

Kings and Queens of England and Britain

NORMAN KINGS

WILLIAM I (The Conqueror) 1066 – 1087

Also known as William the Bastard. William came to England from Normandy and beat HAROLD at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. In 1085 the Domesday Survey was begun and all England was recorded so William knew exactly what his new kingdom contained. He also created The New Forest as a Game Park for hunting. After losing his devoted wife, Matilda of Flanders, William had few friends. He died at Rouen in 1087.



WILLIAM II (Rufus) 1087 – 1100

William was not a popular king, given to extravagance and cruelty. He never married and was killed in the New Forest by a stray arrow while out hunting, maybe accidentally but there is some doubt about this. Walter Tyrrell, one of the hunting party, was blamed for the deed. The Rufus Stone in The New Forest marks the spot where he fell.



HENRY I 1100 – 1135

Henry Beauclerc was the fourth son of William I. Well educated, he founded a zoo at Woodstock to study animals. He was called the 'Lion of Justice' as he gave England good laws even if the punishments were ferocious. His two sons were drowned in the *White Ship* so his daughter Matilda was made his successor. She was married to Geoffrey Plantagenet. When Henry died the Council considered a woman unfit to rule so offered the throne to STEPHEN, a grandson of William I.



STEPHEN 1135 – 1154

Stephen was a very weak king and the whole country was almost destroyed by the constant raids by the Scots and the Welsh. During Stephen's reign the Norman barons wielded great power, extorting money and looting town and country. A decade of civil war ensued when Matilda invaded from Anjou. A compromise was decided, Matilda's son was to be king when Stephen died.



PLANTAGENET KINGS

HENRY II 1154 – 1189

Henry of Anjou was a strong king. A brilliant soldier, he extended his French lands until he ruled most of France. He laid the foundation of the English Jury System and raised new taxes (scutage) from the landholders to pay for a militia force. Henry is mostly remembered for his quarrel with Thomas A Becket, and Becket's subsequent murder in Canterbury Cathedral on 29th December 1170. His sons turned against him, even his favourite son John.



RICHARD I (The Lionheart) 1189 – 1199







Richard was the second son of Henry II. He was thought to be homosexual. He spent almost all of his reign abroad, fighting in the Third Crusade. He had no children. Richard died from an arrow-wound, far from the Kingdom that he so rarely visited.







JOHN 1199 – 1216

John Lackland was the fourth child of Henry II. Short and fat, he was jealous of his dashing brother Richard I whom he succeeded. He was cruel, self-indulgent, selfish and avaricious, and the raising of punitive taxes united all the elements of society, clerical and lay, against him. The Pope excommunicated him. On 15th June 1215 at Runnymede the barons compelled John to sign Magna Carta, the Great Charter, which reinstated the rights of all his subjects. John died - from over-eating – a fugitive from all his enemies. He has been termed "the worst English king".



