a week later. Victoria's uncle inherited the Crown, becoming King George IV. Though she occupied a high position in the line of succession, Victoria was taught only German, the first language of both her mother and her governess, during her early years. After reaching the age of three, however, she was schooled in English. She eventually learned to speak Italian, Greek, Latin and French. When Victoria was eleven years old, her uncle, King George IV, died childless, leaving the throne to his brother, who became King William IV. As the new king had no living legitimate children, the young Princess Victoria became the heir to the throne.

### 10.6.2 Marriage and children

Princess Victoria met her future husband, Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, when she was sixteen years old. Prince Albert was Victoria's first cousin, his father being the brother of her mother. William IV disapproved of the match, but he did not stop the couple. The Queen married Prince Albert on 10 February 1840. Prince Albert was commonly known as the **Prince Consort**, though he did not formally obtain the title until 1857. The first child of the royal couple, also named Victoria, was born on 21 November 1840. They had eight more children during what was a very happy marriage.

### 10.6.3 Early Victorian politics

In the 1840s, the prime minister, Robert Peel, faced a crisis involving the abolition of the Corn Laws, which imposed import duty on grain. Many Tories (by then known also Conservatives) were opposed to the abolition, but some Tories (the "Peelites") and most Whigs supported it. Peel resigned in 1846, after the Corn Laws did get abolished. He was replaced by the Whig Lord John Russell. Russell's ministry, though Whig, was not favoured by the Queen.

In 1845, Ireland was hit by a potato blight that over four years cost the lives of over one million Irish people and saw the emigration of another million. This disaster is now known as the Irish Potato Famine. In 1851, the Great Exhibition of 1851 was held. Organised by Prince Albert, the exhibition was officially opened by the Queen on 1 May. It proved an incredible success, with its profits being used to start up the Victoria and Albert Museum.

The United Kingdom join the Crimean War in 1854, on the side of the Ottoman Empire and against Russia. It was after this war that Victoria instituted the Victoria Cross, an award for valour.

#### 10.6.4 Widowhood

The Prince Consort died in 1861. Victoria, who was devoted to him, went into a semi-permanent state of mourning and wore black for the remainder of her life. She avoided public appearances and rarely set foot inside London. Afterwards Victoria had a small number of male favourites. These include a Scottish manservant, John Brown. Some even suggest that she secretly married him. Victoria's isolation reduced her popularity, and even encouraged the growth of the republican movement. Although she did perform her official duties, she did not actively participate in the government, remaining secluded in her royal residences.

Meanwhile, one of the most important pieces of legislation of the nineteenth century, the Reform Act 1867, was passed by Parliament. Lord Palmerston was opposed to electoral reform, but he died in 1865. The new prime minister was Lord Russell, and was in turn followed by Lord Derby, during whose premiership the Reform Act was passed.

#### 10.6.5 Gladstone and Disraeli

In 1868, the Conservative Benjamin Disraeli became prime minister. In time he became Victoria's favourite prime minister. However, he was soon replaced by William Gladstone. Gladstone was famously at odds with both Victoria and Disraeli during his political career. She once remarked that she felt he addressed her as though she were a public meeting. It was during Gladstone's ministry, in the early 1870s, that the Queen began to gradually emerge from a state of perpetual mourning and isolation. With the encouragement of her family, she became more active.

In 1876 Parliament gave the Queen the additional title "Empress of India". Disraeli's period as prime minister ended in 1880 when the Liberals won a general election, and Gladstone became prime minister again.

Victoria's battles with Gladstone continued during her later years. She was forced to accept his proposed electoral reforms, including the Representation of the People Act 1884, which considerably increased the electorate. Gladstone's government fell in 1885, to be replaced by the ministry of a Conservative, Lord Salisbury. Gladstone returned to power in 1886, and he introduced the Irish Home Rule Bill, which sought to create a separate Irish parliament. Victoria was opposed to the bill, which she believed would undermine the British Empire. When the bill was rejected by the House of Commons, Gladstone resigned, allowing Victoria to re-appoint Lord Salisbury as prime minister.

#### 10.6.6 Later years

1887 saw Victoria's Golden Jubilee. She had a banquet, to which fifty European kings and princes were invited. The day after there was a large procession through London that was supported by many wellwishers.

