

Earliest times

1 The foundation stones

The island • Britain's prehistory • The Celts • The Romans • Roman life

The island

However complicated the modern industrial state may be, land and climate affect life in every country. They affect social and economic life, population and even politics. Britain is no exception. It has a milder climate than much of the European mainland because it lies in the way of the Gulf Stream, which brings warm water and winds from the Gulf of Mexico. Within Britain there are differences of climate between north and south, east and west. The north is on average 5°C cooler than the south. Annual rainfall in the east is on average about 600 mm, while in many parts of the west it is more than double that. The countryside is varied also. The north and west are mountainous or hilly. Much of the south and east is fairly flat, or low-lying. This means that the south and east on the whole have better agricultural conditions, and it is possible to harvest crops in early August, two months earlier than in the north. So it is not surprising that southeast Britain has always been the most populated part of the island. For this reason it has always had the most political power.

Britain is an island, and Britain's history has been closely connected with the sea. Until modern times it was as easy to travel across water as it was across land, where roads were frequently unusable. At moments of great danger Britain has been saved from danger by its surrounding seas. Britain's history and its strong national sense have been shaped by the sea.

Stonehenge is the most powerful monument of Britain's prehistory. Its purpose is still not properly understood. Those who built Stonehenge knew how to cut and move very large pieces of stone, and place horizontal stone beams across the upright pillars. They also had the authority to control large numbers of workers, and to fetch some of the stone from distant parts of Wales.

Britain's prehistory

Britain has not always been an island. It became one only after the end of the last ice age. The temperature rose and the ice cap melted, flooding the lower-lying land that is now under the North Sea and the English Channel.

The Ice Age was not just one long equally cold period. There were warmer times when the ice cap retreated, and colder periods when the ice cap reached as far south as the River Thames. Our first evidence of human life is a few stone tools, dating from one of the warmer periods, about 250,000 BC. These simple objects show that there were two different kinds of inhabitant. The earlier group made their tools from flakes of flint, similar in kind to stone tools found across the north European plain as far as Russia. The other group made tools from a central core of flint, probably the earliest method of human tool making, which spread from

A hand axe, made from flint, found at Swanscombe in north Kent.



Africa to Europe. Hand axes made in this way have been found widely, as far north as Yorkshire and as far west as Wales.

However, the ice advanced again and Britain became hardly habitable until another milder period, probably around 50,000 BC. During this time a new type of human being seems to have arrived, who was the ancestor of the modern British. These people looked similar to the modern British, but were probably smaller and had a life span of only about thirty years.

Around 10,000 BC, as the Ice Age drew to a close, Britain was peopled by small groups of hunters, gatherers and fishers. Few had settled homes, and they seemed to have followed herds of deer which provided them with food and clothing. By about 5000 BC Britain had finally become an island, and had also become heavily forested. For the wanderer-hunter culture this was a disaster, for the cold-loving deer and other animals on which they lived largely died out.

About 3000 BC Neolithic (or New Stone Age) people crossed the narrow sea from Europe in small round boats of bent wood covered with animal skins. Each could carry one or two persons. These people kept animals and grew corn crops, and knew

how to make pottery. They probably came from either the Iberian (Spanish) peninsula or even the North African coast. They were small, dark, and long-headed people, and may be the forefathers of dark-haired inhabitants of Wales and Cornwall today. They settled in the western parts of Britain and Ireland, from Cornwall at the southwest end of Britain all the way to the far north.

These were the first of several waves of invaders before the first arrival of the Romans in 55 BC. It used to be thought that these waves of invaders marked fresh stages in British development. However, although they must have brought new ideas and methods, it is now thought that the changing pattern of Britain's prehistory was the result of local economic and social forces.

The great "public works" of this time, which needed a huge organisation of labour, tell us a little of how prehistoric Britain was developing. The earlier of these works were great "barrows", or burial mounds, made of earth or stone. Most of these barrows are found on the chalk uplands of south Britain. Today these uplands have poor soil and few trees, but they were not like that then. They were airy woodlands that could easily be cleared for farming, and as a result were the most



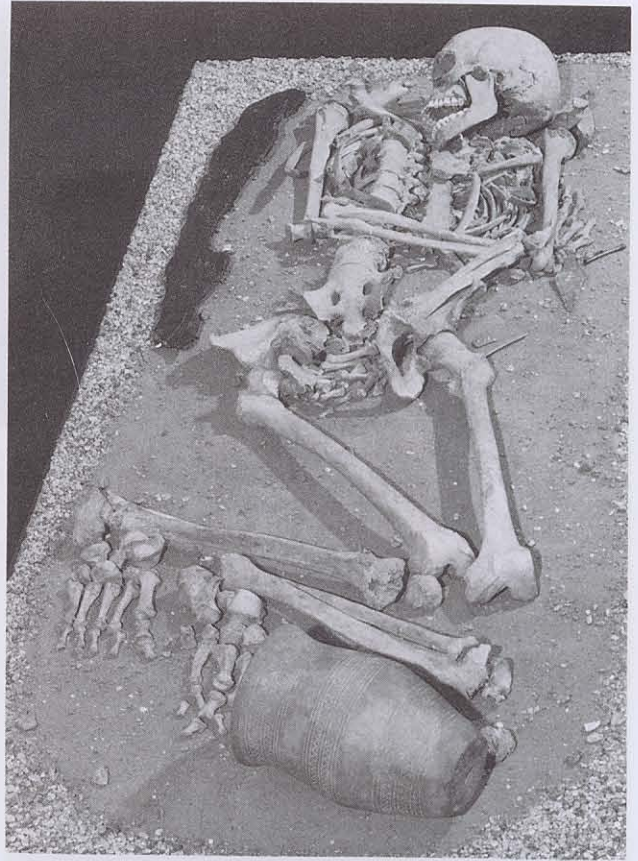
There were Stone Age sites from one end of Britain to the other. This stone hut, at Skara Brae, Orkney, off the north coast of Scotland, was suddenly covered by a sandstorm before 2000 BC. Unlike southern sites, where wood was used which has since rotted, Skara Brae is all stone, and the stone furniture is still there. Behind the fireplace (bottom left) there are storage shelves against the back wall. On the right is probably a stone sided bed, in which rushes or heather were placed for warmth.

easily habitable part of the countryside. Eventually, and over a very long period, these areas became overfarmed, while by 1400 BC the climate became drier, and as a result this land could no longer support many people. It is difficult today to imagine these areas, particularly the uplands of Wiltshire and Dorset, as heavily peopled areas.

Yet the monuments remain. After 3000 BC the chalkland people started building great circles of earth banks and ditches. Inside, they built wooden buildings and stone circles. These “hengés”, as they are called, were centres of religious, political and economic power. By far the most spectacular, both then and now, was Stonehenge, which was built in separate stages over a period of more than a thousand years. The precise purposes of Stonehenge remain a mystery, but during the second phase of building, after about 2400 BC, huge bluestones were brought to the site from south Wales. This could only have been achieved because the political authority of the area surrounding Stonehenge was recognised over a very large area, indeed probably over the whole of the British Isles. The movement of these bluestones was an extremely important event, the story of which was passed on from generation to generation. Three thousand years later, these unwritten memories were recorded in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *History of Britain*, written in 1136.

Stonehenge was almost certainly a sort of capital, to which the chiefs of other groups came from all over Britain. Certainly, earth or stone henges were built in many parts of Britain, as far as the Orkney Islands north of Scotland, and as far south as Cornwall. They seem to have been copies of the great Stonehenge in the south. In Ireland the centre of prehistoric civilisation grew around the River Boyne and at Tara in Ulster. The importance of these places in folk memory far outlasted the builders of the monuments.

After 2400 BC new groups of people arrived in southeast Britain from Europe. They were round-headed and strongly built, taller than Neolithic Britons. It is not known whether they invaded by armed force, or whether they were invited by



The grave of one of the “Beaker” people, at Barnack, Cambridgeshire, about 1800 BC. It contains a finely decorated pottery beaker and a copper or bronze dagger. Both items distinguished the Beaker people from the earlier inhabitants. This grave was the main burial place beneath one of a group of “barrows”, or burial mounds.

Neolithic Britons because of their military or metal-working skills. Their influence was soon felt and, as a result, they became leaders of British society. Their arrival is marked by the first individual graves, furnished with pottery beakers, from which these people get their name: the “Beaker” people.

Why did people now decide to be buried separately and give up the old communal burial barrows? It is difficult to be certain, but it is thought that the old barrows were built partly to please the gods of the soil, in the hope that this would stop the chalk upland soil getting poorer. The Beaker people brought with them from Europe a new cereal, barley, which could grow almost anywhere. Perhaps they felt it was no longer necessary to please the gods of the chalk upland soil.



Maiden Castle, Dorset, is one of the largest Celtic hill-forts of the early Iron Age. Its strength can still be clearly seen, but even these fortifications were no defence against disciplined Roman troops.

The Beaker people probably spoke an Indo-European language. They seem to have brought a single culture to the whole of Britain. They also brought skills to make bronze tools and these began to replace stone ones. But they accepted many of the old ways. Stonehenge remained the most important centre until 1300 BC. The Beaker people's richest graves were there, and they added a new circle of thirty stone columns, this time connected by stone lintels, or cross-pieces. British society continued to be centred on a number of henges across the countryside.

However, from about 1300 BC onwards the henge civilisation seems to have become less important, and was overtaken by a new form of society in southern England, that of a settled farming class. At first this farming society developed in order to feed the people at the henges, but eventually it became more important and powerful as it grew richer. The new farmers grew wealthy because they learned to enrich the soil with natural waste materials so that it did not become poor and useless. This change probably happened at about the same time that the chalk uplands were becoming drier. Family villages and fortified enclosures appeared across the landscape, in lower-lying areas as well as on the chalk hills, and the old central control of Stonehenge and the other henges was lost.



A reconstructed Iron Age farm. Farms like this were established in southeast Britain from about 700 BC onwards. This may have been the main or even only building; large round huts increasingly took the place of smaller ones. "Their houses are large, round, built of planks and wickerwork, the roof being a dome of thatch," wrote the Greek philosopher Strabo. In most of Celtic Europe huts were square.

From this time, too, power seems to have shifted to the Thames valley and southeast Britain. Except for short periods, political and economic power has remained in the southeast ever since. Hill-forts replaced henges as the centres of local power, and most of these were found in the southeast, suggesting that the land successfully supported more people here than elsewhere.

There was another reason for the shift of power eastwards. A number of better-designed bronze swords have been found in the Thames valley, suggesting that the local people had more advanced metalworking skills. Many of these swords have been found in river beds, almost certainly thrown in for religious reasons. This custom may be the origin of the story of the legendary King Arthur's sword, which was given to him from out of the water and which was thrown back into the water when he died.

The Celts

Around 700 BC, another group of people began to arrive. Many of them were tall, and had fair or red hair and blue eyes. These were the Celts, who probably came from central Europe or further east, from southern Russia, and had moved slowly westwards in earlier centuries. The Celts were technically advanced. They knew how to work with

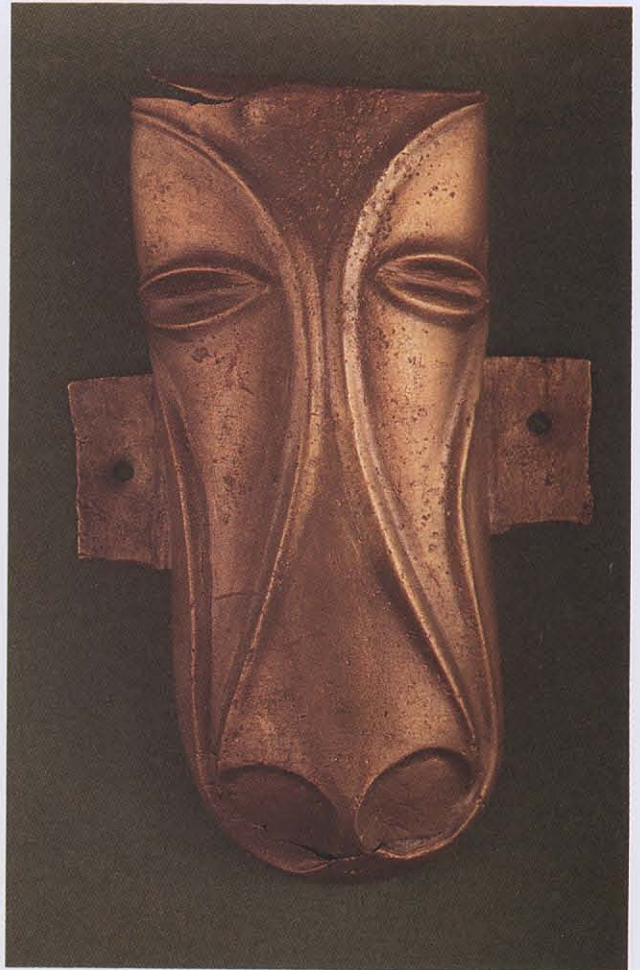
iron, and could make better weapons than the people who used bronze. It is possible that they drove many of the older inhabitants westwards into Wales, Scotland and Ireland. The Celts began to control all the lowland areas of Britain, and were joined by new arrivals from the European mainland. They continued to arrive in one wave after another over the next seven hundred years.

The Celts are important in British history because they are the ancestors of many of the people in Highland Scotland, Wales, Ireland, and Cornwall today. The Iberian people of Wales and Cornwall took on the new Celtic culture. Celtic languages, which have been continuously used in some areas since that time, are still spoken. The British today are often described as Anglo-Saxon. It would be better to call them Anglo-Celt.

Our knowledge of the Celts is slight. As with previous groups of settlers, we do not even know for certain whether the Celts invaded Britain or came peacefully as a result of the lively trade with Europe from about 750 BC onwards. At first most of Celtic Britain seems to have developed in a generally similar way. But from about 500 BC trade contact with Europe declined, and regional differences between northwest and southeast Britain increased. The Celts were organised into different tribes, and tribal chiefs were chosen from each family or tribe, sometimes as the result of fighting matches between individuals, and sometimes by election.

The last Celtic arrivals from Europe were the Belgic tribes. It was natural for them to settle in the southeast of Britain, probably pushing other Celtic tribes northwards as they did so. At any rate, when Julius Caesar briefly visited Britain in 55 BC he saw that the Belgic tribes were different from the older inhabitants. "The interior is inhabited", he wrote, "by peoples who consider themselves indigenous, the coast by people who have crossed from Belgium. Nearly all of these still keep the names of the [European] tribes from which they came."

The Celtic tribes continued the same kind of agriculture as the Bronze Age people before them. But their use of iron technology and their



The Stanwick horse mask shows the fine artistic work of Celtic metalworkers in about AD 50. The simple lines and lack of detail have a very powerful effect.

introduction of more advanced ploughing methods made it possible for them to farm heavier soils. However, they continued to use, and build, hill-forts. The increase of these, particularly in the southeast, suggests that the Celts were highly successful farmers, growing enough food for a much larger population.

The hill-fort remained the centre for local groups. The insides of these hill-forts were filled with houses, and they became the simple economic capitals and smaller "towns" of the different tribal areas into which Britain was now divided. Today the empty hill-forts stand on lonely hilltops. Yet they remained local economic centres long after the Romans came to Britain, and long after they went.

Within living memory certain annual fairs were associated with hill-forts. For example, there was an annual September fair on the site of a Dorset hill-fort, which was used by the writer Thomas Hardy in his novel *Far from the Madding Crowd*, published in 1874.

The Celts traded across tribal borders and trade was probably important for political and social contact between the tribes. Trade with Ireland went through the island of Anglesey. The two main trade outlets eastwards to Europe were the settlements along the Thames River in the south and on the Firth of Forth in the north. It is no accident that the present-day capitals of England and Scotland stand on or near these two ancient trade centres. Much trade, both inside and beyond Britain, was conducted by river and sea. For money the Celts used iron bars, until they began to copy the Roman coins they saw used in Gaul (France).

According to the Romans, the Celtic men wore shirts and breeches (knee-length trousers), and striped or checked cloaks fastened by a pin. It is possible that the Scottish tartan and dress developed from this “striped cloak”. The Celts were also “very careful about cleanliness and neatness”, as one Roman wrote. “Neither man nor woman,” he went on, “however poor, was seen either ragged or dirty.”

The Celtic tribes were ruled over by a warrior class, of which the priests, or Druids, seem to have been particularly important members. These Druids could not read or write, but they memorised all the religious teachings, the tribal laws, history, medicine and other knowledge necessary in Celtic society. The Druids from different tribes all over Britain probably met once a year. They had no temples, but they met in sacred groves of trees, on certain hills, by rivers or by river sources. We know little of their kind of worship except that at times it included human sacrifice.