<p>HENRY III 1216 –1272</p> <p>Henry was 9 years old when he became king. Brought up by priests he became devoted to church, art and learning. He was a weak man, dominated by churchmen and easily influenced by his wife's French relations. In 1264 Henry was captured during the rebellion of barons led by Simon de Montfort and was forced to set up a 'Parlement' at Westminster, the start of the House of Commons. Henry was the greatest of all patrons of medieval architecture and ordered the rebuilding of Westminster Abbey in the Gothic style.</p>	
<p>EDWARD I 1272 – 1307</p> <p>Edward Longshanks was a statesman, lawyer and soldier. He formed the Model Parliament in 1295, bringing together the knights, clergy, nobility and burgesses of the cities, bringing Lords and Commons together for the first time. Aiming at a united Britain, he defeated the Welsh chieftains and created his eldest son Prince of Wales. He was known as the 'Hammer of the Scots' for his victories in Scotland. When his first wife Eleanor died, he escorted her body from Grantham to Westminster, setting up 'Eleanor Crosses' at every resting place. He died on the way to fight Robert Bruce.</p>	
<p>EDWARD II 1307 – deposed 1327</p> <p>Edward was a weak and incompetent king. He had many 'favourites', Piers Gaveston being the most notorious. He was beaten by the Scots at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314. Edward was deposed and held captive in Berkeley Castle in Gloucestershire. His wife joined her lover Mortimer in deposing him: by their orders he was murdered in Berkeley Castle – so legend has it, by having a red-hot poker thrust up his anus! His beautiful tomb in Gloucester Cathedral was erected by his son, Edward III.</p>	
<p>EDWARD III 1327 – 1377</p> <p>Son of Edward II, he reigned for 50 years. His ambition to conquer Scotland and France plunged England into the Hundred Years War, beginning in 1338. The two great victories at Crecy and Poitiers made Edward and his son, the Black Prince, the most renowned warriors in Europe. However the war was very expensive. The outbreak of bubonic plague, the 'Black Death' in 1348-1350 killed half the population of England.</p>	
<p>RICHARD II 1377 – deposed 1399</p> <p>The son of the Black Prince, Richard was extravagant, unjust and faithless. In 1381 came the Peasants Revolt, led by Wat Tyler. The rebellion was put down with great severity. Queen Anne's sudden death completely unbalanced Richard and his extravagance, acts of revenge and tyranny turned his subjects against him. In 1399 Henry Bolingbroke returned from exile and deposed Richard, becoming elected King HENRY IV. Richard was murdered in Pontefract Castle in 1400.</p>	
<p>HOUSE OF LANCASTER</p>	
<p>HENRY IV 1399 – 1413</p> <p>Henry's brief reign was one of rebellions. Richard's half brothers rose immediately on his behalf and in Wales Owen Glendower led a national uprising that was not finally quelled until 1410. Henry, the first Lancastrian king, died of leprosy in 1413 at the age of 45.</p>	
<p>HENRY V 1413 – 1422</p> <p>Henry was a pious, stern and skilful soldier. He pleased the nobles by renewing the war with France and in the face of tremendous odds beat the French at the Battle of Agincourt in 1415. On a second expedition Henry captured Rouen, was recognised as the next King of France and married Catherine, the daughter of the lunatic king of France. Two years later he was dead.</p>	

<p>HENRY VI 1422 – deposed 1461 Beginning of the Wars of the Roses Gentle and retiring, he came to the throne as a baby and inherited a losing war with France, the Hundred Years War finally ending in 1453 with the loss of all French lands except for Calais. The king had an attack of mental illness that was hereditary in his mother's family in 1454 and Richard Duke of York was made Protector of the Realm. The House of York challenged Henry VI's right to the throne and England was plunged into civil war. The battle of St Albans in 1455 was won by the Yorkists. Henry was restored to the throne briefly in 1470. Henry's son, Edward, Prince of Wales was killed at the battle of Tewkesbury one day before Henry was murdered in the Tower of London in 1471. Henry founded both Eton College and King's College, Cambridge, and every year the Provosts of Eton and King's College lay roses and lilies on the altar which now stands where he died.</p>	
HOUSE OF YORK	
<p>EDWARD IV 1461 – 1483 He was the son of Richard Duke of York and Cicely Neville, and not a popular king. His morals were poor (he had many mistresses and had at least one illegitimate son) and even his contemporaries disapproved of him. Edward had his rebellious brother George, Duke of Clarendon, murdered in 1478 on a charge of treason. During his reign the first printing press was established in Westminster by William Caxton. Edward died suddenly in 1483 leaving two sons aged 12 and 9, and five daughters.</p>	
<p>EDWARD V 1483 – 1483 Reigned for only two months. Elder son of EDWARD IV. Succeeded to the throne at the tender age of 13. He and his brother Richard were murdered in the Tower of London – it is said on the orders of his uncle Richard Duke of Gloucester. Richard declared the brothers illegitimate and named himself rightful heir to the crown.</p>	
<p>RICHARD III 1483 – 1485 End of the Wars of the Roses Brother of EDWARD IV. The murders of his nephews and the ruthless extinction of all those who opposed him made his rule very unpopular. In 1485 Henry Richmond, descendant of John of Gaunt, father of HENRY IV, landed in west Wales, gathering forces as he marched into England. At Market Bosworth in Leicestershire he defeated and killed Richard in what was to be the last important battle in the Wars of the Roses.</p>	
THE TUDORS	
<p>HENRY VII 1485 – 1509 When Richard III fell at the Battle of Bosworth, his crown was picked up and placed on the head of Henry Tudor. He married Elizabeth of York and so united the two warring houses, York and Lancaster. He was a skilful politician but avaricious. The material wealth of the country increased greatly. During Henry's reign playing cards were invented and the portrait of his wife Elizabeth has appeared eight times on every pack of cards for nearly 500 years.</p>	
<p>HENRY VIII 1509 – 1547 The best known fact about Henry VIII is that he had six wives! Most school children learn the following rhyme to help them remember the fate of each wife: "Divorced, Beheaded, Died: Divorced, Beheaded, Survived". His first wife was Catherine of Aragon, his brother's widow, whom he later divorced to marry Anne Boleyn. This divorce caused the split from Rome and Henry declared himself the head of the Church Of England. The Dissolution of the Monasteries began in 1536, and the money gained from this helped Henry to bring about an effective Navy. In an effort to have a son, Henry married four further wives, but only one son was born, to Jane Seymour. Henry had two daughters both to become rulers of England – Mary, daughter of Catherine of Aragon, and Elizabeth, daughter of Anne Boleyn.</p>	
<p>EDWARD VI 1547 – 1553 The son of Henry VIII and Jane Seymour, Edward was a sickly boy, due to, it is thought, tuberculosis. Edward succeeded his father at the age of 9, the government being carried on by a Council of Regency with his uncle, Duke of Somerset, styled Protector. Even though his reign was short, many men made their mark. Cranmer wrote the Book of Common Prayer and the uniformity of worship helped turn England into a Protestant State. After Edward's death there was a dispute over the succession. As Mary was Catholic, LADY JANE GREY was named as the next in line to the throne. She was proclaimed Queen but Mary entered London with her supporters and Jane was taken to the Tower. She reigned for only 9 days. She was executed</p>	

