

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

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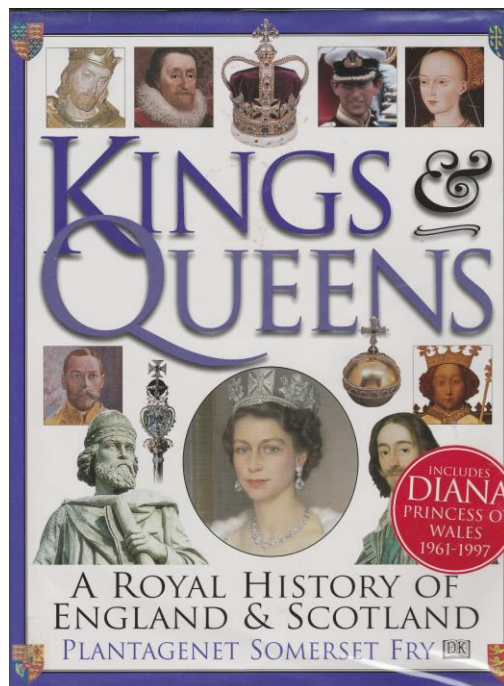
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Kings and queens: a royal history of England and Scotland. (2001). London: Dorling Kindersley.



JOHN

1199–1216



THE COAT OF ARMS OF JOHN

THE YOUNGEST SON OF HENRY II, John inherited from his brother Richard the throne of England, as well as the Plantagenet dominions in France, which he lost to the French by 1204. John's failure to recapture these territories, his dispute with Rome over the Pope's choice of a new Archbishop of Canterbury, and a high level of taxation had the English nobility up in arms against him. In 1215 they forced the King to agree to the Magna Carta, guaranteeing their rights in relation to those of the crown. This led to civil war, which only ended with John's death in 1216. Yet despite these disasters, it is now known that John was a much better king than history has usually portrayed him.

👑 JOHN

- ◆ **Born** Beaumont Palace, Oxford, 24 Dec 1166, fourth son of Henry II and Eleanor.
- ◆ **Married** Isabella of Gloucester, 29 Aug 1189, no children; Isabella of Angoulême, 24 Aug 1200, 5 children.
- ◆ **Acceded** 27 May 1199.
- ◆ **Crowned** Westminster Abbey, 27 May 1199.
- ◆ **Died** Newark Castle, Lincolnshire, 18/19 Oct 1216, aged 49.



OLD LONDON BRIDGE

Completed during the reign of John, London Bridge (above) remained standing until its demolition 600 years later.



BRIDGE OVER THE THAMES

There has been a bridge across the Thames on or around the site of the present London Bridge since Roman times. The construction of the first stone bridge was begun by Henry II in the 1170s, but progress was slow until the French engineer, Isambert of Saintes, was employed by John to complete the project. The bridge, which included a drawbridge, a double row of houses and some 140 shops, all resting on 19 arches, was finally opened in 1206. It remained the only stone bridge across the Thames in London until 1750.

LOVE OF LEISURE

Despite a reputation for hard work, John always found time for leisure. Chief among his recreations was hunting, but he also enjoyed his comforts and is said to have particularly relished taking a bath – an extremely uncommon practice at that time.

HUNTING

John's favourite pastime was hunting, as shown in this 14th-century illustration.

JOHN
King John is shown in this contemporary manuscript illustration in one of his many castles.

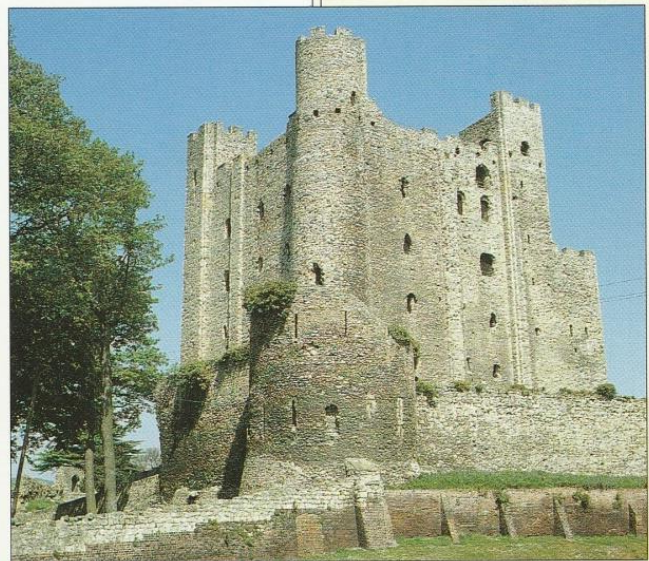


JOHN

Despite his problems with France and the English barons, recent historical research suggests that John was an energetic administrator, a good general, an astute diplomat, and a hard-working and keenly intelligent ruler with a strong sense of justice. In that respect he was one of the ablest of the Plantagenet monarchs. However, a chronicler writing only a decade after his death said that while he was a great prince, he was hardly a happy one.

EVENTS OF THE REIGN 1199 – 1216

- ♦ 1199 John accedes to the throne on the death of Richard.
- ♦ 1204 England loses almost all its possessions in France.
- ♦ 1206 John refuses to accept Stephen Langton as Archbishop of Canterbury.
- ♦ 1208 Pope Innocent III issues an Interdict against England, banning all church services except baptisms and funerals.
- ♦ 1209 Pope Innocent III excommunicates John for his confiscation of ecclesiastical property.
- ♦ 1212 Innocent III declares that John is no longer the rightful King of England.
- ♦ 1213 John submits to the Pope's demands.
- ♦ 1214 Philip Augustus of France defeats the English army at the Battle of Bouvines.
- ♦ 1214 The English barons gather at Bury St Edmunds to discuss the demands they wish to make on the King.
- ♦ 1215 John meets the barons at Runnymede, near Windsor, and finally agrees to their demands and seals Magna Carta.



ROCHESTER CASTLE

Throughout his reign John spent huge sums of money on the construction and maintenance of castles. He was also experienced in conducting siegeworks, capturing Rochester Castle (above) in 1216 by undermining the east corner of the tower.

- ♦ 1215 The Pope decrees that John need not adhere to Magna Carta and civil war breaks out.
- ♦ 1216 The barons seek French aid in their fight against John; Prince Louis of France captures the Tower of London.
- ♦ 1216 John loses his war chest of cash and jewels in the Wash.
- ♦ 1216 John dies at Newark and is buried in Worcester Cathedral.