During the Celtic period women may have had more independence than they had again for hundreds of years. When the Romans invaded Britain two of the largest tribes were ruled by women who fought from their chariots. The most

powerful Celt to stand up to the Romans was a woman, Boadicea. She had become queen of her tribe when her husband had died. She was tall, with long red hair, and had a frightening appearance. In AD 61 she led her tribe against the Romans. She nearly drove them from Britain, and she destroyed London, the Roman capital, before she was defeated and killed. Roman writers commented on the courage and strength of women in battle, and leave an impression of a measure of equality between the sexes among the richer Celts.

The Romans

The name “Britain” comes from the word “Pretani”, the Greco-Roman word for the inhabitants of Britain. The Romans mispronounced the word and called the island “Britannia”.

The Romans had invaded because the Celts of Britain were working with the Celts of Gaul against them. The British Celts were giving them food, and allowing them to hide in Britain. There was another reason. The Celts used cattle to pull their ploughs and this meant that richer, heavier land could be farmed. Under the Celts Britain had become an important food producer because of its mild climate. It now exported corn and animals, as well as hunting dogs and slaves, to the European mainland. The Romans could make use of British food for their own army fighting the Gauls.

The Romans brought the skills of reading and writing to Britain. The written word was important for spreading ideas and also for establishing power. As early as AD 80, as one Roman at the time noted, the governor Agricola “trained the sons of chiefs in the liberal arts . . . the result was that the people who used to reject Latin began to use it in speech and writing. Further the wearing of our national dress came to be valued and the toga [the Roman cloak] came into fashion.” While the Celtic peasantry remained illiterate and only Celtic-speaking, a number of town dwellers spoke Latin and Greek with ease, and the richer landowners in the country almost certainly used Latin. But Latin completely disappeared both in its spoken and written forms when the Anglo-Saxons invaded

Britain in the fifth century AD. Britain was probably more literate under the Romans than it was to be again until the fifteenth century.

Julius Caesar first came to Britain in 55 BC, but it was not until almost a century later, in AD 43, that a Roman army actually occupied Britain. The Romans were determined to conquer the whole island. They had little difficulty, apart from Boadicea's revolt, because they had a better trained army and because the Celtic tribes fought among themselves. The Romans considered the Celts as war-mad, "high spirited and quick for battle", a description some would still give the Scots, Irish and Welsh today.

The Romans established a Romano-British culture across the southern half of Britain, from the River Humber to the River Severn. This part of Britain was inside the empire. Beyond were the upland areas, under Roman control but not developed. These areas were watched from the towns of York, Chester and Caerleon in the western peninsula of Britain that later became known as Wales. Each of these towns was held by a Roman legion of about 7,000 men. The total Roman army in Britain was about 40,000 men.

The Romans could not conquer "Caledonia", as they called Scotland, although they spent over a century trying to do so. At last they built a strong wall along the northern border, named after the Emperor Hadrian who planned it. At the time, Hadrian's wall was simply intended to keep out raiders from the north. But it also marked the border between the two later countries, England and Scotland. Eventually, the border was established a few miles further north. Efforts to change it in later centuries did not succeed, mainly because on either side of the border an invading army found its supply line overstretched. A natural point of balance had been found.

Roman control of Britain came to an end as the empire began to collapse. The first signs were the attacks by Celts of Caledonia in AD 367. The Roman legions found it more and more difficult to stop the raiders from crossing Hadrian's wall. The same was happening on the European mainland as

Germanic groups, Saxons and Franks, began to raid the coast of Gaul. In AD 409 Rome pulled its last soldiers out of Britain and the Romano-British, the Romanised Celts, were left to fight alone against the Scots, the Irish and Saxon raiders from Germany. The following year Rome itself fell to raiders. When Britain called to Rome for help against the raiders from Saxon Germany in the mid-fifth century, no answer came.

Roman life

The most obvious characteristic of Roman Britain was its towns, which were the basis of Roman administration and civilisation. Many grew out of Celtic settlements, military camps or market centres. Broadly, there were three different kinds of town in Roman Britain, two of which were towns established by Roman charter. These were the *coloniae*, towns peopled by Roman settlers, and the *municipia*, large cities in which the whole population was given Roman citizenship. The third kind, the *civitas*, included the old Celtic tribal capitals, through which the Romans administered the Celtic population in the countryside. At first these towns had no walls. Then, probably from the end of the second century to the end of the third century AD, almost every town was given walls. At first many of these were no more than earthworks, but by AD 300 all towns had thick stone walls.

The Romans left about twenty large towns of about 5,000 inhabitants, and almost one hundred smaller ones. Many of these towns were at first army camps, and the Latin word for camp, *castra*, has remained part of many town names to this day (with the ending chester, caster or cester): Gloucester, Leicester, Doncaster, Winchester, Chester, Lancaster and many others besides. These towns were built with stone as well as wood, and had planned streets, markets and shops. Some buildings had central heating. They were connected by roads which were so well built that they survived when later roads broke up. These roads continued to be used long after the Romans left, and became the main roads of modern Britain. Six of these Roman roads met in London, a capital city of about 20,000



The reconstruction of a Roman kitchen about AD 100 shows pots and equipment. The tall pots, or amphorae, were for wine or oil. The Romans produced wine in Britain, but they also imported it from southern Europe.

people. London was twice the size of Paris, and possibly the most important trading centre of northern Europe, because southeast Britain produced so much corn for export.

Outside the towns, the biggest change during the Roman occupation was the growth of large farms, called "villas". These belonged to the richer Britons who were, like the townspeople, more Roman than Celt in their manners. Each villa had many workers. The villas were usually close to towns so that the crops could be sold easily. There was a growing difference between the rich and those who did the actual work on the land. These, and most people, still lived in the same kind of round huts and villages which the Celts had been living in four hundred years earlier, when the Romans arrived.

In some ways life in Roman Britain seems very civilised, but it was also hard for all except the richest. The bodies buried in a Roman graveyard at York show that life expectancy was low. Half the entire population died between the ages of twenty and forty, while 15 per cent died before reaching the age of twenty.

It is very difficult to be sure how many people were living in Britain when the Romans left. Probably it was as many as five million, partly because of the peace and the increased economic life which the Romans had brought to the country. The new wave of invaders changed all that.

2 The Saxon invasion

The invaders • Government and society • Christianity: the partnership of Church and state • The Vikings • Who should be king?

The invaders

The wealth of Britain by the fourth century, the result of its mild climate and centuries of peace, was a temptation to the greedy. At first the Germanic tribes only raided Britain, but after AD 430 they began to settle. The newcomers were warlike and illiterate. We owe our knowledge of this period mainly to an English monk named Bede, who lived three hundred years later. His story of events in his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* has been proved generally correct by archaeological evidence.

Bede tells us that the invaders came from three powerful Germanic tribes, the Saxons, Angles and Jutes. The Jutes settled mainly in Kent and along the south coast, and were soon considered no different from the Angles and Saxons. The Angles settled in the east, and also in the north Midlands, while the Saxons settled between the Jutes and the Angles in a band of land from the Thames Estuary westwards. The Anglo-Saxon migrations gave the larger part of Britain its new name, England, "the land of the Angles".

The British Celts fought the raiders and settlers from Germany as well as they could. However, during the next hundred years they were slowly pushed westwards until by 570 they were forced west of Gloucester. Finally most were driven into the mountains in the far west, which the Saxons called "Weallas", or "Wales", meaning "the land of the foreigners". Some Celts were driven into Cornwall, where they later accepted the rule of Saxon lords. In the north, other Celts were driven into the lowlands of the country which became



The Anglo-Saxon invasions and the kingdoms they established.

known as Scotland. Some Celts stayed behind, and many became slaves of the Saxons. Hardly anything is left of Celtic language or culture in England, except for the names of some rivers, Thames, Mersey, Severn and Avon, and two large cities, London and Leeds.

The strength of Anglo-Saxon culture is obvious even today. Days of the week were named after Germanic gods: Tig (Tuesday), Wodin (Wednesday), Thor (Thursday), Frei (Friday). New place-names appeared on the map. The first of

these show that the earliest Saxon villages, like the Celtic ones, were family villages. The ending *-ing* meant folk or family, thus “Reading” is the place of the family of Rada, “Hastings” of the family of Hasta. *Ham* means farm, *ton* means settlement. Birmingham, Nottingham or Southampton, for example, are Saxon place-names. Because the Anglo-Saxon kings often established settlements, Kingston is a frequent place-name.

The Anglo-Saxons established a number of kingdoms, some of which still exist in county or regional names to this day: Essex (East Saxons), Sussex (South Saxons), Wessex (West Saxons), Middlesex (probably a kingdom of Middle Saxons), East Anglia (East Angles). By the middle of the seventh century the three largest kingdoms, those of Northumbria, Mercia and Wessex, were the most powerful.



Left: A silver penny showing Offa, king of Mercia (AD 757–896). Offa was more powerful than any of the other Anglo-Saxon kings of his time or before him. His coins were of a higher quality than any coins used since the departure of the Romans four hundred years earlier.

Right: A gold coin of King Offa, a direct copy of an Arab dinar of the year AD 774. Most of it is in Arabic, but on one side it also has “OFFA REX”. It tells us that the Anglo-Saxons of Britain were well aware of a more advanced economic system in the distant Arab empire, and also that even as far away as Britain and northern Europe, Arab-type gold coins were more trusted than any others. It shows how great were the distances covered by international trade at this time.

It was not until a century later that one of these kings, King Offa of Mercia (757–96), claimed “kingship of the English”. He had good reason to do so. He was powerful enough to employ thousands of men to build a huge dyke, or earth wall, the length of the Welsh border to keep out the troublesome Celts. But although he was the most powerful king of his time, he did not control all of England.

The power of Mercia did not survive after Offa’s death. At that time, a king’s power depended on the personal loyalty of his followers. After his death the next king had to work hard to rebuild these personal feelings of loyalty. Most people still believed, as the Celts had done, that a man’s first

duty was to his own family. However, things were changing. The Saxon kings began to replace loyalty to family with loyalty to lord and king.

Government and society

The Saxons created institutions which made the English state strong for the next 500 years. One of these institutions was the King’s Council, called the *Witan*. The *Witan* probably grew out of informal groups of senior warriors and churchmen to whom kings like Offa had turned for advice or support on difficult matters. By the tenth century the *Witan* was a formal body, issuing laws and charters. It was not at all democratic, and the king could decide to ignore the *Witan*’s advice. But he knew that it might be dangerous to do so. For the *Witan*’s authority was based on its right to choose kings, and to agree the use of the king’s laws. Without its support the king’s own authority was in danger. The *Witan* established a system which remained an important part of the king’s method of government. Even today, the king or queen has a *Privy Council*, a group of advisers on the affairs of state.

The Saxons divided the land into new administrative areas, based on *shires*, or counties. These shires, established by the end of the tenth century, remained almost exactly the same for a thousand years. “Shire” is the Saxon word, “county” the Norman one, but both are still used. (In 1974 the counties were reorganised, but the new system is very like the old one.) Over each shire was appointed a *shire reeve*, the king’s local administrator. In time his name became shortened to “sheriff”.

Anglo-Saxon technology changed the shape of English agriculture. The Celts had kept small, square fields which were well suited to the light plough they used, drawn either by an animal or two people. This plough could turn corners easily. The Anglo-Saxons introduced a far heavier plough which was better able to plough in long straight lines across the field. It was particularly useful for cultivating heavier soils. But it required six or eight oxen to pull it, and it was difficult to turn. This heavier plough led to changes in land ownership and organisation. In order to make the best use of



Reconstruction of an Anglo-Saxon village. Each house had probably only one room, with a wooden floor with a pit beneath it. The pit may have been used for storage, but more probably to keep the house off the damp ground. Each village had its lord. The word "lord" means "loaf ward" or "bread keeper", while "lady" means "loaf kneader" or "bread maker", a reminder that the basis of Saxon society was farming. The duty of the village head, or lord, was to protect the farm and its produce.

village land, it was divided into two or three very large fields. These were then divided again into long thin strips. Each family had a number of strips in each of these fields, amounting probably to a family "holding" of twenty or so acres. Ploughing these long thin strips was easier because it avoided the problem of turning. Few individual families could afford to keep a team of oxen, and these had to be shared on a co-operative basis.

One of these fields would be used for planting spring crops, and another for autumn crops. The third area would be left to rest for a year, and with the other areas after harvest, would be used as common land for animals to feed on. This Anglo-Saxon pattern, which became more and more common, was the basis of English agriculture for a thousand years, until the eighteenth century.

It needs only a moment's thought to recognise that the fair division of land and of teams of oxen, and the sensible management of village land shared out between families, meant that villagers had to work more closely together than they had ever done before.

The Saxons settled previously unfarmed areas. They cut down many forested areas in valleys to farm the richer lowland soil, and they began to drain the wet

land. As a result, almost all the villages which appear on eighteenth-century maps already existed by the eleventh century.

In each district was a "manor" or large house. This was a simple building where local villagers came to pay taxes, where justice was administered, and where men met together to join the Anglo-Saxon army, the *fyrd*. The lord of the manor had to organise all this, and make sure village land was properly shared. It was the beginning of the manorial system which reached its fullest development under the Normans.

At first the lords, or *aldermen*, were simply local officials. But by the beginning of the eleventh century they were warlords, and were often called by a new Danish name, *earl*. Both words, *alderman* and *earl*, remain with us today: *aldermen* are elected officers in local government, and *earls* are high ranking nobles. It was the beginning of a class system, made up of king, lords, soldiers and workers on the land. One other important class developed during the Saxon period, the men of learning. These came from the Christian Church.

Christianity: the partnership of Church and state

We cannot know how or when Christianity first reached Britain, but it was certainly well before Christianity was accepted by the Roman Emperor Constantine in the early fourth century AD. In the last hundred years of Roman government Christianity became firmly established across Britain, both in Roman-controlled areas and beyond. However, the Anglo-Saxons belonged to an older Germanic religion, and they drove the Celts into the west and north. In the Celtic areas Christianity continued to spread, bringing paganism to an end. The map of Wales shows a number of place-names beginning or ending with *llan*, meaning the site of a small Celtic monastery around which a village or town grew.

In 597 Pope Gregory the Great sent a monk, Augustine, to re-establish Christianity in England. He went to Canterbury, the capital of the king of Kent. He did so because the king's wife came from



The opening page of St Luke's Gospel, made at the Northumbrian island of Lindisfarne, about AD 698. In his History, Bede wrote how one man told the pagan Northumbrian king, "when you are sitting in winter with your lords in the feasting hall, with a good fire to warm and light it, a sparrow flies in from the storms of rain and snow outside. It flies in at one door, across the lighted room and out through the other door into the darkness and storms outside. In the same way man comes into the light for a short time, but of what came before, or what is to follow, man is ignorant. If this new teaching tells us something more certain, it seems worth following." Christianity gave the Anglo-Saxon world new certainty.

Europe and was already Christian. Augustine became the first Archbishop of Canterbury in 601. He was very successful. Several ruling families in England accepted Christianity. But Augustine and his group of monks made little progress with the ordinary people. This was partly because Augustine was interested in establishing Christian authority, and that meant bringing rulers to the new faith.

It was the Celtic Church which brought Christianity to the ordinary people of Britain. The Celtic bishops went out from their monasteries of Wales, Ireland and Scotland, walking from village

to village teaching Christianity. In spite of the differences between Anglo-Saxons and Celts, these bishops seem to have been readily accepted in Anglo-Saxon areas. The bishops from the Roman Church lived at the courts of the kings, which they made centres of Church power across England. The two Christian Churches, Celtic and Roman, could hardly have been more different in character. One was most interested in the hearts of ordinary people, the other was interested in authority and organisation. The competition between the Celtic and Roman Churches reached a crisis because they disagreed over the date of Easter. In 663 at the Synod (meeting) of Whitby the king of Northumbria decided to support the Roman Church. The Celtic Church retreated as Rome extended its authority over all Christians, even in Celtic parts of the island.

England had become Christian very quickly. By 660 only Sussex and the Isle of Wight had not accepted the new faith. Twenty years later, English teachers returned to the lands from which the Anglo-Saxons had come, bringing Christianity to much of Germany.

Saxon kings helped the Church to grow, but the Church also increased the power of kings. Bishops gave kings their support, which made it harder for royal power to be questioned. Kings had "God's approval". The value of Church approval was all the greater because of the uncertainty of the royal succession. An eldest son did not automatically become king, as kings were chosen from among the members of the royal family, and any member who had enough soldiers might try for the throne. In addition, at a time when one king might try to conquer a neighbouring kingdom, he would probably have a son to whom he would wish to pass this enlarged kingdom when he died. And so when King Offa arranged for his son to be crowned as his successor, he made sure that this was done at a Christian ceremony led by a bishop. It was good political propaganda, because it suggested that kings were chosen not only by people but also by God.