in 1554, aged 17.

MARY I (Bloody Mary) 1553 – 1558

Daughter of HENRY VIII and Catherine of Aragon. A devout Catholic, she married Philip of Spain. Mary attempted to enforce the wholesale conversion of England to Catholicism. She carried this out with the utmost severity. The Protestant bishops, Latimer, Ridley and Archbishop Cranmer were among those burnt at the stake. The place, in Broad Street Oxford, is marked by a bronze cross. The country was plunged into a bitter blood bath, which is why she is remembered as Bloody Mary. She died in 1558 at Lambeth Palace.



ELIZABETH I 1558 – 1603

The daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth was a remarkable woman, noted for her learning and wisdom. From first to last she was popular with the people and had a genius for the selection of capable advisors. Drake, Raleigh, Hawkins, the Cecils, Essex and many, many more made England respected and feared. The Spanish Armada was decisively defeated in 1588 and Raleigh's first Virginian colony was founded. The execution of Mary Queen of Scots marred what was a glorious time in English history. Shakespeare was also at the height of his popularity. Elizabeth never married.



BRITISH MONARCHS

THE STUARTS

JAMES I and VI of Scotland 1603 – 1625

James was the son of Mary Queen of Scots and Lord Darnley. He was the first king to rule over Scotland and England. James was more of a scholar than a man of action. In 1605 the Gunpowder Plot was hatched: Guy Fawkes and his friends, Catholics, tried to blow up the Houses of Parliament, but were captured before they could do so. James's reign saw the publication of the Authorised Version of the Bible, though this caused problems with the Puritans. In 1620 the Pilgrim Fathers sailed for America in their ship The Mayflower.



CHARLES I 1625 – 1649 English Civil War

Son of JAMES I, Charles believed that he ruled by Divine Right. He encountered difficulties with Parliament from the beginning, and this led to the outbreak of Civil War in 1642. The war lasted four years and after the defeat of Charles by the New Model Army, led by Oliver Cromwell, Charles was captured and executed at Whitehall in 1649.



THE COMMONWEALTH declared May 19th 1649

OLIVER CROMWELL, Lord Protector 1653 – 1658

Cromwell was born at Huntingdon, north of Cambridge in 1599, the son of a small landowner. He entered Parliament in 1629 and became active in events leading to the Civil War. A leading Puritan figure, he raised cavalry forces and organised the New Model Army, which he led to victory over the Royalists at Naseby in 1645. Failing to gain agreement on constitutional change in government with CHARLES I, Cromwell was a member of a 'Special Commission' that tried and condemned the King to death in 1649. Cromwell declared Britain a republic 'The Commonwealth' and he went on to become its Lord Protector.

RICHARD CROMWELL, Lord Protector 1658 – 1659

THE RESTORATION

CHARLES II 1660 – 1685









Son of CHARLES I. Known as the Merry Monarch. After the collapse of the Protectorate following the death of Oliver Cromwell and the flight of Richard Cromwell to France, the Army and Parliament asked Charles to take the throne in 1660. Although very popular he was a weak king and his foreign policy was inept. He had 13 known mistresses, one of whom was Nell Gwyn. He fathered numerous illegitimate children but no heir to the throne. The Great Plague in 1665 and the Great Fire of London in 1666 took place during his reign. Many new buildings were built at this time. St. Paul's Cathedral was built by Sir Christopher Wren and also many churches still to be seen today.