Gladstone became prime minister again in 1892. After the last of his Irish Home Rule Bills was defeated, he retired in 1894, to be replaced by the Lord Rosebery. Lord Rosebery was succeeded in 1895 by Lord Salisbury, who served for the rest of Victoria's reign.

On 22 September 1896 became the longest-reigning monarch in British history. At the Queen's request, all special public celebrations of the event were delayed until 1897, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. The Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, proposed that the Jubilee be made a festival of the British Empire. Thus, the Prime Ministers of all the self-governing colonies were invited along with their families. The procession, in which the Queen participated, included troops from each British colony and dependency, together with soldiers sent by Indian Princes and Chiefs (who were subordinate to Victoria, the Empress of India). The Diamond Jubilee celebration was an occasion marked by great outpourings of affection for the Queen, who was by then confined to a wheelchair.

During Victoria's last years, the United Kingdom was involved in the Second Boer War, which received the enthusiastic support of the Queen. Her last ceremonial public function came in 1899, when she laid the foundation stone for new buildings of the South Kensington Museum, which became known as the Victoria and Albert Museum.

### **10.6.7 Assassination attempts**

Throughout her reign, there were a number of attempts on Victoria's life. During Victoria's first pregnancy, eighteen-year old Edward Oxford attempted to assassinate the Queen whilst she was riding in a carriage with Prince Albert in London. Oxford fired twice, but both bullets missed. He was tried for high treason, but was acquitted on the grounds of insanity. Three attempts to assassinate the Queen occurred in 1842. In 1849, an unemployed Irishman tried to alarm the Queen by firing a powder-filled pistol as her carriage passed along Constitution Hill, London. In 1850, the Queen was injured when she was assaulted by a possibly insane ex-Army officer. As Victoria was riding in a carriage, she was struck by a cane, which crushed her bonnet and bruised her. In 1872, when Victoria was getting off a carriage, a seventeen-year old Irishman rushed towards her with an (unloaded) pistol in one hand and a petition to free Irish prisoners in the other. Then in 1882 a Scottish madman fired a bullet towards the Queen, who was seated in her carriage, but missed. Finally, at the time of her Golden Jubilee in 1887, there was a plan by Irish terrorists to blow up Westminster Abbey while the Queen attended a service of thanksgiving. This assassination attempt was discovered and became known as The Jubilee Plot.

### **10.6.8 Death**

Victoria's death was to be a peaceful and natural one. Following a custom she maintained throughout her widowhood, Victoria spent Christmas in Osborne House (which Prince Albert had designed himself) on the Isle of Wight. She died there on 22 January 1901, aged 81, having reigned for sixty-three years, seven months and two days (more than any British monarch before or since). She was buried in the Frogmore Mausoleum beside her husband. Victoria was succeeded by her eldest son, the Prince of Wales, who reigned as King Edward VII. Victoria's death brought an end to the rule of the House of Hanover in the United Kingdom. King Edward VII, like his father Prince Albert, belonged to the House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha.

## 10.7 References

# 11 The House of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (1901-1917)

## 11.1 Edward VII (1901-1910)



**Figure 45** Edward VII

Edward VII was born at Buckingham Palace on 9 November 1841. His parents were Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. Edward VII was King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, King of the Commonwealth Realms and the Emperor of India from 22 January 1901 to his death on 6 May 1910. He was the first British monarch of the House of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. Despite taking the name "King Edward", he was known to his family as "Bertie" as his first name was Albert.

### 11.1.1 Early life

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert wanted their eldest son to have an education that would prepare him to be a model constitutional monarch. Aged seven, Bertie started a rigorous educational programme devised by the Prince Consort. However, he was not a good student, with his main talents being his tact and charm. Edward hoped to have a career in the British Army, but this was denied him because he was heir to the throne, although he did serve

briefly in the Grenadier Guards in 1861. As a young man, he gained a reputation as a playboy.

### **11.1.2 Marriage**

Once widowed, Queen Victoria withdrew from public life, but she did arrange for her son to marry Princess Alexandra of Denmark, the beautiful elder daughter of King Christian IX of Denmark. The couple married on 10 March 1863. However, Edward kept mistresses throughout his married life.