There were other ways in which the Church increased the power of the English state. It established monasteries, or *minsters*, for example

Westminster, which were places of learning and education. These monasteries trained the men who could read and write, so that they had the necessary skills for the growth of royal and Church authority. The king who made most use of the Church was Alfred, the great king who ruled Wessex from 871–899. He used the literate men of the Church to help establish a system of law, to educate the people and to write down important matters. He started the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the most important source, together with Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, for understanding the period.

During the next hundred years, laws were made on a large number of matters. By the eleventh century royal authority probably went wider and deeper in England than in any other European country.

This process gave power into the hands of those who could read and write, and in this way class divisions were increased. The power of landlords, who had been given land by the king, was increased because their names were written down. Peasants, who could neither read nor write, could lose their traditional rights to their land, because their rights were not registered.

The Anglo-Saxon kings also preferred the Roman Church to the Celtic Church for economic reasons. Villages and towns grew around the monasteries and increased local trade. Many bishops and monks in England were from the Frankish lands (France and Germany) and elsewhere. They were invited by English rulers who wished to benefit from closer Church and economic contact with Europe. Most of these bishops and monks seem to have come from churches or monasteries along Europe's vital trade routes. In this way close contact with many parts of Europe was encouraged. In addition they all used Latin, the written language of Rome, and this encouraged English trade with the continent. Increased literacy itself helped trade. Anglo-Saxon England became well known in Europe for its exports of woollen goods, cheese, hunting dogs, pottery and metal goods. It imported wine, fish, pepper, jewellery and wheel-made pottery.

The Vikings

Towards the end of the eighth century new raiders were tempted by Britain's wealth. These were the Vikings, a word which probably means either "pirates" or "the people of the sea inlets", and they came from Norway and Denmark. Like the Anglo-Saxons they only raided at first. They burnt churches and monasteries along the east, north and west coasts of Britain and Ireland. London was itself raided in 842.

In 865 the Vikings invaded Britain once it was clear that the quarrelling Anglo-Saxon kingdoms could not keep them out. This time they came to conquer and to settle. The Vikings quickly accepted Christianity and did not disturb the local population. By 875 only King Alfred in the west of Wessex held out against the Vikings, who had already taken most of England. After some serious defeats Alfred won a decisive battle in 878, and eight years later he captured London. He was strong enough to make a treaty with the Vikings.



The Viking invasions and the areas they brought under their control.



The Oseberg Viking ship, made in about AD 800, was 21 metres long and carried about 35 men. Although this particular ship was probably only used along the coast, ships of similar size were used to invade Britain. Their design was brilliant. When an exact copy of similar ship was used to cross the Atlantic to America in 1893, its captain wrote, "the finest merchant ships of our day . . . have practically the same type of bottom as the Viking ships."

Viking rule was recognised in the east and north of England. It was called the Danelaw, the land where the law of the Danes ruled. In the rest of the country Alfred was recognised as king. During his struggle against the Danes, he had built walled settlements to keep them out. These were called *burghs*. They became prosperous market towns, and the word, now usually spelt *borough*, is one of the commonest endings to place names, as well as the name of the unit of municipal or town administration today.

Who should be king?

By 950 England seemed rich and peaceful again after the troubles of the Viking invasion. But soon afterwards the Danish Vikings started raiding westwards. The Saxon king, Ethelred, decided to pay the Vikings to stay away. To find the money he set a tax on all his people, called *Danegeld*, or "Danish money". It was the beginning of a regular tax system of the people which would provide the money for armies. The effects of this tax were most heavily felt by the ordinary villagers, because they had to provide enough money for their village landlord to pay Danegeld.

The story of the battle of Hastings and the Norman conquest of Saxon England is told in the Bayeux tapestry cartoon. "Harold the king is killed" says the Latin writing, and beneath it stands a man with an arrow in his eye, believed to be King Harold. In the picture strip below the main scene, men are seen stealing the clothing from the dead and wounded, a common practice on battlefields through the centuries.

When Ethelred died Cnut (or Canute), the leader of the Danish Vikings, controlled much of England. He became king for the simple reason that the royal council, the Witan, and everyone else, feared disorder. Rule by a Danish king was far better than rule by no one at all. Cnut died in 1035, and his son died shortly after, in 1040. The Witan chose Edward, one of Saxon Ethelred's sons, to be king.

Edward, known as "the Confessor", was more interested in the Church than in kingship. Church building had been going on for over a century, and he encouraged it. By the time Edward died there was a church in almost every village. The pattern of the English village, with its manor house and church, dates from this time. Edward started a new church fit for a king at Westminster, just outside the city of London. In fact Westminster Abbey was a Norman, not a Saxon building, because he had spent almost all his life in Normandy, and his mother was a daughter of the duke of Normandy. As their name suggests, the Normans were people from the north. They were the children and grandchildren of Vikings who had captured, and settled in, northern France. They had soon become



French in their language and Christian in their religion. But they were still well known for their fighting skills.

Edward only lived until 1066, when he died without an obvious heir. The question of who should follow him as king was one of the most important in English history. Edward had brought many Normans to his English court from France. These Normans were not liked by the more powerful Saxon nobles, particularly by the most powerful family of Wessex, the Godwinsons. It was a Godwinson, Harold, whom the Witan chose to be the next king of England. Harold had already shown his bravery and ability. He had no royal blood, but he seemed a good choice for the throne of England.

Harold's right to the English throne was challenged by Duke William of Normandy. William had two claims to the English throne. His first claim was that King Edward had promised it to him. The second claim was that Harold, who had visited William in 1064 or 1065, had promised William that he, Harold, would not try to take the throne for himself. Harold did not deny this second claim, but said that he had been forced to make the

promise, and that because it was made unwillingly he was not tied by it.

Harold was faced by two dangers, one in the south and one in the north. The Danish Vikings had not given up their claim to the English throne. In 1066 Harold had to march north into Yorkshire to defeat the Danes. No sooner had he defeated them than he learnt that William had landed in England with an army. His men were tired, but they had no time to rest. They marched south as fast as possible.

Harold decided not to wait for the whole Saxon army, the *fyrð*, to gather because William's army was small. He thought he could beat them with the men who had done so well against the Danes. However, the Norman soldiers were better armed, better organised, and were mounted on horses. If he had waited, Harold might have won. But he was defeated and killed in battle near Hastings.

William marched to London, which quickly gave in when he began to burn villages outside the city. He was crowned king of England in Edward's new church of Westminster Abbey on Christmas Day, 1066. A new period had begun.

3 The Celtic kingdoms

Wales • Ireland • Scotland

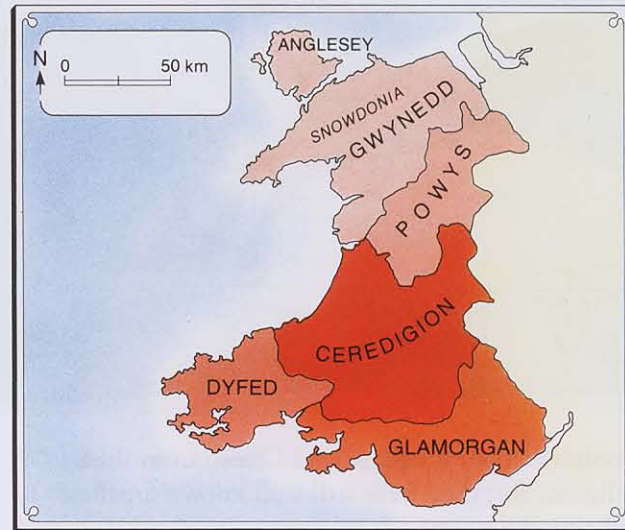
England has always played the most powerful part in the history of the British Isles. However, the other three countries, Wales, Ireland and Scotland, have a different history. Until recently few historians looked at British history except from an English point of view. But the stories of Wales, Ireland and Scotland are also important, because their people still feel different from the Anglo-Saxon English. The experience of the Welsh, Irish and Scots helps to explain the feeling they have today.

Wales

By the eighth century most of the Celts had been driven into the Welsh peninsula. They were kept out of England by Offa's Dyke, the huge earth wall built in AD 779. These Celts, called Welsh by the Anglo-Saxons, called themselves *cymry*, "fellow countrymen".

Because Wales is a mountainous country, the *cymry* could only live in the crowded valleys. The rest of the land was rocky and too poor for anything except keeping animals. For this reason the population remained small. It only grew to over half a million in the eighteenth century. Life was hard and so was the behaviour of the people. Slavery was common, as it had been all through Celtic Britain.

Society was based on family groupings, each of which owned one or more village or farm settlement. One by one in each group a strong leader made himself king. These men must have been tribal chiefs to begin with, who later managed to become overlords over neighbouring family groups. Each of these kings tried to conquer the others, and the idea of a high, or senior, king developed.



Wales and its Celtic kingdoms.

The early kings travelled around their kingdoms to remind the people of their control. They travelled with their hungry followers and soldiers. The ordinary people ran away into the hills and woods when the king's men approached their village.

Life was dangerous, treacherous and bloody. In 1043 the king of Glamorgan died of old age. It was an unusual event, because between 949 and 1066 no less than thirty-five Welsh rulers died violently, usually killed by a *cymry*, a fellow countryman.

In 1039 Gruffydd ap (son of) Llewelyn was the first Welsh high king strong enough to rule over all Wales. He was also the last, and in order to remain in control he spent almost the whole of his reign fighting his enemies. Like many other Welsh rulers, Gruffydd was killed by a *cymry* while defending Wales against the Saxons. Welsh kings after him were able to rule only after they had promised loyalty to Edward the Confessor, king of England. The story of an independent and united Wales was over almost as soon as it had begun.

Ireland

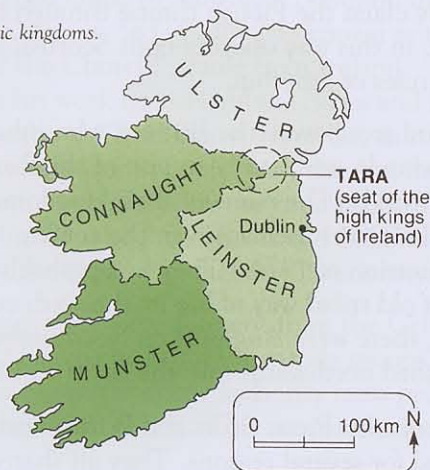
Ireland was never invaded by either the Romans or the Anglo-Saxons. It was a land of monasteries and had a flourishing Celtic culture. As in Wales, people were known by the family grouping they belonged to. Outside their tribe they had no protection and no name of their own. They had only the name of their tribe. The kings in this tribal society were chosen by election. The idea was that the strongest man should lead. In fact the system led to continuous challenges.

Five kingdoms grew up in Ireland: Ulster in the north, Munster in the southwest, Leinster in the southeast, Connaught in the west, with Tara as the seat of the high kings of Ireland.

Christianity came to Ireland in about AD 430. The beginning of Ireland's history dates from that time, because for the first time there were people who could write down events. The message of Christianity was spread in Ireland by a British slave, Patrick, who became the "patron saint" of Ireland. Christianity brought writing, which weakened the position of the Druids, who depended on memory and the spoken word. Christian monasteries grew up, frequently along the coast.

This period is often called Ireland's "golden age". Invaders were unknown and culture flowered. But it is also true that the five kingdoms were often at war, each trying to gain advantage over the other, often with great cruelty.

Ireland's Celtic kingdoms.



A page from the Book of Kells, the finest surviving Irish Celtic manuscript.

The round tower of Devenish is one of only two that still stand at Celtic monastic sites in Ulster, Ireland. This one was built in the twelfth century AD. The entrance is about three metres above ground level, and had a ladder that could be pulled in so that enemies could not enter. This design may well have been introduced after the Viking raids began in the ninth century.



This “golden age” suddenly ended with the arrival of Viking raiders, who stole all that the monasteries had. Very little was left except the stone memorials that the Vikings could not carry away.

The Vikings, who traded with Constantinople (now Istanbul), Italy, and with central Russia, brought fresh economic and political action into Irish life. Viking raids forced the Irish to unite. In 859 Ireland chose its first high king, but it was not an effective solution because of the quarrels that took place each time a new high king was chosen. Viking trade led to the first towns and ports. For the Celts, who had always lived in small settlements, these were revolutionary. Dublin, Ireland’s future capital, was founded by the Vikings.

As an effective method of rule the high kingship of Ireland lasted only twelve years, from 1002 to 1014, while Ireland was ruled by Brian Boru. He is still looked back on as Ireland’s greatest ruler. He tried to create one single Ireland, and encouraged the growth of organisation – in the Church, in administration, and in learning.

Brian Boru died in battle against the Vikings. One of the five Irish kings, the king of Leinster, fought on the Vikings’ side. Just over a century later another king of Leinster invited the Normans of England to help him against his high king. This gave the Normans the excuse they wanted to enlarge their kingdom.

Scotland

As a result of its geography, Scotland has two different societies. In the centre of Scotland mountains stretch to the far north and across to the west, beyond which lie many islands. To the east and to the south the lowland hills are gentler, and much of the countryside is like England, rich, welcoming and easy to farm. North of the “Highland Line”, as the division between highland and lowland is called, people stayed tied to their own family groups. South and east of this line society was more easily influenced by the changes taking place in England.



Iona, the western Scottish island on which St Columba established his abbey in AD 563 when he came Ireland. From Iona Columba sent his missionaries to bring Christianity to the Scots. The present cathedral was built in about 1500.

Scotland was populated by four separate groups of people. The main group, the Picts, lived mostly in the north and northeast. They spoke Celtic as well as another, probably older, language completely unconnected with any known language today, and they seem to have been the earliest inhabitants of the land. The Picts were different from the Celts because they inherited their rights, their names and property from their mothers, not from their fathers.

The non-Pictish inhabitants were mainly Scots. The Scots were Celtic settlers who had started to move into the western Highlands from Ireland in the fourth century.

In 843 the Pictish and Scottish kingdoms were united under a Scottish king, who could also probably claim the Pictish throne through his mother, in this way obeying both Scottish and Pictish rules of kingship.

The third group were the Britons, who inhabited the Lowlands, and had been part of the Romano-British world. (The name of their kingdom, Strathclyde, was used again in the county reorganisation of 1974.) They had probably given up their old tribal way of life by the sixth century. Finally, there were Angles from Northumbria who had pushed northwards into the Scottish Lowlands.

Unity between Picts, Scots and Britons was achieved for several reasons. They all shared a



common Celtic culture, language and background. Their economy mainly depended on keeping animals. These animals were owned by the tribe as a whole, and for this reason land was also held by tribes, not by individual people. The common economic system increased their feeling of belonging to the same kind of society and the feeling of difference from the agricultural Lowlands. The sense of common culture may have been increased by marriage alliances between tribes. This idea of common landholding remained strong until the tribes of Scotland, called “clans”, collapsed in the eighteenth century.

The spread of Celtic Christianity also helped to unite the people. The first Christian mission to Scotland had come to southwest Scotland in about AD 400. Later, in 563, Columba, known as the “Dove of the Church”, came from Ireland. Through his work both Highland Scots and Picts were brought to Christianity. He even, so it is said, defeated a monster in Loch Ness, the first mention of this famous creature. By the time of the Synod of Whitby in 663, the Picts, Scots and Britons had all been brought closer together by Christianity.

The Angles were very different from the Celts. They had arrived in Britain in family groups, but they soon began to accept authority from people outside their own family. This was partly due to

their way of life. Although they kept some animals, they spent more time growing crops. This meant that land was held by individual people, each man working in his own field. Land was distributed for farming by the local lord. This system encouraged the Angles of Scotland to develop a non-tribal system of control, as the people of England further south were doing. This increased their feeling of difference from the Celtic tribal Highlanders further north.

Finally, as in Ireland and in Wales, foreign invaders increased the speed of political change. Vikings attacked the coastal areas of Scotland, and they settled on many of the islands, Shetland, the Orkneys, the Hebrides, and the Isle of Man southwest of Scotland. In order to resist them, Picts and Scots fought together against the enemy raiders and settlers. When they could not push them out of the islands and coastal areas, they had to deal with them politically. At first the Vikings, or “Norsemen”, still served the king of Norway. But communications with Norway were difficult. Slowly the earls of Orkney and other areas found it easier to accept the king of Scots as their overlord, rather than the more distant king of Norway.