JAMES II and VII of Scotland 1685 – 1688

Brother of CHARLES II. A Catholic, he was very unpopular because of his persecution of the Protestants, and he was hated by the people. Following the Monmouth uprising (Monmouth was an illegitimate son of CHARLES II and a Protestant) and the Bloody Assizes of Judge Jeffries, the Parliament asked WILLIAM OF ORANGE to take the throne. William was married to MARY, JAMES's daughter. William landed in England and James fled to France where he died in exile in 1701.



<p>WILLIAM III 1689 – 1702 AND MARY II 1689 – 1694 William and Mary were to reign jointly, and William was to have the Crown for life after Mary died in 1694. JAMES plotted to regain the throne and in 1689 landed in Ireland. William defeated James at the Battle of the Boyne and James fled to France once again.</p>		
<p>ANNE 1702 – 1714 Anne was the second daughter of JAMES II. She had 17 children but all died. Anne was a close friend of Sarah Churchill, the Duchess of Marlborough. Anne was a staunch, high church Protestant and the victories of the Duke of Marlborough abroad gave the country an influence never before attained in Europe. After Anne's death the succession went to the nearest Protestant relative of the Stuart line. This was SOPHIA, daughter of Elizabeth of Bohemia, JAMES I 's only daughter.</p>		
<p>THE HANOVERIANS</p>		
<p>GEORGE I 1714 – 1727 Son of SOPHIA and the Elector of Hanover, great-grandson of James I. George never learned English so the conduct of national policy was left to the government of the time. Sir Robert Walpole became England's first Prime Minister. In 1715 the Jacobites (followers of James Stuart, son of JAMES II) attempted to supplant George, but the attempt failed. George spent little time in England – he preferred his beloved Hanover.</p>		
<p>GEORGE II 1727 – 1760 Only son of GEORGE I. He was more English than his father, but still relied on Sir Robert Walpole to run the country. George was the last English king to lead his army into battle at Dettingen in 1743. In 1745 the Jacobites tried once again to restore a Stuart to the throne. Prince Charles Edward Stuart, 'Bonnie Prince Charlie', landed in Scotland. He was routed at Culloden Moor by the army under the Duke of Cumberland, known as 'Butcher' Cumberland. Bonnie Prince Charlie escaped to France with the help of Flora MacDonald, and died a drunkard's death in Rome.</p>		
<p>GEORGE III 1760 – 1820 He was a grandson of GEORGE II and the first English-born and English-speaking monarch since Queen Anne. His reign was one of elegance and the age of some of the greatest names in English literature – Jane Austen, Byron, Shelley, Keats and Wordsworth. It was also the time of great statesmen like Pitt and Fox and great captains like Wellington and Nelson. In 1773 the 'Boston Tea Party' was the first sign of the troubles that were to come in America. The American Colonies proclaimed their independence on July 4th 1776. George was well meaning but suffered from a mental illness due to intermittent porphyria and eventually became blind and insane. His son ruled as Prince Regent after 1811 until George's death.</p>		
<p>GEORGE IV 1820 – 1830 Known as the 'First Gentleman of Europe'. He had a love of art and architecture but his private life was a mess, to put it mildly! He married twice, once in 1785 to Mrs. Fitzherbert, secretly as she was a Catholic, and then in 1795 to Caroline of Brunswick. Mrs. Fitzherbert remained the love of his life. Caroline and George had one daughter, Charlotte in 1796 but she died in 1817. George was considered a great wit, but was also a buffoon and his death was hailed with relief!</p>		
<p>WILLIAM IV 1830 – 1837 Known as the 'Sailor King' (for 10 years the young Prince William, brother of George IV, served in the Royal Navy), he was the third son of GEORGE III. Before his accession he lived with a Mrs. Jordan, an actress, by whom he had ten children. When Princess Charlotte died, he had to marry in order to secure the succession. He married Adelaide of Saxe-Coburg in 1818. He had two daughters but they did not live. He hated pomp and wanted to dispense with the Coronation. The people loved him because of his lack of pretension. During his reign England abolished slavery in the colonies in 1833. The Reform Act was passed in 1832; this extended the franchise to the middle-classes on a basis of property qualifications.</p>		