### **11.1.3 Heir apparent**

During Victoria's widowhood, Edward represented her at public gatherings, but Victoria did not allow him to have an active role in the running of the country. Several incidents, including a court appearance in a notorious divorce case, brought him bad press and caused him to be regarded as unsuitable material for a future monarch. He was known for his love of gambling and country sports. But Edward was also a patron of the arts and sciences and helped found the Royal College of Music.

### **11.1.4 Reign**

When Queen Victoria died on 22 January 1901, Bertie, then aged 59, became king. Edward VII and Queen Alexandra were crowned at Westminster Abbey on 9 August 1902. His coronation was going to be on 26 June, but two days before on 24 June, Edward developed appendicitis. He needed what may have been a life-saving operation. Two weeks later it was announced that the King was out of danger.

As king, Edward's main interests lay in the fields of foreign affairs and naval and military matters. Fluent in French and German, he made a number of visits abroad. One of his most important foreign trips was an official visit to France in spring 1903 as the guest of President Émile Loubet. This visit helped build the Anglo-French Entente Cordiale, which was an informal agreement setting out what territories were British and French colonies in North Africa, with the aim of preventing future wars between the two countries.

Edward VII, mainly through his mother and his father-in-law, was related to nearly every other European monarch and came to be known as the Uncle of Europe. The German Emperor Wilhelm II, Tsar Nicholas II of Russia, King Alphonso XIII of Spain and Carl Eduard, Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha were Edward's nephews. King Haakon VII of Norway was his son-in-law and nephew by marriage. King George I of the Hellenes and King Frederick VIII of Denmark were his brothers-in-law. King Albert I of the Belgians, King Manuel II of Portugal, King Ferdinand of Bulgaria, Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands and Prince Ernst August, Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg, were his cousins.

In the last year of his life, Edward was involved in a constitutional crisis when the Conservative majority in the House of Lords refused to pass the "People's Budget" proposed by the Liberal government of Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith. The King died before the Liberal victory in the 1910 general election resolved the situation, but he told Asquith



that he would, if necessary, appoint new peers to allow the Budget to pass through the House of Lords.

### 11.1.5 Death

Edward died from a heart attack brought on by bronchitis on 6 May 1910. He was succeeded by his eldest surviving son, who became George V.

## 11.2 George V (1910-1936)



**Figure 46** George V

George V was born at Marlborough House on 3 June 1865. His parents were Edward VII and Queen Alexandra. He was King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, King of the Commonwealth Realms and Emperor of India from 6 May 1910 until his death on 20 January 1936.

### 11.2.1 Early life

As a younger son of the Prince of Wales (as Edward VII then was), he was not expected to become king. However, as George was born only fifteen months after his brother Prince Albert Victor, it was decided to educate both royal princes together. Given the importance of Prince Albert Victor's expected future role as king, both brothers were given a strict programme of study, although neither did well at their studies.

Later the royal brothers served as Naval cadets on HMS *Bacchante*. They toured the British Empire, visiting the colonies in Australia and the Far East, and also getting tattooed in Japan. When they returned to the UK, the brothers were parted with George joining the Royal Navy and Albert Victor attending Trinity College, Cambridge. George served in the

navy until 1891. He travelled the world and visited many areas of the British Empire. He also got many more tattoos, and a parrot that he took home to England with him.

### **11.2.2 Marriage**

In 1891, Prince Albert Victor became engaged to his second cousin once removed, Princess Victoria Mary of Teck (always called "May"), the only daughter of Prince Francis, Duke of Teck and Princess Mary Adelaide of Cambridge. However, Albert Victor died of pneumonia six weeks later, leaving George second in line to the throne and likely to succeed after his father. Queen Victoria still favoured Princess May as a suitable bride for a future King, so she persuaded George to propose to May and May accepted. Despite its being an arranged marriage, George and May's marriage was largely successful, and unlike his father, George is not believed to have had a mistress. They married on 6 July 1893, and they had six children in total. David and Bertie were the first two. Then came Mary, Henry, George and John. The first two were later to become King Edward VIII and King George VI respectively.

### **11.2.3 Time before becoming king**

In 1892 Queen Victoria made George the Duke of York. As Duke and Duchess of York, George and May carried out a wide variety of public duties. In 1900, they toured the British Empire, visiting Australia, where the Duke opened the first session of the Australian Parliament on the creation of the Commonwealth of Australia.