However, as the Welsh had also discovered, the English were a greater danger than the Vikings. In 934 the Scots were seriously defeated by a Wessex army pushing northwards. The Scots decided to seek the friendship of the English, because of the likely losses from war. England was obviously stronger than Scotland but, luckily for the Scots, both the north of England and Scotland were difficult to control from London. The Scots hoped that if they were reasonably peaceful the Sassenachs, as they called the Saxons (and still call the English), would leave them alone.

Scotland remained a difficult country to rule even from its capital, Edinburgh. Anyone looking at a map of Scotland can immediately see that control of the Highlands and islands was a great problem. Travel was often impossible in winter, and slow and difficult in summer. It was easy for a clan chief or noble to throw off the rule of the king.



The early Middle Ages

4 Conquest and feudal rule

The Norman Conquest • Feudalism • Kingship: a family business • Magna Carta and the decline of feudalism

The Norman Conquest

William the Conqueror's coronation did not go as planned. When the people shouted "God Save the King" the nervous Norman guards at Westminster Abbey thought they were going to attack William. In their fear they set fire to nearby houses and the coronation ceremony ended in disorder.

Although William was now crowned king, his conquest had only just begun, and the fighting lasted for another five years. There was an Anglo-Saxon rebellion against the Normans every year until 1070. The small Norman army marched from village to village, destroying places it could not control, and building forts to guard others. It was a true army of occupation for at least twenty years. The north was particularly hard to control, and the Norman army had no mercy. When the Saxons fought back, the Normans burnt, destroyed and killed. Between Durham and York not a single house was left standing, and it took a century for the north to recover.

Few Saxon lords kept their lands and those who did were the very small number who had accepted William immediately. All the others lost everything. By 1086, twenty years after the arrival of the Normans, only two of the greater landlords

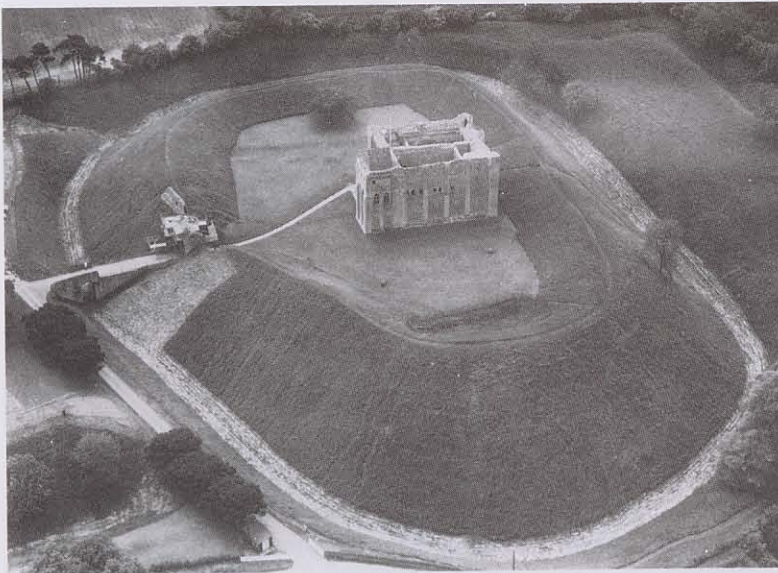
An argument between King Henry II and his archbishop, Thomas Becket. Behind Becket stand two knights, probably those who killed him to please Henry. The picture illustrates the struggle between Church and state during the early Middle Ages. The Church controlled money, land (including towns and feudal estates), and men. As a result, the kings of England had to be very careful in their dealings with the Church. They tried to prevent any increase in Church power, and tried to appoint bishops who would be more loyal to the king than to the Church. Becket died because he tried to prevent the king from gaining more control of Church affairs.

and only two bishops were Saxon. William gave the Saxon lands to his Norman nobles. After each English rebellion there was more land to give away. His army included Norman and other French land seekers. Over 4,000 Saxon landlords were replaced by 200 Norman ones.

Feudalism

William was careful in the way he gave land to his nobles. The king of France was less powerful than many of the great landlords, of whom William was the outstanding example. In England, as each new area of land was captured, William gave parts of it as a reward to his captains. This meant that they held separate small pieces of land in different parts of the country so that no noble could easily or quickly gather his fighting men to rebel. William only gave some of his nobles larger estates along the troublesome borders with Wales and Scotland. At the same time he kept enough land for himself to make sure he was much stronger than his nobles. Of all the farmland of England he gave half to the Norman nobles, a quarter to the Church, and kept a fifth himself. He kept the Saxon system of sheriffs, and used these as a balance to local nobles. As a result England was different from the rest of Europe because it had one powerful family, instead of a large number of powerful nobles. William, and the kings after him, thought of England as their personal property.

William organised his English kingdom according to the feudal system which had already begun to develop in England before his arrival. The word



Castle Rising in Norfolk, a fine example of the stone-built keeps the Normans built in the early twelfth century. These replaced the earlier Norman “motte and bailey” castles, which were earth mounds surrounded by a wooden fence or pallsade. A stone-built keep of the new kind was extremely difficult to capture, except by surprise. Keeps of this kind had a well, providing fresh water for a long siege.



The great hall in Castle Headingham, built in 1140, gives an idea of the inside of a Norman castle. The floor was covered with rushes or reeds, cut from a nearby marsh or wetland area. The walls were decorated with woven woollen embroidered hangings, for which England was famous. The furniture is of a much later date. In Norman times there was probably a large but simple table and chair for the lord of the castle. Others sat on benches, or might have stood for meals.

“feudalism” comes from the French word *feu*, which the Normans used to refer to land held in return for duty or service to a lord. The basis of feudal society was the holding of land, and its main purpose was economic. The central idea was that all land was owned by the king but it was held by others, called “vassals”, in return for services and goods. The king gave large estates to his main nobles in return for a promise to serve him in war for up to forty days. The nobles also had to give him part of the produce of the land. The greater nobles gave part of their lands to lesser nobles, knights, and other “freemen”. Some freemen paid for the land by doing military service, while others paid rent. The noble kept “serfs” to work on his own land. These were not free to leave the estate, and were often little better than slaves.



A thirteenth-century knight pays homage. The nobility of Britain still pay homage to the sovereign during the coronation ceremony. Ever since the Middle Ages, west European Christians have used the feudal homage position when praying, a reminder of their relationship to God, their lord and protector.

There were two basic principles to feudalism: every man had a lord, and every lord had land. The king was connected through this “chain” of people to the lowest man in the country. At each level a man had to promise loyalty and service to his lord. This promise was usually made with the lord sitting on his chair and his vassal kneeling before him, his hands placed between those of his lord. This was

called “homage”, and has remained part of the coronation ceremony of British kings and queens until now. On the other hand, each lord had responsibilities to his vassals. He had to give them land and protection.

When a noble died his son usually took over his estate. But first he had to receive permission from the king and make a special payment. If he was still a child the king would often take the produce of the estate until the boy was old enough to look after the estate himself. In this way the king could benefit from the death of a noble. If all the noble’s family died the land went back to the king, who would be expected to give it to another deserving noble. But the king often kept the land for some years, using its wealth, before giving it to another noble.

If the king did not give the nobles land they would not fight for him. Between 1066 and the mid-fourteenth century there were only thirty years of complete peace. So feudal duties were extremely important. The king had to make sure he had enough satisfied nobles who would be willing to fight for him.

William gave out land all over England to his nobles. By 1086 he wanted to know exactly who owned which piece of land, and how much it was worth. He needed this information so that he could plan his economy, find out how much was produced and how much he could ask in tax. He therefore sent a team of people all through England to make a complete economic survey. His men asked all kinds of questions at each settlement: How much land was there? Who owned it? How much was it worth? How many families, ploughs and sheep were there? And so on. This survey was the only one of its kind in Europe. Not surprisingly, it was most unpopular with the people, because they felt they could not escape from its findings. It so reminded them of the paintings of the Day of Judgement, or “doom”, on the walls of their churches that they called it the “Domesday” Book. The name stuck. The Domesday Book still exists, and gives us an extraordinary amount of information about England at this time.

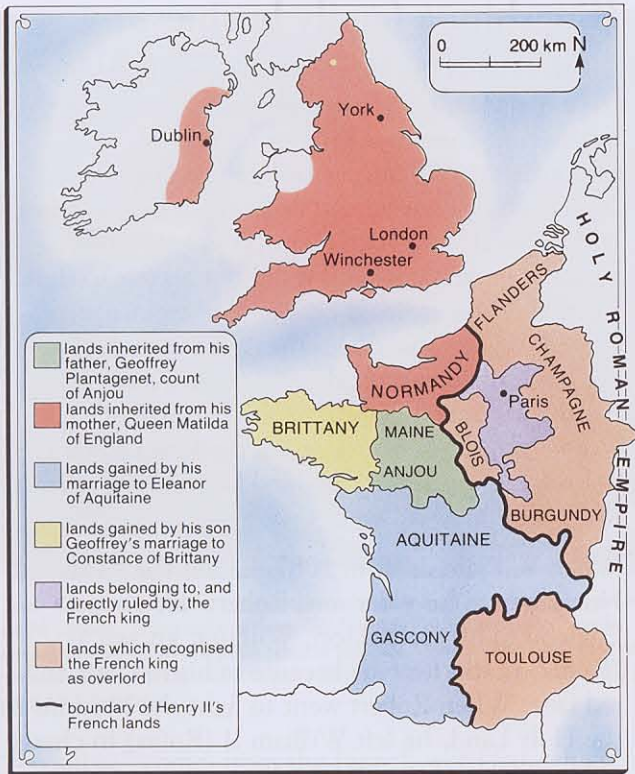
Kingship: a family business

To understand the idea of kingship and lordship in the early Middle Ages it is important to realise that at this time there was little or no idea of nationalism. William controlled two large areas: Normandy, which he had been given by his father, and England, which he had won in war. Both were personal possessions, and it did not matter to the rulers that the ordinary people of one place were English while those of another were French. To William the important difference between Normandy and England was that as duke of Normandy he had to recognise the king of France as his lord, whereas in England he was king with no lord above him.

When William died, in 1087, he left the Duchy of Normandy to his elder son, Robert. He gave England to his second son, William, known as “Rufus” (Latin for red) because of his red hair and red face. When Robert went to fight the Muslims in the Holy Land, he left William II (Rufus) in charge of Normandy. After all, the management of Normandy and England was a family business.

William Rufus died in a hunting accident in 1100, shot dead by an arrow. He had not married, and therefore had no son to take the crown. At the time of William’s death, Robert was on his way home to Normandy from the Holy Land. Their younger brother, Henry, knew that if he wanted the English crown he would have to act very quickly. He had been with William at the time of the accident. He rode to Winchester and took charge of the king’s treasury. He then rode to Westminster, where he was crowned king three days later. Robert was very angry and prepared to invade. But it took him a year to organise an army.

The Norman nobles in England had to choose between Henry and Robert. This was not easy because most of them held land in Normandy too. In the end they chose Henry because he was in London, with the crown already on his head. Robert’s invasion was a failure and he accepted payment to return to Normandy. But Henry wanted more. He knew that many of his nobles would willingly follow him to Normandy so that they



Henry II's empire.

could win back their Norman lands. In 1106 Henry invaded Normandy and captured Robert. Normandy and England were reunited under one ruler.

Henry I's most important aim was to pass on both Normandy and England to his successor. He spent the rest of his life fighting to keep Normandy from other French nobles who tried to take it. But in 1120 Henry's only son was drowned at sea.

During the next fifteen years Henry hoped for another son but finally accepted that his daughter, Matilda, would follow him. Henry had married Matilda to another great noble in France, Geoffrey Plantagenet. Geoffrey was heir to Anjou, a large and important area southwest of Normandy. Henry hoped that the family lands would be made larger by this marriage. He made all the nobles promise to accept Matilda when he died. But then Henry himself quarrelled publicly with Matilda's husband, and died soon after. This left the succession in question.

At the time both the possible heirs to Henry were on their own estates. Matilda was with her husband in Anjou and Henry's nephew, Stephen of Blois, was in Boulogne, only a day's journey by sea from England. As Henry had done before him, Stephen raced to England to claim the crown. Also as before, the nobles in England had to choose between Stephen, who was in England, and Matilda, who had quarrelled with her father and who was still in France. Most chose Stephen, who seems to have been good at fighting but little else. He was described at the time as "of outstanding skill in arms, but in other things almost an idiot, except that he was more inclined towards evil." Only a few nobles supported Matilda's claim.

Matilda invaded England four years later. Her fight with Stephen led to a terrible civil war in which villages were destroyed and many people were killed. Neither side could win, and finally in 1153 Matilda and Stephen agreed that Stephen could keep the throne but only if Matilda's son, Henry, could succeed him. Fortunately for England, Stephen died the following year, and the family possessions of England and the lands in France were united under a king accepted by everyone. It took years for England to recover from the civil war. As someone wrote at the time, "For nineteen long winters, God and his angels slept." This kind of disorder and destruction was common in Europe, but it was shocking in England because people were used to the rule of law and order.

Henry II was the first unquestioned ruler of the English throne for a hundred years. He destroyed the castles which many nobles had built without royal permission during Stephen's reign, and made sure that they lived in manor houses that were undefended. The manor again became the centre of local life and administration.

Henry II was ruler of far more land than any previous king. As lord of Anjou he added his father's lands to the family empire. After his marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine he also ruled the lands south of Anjou. Henry II's empire stretched from the Scottish border to the Pyrenees.



Four kings of the early Middle Ages: (top row) Henry II, Richard I, (bottom row) John and Henry III. Richard's shield carries the badge of the English kings. The three gold lions (called "leopards" in heraldic language) on a red field still form two of the four "quarters" of the Royal Standard or shield today.

England provided most of Henry's wealth, but the heart of his empire lay in Anjou. And although Henry recognised the king of France as the overlord of all his French lands, he actually controlled a greater area than the king of France. Many of Henry's nobles held land on both sides of the English channel.

However, Henry quarrelled with his beautiful and powerful wife, and his sons, Richard and John, took Eleanor's side. It may seem surprising that Richard and John fought against their own father. But in fact they were doing their duty to the king of France, their feudal overlord, in payment for the lands they held from him. In 1189 Henry died a broken man, disappointed and defeated by his sons and by the French king.

Henry was followed by his rebellious son, Richard. Richard I has always been one of England's most

popular kings, although he spent hardly any time in England. He was brave, and a good soldier, but his nickname *Coeur de Lion*, "lionheart", shows that his culture, like that of the kings before him, was French. Richard was everyone's idea of the perfect feudal king. He went to the Holy Land to make war on the Muslims and he fought with skill, courage and honour.

On his way back from the Holy Land Richard was captured by the duke of Austria, with whom he had quarrelled in Jerusalem. The duke demanded money before he would let him go, and it took two years for England to pay. Shortly after, in 1199, Richard was killed in France. He had spent no more than four or five years in the country of which he was king. When he died the French king took over parts of Richard's French lands to rule himself.

Richard had no son, and he was followed by his brother, John. John had already made himself unpopular with the three most important groups of people, the nobles, the merchants and the Church.

John was unpopular mainly because he was greedy. The feudal lords in England had always run their own law courts and profited from the fines paid by those brought to court. But John took many cases out of their courts and tried them in the king's courts, taking the money for himself.

It was normal for a feudal lord to make a payment to the king when his daughter was married, but John asked for more than was the custom. In the same way, when a noble died, his son had to pay money before he could inherit his father's land. In order to enlarge his own income, John increased the amount they had to pay. In other cases when a noble died without a son, it was normal for the land to be passed on to another noble family. John kept the land for a long time, to benefit from its wealth. He did the same with the bishoprics. As for the merchants and towns, he taxed them at a higher level than ever before.

In 1204 King John became even more unpopular with his nobles. The French king invaded Normandy and the English nobles lost their lands there. John had failed to carry out his duty to them as duke of Normandy. He had taken their money but he had not protected their land.

In 1209 John quarrelled with the pope over who should be Archbishop of Canterbury. John was in a weak position in England and the pope knew it. The pope called on the king of France to invade England, and closed every church in the country. At a time when most people believed that without the Church they would go to hell, this was a very serious matter. In 1214 John gave in, and accepted the pope's choice of archbishop.

In 1215 John hoped to recapture Normandy. He called on his lords to fight for him, but they no longer trusted him. They marched to London, where they were joined by angry merchants. Outside London at Runnymede, a few miles up the river, John was forced to sign a new agreement.

Magna Carta and the decline of feudalism

This new agreement was known as "Magna Carta", the Great Charter, and was an important symbol of political freedom. The king promised all "freemen" protection from his officers, and the right to a fair and legal trial. At the time perhaps less than one quarter of the English were "freemen". Most were not free, and were serfs or little better. Hundreds of years later, Magna Carta was used by Parliament to protect itself from a powerful king. In fact Magna Carta gave no real freedom to the majority of people in England. The nobles who wrote it and forced King John to sign it had no such thing in mind. They had one main aim: to make sure John did not go beyond his rights as feudal lord.