<p>VICTORIA 1837 – 1901 Victoria was the only child of Princess Victoria of Saxe-Coburg and Edward Duke of Kent, fourth son of GEORGE III. The throne Victoria inherited was weak and unpopular. In 1840 she married her cousin Albert of Saxe-Coburg, who exerted tremendous influence over her. The Queen withdrew from public life after the death of Albert in 1861 until her Golden Jubilee in 1887. Her reign saw the British Empire double in size and in 1876 the Queen became Empress of India, the 'Jewel in the Crown'. When Victoria died in 1901, after the longest reign in English history, the British Empire and British world power had reached their highest point. She had nine children, 40 grand-children and 37 great-grandchildren, scattered all over Europe.</p>	
<p>EDWARD VII 1901 – 1910 A much loved king, the opposite of his dour father. He loved horse-racing, gambling and women! This Edwardian Age was one of elegance. Edward had all the social graces and many sporting interests, yachting and horse-racing – his horse Minoru won the Derby in 1909. Edward married the beautiful Alexandra of Denmark in 1863 and they had six children. The eldest, Edward Duke of Clarence, died in 1892 just before he was to marry Princess Mary of Teck. When Edward died in 1910 it is said that Queen Alexandra brought his current mistress Mrs. Keppel to his bedside to take her farewell. His best known mistress was Lily Langtry, the 'Jersey Lily'</p>	
<p>HOUSE OF WINDSOR – Name changed in 1917</p>	
<p>GEORGE V 1910 – 1936 George had not expected to be king, but when his elder brother died he became the heir-apparent. He had joined the Navy as a cadet in 1877 and loved the sea. He was a bluff, hearty man with a 'quarter-deck' manner. In 1893 he married Princess Mary of Teck, his dead brother's fiancée. His years on the throne were difficult; the First World War in 1914 – 1918 and the troubles in Ireland which lead to the creation of the Irish Free State were considerable problems. In 1932 he began the royal broadcasts on Christmas Day and in 1935 he celebrated his Silver Jubilee. His latter years were overshadowed by his concern about the Prince of Wales and his infatuation with Mrs. Simpson.</p>	
<p>EDWARD VIII June 1936 – abdicated December 1936 Edward was the most popular Prince of Wales England had ever had. Consequently when he renounced the throne to marry Mrs. Wallis Simpson the country found it almost impossible to believe. The people as a whole knew nothing about Mrs. Simpson until early in December 1936. Mrs. Simpson was an American, a divorcee and had two husbands still living. This was unacceptable to the Church as Edward had stated that he wanted her to be crowned with him at the Coronation to take place the following May. Edward abdicated in favour of his brother and took the title, Duke of Windsor. He went to live abroad.</p>	
<p>GEORGE VI 1936 – 1952 George was a shy and nervous man with a very bad stutter, the exact opposite of his brother the Duke of Windsor, but he had inherited the steady virtues of his father GEORGE V. He was well loved by the English people. The Second World War started in 1939 and throughout the King and Queen set an example of courage and fortitude. They remained at Buckingham Palace for the duration of the war in spite of the bombing. The Palace was bombed more than once. George was in close touch with the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill throughout the war and both had to be dissuaded from landing with the troops in Normandy on D-Day! The whole country flocked to the Festival of Britain held in London in 1951, 100 years after the Great Exhibition during VICTORIA's reign.</p>	
<p>ELIZABETH II 1952 – 2022 Like her parents, Elizabeth was heavily involved in the war effort during the Second World War, serving in the women's branch of the British Army known as the Auxiliary Territorial Service, training as a driver and mechanic. She married her cousin Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, and they had four children: Charles, Anne, Andrew and Edward. Elizabeth's coronation in 1953 was the first to be televised. Elizabeth reigned as a constitutional monarch through major political changes such as the Troubles in Northern Ireland, devolution in the United Kingdom, the decolonisation of Africa, and the United Kingdom's accession to the European Communities and withdrawal from the European Union. Her reign of 70 years and 214 days is the longest of any British monarch.</p>	
<p>CHARLES III 2022 – He was the longest-serving Prince of Wales, having held the title from 26 July 1958 until his accession. At 73 years of age, Charles is the oldest person ever to assume the British throne. In 1981, he married Lady Diana Spencer, with whom he had two sons, Prince William and Prince Harry. In 1996, the couple divorced after they had each engaged in well-publicised extramarital affairs. Diana died as the result of a car crash in Paris the following year.</p>	

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