In 1901, Queen Victoria died and George became next in line to the throne. His father, Edward VII, made him Prince of Wales later that year. In contrast with Queen Victoria, who excluded Edward from state affairs, George was given wide access to state documents and papers. He often read over the papers with his wife, Princess May, who was cleverer than him. May also helped write speeches for her husband.

### **11.2.4 Reign**

On 6 May 1910, King Edward VII died and George became George V. Princess May became Queen Mary. On 11 December 1911, the King and Queen travelled to India for the Delhi Durbar, where they were presented to Indian dignitaries and princes as the Emperor and Empress of India. George wore the newly-created Imperial Crown of India at the ceremony. Later, the Emperor and Empress travelled throughout India visiting their new subjects.

As King and Queen, George and Mary saw Britain through World War I. This war was fought against Germany, amongst others, which made it a difficult time for the Royal Family, as they had many German relatives. On 17 July 1917 he changed the name of the British Royal House from the German-sounding House of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha to the House of Windsor. He also renounced all use of German titles and styles for his British relatives.

### 11.2.5 Death

World War I took its toll on George's health, which rapidly worsened. He had always had a weak chest, which was not helped by his smoking. An illness saw him go to the seaside, by Bognor Regis in Sussex, where Queen Mary helped nurse him back to health (however, reputedly the King's last words, upon being told that he would soon be well enough to revisit Bognor Regis were "... bugger Bognor!") He did live to see the Silver Jubilee of his reign, in 1935, by which time he had become a well-loved king.

George died on 20 January 1936 at Sandringham House in Norfolk. He was buried at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle. It is said his death was hastened by his doctor giving him a lethal injection of cocaine and morphine, both to end the King's suffering and to make sure he died by midnight so that his death could be announced in the morning newspapers.



## 12 The House of Windsor (1917 onwards)

### 12.1 George V (1910-1936)

The first monarch of the House of Windsor was George V. However, he started out as being of the House of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, and so he can be read about in the previous chapter.

### 12.2 Edward VIII (1936)

Edward VIII was born at White Lodge, Richmond upon Thames on 23 June 1894. Edward was the eldest son of George V and Queen Mary. He was King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the British Dominions beyond the Seas, and Emperor of India from 20 January 1936 until his abdication on 11 December 1936, after which he was Prince Edward and then Duke of Windsor until his death on 28 May 1972. During World War II he was the Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Bahamas after spending a great deal of time in Bermuda. He was known to his family and close friends, by his last Christian name, David.

#### 12.2.1 Prince of Wales

In 1910, George V made Edward Prince of Wales. When the First World War broke out in 1914 Edward joined the army, serving with the Grenadier Guards. Although Edward was willing to serve on the front lines, the British government refused to allow it, because of the harm that the capture of the heir to the throne would cause. However, Edward did witness at first hand the horror of trench warfare, and visited the front line as often as he could. His role in the war, although limited, led to his great popularity among veterans of the conflict.

Throughout the 1920s the Prince of Wales represented his father, King George V, at home and abroad on many occasions. He took a special interest in visiting the poorest areas of the country. Abroad the Prince of Wales toured the British Empire, undertaking 13 tours between 1919 and 1935.

In 1928, King George V gave Edward a home, Fort Belvedere, near Sunningdale in Berkshire. There Edward had relationships with a series of married women, including the American Wallis Simpson. Simpson had divorced her first husband in 1927 and later married Ernest Simpson. Edward's relationship with Wallis Simpson further weakened his poor relationship with his father, King George V. The King and Queen refused to receive Mrs Simpson at

court, and his brother, Prince Albert, urged Edward to seek a more suitable wife. Edward, however, had now fallen in love with Wallis and the couple grew ever closer.

### 12.2.2 Reign

King George V died on 20 January 1936, and Edward became King Edward VIII. The next day he broke royal protocol by watching the proclamation of his own accession to the throne from a window of St James's Palace in the company of the still-married Mrs Simpson. It was also at this time that Edward VIII became the first British monarch to fly in an aeroplane, when he flew from Sandringham to London for his Accession Council.