Magna Carta marks a clear stage in the collapse of English feudalism. Feudal society was based on links between lord and vassal. At Runnymede the nobles were not acting as vassals but as a class. They established a committee of twenty-four lords to make sure John kept his promises. That was not a "feudal" thing to do. In addition, the nobles were acting in co-operation with the merchant class of towns.

The nobles did not allow John's successors to forget this charter and its promises. Every king recognised Magna Carta, until the Middle Ages ended in disorder and a new kind of monarchy came into being in the sixteenth century.

There were other small signs that feudalism was changing. When the king went to war he had the right to forty days' fighting service from each of his lords. But forty days were not long enough for fighting a war in France. The nobles refused to fight for longer, so the king was forced to pay soldiers to fight for him. (They were called "paid fighters", *solidarius*, a Latin word from which the word "soldier" comes.) At the same time many lords preferred their vassals to pay them in money rather than in services. Vassals were gradually beginning to change into tenants. Feudalism, the use of land in return for service, was beginning to weaken. But it took another three hundred years before it disappeared completely.

5 The power of the kings of England

Church and state • The beginnings of Parliament • Dealing with the Celts

Church and state

John's reign also marked the end of the long struggle between Church and state in England. This had begun in 1066 when the pope claimed that William had promised to accept him as his feudal lord. William refused to accept this claim. He had created Norman bishops and given them land on condition that they paid homage to him. As a result it was not clear whether the bishops should obey the Church or the king. Those kings and popes who wished to avoid conflict left the matter alone. But some kings and popes wanted to increase their authority. In such circumstances trouble could not be avoided.

The struggle was for both power and money. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries the Church wanted the kings of Europe to accept its authority over both spiritual and earthly affairs, and argued that even kings were answerable to God. Kings, on the other hand, chose as bishops men who would be loyal to them.

The first serious quarrel was between William Rufus and Anselm, the man he had made Archbishop of Canterbury. Anselm, with several other bishops, fearing the king, had escaped from England. After William's death Anselm refused to do homage to William's successor, Henry I. Henry, meanwhile, had created several new bishops but they had no spiritual authority without the blessing of the archbishop. This left the king in a difficult position. It took seven years to settle the disagreement. Finally the king agreed that only the Church could create bishops. But in return the Church agreed that bishops would pay homage to the king for the lands owned by their bishoprics. In practice the

wishes of the king in the appointment of bishops remained important. But after Anselm's death Henry managed to delay the appointment of a new archbishop for five years while he benefited from the wealth of Canterbury. The struggle between Church and state continued.

The crisis came when Henry II's friend Thomas Becket was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury in 1162. Henry hoped that Thomas would help him bring the Church more under his control. At first Becket refused, and then he gave in. Later he changed his mind again and ran away to France, and it seemed as if Henry had won. But in 1170 Becket returned to England determined to resist the king. Henry was very angry, and four knights who heard him speak out went to Canterbury to murder Becket. They killed him in the holiest place in the cathedral, on the altar steps.

All Christian Europe was shocked, and Thomas Becket became a saint of the Church. For hundreds of years afterwards people not only from England but also from Europe travelled to Canterbury to pray at Becket's grave. Henry was forced to ask the pope's forgiveness. He also allowed himself to be whipped by monks. The pope used the event to take back some of the Church's privileges. But Henry II could have lost much more than he did. Luckily for Henry, the nobles were also involved in the argument, and Henry had the nobles on his side. Usually the Church preferred to support the king against the nobles, but expected to be rewarded for its support. King John's mistake forty years later was to upset both Church and nobles at the same time.

The beginnings of Parliament

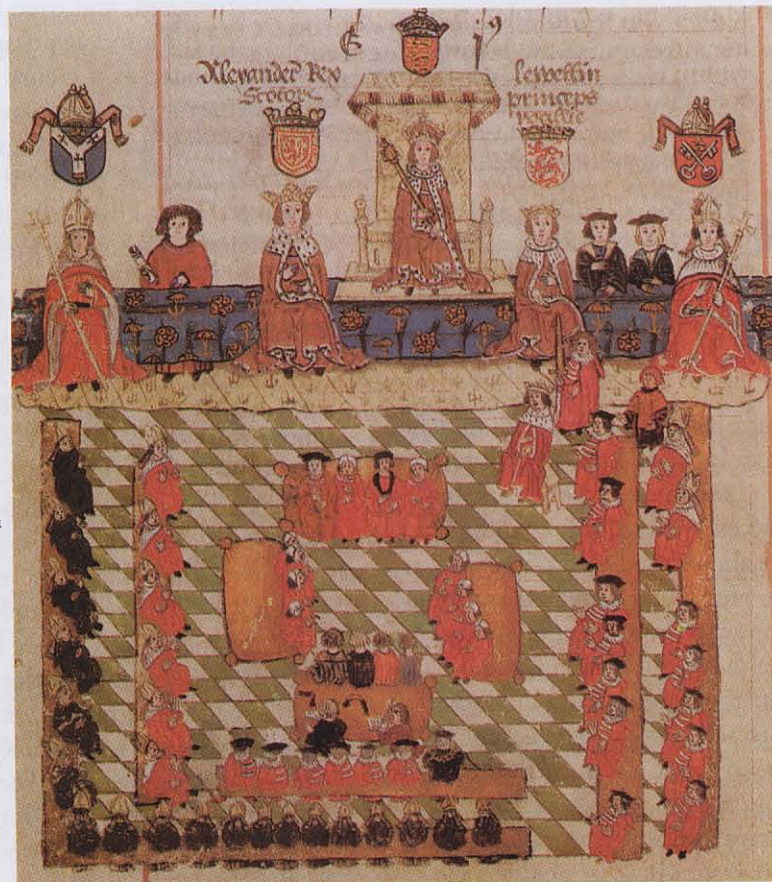
King John had signed Magna Carta unwillingly, and it quickly became clear that he was not going to keep to the agreement. The nobles rebelled and soon pushed John out of the southeast. But civil war was avoided because John died suddenly in 1216.

John's son, Henry III, was only nine years old. During the first sixteen years as king he was under the control of powerful nobles, and tied by Magna Carta.

Henry was finally able to rule for himself at the age of twenty-five. It was understandable that he wanted to be completely independent of the people who had controlled his life for so long. He spent his time with foreign friends, and became involved in expensive wars supporting the pope in Sicily and also in France.

Henry's heavy spending and his foreign advisers upset the nobles. Once again they acted as a class, under the leadership of Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester. In 1258 they took over the government and elected a council of nobles. De Montfort called it a *parliament*, or *parlement*, a French word meaning a "discussion meeting". This "parliament" took control of the treasury and forced Henry to get rid of his foreign advisers. The nobles were supported by the towns, which wished to be free of Henry's heavy taxes.

But some of the nobles did not support the revolutionary new council, and remained loyal to Henry. With their help Henry was finally able to defeat and kill Simon de Montfort in 1265. Once again he had full royal authority, although he was careful to accept the balance which de Montfort had created between king and nobles. When Henry died in 1272 his son Edward I took the throne without question.



Edward I's parliament. Edward sits in front of his nobles, bishops and shire knights. On his right sits Alexander, king of Scots, and on his left is Llewelyn, Prince of Wales. It is unlikely either ever sat in Edward's parliament, but he liked to think of them as under his authority. Beyond Alexander and Llewelyn sit the archbishops of Canterbury and York, and there are more bishops on the left of the picture, a reminder of the political and economic strength of the Church at this time. In the centre are woolsacks, symbolic of England's wealth.

Edward I brought together the first real parliament. Simon de Montfort's council had been called a parliament, but it included only nobles. It had been able to make statutes, or written laws, and it had been able to make political decisions. However, the lords were less able to provide the king with money, except what they had agreed to pay him for the lands they held under feudal arrangement. In the days of Henry I (1100–35), 85 per cent of the king's income had come from the land. By 1272 income from the land was less than 40 per cent of the royal income. The king could only raise the rest by taxation. Since the rules of feudalism did not include taxation, taxes could only be raised with the agreement of those wealthy enough to be taxed.

Several kings had made arrangements for taxation before, but Edward I was the first to create a “representative institution” which could provide the money he needed. This institution became the House of Commons. Unlike the House of Lords it contained a mixture of “gentry” (knights and other wealthy freemen from the shires) and merchants from the towns. These were the two broad classes of people who produced and controlled England's wealth.

In 1275 Edward I commanded each shire and each town (or borough) to send two representatives to his parliament. These “commoners” would have stayed away if they could, to avoid giving Edward money. But few dared risk Edward's anger. They became unwilling representatives of their local community. This, rather than Magna Carta, was the beginning of the idea that there should be “no taxation without representation”, later claimed by the American colonists of the eighteenth century.

In other parts of Europe, similar “parliaments” kept all the gentry separate from the commoners. England was special because the House of Commons contained a mixture of gentry belonging to the feudal ruling class and merchants and freemen who did not. The co-operation of these groups, through the House of Commons, became important to Britain's later political and social development. During the 150 years following Edward's death the agreement of the Commons



Harlech Castle, one of several castles built by Edward I in order to control the north and west of Wales. The mountainous country of Snowdonia in the background was a place of safety for the Welsh rebels. While it was extremely difficult for Edward to reach the rebels in these mountains, it was also impossible for such rebels ever to capture castles as strong as Harlech. These hugely expensive castles were so strong that they persuaded the Welsh that another rising against English rule was unlikely to succeed.

became necessary for the making of all statutes, and all special taxation additional to regular taxes.

Dealing with the Celts

Edward I was less interested in winning back parts of France than in bringing the rest of Britain under his control.

William I had allowed his lords to win land by conquest in Wales. These Normans slowly extended their control up the Welsh river valleys and by the beginning of the twelfth century much of Wales was held by them. They built castles as they went forward, and mixed with and married the Welsh during the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries. A new class grew up, a mixture of the Norman and Welsh rulers, who spoke Norman French and Welsh, but not English. They all became vassals of the English king.

The only Welsh who were at all free from English rule lived around Snowdon, the wild mountainous area of north Wales. They were led by Llewelyn ap Gruffydd, prince of Gwynedd, who tried to become independent of the English. Edward was determined to defeat him and bring Wales completely under his control. In 1282 Llewelyn was captured and killed. Edward then began a programme of castle building which was extremely expensive and took many years to complete.

In 1284 Edward united west Wales with England, bringing the English county system to the newly conquered lands. But he did not interfere with the areas the Normans had conquered earlier on the English–Welsh border, because this would have led to trouble with his nobles.

The English considered that Wales had become part of England for all practical purposes. If the Welsh wanted a prince, they could have one. At a public ceremony at Caernarfon Edward I made his own baby son (later Edward II) Prince of Wales. From that time the eldest son of the ruling king or queen has usually been made Prince of Wales.

Ireland had been conquered by Norman lords in 1169. They had little difficulty in defeating the Irish kings and tribes. Henry II, afraid that his lords might become too independent, went to Ireland himself. He forced the Irish chiefs and Norman lords to accept his lordship. He did so with the authority of the pope, who hoped to bring the Irish Celtic Church under his own control.

Henry II made Dublin, the old Viking town, the capital of his new colony. Much of western Ireland remained in the hands of Irish chiefs, while Norman lords governed most of the east. Edward I took as much money and as many men as he could for his wars against the Welsh and Scots. As a result Ireland was drained of its wealth. By 1318 it was able to provide the English king with only one-third of the amount it had been able to give in 1272. The Norman nobles and Irish chiefs quietly avoided English authority as much as possible. As a result, the English Crown only controlled Dublin and a small area around it, known as “the Pale”.

The Irish chiefs continued to live as they always had done, moving from place to place, and eating out of doors, a habit they only gave up in the sixteenth century. The Anglo-Irish lords, on the other hand, built strong stone castles, as they had done in Wales. But they also became almost completely independent from the English Crown, and some became “more Irish than the Irish”.

In Scotland things were very different. Although Scottish kings had sometimes accepted the English king as their “overlord”, they were much stronger than the many Welsh kings had been. By the eleventh century there was only one king of Scots, and he ruled over all the south and east of Scotland. Only a few areas of the western coast were still completely independent and these all came under the king’s control during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In Ireland and Wales Norman knights were strong enough to fight local chiefs on their own. But only the English king with a large army could hope to defeat the Scots. Most English kings did not even try, but Edward I was different.

The Scottish kings were closely connected with England. Since Saxon times, marriages had frequently taken place between the Scottish and English royal families. At the same time, in order to establish strong government, the Scottish kings offered land to Norman knights from England in return for their loyalty. Scotland followed England in creating a feudal state. On the whole Celtic society accepted this, probably because the Normans married into local Celtic noble families. The feudal system, however, did not develop in the Highlands, where the tribal “clan” system continued. Some Scottish kings held land in England, just as English kings held lands in France. And in exactly the same way they did homage, promising loyalty to the English king for that land.

In 1290 a crisis took place over the succession to the Scottish throne. There were thirteen possible heirs. Among these the most likely to succeed were John de Balliol and Robert Bruce, both Norman–Scottish knights. In order to avoid civil war the Scottish nobles invited Edward I to settle the matter.

Edward had already shown interest in joining Scotland to his kingdom. In 1286 he had arranged for his own son to marry Margaret, the heir to the Scottish throne, but she had died in a shipwreck. Now he had another chance. He told both men that they must do homage to him, and so accept his overlordship, before he would help settle the question. He then invaded Scotland and put one of them, John de Balliol, on the Scottish throne.

De Balliol's four years as king were not happy. First, Edward made him provide money and troops for the English army and the Scottish nobles rebelled. Then Edward invaded Scotland again, and captured all the main Scottish castles. During the invasion Edward stole the sacred Stone of Destiny from Scone Abbey on which, so the legend said, all Scottish kings must sit. Edward believed that without the Stone, any Scottish coronation would be meaningless, and that his own possession of the Stone would persuade the Scots to accept him as king. However, neither he nor his successors became kings of Scots, and the Scottish kings managed perfectly well without it.

Edward's treatment of the Scots created a popular resistance movement. At first it was led by William Wallace, a Norman–Scottish knight. But after one victory against an English army, Wallace's "people's army" was itself destroyed by Edward in 1297. The Scots had formed rings of spearmen which stood firm against the English cavalry attacks, but Edward's Welsh longbowmen broke the Scottish formations, and the cavalry then charged down on them.

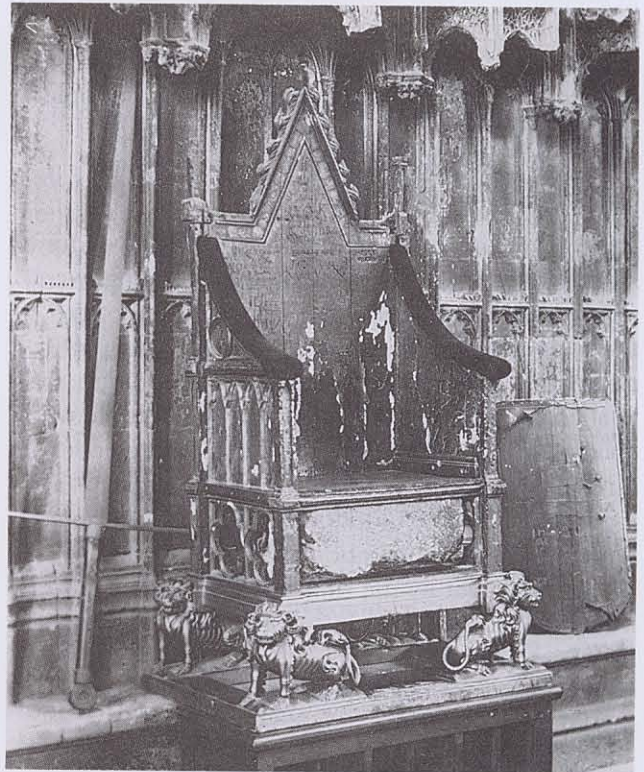
It seemed as if Edward had won after all. He captured Wallace and executed him, putting his head on a pole on London Bridge. Edward tried to make Scotland a part of England, as he had done with Wales. Some Scottish nobles accepted him, but the people refused to be ruled by the English king. Scottish nationalism was born on the day Wallace died.

A new leader took up the struggle. This was Robert Bruce, who had competed with John de Balliol for the throne. He was able to raise an army and defeat the English army in Scotland. Edward I gathered

another great army and marched against Robert Bruce, but he died on the way north in 1307. On Edward's grave were written the words "Edward, the Hammer of the Scots". He had intended to hammer them into the ground and destroy them, but in fact he had hammered them into a nation.

After his death his son, Edward II, turned back to England. Bruce had time to defeat his Scottish enemies, and make himself accepted as king of the Scots. He then began to win back the castles still held by the English. When Edward II invaded Scotland in 1314 in an effort to help the last English-held castles, Bruce destroyed his army at Bannockburn, near Stirling. Six years later, in 1320, the Scots clergy meeting at Arbroath wrote to the pope in Rome to tell him that they would never accept English authority: "for as long as even one hundred of us remain alive, we will never consent to subject ourselves to the dominion of the English."

Edward I's coronation chair. The Scottish Stone of Destiny which Edward took from Scone Abbey is under the seat, a symbol of England's desire to rule Scotland. On either side of the throne stand the symbolic state sword and shield of Edward III.



6 Government and society

The growth of government • Law and justice • Religious beliefs • Ordinary people in country and town • The growth of towns as centres of wealth • Language, literature and culture

The growth of government

William the Conqueror had governed England and Normandy by travelling from one place to another to make sure that his authority was accepted. He, and the kings after him, raised some of the money they needed by trying cases and fining people in the royal courts. The king's "household" was the government, and it was always on the move. There was no real capital of the kingdom as there is today. Kings were crowned in Westminster, but their treasury stayed in the old Wessex capital, Winchester. When William and the kings after him moved around the country staying in towns and castles, they were accompanied by a large number of followers. Wherever they went the local people had to give them food and somewhere to stay. It could have a terrible effect. Food ran out, and prices rose.

This form of government could only work well for a small kingdom. By the time the English kings were ruling half of France as well they could no longer travel everywhere themselves. Instead, they sent nobles and knights from the royal household to act as sheriffs. But even this system needed people who could administer taxation, justice, and carry out the king's instructions. It was obviously not practical for all these people to follow the king everywhere. At first this "administration" was based in Winchester, but by the time of Edward I, in 1290, it had moved to Westminster. It is still there today. However, even though the administration was in Westminster the real capital of England was still "in the king's saddle".

The king kept all his records in Westminster, including the Domesday Book. The king's administration kept a careful watch on noble families. It made sure the king claimed money every time a young noble took over the lands of his father, or when a noble's daughter married. In every possible way the king always "had his hand in his subject's pocket". The administration also checked the towns and the ports to make sure that taxes were paid, and kept a record of the fines made by the king's court.

Most important of all, the officials in Westminster had to watch the economy of the country carefully. Was the king getting the money he needed in the most effective way? Such questions led to important changes in taxation between 1066 and 1300. In 1130 well over half of Henry I's money came from his own land, one-third from his feudal vassals in rights and fines, and only one-seventh from taxes. One hundred and fifty years later, over half of Edward I's money came from taxes, but only one-third came from his land and only one-tenth from his feudal vassals. It is no wonder that Edward called to his parliament representatives of the people whom he could tax most effectively.

It is not surprising, either, that the administration began to grow very quickly. When William I invaded Britain he needed only a few clerks to manage his paperwork. Most business, including feudal homage, was done by the spoken, not written, word. But the need for paperwork grew rapidly. In 1050 only the king (Edward the Confessor) had a seal with which to "sign" official papers. By the time of Edward I, just over two

hundred years later, even the poorest man was expected to have a seal in order to sign official papers, even if he could not read. From 1199 the administration in Westminster kept copies of all the letters and documents that were sent out.

The amount of wax used for seals on official papers gives an idea of the rapid growth of the royal administration. In 1220, at the beginning of Henry III's reign, 1.5 kg were used each week. Forty years later, in 1260, this had risen to 14 kg weekly. And government administration has been growing ever since.

Law and justice

The king, of course, was responsible for law and justice. But kings usually had to leave the administration of this important matter to someone who lived close to the place where a crime was committed. In Saxon times every district had had its own laws and customs, and justice had often been a family matter. After the Norman Conquest nobles were allowed to administer justice among the villages and people on their lands. Usually they mixed Norman laws with the old Saxon laws. They had freedom to act more or less as they liked. More serious offences, however, were tried in the king's courts.

Henry I introduced the idea that all crimes, even those inside the family, were no longer only a family matter but a breaking of the "king's peace". It was therefore the king's duty to try people and punish them. At first the nobles acted for the king on their own lands, but Henry wanted the same kind of justice to be used everywhere. So he appointed a number of judges who travelled from place to place administering justice. (These travelling, or "circuit", judges still exist today.) They dealt both with crimes and disagreements over property. In this way the king slowly took over the administration from the nobles.

At first the king's judges had no special knowledge or training. They were simply trusted to use common sense. Many of them were nobles or bishops who followed directly the orders of the king. It is not surprising that the quality of judges

depended on the choice of the king. Henry II, the most powerful English king of the twelfth century, was known in Europe for the high standards of his law courts. "The convincing proof of our king's strength," wrote one man, "is that whoever has a just cause wants to have it tried before him, whoever has a weak one does not come unless he is dragged."

By the end of the twelfth century the judges were men with real knowledge and experience of the law. Naturally these judges, travelling from place to place, administered the same law wherever they went. This might seem obvious now, but since Saxon times local customs and laws had varied from one place to another. The law administered by these travelling judges became known as "common law", because it was used everywhere.

England was unlike the rest of Europe because it used common law. Centuries later, England's common law system was used in the United States (the North American colonies) and in many other British colonial possessions, and accepted when these became nations in their own right. In other parts of Europe legal practice was based on the Civil Law of the Roman Empire, and the Canon Law of the Church. But although English lawyers referred to these as examples of legal method and science, they created an entirely different system of law based on custom, comparisons, previous cases and previous decisions. In this way traditional local laws were replaced by common law all over the land. This mixture of experience and custom is the basis of law in England even today. Modern judges still base their decisions on the way in which similar cases have been decided.

The new class of judges was also interested in how the law was carried out, and what kinds of punishment were used. From Anglo-Saxon times there had been two ways of deciding difficult cases when it was not clear if a man was innocent or guilty. The accused man could be tested in battle against a skilled fighter, or tested by "ordeal". A typical "ordeal" was to put a hot iron on the man's tongue. If the burn mark was still there three days later he was thought to be guilty. It was argued that

God would leave the burn mark on a guilty man's tongue. Such a system worked only as long as people believed in it. By the end of the twelfth century there were serious doubts and in 1215 the pope forbade the Church to have anything to do with trial by ordeal.

In England trial by ordeal was replaced with trial by jury. The jury idea dated back to the Danes of Danelaw, but had only been used in disputes over land. Henry II had already introduced the use of juries for some cases in the second half of the twelfth century. But it was not the kind of jury we know today. In 1179 he allowed an accused man in certain cases to claim "trial by jury". The man could choose twelve neighbours, "twelve good men and true", who would help him prove that he was not guilty. Slowly, during the later Middle Ages, the work of these juries gradually changed from giving evidence to judging the evidence of others. Juries had no training in the law. They were ordinary people using ordinary common sense. It was soon obvious that they needed guidance. As a result law schools grew up during the thirteenth century, producing lawyers who could advise juries about the points of law.

Religious beliefs

The Church at local village level was significantly different from the politically powerful organisation the king had to deal with. At the time of William I the ordinary village priest could hardly read at all, and he was usually one of the peasant community. His church belonged to the local lord, and was often built next to the lord's house. Almost all priests were married, and many inherited their position from their father.

However, even at village level the Church wished to replace the lord's authority with its own, but it was only partly successful. In many places the lord continued to choose the local priest, and to have more influence over him than the more distant Church authorities were able to have.

The Church also tried to prevent priests from marrying. In this it was more successful, and by the end of the thirteenth century married priests were

unusual. But it was still common to find a priest who "kept a girl in his house who lit his fire but put out his virtue."

There were, however, many who promised not to marry and kept that promise. This was particularly true of those men and women who wanted to be monks or nuns and entered the local monastery or nunnery. One reason for entering a religious house was the increasing difficulty during this period of living on the land. As the population grew, more and more people found they could not feed their whole family easily. If they could enter a son or daughter into the local religious house there would be fewer mouths to feed. Indeed, it may have been the economic difficulties of raising a family which persuaded priests to follow the Church ruling. Life was better as a monk within the safe walls of a monastery than as a poor farmer outside. A monk could learn to read and write, and be sure of food and shelter. The monasteries were centres of wealth and learning.

In 1066 there were fifty religious houses in England, home for perhaps 1,000 monks and nuns. By the beginning of the fourteenth century there were probably about 900 religious houses, with 17,500 members. Even though the population in the fourteenth century was three times larger than it had been in 1066, the growth of the monasteries is impressive.

The thirteenth century brought a new movement, the "brotherhoods" of friars. These friars were wandering preachers. They were interested not in Church power and splendour, but in the souls of ordinary men and women. They lived with the poor and tried to bring the comfort of Christianity to them. They lived in contrast with the wealth and power of the monasteries and cathedrals, the local centres of the Church.

Ordinary people in country and town

There were probably between 1.5 and 2 million people living in England in 1066. The Domesday Book tells us that nine-tenths of them lived in the

countryside. It also tells us that 80 per cent of the land used for farming at the beginning of the twentieth century was already being ploughed in 1086. In fact it was not until the nineteenth century that the cultivated area became greater than the level recorded in the Domesday Book.

Life in the countryside was hard. Most of the population still lived in villages in southern and eastern parts of England. In the north and west there were fewer people, and they often lived apart from each other, on separate farms. Most people lived in the simplest houses. The walls were made of wooden beams and sticks, filled with mud. The roofs were made of thatch, with reeds or corn stalks laid thickly and skilfully so that the rain ran off easily. People ate cereals and vegetables most of the time, with pork meat for special occasions. They worked from dawn to dusk every day of the year, every year, until they were unable to work any longer. Until a man had land of his own he would usually not marry. However, men and women often slept together before marriage, and once a woman was expecting a child, the couple had no choice but to marry.

The poor were divided from their masters by the feudal class system. The basis of this “manorial system” was the exchange of land for labour. The landlord expected the villagers to work a fixed number of days on his own land, the “home farm”. The rest of the time they worked on their small strips of land, part of the village’s “common land” on which they grew food for themselves and their family. The Domesday Book tells us that over three-quarters of the country people were serfs. They were not free to leave their lord’s service or his land without permission. Even if they wanted to run away, there was nowhere to run to. Anyway, a serf’s life, under his lord’s protection, was better than the life of an unprotected wanderer. Order and protection, no matter how hard life might be, was always better than disorder, when people would starve.

The manorial system was not the same all over the country, and it did not stay the same throughout the Middle Ages. There were always differences in

the way the system worked between one estate and another, one region and another, and between one period and another. Local customs and both local and national economic pressures affected the way things worked.

The manorial system is often thought to be Norman, but in fact it had been growing slowly throughout the Anglo-Saxon period. The Normans inherited the system and developed it to its fullest extent. But the Normans were blamed for the bad aspects of the manorial system because they were foreign masters.

In the early days of the Conquest Saxons and Normans feared and hated each other. For example, if a dead body was found, the Saxons had to prove that it was not the body of a murdered Norman. If they could not prove it, the Normans would burn the nearest village. The Norman ruling class only really began to mix with and marry the Saxons, and consider themselves “English” rather than French, after King John lost Normandy in 1204. Even then, dislike remained between the rulers and the ruled.

Every schoolchild knows the story of Robin Hood, which grew out of Saxon hatred for Norman rule. According to the legend Robin Hood lived in Sherwood Forest near Nottingham as a criminal or “outlaw”, outside feudal society and the protection of the law. He stole from the rich and gave to the poor, and he stood up for the weak against the powerful. His weapon was not the sword of nobles and knights, but the longbow, the weapon of the common man.

In fact, most of the story is legend. The only thing we know is that a man called Robert or “Robin” Hood was a wanted criminal in Yorkshire in 1230. The legend was, however, very popular with the common people all through the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, although the ruling class greatly disliked it. Later the story was changed. Robin Hood was described as a man of noble birth, whose lands had been taken by King John. Almost certainly this was an effort by the authorities to make Robin Hood “respectable”.



Left: Two out of twelve pictures illustrating the occupations of each month, about 1280.

Above left February: a man sits cooking and warming his boots by the fire. Above him hang smoked meat and sausages, probably his only meat for the winter. In the autumn most animals were killed, and smoked or salted to keep them from going bad. There was only enough food to keep breeding animals alive through the winter. Below left November: perhaps it is the same man knocking acorns or nuts from a tree for his pigs to eat. The complete set of pictures shows mixed farming, which produced cereals, grapes for wine and pigs.

Above: A woman milks a cow, while the cow tenderly licks its calf. Almost all the population lived in the country, but cows were kept by townspeople too. This domestic scene has a touching gentleness about it.

Most landlords obtained their income directly from the home farm, and also from letting out some of their land in return for rent in crops or money. The size of the home farm depended on how much land the landlord chose to let out. In the twelfth century, for example, many landlords found it more profitable to let out almost all the home farm lands, and thus be paid in money or crops rather than in labour. In fact it is from this period that the word “farm” comes. Each arrangement the landlord made to let land to a villager was a “firma”: a fixed or settled agreement.

By 1300 the population was probably just over four million (up to the nineteenth century figures can only be guessed at), about three times what it had been in 1066. This increase, of course, had an effect on life in the country. It made it harder to grow enough food for everyone. The situation was made worse by the Normans’ love of hunting. They drove the English peasants out of the forests, and punished them severely if they killed any forest animals. “The forest has its own laws,” wrote one man bitterly, “based not on the common law of the kingdom, but on the personal wishes of the king.”

The peasants tried to farm more land. They drained marshland, and tried to grow food on high ground and on other poor land. But much of this newly cleared land quickly became exhausted, because the soil was too poor, being either too heavy or too light and sandy. As a result, the effort to farm more land could not match the increase in population, and this led to a decline in individual family land holdings. It also led to an increase in the number of landless labourers, to greater poverty and hunger. As land became overused, so bad harvests became more frequent. And in the years of bad harvest people starved to death. It is a pattern cruelly familiar to many poor countries today. Among richer people, the pressure on land led to an increase in its value, and to an increase in buying and selling. Landowning widows found themselves courted by land-hungry single men.

Unfortunately, agricultural skills improved little during this period. Neither peasants nor landlords had the necessary knowledge or understanding to develop them. In addition, manorial landlords, equally interested in good harvests, insisted that the animals of the peasantry grazed on their own land to enrich it during its year of rest. Many villagers

tried to increase their income by other activities and became blacksmiths, carpenters, tilers or shepherds, and it is from the thirteenth century that many villagers became known by their trade name.

Shortage of food led to a sharp rise in prices at the end of the twelfth century. The price of wheat, for example, doubled between 1190 and 1200. A sheep that cost four pence in 1199 fetched ten pence in 1210. Prices would be high in a bad season, but could suddenly drop when the harvest was specially good. This inflation weakened feudal ties, which depended to a great extent on a steady economic situation to be workable. The smaller landed knights found it increasingly difficult to pay for their military duties. By the end of the thirteenth century a knight's equipment, which had cost fifteen shillings in the early twelfth century, now cost more than three times this amount. Although nobles and knights could get more money from their land by paying farm labourers and receiving money rents than by giving land rent free in return for labour, many knights with smaller estates became increasingly indebted.

We know about these debts from the records of the "Exchequer of the Jews". The small Jewish community in England earned its living by lending money, and lived under royal protection. By the late thirteenth century these records show a large number of knights in debt to Jewish money lenders. When a knight was unable to repay the money he had borrowed, the Jewish money lender sold the knight's land to the greater landholding nobility. This did not please Edward I, who feared the growth in power of the greater nobility as they profited from the disappearance of smaller landholders. He had wanted the support of the knightly class against the greater lords, and it was partly for this reason that he had called on them to be represented in Parliament. Now he saw the danger that as a class they might become seriously weakened. The Jews were middlemen in an economic process which was the result of social forces at work in the countryside. While the economic function of the Jews in providing capital had been useful they had been safe, but once this

was no longer so, the king used popular feeling against them as an excuse to expel them. In 1290 the Jewish community was forced to leave the country.

Feudalism was slowly dying out, but the changes often made landlords richer and peasants poorer. Larger landlords had to pay fewer feudal taxes, while new taxes were demanded from everyone in possession of goods and incomes. As a result many could not afford to pay rent and so they lost their land. Some of these landless people went to the towns, which offered a better hope for the future.