It was now becoming clear that the new King wished to marry Mrs Simpson, especially when divorce proceedings between Mr and Mrs Simpson were brought at Ipswich Crown Court. Powerful figures in the British government deemed marriage to Mrs Simpson impossible for Edward, even if Wallis obtained her second divorce, because he had become the Supreme Governor of the Church of England which prohibited remarriage after divorce.

On 16 July 1936, an attempt was made on the King's life. Jerome Bannigan produced a loaded revolver as the King rode on horseback at Constitution Hill, near Buckingham Palace. Police spotted the gun and pounced on him, and he was quickly arrested. At Bannigan's trial, he alleged that "a foreign power" had paid him £150 to kill Edward, a claim the court rejected.

On 16 November 1936, Edward met with Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin at Fort Belvedere and expressed his desire to marry Wallis Simpson when she became free to do so. The Prime Minister responded by presenting the King with three choices: he could give up the idea of marriage; marry Wallis against his ministers' wishes; or abdicate. It was clear that Edward was not prepared to give up Wallis. By marrying against the advice of his ministers, it was likely that he would cause the government to resign, prompting a constitutional crisis. The Prime Ministers of the British dominions had also made clear their opposition to the King marrying a divorcée; only the Irish Free State was not opposed to the idea of marriage. Faced with this opposition, Edward chose to abdicate. Edward duly signed an instrument of abdication at Fort Belvedere on 10 December 1936. The next day, he performed his last act as King when he gave Royal Assent to His Majesty's Declaration of Abdication Act 1936 which applied to the United Kingdom and all the dominions except the Irish Free State. The Free State passed the equivalent External Relations Act, which included the abdication in its schedule, the next day.

On the night of 11 December 1936, Edward, now reverted to the title of The Prince Edward, made a broadcast to the nation and the Empire, explaining his decision to abdicate. He famously said, "I have found it impossible to carry the heavy burden of responsibility and to discharge my duties as king as I would wish to do without the help and support of the woman I love."

After the broadcast, Edward left the United Kingdom for France, though he was unable to join Wallis until her divorce became absolute, several months later. His brother, Prince Albert, Duke of York succeeded to the throne as King George VI. George VI made Edward the Duke of Windsor. The Duke of Windsor married Mrs Simpson, who had changed her

name by deed poll to Wallis Warfield, in a private ceremony on 3 June 1937 at Chateau de Candé, Monts, France. None of the British royal family attended.

### 12.2.3 World War II

In 1937, the Duke and Duchess visited Germany as personal guests of the Nazi leader Adolf Hitler, a visit much publicised by the German media. The couple then settled in France. When the Germans invaded the north of France in May 1940, the Windsors fled south, first to Biarritz, then in June to Spain. In July the pair moved to Lisbon. In August a British warship took them to the Bahamas, where the Duke of Windsor was made Governor. He held the post until the end of World War II in 1945.

### 12.2.4 Death

After the war, the couple returned once again to France in Neuilly near Paris, where they spent much of the remainder of their lives in retirement. The Royal Family never accepted the Duchess and would not receive her formally, although the former King sometimes met his mother and a brother after his abdication. The Duke died of throat cancer in 1972 in Paris, and his body was returned to Britain for burial at Frogmore near Windsor Castle. The Duchess travelled to England to attend his funeral, staying at Buckingham Palace during her visit. The Duchess, on her death a decade and a half later, was buried alongside her husband in Frogmore simply as "Wallis, his wife". The Duke and Duchess had no children.

## 12.3 George VI (1936-1952)



**Figure 47** George VI

George VI was born at York Cottage on the Sandringham Estate in Norfolk on 14 December 1895. He was the second son of George V and Queen Mary. He was King of the United

Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the British dominions beyond the seas from 11 December 1936 until his death on 6 February 1952. George VI was also the Emperor of India (until 1947) and King of Ireland (until 1949). George VI came to the throne after the abdication of his brother, Edward VIII. He was king during the Second World War. He was known as Bertie, after his first name, Albert, to his family.

### 12.3.1 Early life

As a child, George often suffered from ill health and he was described as "easily frightened and somewhat prone to tears". Albert developed a severe stammer that lasted for many years as well as chronic stomach problems. He also suffered from knock knees, and to correct this he had to wear splints, which were extremely painful. He was also forced to write with his right hand although he was a natural left-hander.

In 1909, Bertie joined the Royal Navy and served as a naval cadet. Despite coming in at the bottom of the class, Albert moved to Dartmouth and served as a midshipman. He was still in the Navy when Edward VII died on 6 May 1910. Albert was now second in line for the throne. Albert served during World War I. He saw action aboard HMS *Collingwood* in the Battle of Jutland in 1916. In 1917 Albert joined the Royal Air Force but did not see any further action in the war. After the war, Albert studied history, economics and civics for a year at Trinity College, Cambridge, from October 1919. In 1920, he began to take on royal duties, representing his father, King George V.

### 12.3.2 Marriage and children

Albert had a great deal of freedom in choosing his wife. In 1920 he met Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, the youngest daughter of Claude Bowes-Lyon, 14th Earl of Strathmore and Kinghorne and set his sights on marrying her. She rejected his proposal twice before she said yes. They were married on 26 April 1923. They had two children: Elizabeth, born in 1926, and Margaret, born in 1930.

### 12.3.3 Reign

The Duke and Duchess lived a relatively sheltered life at their London residence, 145 Piccadilly. When Edward VIII he abdicated on 11 December 1936, however, Albert became King George VI.

The growing likelihood of war in Europe would dominate the reign of King George VI. Initially the King and Queen took an appeasement stance against the German dictator Adolf Hitler, and supported the policy of Neville Chamberlain. In 1939, the King and Queen visited Canada from where they made a shorter visit to the United States of America. George was the first reigning British monarch to visit either of these countries. The aim of the tour was mainly political, to shore up Atlantic support for Britain in any upcoming war. The King and Queen were extremely enthusiastically received by the Canadian public. They were also warmly received by the American people, visiting the 1939 New York World's Fair and staying at the White House with President Roosevelt. When war broke out in 1939, George VI with his wife chose to stay in London and not flee to Canada, as had been



suggested. The King and Queen officially stayed in Buckingham Palace throughout the war, although they often escaped to Windsor Castle to avoid bombing raids. George VI and Queen Elizabeth narrowly avoided death when a lone German bomber despatched to bomb Buckingham Palace attacked. The bomb exploded in the courtyard, shattering windows in the palace.

Throughout the war, the King and Queen provided morale-boosting visits throughout the UK, visiting bomb sites and munition factories. On Victory in Europe (VE) Day, the Royal Family appeared on the balcony of Buckingham Palace to celebrate the end of the war in Europe. After the war, George VI's reign saw the start of the break up of the British Empire, in particular when India became an independent dominion, with George VI giving up the title of Emperor of India.

#### **12.3.4 Death**

The war had taken its toll on the King's health. This was made worse by his heavy smoking and he got lung cancer. Increasingly his daughter Princess Elizabeth, the heir to the throne, would take on more of the royal duties as her father's health got worse. On 6 February 1952, George VI died aged 56 in his sleep at Sandringham House in Norfolk. He was buried in St George's Chapel in Windsor Castle. In 2002, the body of his wife Elizabeth and the ashes of his daughter Princess Margaret were interred in a tomb alongside him.

## 12.4 Elizabeth II (1952 onwards)



**Figure 48**

Elizabeth II was born at 17 Bruton Street in Mayfair, London on 21 April 1926. She is the eldest daughter of George VI and Queen Elizabeth. Elizabeth II is the current Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of many other independent nations too. She became Queen on 6 February 1952. She is currently the second-longest-serving head of state in the world, after King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand.

### 12.4.1 Early life

Elizabeth was thirteen years old when World War II broke out. She and her younger sister, Princess Margaret, were evacuated to Windsor Castle, Berkshire. There was some suggestion that the princesses be sent to Canada, but their mother refused to consider this, famously saying, "The children could not possibly go without me, I wouldn't leave without the King, and the King will never leave". In 1940 Princess Elizabeth made her first broadcast, addressing other children who had been evacuated.

In 1945 Princess Elizabeth joined the Women's Auxiliary Territorial Service. She was the first and so far only female member of the royal family actually to serve in the military. Elizabeth made her first official visit overseas in 1947, when she went with her parents to South Africa. On her 21st birthday she made a broadcast to the British Commonwealth and Empire pledging to devote her life to the service of the people of the Commonwealth and Empire.