The growth of towns as centres of wealth

England was to a very large degree an agricultural society. Even in towns and cities, many of those involved in trade or industry also farmed small holdings of land on the edge of town. In this sense England was self-sufficient. However, throughout the Middle Ages England needed things from abroad, such as salt and spices. Inside England there was a good deal of trade between different regions. Wool-growing areas, for example, imported food from food-producing areas. However, it is harder to know the extent of this internal trade because it was less formal than international trade, and therefore less recorded.

We know more about international trade, which was recorded because the king obtained a considerable income from customs dues. During the Anglo-Saxon period most European trade had been with the Frisians in the Low Countries, around the mouth of the River Rhine. Following the Viking invasions most trade from the ninth century onwards had taken place with Scandinavia. By the eleventh century, for example, English grain was highly valued in Norway. In return England imported Scandinavian fish and tall timber. However, by the end of the twelfth century this Anglo-Scandinavian trade link had weakened.

This was the result of the Norman Conquest, after which England looked away from the northeast, Scandinavia and Germany, and towards the south, France, the Low Countries, and beyond. The royal

family had links with Gascony in southwest France, and this led to an important trade exchange of wine for cloth and cereal. However, easily the most important link was once again with the Low Countries, and the basis of this trade was wool.

England had always been famous for its wool, and in Anglo-Saxon times much of it had been exported to the Low Countries. In order to improve the manufacture of woollen cloth, William the Conqueror encouraged Flemish weavers and other skilled workers from Normandy to settle in England. They helped to establish new towns: Newcastle, Hull, Boston, Lynn and others. These settlers had good connections with Europe and were able to begin a lively trade. However, raw wool rather than finished cloth remained the main export. As the European demand for wool stayed high, and since no other country could match the high quality of English wool, English exporters could charge a price high above the production cost, and about twice as much as the price in the home market. The king taxed the export of raw wool heavily as a means of increasing his own income. It was easily England's most profitable business. When Richard I was freed from his captivity, over half the price was paid in wool. As a symbol of England's source of wealth, a wool sack has remained in the House of Lords ever since this time. Much of the wool industry was built up by the monasteries, which kept large flocks of sheep on their great estates.

The wool trade illustrates the way in which the towns related to the countryside. "Chapmen" or "hucksters", travelling traders, would buy wool at particular village markets. Then they took the wool to town, where it would be graded and bundled up for export or for local spinning. Larger fairs, both in town and country, were important places where traders and producers met, and deals could be made. These were not purely English affairs. Foreign merchants seeking high quality wool frequently attended the larger fairs.

Such trade activities could not possibly have taken place under the restrictions of feudalism. But towns were valuable centres to nobles who wanted to sell

their produce and to kings who wished to benefit from the increase in national wealth. As a result, the townspeople quickly managed to free themselves from feudal ties and interference. At the end of the Anglo-Saxon period there were only a few towns, but by 1250 most of England's towns were already established.

Many towns stood on land belonging to feudal lords. But by the twelfth century kings were discouraging local lords from taking the wealth from nearby towns. They realised that towns could become effective centres of royal authority, to balance the power of the local nobility. The kings therefore gave "charters of freedom" to many towns, freeing the inhabitants from feudal duties to the local lord. These charters, however, had to be paid for, and kings sold them for a high price. But it was worth the money. Towns could now raise their own local taxes on goods coming in. They could also have their own courts, controlled by the town merchants, on condition that they paid an annual tax to the king. Inside the town walls, people were able to develop social and economic organisations free from feudal rule. It was the beginnings of a middle class and a capitalist economy.

Within the towns and cities, society and the economy were mainly controlled by "guilds". These were brotherhoods of different kinds of merchants, or of skilled workers. The word "guild" came from the Saxon word "gildan", to pay, because members paid towards the cost of the brotherhood. The merchant guilds grew in the thirteenth century and included all the traders in any particular town. Under these guilds trade was more tightly controlled than at any later period. At least one hundred guilds existed in the thirteenth century, similar in some ways to our modern trade unions. The right to form a guild was sometimes included in a town's charter of freedom. It was from among the members of the guild that the town's leaders were probably chosen. In the course of time entry into these guilds became increasingly difficult as guilds tried to control a particular trade. In some cases entry was only open to the sons of guild members. In other cases entry could be obtained by

paying a fee to cover the cost of the training, or apprenticeship, necessary to maintain the high standard of the trade.

During the fourteenth century, as larger towns continued to grow, “craft” guilds came into being. All members of each of these guilds belonged to the same trade or craft. The earliest craft guilds were those of the weavers in London and Oxford. Each guild tried to protect its own trade interests. Members of these guilds had the right to produce, buy or sell their particular trade without having to pay special town taxes. But members also had to make sure that goods were of a certain quality, and had to keep to agreed prices so as not to undercut other guild members.

In London the development of craft guilds went further than elsewhere, with a rich upper level of the craft community, the so-called livery companies, controlling most of the affairs of the city. Over the centuries the twelve main livery companies have developed into large financial institutions. Today they play an important part in the government of the City of London, and the yearly choice of its Lord Mayor.

Language, literature and culture

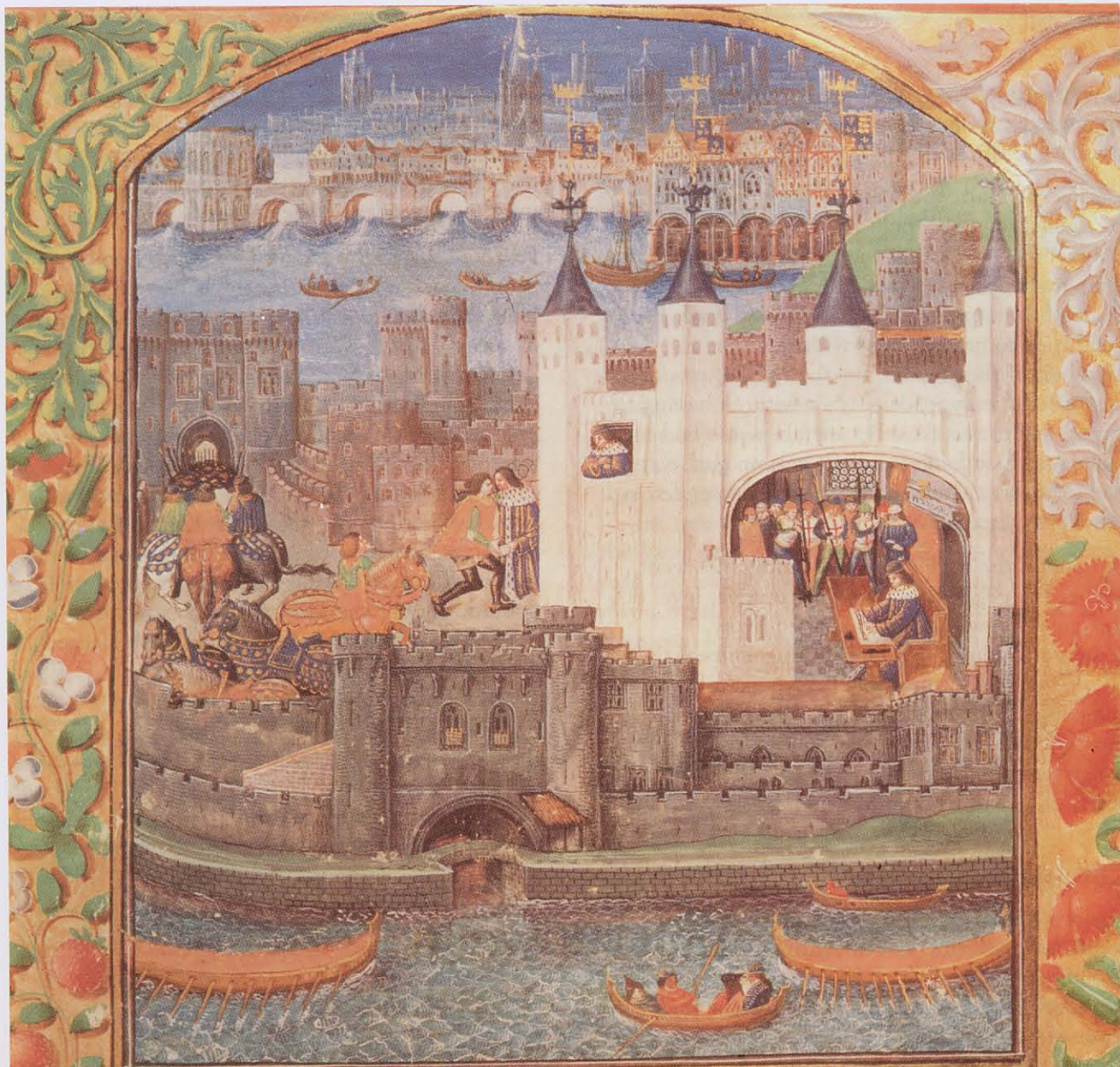
The growth of literacy in England was closely connected with the twelfth-century Renaissance, a cultural movement which had first started in Italy. Its influence moved northwards along the trade routes, reaching England at the end of the century. This revolution in ideas and learning brought a new desire to test religious faith against reason. Schools of learning were established in many towns and cities. Some were “grammar” schools independent of the Church, while others were attached to a cathedral. All of these schools taught Latin, because most books were written in this language. Although it may seem strange for education to be based on a dead language, Latin was important because it was the educated language of almost all Europe, and was therefore useful in the spread of ideas and learning. In spite of the dangers, the Church took a lead in the new intellectual movement.

In England two schools of higher learning were established, the first at Oxford and the second at Cambridge, at the end of the twelfth century. By the 1220s these two universities were the intellectual leaders of the country.

Few could go to the universities. Most English people spoke neither Latin, the language of the Church and of education, nor French, the language of law and of the Norman rulers. It was a long time before English became the language of the ruling class. Some French words became part of the English language, and often kept a more polite meaning than the old Anglo-Saxon words. For example, the word “chair”, which came from the French, describes a better piece of furniture than the Anglo-Saxon word “stool”. In the same way, the Anglo-Saxon word “belly” was replaced in polite society by the word “stomach”. Other Anglo-Saxon words ceased to be used altogether.

Mob Quad in Merton College is the oldest of Oxford's famous “quadrangles”, or courtyards. It was built in the first half of the fourteenth century. Almost all the Oxford colleges were built round quadrangles, with a library on one side (in Mob Quad on the first floor on the left), and living areas for both masters and students on the other sides. Merton College chapel, in the background, is the finest late fourteenth-century example in Oxford.





Des nouvelles d'abbion
 Si vous en plaist escouter
 Mon frere & mon cōpatrio
 S'achiez qua mon retoner
 Il y este deca la mer
 Et ceu a loyeuse chiere

The late Middle Ages

7 The century of war, plague and disorder

War with Scotland and France • The age of chivalry • The century of plagues • The poor in revolt • Heresy and orthodoxy

The fourteenth century was disastrous for Britain as well as most of Europe, because of the effect of wars and plagues. Probably one-third of Europe's population died of plague. Hardly anywhere escaped its effects.

Britain and France suffered, too, from the damages of war. In the 1330s England began a long struggle against the French Crown. In France villages were raided or destroyed by passing armies. France and England were exhausted economically by the cost of maintaining armies. England had the additional burden of fighting the Scots, and maintaining control of Ireland and Wales, both of which were trying to throw off English rule.

It is difficult to measure the effects of war and plague on fourteenth-century Britain, except in deaths. But undoubtedly one effect of both was an increasing challenge to authority. The heavy demands made by the king on gentry and merchants weakened the economic strength of town and countryside but increased the political strength of the merchants and gentry whenever they provided the king with money. The growth of an alliance between merchants and gentry at this time was of the greatest importance for later political developments, particularly for the strength of Parliament against the king in the seventeenth

century, and also for the strength of society against the dangers of revolution at the end of the eighteenth century. Finally, the habit of war created a new class of armed men in the countryside, in place of the old feudal system of forty days' service. These gangs, in reality local private armies, damaged the local economy but increased the nobles' ability to challenge the authority of the Crown. Already in 1327 one king had been murdered by powerful nobles, and another one was murdered in 1399. These murders weakened respect for the Crown, and encouraged repeated struggles for it amongst the king's most powerful relations. In the following century a king, or a king's eldest son, was killed in 1461, 1471, 1483 and 1485. But in the end the nobles destroyed themselves and as a class they disappeared.

War with Scotland and France

England's wish to control Scotland had suffered a major setback at Bannockburn in 1314. Many of the English had been killed, and Edward II himself had been lucky to escape. After other unsuccessful attempts England gave up its claim to overlordship of Scotland in 1328. However, it was not long before the two countries were at war again, but this time because of England's war with France.

The repeated attempts of English kings to control Scotland had led the Scots to look for allies. After Edward I's attempt to take over Scotland in 1295, the Scots turned to the obvious ally, the king of France, for whom there were clear advantages in an alliance with Scotland. This "Auld [old] Alliance"

The Tower of London has been a fortress, palace and prison. One of its earliest prisoners was the French duke of Orleans, who was captured at the battle of Agincourt in 1415. He spent twenty-five years in English prisons before he was ransomed. He appears in this picture, seated in the Norman White Tower, guarded by English soldiers. The White Tower itself was built by William I with stone brought from Normandy. Behind the Tower is London Bridge, with houses built upon it.

lasted into the sixteenth century. France benefited more than Scotland from it, but both countries agreed that whenever England attacked one of them, the other would make trouble behind England's back. The alliance did not operate the whole time. There were long periods when it was not needed or used.

England's troubles with France resulted from the French king's growing authority in France, and his determination to control all his nobles, even the greatest of them. France had suffered for centuries from rebellious vassals, and the two most troublesome were the duke of Burgundy and the English king (who was still the king of France's vassal as duke of Aquitaine), both of whom refused to recognise the French king's overlordship.

To make his position stronger, the king of France began to interfere with England's trade. Part of Aquitaine, an area called Gascony, traded its fine wines for England's corn and woollen cloth. This trade was worth a lot of money to the English Crown. But in 1324 the French king seized part of Gascony. Burgundy was England's other major trading partner, because it was through Burgundy's province of Flanders (now Belgium) that almost all England's wool exports were made. Any French move to control these two areas was a direct threat to England's wealth. The king of France tried to make the duke of Burgundy accept his authority. To prevent this, England threatened Burgundy with economic collapse by stopping wool exports to Flanders. This forced the duke of Burgundy to make an alliance with England against France.

England went to war because it could not afford the destruction of its trade with Flanders. It was difficult to persuade merchants to pay for wars against the Scots or the Welsh, from which there was so little wealth to be gained. But the threat to their trade and wealth persuaded the rich merchant classes of England that war against France was absolutely necessary. The lords, knights and fighting men also looked forward to the possibility of winning riches and lands.

Edward III declared war on France in 1337. His excuse was a bold one: he claimed the right to the

French Crown. It is unlikely that anyone, except for the English, took his claim very seriously, but it was a good enough reason for starting a war. The war Edward began, later called the Hundred Years War, did not finally end until 1453, with the English Crown losing all its possessions in France except for Calais, a northern French port.

At first the English were far more successful than the French on the battlefield. The English army was experienced through its wars in Wales and in Scotland. It had learnt the value of being lightly armed, and quick in movement. Its most important weapon was the Welsh longbow, used by most of the ordinary footsoldiers. It was very effective on the battlefield because of its quick rate of fire. An experienced man could fire a second arrow into the air before the first had reached its destination. Writers of the time talk of "clouds" of arrows darkening the sky. These arrows could go through most armour. The value of the longbow was proved in two victories, at Crécy in 1346 and at Poitiers in 1356, where the French king himself was taken prisoner. The English captured a huge quantity of treasure, and it was said that after the battle of Poitiers every woman in England had a French bracelet on her arm. The French king bought his freedom for £500,000, an enormous amount of money in those days.

By the treaty of Brétigny, in 1360, Edward III was happy to give up his claim to the French throne because he had re-established control over areas previously held by the English Crown. The French recognised his ownership of all Aquitaine, including Gascony; parts of Normandy and Brittany, and the newly captured port of Calais. But because the French king had only unwillingly accepted this situation the war did not end, and fighting soon began again. All this land, except for the valuable coastal ports of Calais, Cherbourg, Brest, Bordeaux and Bayonne, was taken back by French forces during the next fifteen years. It was a warning that winning battles was a good deal easier than winning wars.

True to the "Auld Alliance" the king of Scots had attacked England in 1346, but he was defeated and

taken prisoner. English forces raided as far as Edinburgh, destroying and looting. However, Edward III allowed the French to ransom the Scots king David and, satisfied with his successes in France, Edward gave up trying to control the Scots Crown. For a while there was peace, but the struggle between the French and English kings over French territories was to continue into the fifteenth century.