### 12.4.2 Marriage and motherhood

Elizabeth married The Duke of Edinburgh on 20 November 1947. The Duke is Queen Elizabeth's second cousin once removed, they are both descended from Christian IX of Denmark. The couple are also third cousins. After their wedding Philip and Elizabeth took up residence at Clarence House, London. But at various times between 1946 and 1953, the Duke of Edinburgh was stationed in Malta as a serving Royal Navy officer. Philip and Elizabeth lived in Malta for a period between 1949 and 1951. On 14 November 1948 Elizabeth gave birth to her first child, Charles. They later had three other children: Anne, Andrew and Edward.

### 12.4.3 Reign

King George's health declined during 1951 and Elizabeth frequently stood in for him at public events. She visited Greece, Italy and Malta (where Philip was then stationed) during the year. In October she toured Canada and visited President Truman in Washington, DC. In January 1952 Elizabeth and Philip set out for a tour of Australia and New Zealand. They had reached Kenya when word arrived of the death of her father on 6 February 1952. At the moment she became aware she was now queen, she was in the Treetops Hotel.

After the Coronation, Elizabeth and Philip moved to Buckingham Palace in central London. It is believed, however, that like many of her predecessors she dislikes the Palace as a residence and considers Windsor Castle, west of London, to be her home. She also spends time at Balmoral Castle in Scotland and at Sandringham House in Norfolk.

At the time of Elizabeth's accession there was much talk of a "new Elizabethan age". As nations have developed economically and in literacy, Queen Elizabeth has witnessed over the past 50 years a gradual transformation of the British Empire into its modern successor, the Commonwealth. She has worked hard to maintain links with former British possessions, and in some cases, such as South Africa, she has played an important role in retaining or restoring good relations. Queen Elizabeth has become the most widely travelled head of state in history and has visited many Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth countries.

In 2002 she celebrated her Golden Jubilee, marking the 50th anniversary of her accession to the Throne. The year saw a large tour of the Commonwealth Realms, including numerous parades and official concerts. Then in 2012 she celebrated her Diamond Jubilee, marking the 60th anniversary of her accession to the Throne.

# 13 Future monarchs

## 13.1 Charles, Prince of Wales



**Figure 49** Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales

Prince Charles, who was born at Buckingham Palace on 14 November 1948, is the eldest son of Elizabeth II and Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. He is the heir to the throne of the United Kingdom. The Prince of Wales is well known for his extensive charity work, particularly for the Prince's Trust. He also carries out a full schedule of royal duties, and increasingly is taking on more royal roles from his aging mother. The Prince is also well known for his high profile marriages to the late Lady Diana Spencer and subsequently to Camilla, The Duchess of Cornwall.

### 13.1.1 Early life

In 1952, his mother assumed the throne, becoming Queen Elizabeth II. Prince Charles immediately became Duke of Cornwall. He also became the Duke of Rothesay, the title by which he is known in Scotland.

He went to Hill House School in West London, and later the Cheam preparatory school in Berkshire, which the Duke of Edinburgh also went to. The Prince finished his education

at Gordonstoun, a private boarding school in the north east of Scotland. His father, the Duke of Edinburgh, had previously attended Gordonstoun, becoming head boy. It is often reported that the Prince hated his time at the school, where he was a frequent target for bullies. In 1966 Charles spent two terms at Geelong Grammar School in Victoria, Australia during which time he also visited Papua New Guinea. On his return to Gordonstoun he followed in his father's footsteps by becoming head boy. In 1967 he left Gordonstoun with two A levels, in history and French.

Traditionally, the heir to the throne would go straight into the military after finishing school. However, Charles went to university at Trinity College, Cambridge where he studied Anthropology and Archaeology, and later History, earning a 2:2 (a lower second class degree). Charles was the first member of the British Royal Family to be awarded a degree. He also went to the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth to learn the Welsh language, making him the first English-born Prince of Wales ever to make a serious attempt to do so.

He was created The Prince of Wales and Earl of Chester in 1958, though his actual investiture did not take place until 1 July 1969. This was a major ceremony, held at Caernarfon Castle in north Wales, a place traditionally associated with the creation of the title in the 13th century. The Welsh borough of Swansea was granted city status to mark the occasion. He served on HMS Norfolk as Sub Lieutenant Prince of Wales in the early seventies.

### **13.1.2 First marriage**

On 29 July 1981, The Prince of Wales married Lady Diana Spencer at St Paul's Cathedral before 3,500 invited guests and an estimated 750 million people around the world. Almost immediately, the Princess of Wales became a star attraction, chased by the press, her every move (including every change in hairstyle) closely followed by millions. However, the marriage soon became troubled. Within five years of the wedding the marriage was already on the brink of collapse, and though they remained publicly a couple, they had effectively separated by the mid 1990s, he living in Highgrove, she in Kensington Palace. They divorced on 28 August 1996. They had had two sons, Prince William of Wales and Prince Henry of Wales, who is known by the name "Harry". Diana, Princess of Wales was killed in a car accident in Paris, France in 1997.

### **13.1.3 Second marriage**

After his divorce from Diana, Princess of Wales, The Prince of Wales's relationship with Camilla Parker Bowles eventually became openly acknowledged, with her becoming his unofficial consort. Over time, opinion shifted to a point where a civil marriage would be acceptable. They married on 9 April 2005. It was announced that, after the marriage, as the wife of The Prince of Wales, Camilla would be styled Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Cornwall and that upon the Prince's accession to the throne, she would not be known as Queen Camilla but as Her Royal Highness The Princess Consort.



### 13.1.4 Personal interests

The Prince of Wales is a keen horseman and huntsman. He served in the Royal Navy from 1971 to 1976, commanding HMS *Bronington*, a minehunter, from February 1976 until December 1976. He is also a watercolour artist and a published writer. He has exhibited and sold a number of paintings. The Prince's Trust, which he founded, is a charity that works mainly with young people, offering loans to groups, businesses and people (often in deprived areas) who had difficulty receiving outside support. Fundraising concerts are regularly held for the Prince's Trust, with leading pop, rock and classical musicians taking part

To put his ideas on architecture and town planning into practice, the Prince of Wales is developing the village of Poundbury in Dorset. Prior to commencing work on Poundbury he had published a book and produced a documentary called *A Vision for Britain*. In 1992 he also established The Prince of Wales Institute of Architecture and began the publication of a magazine dealing with architecture, but the latter has since ceased independent operation after being merged with another charity to create The Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment in 2001. The Prince is also keen on growing and promoting organic food, although he drew some ridicule when he joked about sometimes talking to his houseplants. The Prince of Wales is President of 16 charities, and raised over £100 million for charity in 2004.

## 13.2 Prince William of Wales



**Figure 50** Prince William of Wales

Prince William of Wales was born at St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington on 21 June 1982. His parents are Charles, Prince of Wales and Lady Diana Spencer. He is second in the line of succession to the British throne.

On 1 March 1991 (St. David's Day), Prince William made his first official public appearance during a visit to Cardiff, the capital city of Wales. After arriving by plane, the eight-year-old prince was taken by his parents to Llandaff Cathedral. After a tour of the cathedral, he signed its visitors book, which showed that he was left-handed. Prince William went to the Mrs Jane Mynors' nursery school and the pre-prep Wetherby School both in West London, and later attended Ludgrove School in Berkshire. After passing an entrance exam he went

on to attend Eton College in Berkshire. Whilst there he studied geography, biology and history of art at A-level.

Like a growing number of British teenagers, Prince William chose to take a gap year after finishing Eton College. He took part in British Army training in Belize. He spent the final stage of his gap year in southern Chile as a volunteer with Raleigh International. Pictures of the prince cleaning a toilet were broadcast around the world. After his gap year, Prince William attended the University of St Andrews in Fife, Scotland from 2001 until he was graduated in 2005. He started doing a degree course in Arts History, although he later changed his main subject to Geography and gained a Scottish Master of Arts degree with upper-second class honours. In January 2006, the prince began his cadet course at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst to train as an Army Officer. William joined his brother who had been there since May 2005.

In July 2005, William carried out his first official engagements representing Elizabeth II, as Queen of New Zealand, at World War II commemorations in New Zealand. In September of the same year, it was announced that William will become president of The Football Association in May 2006 and patron to the UK charity Centrepoint, which works with homeless young people. In April 2011, he married Kate Middleton.



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