The age of chivalry

Edward III and his eldest son, the Black Prince, were greatly admired in England for their courage on the battlefield and for their courtly manners. They became symbols of the “code of chivalry”, the way in which a perfect knight should behave. During the reign of Edward interest grew in the legendary King Arthur. Arthur, if he ever existed, was probably a Celtic ruler who fought the Anglo-Saxons, but we know nothing more about him. The fourteenth-century legend created around Arthur included both the imagined magic and mystery of the Celts, and also the knightly values of the court of Edward III.

According to the code of chivalry, the perfect knight fought for his good name if insulted, served God and the king, and defended any lady in need. These ideas were expressed in the legend of the Round Table, around which King Arthur and his knights sat as equals in holy brotherhood.

Edward introduced the idea of chivalry into his court. Once, a lady at court accidentally dropped her garter and Edward III noticed some of his courtiers laughing at her. He picked up the garter and tied it to his own leg, saying in French, “*Honi soit qui mal y pense*,” which meant “Let him be ashamed who sees wrong in it.” From this strange yet probably true story, the Order of the Garter was founded in 1348. Edward chose as members of the order twenty-four knights, the same number the legendary Arthur had chosen. They met once a year on St George’s Day at Windsor Castle, where King Arthur’s Round Table was supposed to have



Edward III receives his sword and shield from the mythical St George. This is a propaganda picture. As patron saint of England, and of the Order of the Garter which Edward III has founded, St George is used in this way to confirm Edward’s position.

been. The custom is still followed, and *Honi Soit Qui Mal Y Pense* is still the motto of the royal family.

Chivalry was a useful way of persuading men to fight by creating the idea that war was a noble and glorious thing. War could also, of course, be profitable. But in fact cruelty, death, destruction and theft were the reality of war, as they are today. The Black Prince, who was the living example of chivalry in England, was feared in France for his cruelty.



Knights, according to the ideals of chivalry, would fight to defend a lady's honour. In peacetime knights fought one against another in tournaments. Here a knight prepares to fight, and is handed his helmet and shield by his wife and daughter. Other knights could recognise by the design on his shield and on his horse's coat that the rider was Sir Geoffrey Luttrell.

The century of plagues

The year 1348 brought an event of far greater importance than the creation of a new order of chivalry. This was the terrible plague, known as the Black Death, which reached almost every part of Britain during 1348–9. Probably more than one-third of the entire population of Britain died, and fewer than one person in ten who caught the plague managed to survive it. Whole villages disappeared, and some towns were almost completely deserted until the plague itself died out.

The Black Death was neither the first natural disaster of the fourteenth century, nor the last. Plagues had killed sheep and other animals earlier in the century. An agricultural crisis resulted from the growth in population and the need to produce more food. Land was no longer allowed to rest one year in three, which meant that it was over-used, resulting in years of famine when the harvest failed. This process had already begun to slow down population growth by 1300.

After the Black Death there were other plagues during the rest of the century which killed mostly the young and healthy. In 1300 the population of Britain had probably been over four million. By the end of the century it was probably hardly half that figure, and it only began to grow again in the second half of the fifteenth century. Even so, it took until the seventeenth century before the population reached four million again.

The dramatic fall in population, however, was not entirely a bad thing. At the end of the thirteenth century the sharp rise in prices had led an increasing number of landlords to stop paying workers for their labour, and to go back to serf labour in order to avoid losses. In return villagers were given land to farm, but this tenanted land was often the poorest land of the manorial estate. After the Black Death there were so few people to work on the land that the remaining workers could ask for more money for their labour. We know they did this because the king and Parliament tried again and again to control wage increases. We also know from these repeated efforts that they cannot have been successful. The poor found that they could demand more money and did so. This finally led to the end of serfdom.

Because of the shortage and expense of labour, landlords returned to the twelfth-century practice of letting out their land to energetic freeman farmers who bit by bit added to their own land. In the twelfth century, however, the practice of letting out farms had been a way of increasing the landlord's profits. Now it became a way of avoiding losses. Many "firma" agreements were for a whole life span, and some for several life spans. By the mid-fifteenth century few landlords had home farms at all. These smaller farmers who rented the manorial lands slowly became a new class, known as the "yeomen". They became an important part of the agricultural economy, and have always remained so.

Overall, agricultural land production shrank, but those who survived the disasters of the fourteenth century enjoyed a greater share of the agricultural economy. Even for peasants life became more comfortable. For the first time they had enough money to build more solid houses, in stone where it was available, in place of huts made of wood, mud and thatch.

There had been other economic changes during the fourteenth century. The most important of these was the replacement of wool by finished cloth as

The Black Death killed between a half and one-third of the population of Britain.



England's main export. This change was the natural result of the very high prices at which English wool was sold in Flanders by the end of the thirteenth century. Merchants decided they could increase their profits further by buying wool in England at half the price for which it was sold in Flanders, and produce finished cloth for export. This process suddenly grew very rapidly after the Flemish cloth industry itself collapsed during the years 1320 to 1360. Hundreds of skilled Flemings came to England in search of work. They were encouraged to do so by Edward III because there was a clear benefit to England in exporting a finished product rather than a raw material. The surname "Fleming" has been a common one in England ever since, particularly in East Anglia, where many Flemings settled.

At the beginning of the century England had exported 30,000 sacks of raw wool but only 8,000 lengths of cloth each year. By the middle of the century it exported only 8,000 sacks of wool but 50,000 lengths of cloth, and by the end of the century this increased to well over 100,000. The wool export towns declined. They were replaced by towns and villages with fast-flowing rivers useful for the new process of cleaning and treating wool. Much of the clothmaking process, like spinning, was done in the workers' own homes. Indeed, so many young women spun wool that "spinster" became and has remained the word for an unmarried woman.

The West Country, Wales, and Yorkshire in the north all did well from the change in clothmaking. But London remained much larger and richer. By the late fourteenth century its 50,000 inhabitants were supported by trade with the outside world, especially the Baltic, Mediterranean and North Sea ports. Its nearest trade rival was Bristol.

The poor in revolt

It is surprising that the English never rebelled against Edward III. He was an expensive king at a time when many people were miserably poor and sick with plagues. At the time of the Black Death he was busy with expensive wars against France and Scotland. The demands he made on merchants and peasants were enormous, but Edward III handled these people with skill.

Edward's grandson, Richard, was less fortunate. He became king on his grandfather's death in 1377 because his father, the Black Prince, had died a few months earlier. Richard II inherited the problems of discontent but had neither the diplomatic skill of his grandfather, nor the popularity of his father. Added to this he became king when he was only eleven, and so others governed for him. In the year he became king, these advisers introduced a tax payment for every person over the age of fifteen. Two years later, this tax was enforced again. The people paid.

But in 1381 this tax was enforced for a third time and also increased to three times the previous amount. There was an immediate revolt in East Anglia and in Kent, two of the richer parts of the country. The poorer parts of the country, the north and northwest, did not rebel. This suggests that in the richer areas ordinary people had become more aware and confident of their rights and their power.

The new tax had led to revolt, but there were also other reasons for discontent. The landlords had been trying for some time to force the peasants back into serfdom, because serf labour was cheaper than paid labour. The leader of the revolt, Wat Tyler, was the first to call for fair treatment of England's poor people: "We are men formed in Christ's likeness," he claimed, "and we are kept like animals." The people sang a revolutionary rhyme suggesting that when God created man he had not made one man master over another:

When Adam delved, and Eve span,
Who was then the gentleman?

The idea that God had created all people equal called for an end to feudalism and respect for

honest labour. But the Peasants' Revolt, as it was called, only lasted for four weeks. During that period the peasants took control of much of London. In fact the revolt was not only by peasants from the countryside: a number of poorer townspeople also revolted, suggesting that the discontent went beyond the question of feudal service. When Wat Tyler was killed, Richard II skilfully quietened the angry crowd. He promised to meet all the people's demands, including an end to serfdom, and the people peacefully went home.

As soon as they had gone, Richard's position changed. Although he did not try to enforce the tax, he refused to keep his promise to give the peasants their other demands. "Serfs you are," he said, "and serfs you shall remain." His officers hunted down other leading rebels and hanged them. But the danger of revolt by the angry poor was a warning to the king, the nobles and to the wealthy of the city of London.

Heresy and orthodoxy

The Peasants' Revolt was the first sign of growing discontent with the state. During the next century discontent with the Church also grew. There had already been a few attacks on Church property in towns controlled by the Church. In 1381 one rebel priest had called for the removal of all bishops and archbishops, as well as all the nobles.

The greed of the Church was one obvious reason for its unpopularity. The Church was a feudal power, and often treated its peasants and townspeople with as much cruelty as the nobles did. There was another reason why the people of England disliked paying taxes to the pope. Edward's wars in France were beginning to make the English conscious of their "Englishness" and the pope was a foreigner. To make matters worse the pope had been driven out of Rome, and was living in Avignon in France. It seemed obvious to the English that the pope must be on the French side, and that the taxes they paid to the Church were actually helping France against England. This was a matter on which the king and people in England agreed. The king reduced the amount of tax money

the pope could raise in Britain, and made sure that most of it found its way into his own treasury instead.

One might have expected the bishops and clergy to oppose the king. They did not, because almost all of them were English and came from noble families, and so shared the political views of the nobility. Most of them had been appointed by the king and some of them also acted as his officers. When the peasants stormed London in 1381 they executed the Archbishop of Canterbury, who was also the king's chancellor. It was unlikely that his killers saw much difference between the two offices. Archbishop or chancellor, he was part of an oppressive establishment.

Another threat to the Church during the fourteenth century was the spread of religious writings, which were popular with an increasingly literate population. These books were for use in private prayer and dealt with the death of Jesus Christ, the lives of the Saints and the Virgin Mary. The increase in private prayer was a direct threat to the authority of the Church over the religious life of the population. This was because these writings allowed people to pray and think independently of Church control. Private religious experience and the increase of knowledge encouraged people to challenge the Church's authority, and the way it used this to advance its political influence.

Most people were happy to accept the continued authority of the Church, but some were not. At the end of the fourteenth century new religious ideas appeared in England which were dangerous to Church authority, and were condemned as heresy. This heresy was known as "Lollardy", a word which probably came from a Latin word meaning "to say prayers". One of the leaders of Lollardy was John Wycliffe, an Oxford professor. He believed that everyone should be able to read the Bible in English, and to be guided by it in order to save their soul. He therefore translated it from Latin, finishing the work in 1396. He was not allowed to publish his new Bible in England, and was forced to leave Oxford. However, both he and the other Lollards were admired by those nobles and scholars who



The Peasants' Revolt ended when the Lord Mayor of London killed Wat Tyler at Smithfield. Perhaps he feared that Tyler would kill King Richard, to whom Tyler was talking. Richard II can be seen a second time, talking to the peasant army (right) and calming them with the words, "Sirs, will you shoot your king? I am your leader, follow me." In fact he sent them to their homes, and sent his officers to arrest and execute the leaders.

were critical of the Church, its wealth and the poor quality of its clergy.

If the Lollards had been supported by the king, the English Church might have become independent from the papacy in the early fifteenth century. But Richard's successor, Henry IV, was not sympathetic. He was deeply loyal to the Church, and in 1401 introduced into England for the first time the idea of executing the Lollards by burning. Lollardy was not well enough organised to resist. In the next few years it was driven underground, and its spirit was not seen again for a century.

8 The crisis of kings and nobles

The crisis of kingship • Wales in revolt • The struggle in France • The Wars of the Roses • Scotland



Richard II. This is probably the earliest portrait of a sovereign painted from life to have survived to this day. This is a copy of the original in Westminster Abbey.

The crisis of kingship

During the fourteenth century, towards the end of the Middle Ages, there was a continuous struggle between the king and his nobles. The first crisis came in 1327 when Edward II was deposed and cruelly murdered. His eleven-year-old son, Edward III, became king, and as soon as he could, he punished those responsible. But the principle that kings were neither to be killed nor deposed was broken.

Towards the end of the fourteenth century Richard II was the second king to be killed by ambitious lords. He had made himself extremely unpopular by his choice of advisers. This was always a difficult matter, because the king's advisers became powerful, and those not chosen lost influence and wealth. Some of Richard's strongest critics had been the most powerful men in the kingdom.

Richard was young and proud. He quarrelled with these nobles in 1388, and used his authority to humble them. He imprisoned his uncle, John of Gaunt, the third son of Edward III, who was the most powerful and wealthy noble of his time. John of Gaunt died in prison. Other nobles, including John of Gaunt's son, Henry duke of Lancaster, did not forget or forgive. In 1399, when Richard II was busy trying to establish royal authority again in Ireland, they rebelled. Henry of Lancaster, who had left England, returned and raised an army. Richard was deposed.

Unlike Edward II, however, Richard II had no children. There were two possible successors. One was the earl of March, the seven-year-old grandson of Edward III's second son. The other was Henry of Lancaster, son of John of Gaunt. It was difficult to

say which had the better claim to the throne. But Henry was stronger. He won the support of other powerful nobles and took the crown by force. Richard died mysteriously soon after.

Henry IV spent the rest of his reign establishing his royal authority. But although he passed the crown to his son peacefully, he had sown the seeds of civil war. Half a century later the nobility would be divided between those who supported his family, the “Lancastrians”, and those who supported the family of the earl of March, the “Yorkists”.

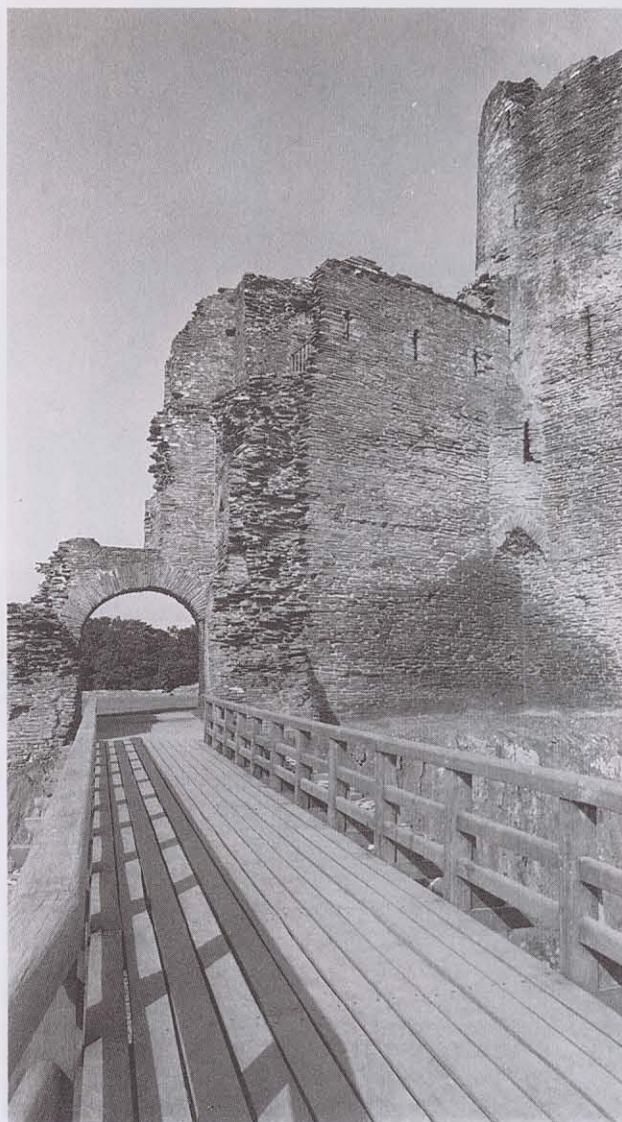
Wales in revolt

Edward I had conquered Wales in the 1280s, and colonised it. He brought English people to enlarge small towns. Pembrokeshire, in the far southwest, even became known as “the little England beyond Wales”. Edward’s officers drove many of the Welsh into the hills, and gave their land to English farmers. Many Welsh were forced to join the English army, not because they wanted to serve the English but because they had lost their land and needed to live. They fought in Scotland and in France, and taught the English their skill with the longbow.

A century later the Welsh found a man who was ready to rebel against the English king, and whom they were willing to follow. Owain Glyndwr was the first and only Welsh prince to have wide and popular support in every part of Wales. In fact it was he who created the idea of a Welsh nation. He was descended from two royal families which had ruled in different parts of Wales before the Normans came.

Owain Glyndwr’s rebellion did not start as a national revolt. At first he joined the revolt of Norman–Welsh border lords who had always tried to be free of royal control. But after ten years of war Owain Glyndwr’s border rebellion had developed into a national war, and in 1400 he was proclaimed Prince of Wales by his supporters. This was far more popular with the Welsh people than Edward I’s trick with his newborn son at Caernarfon in 1284. However, Glyndwr was not strong enough to

defeat the English armies sent against him. He continued to fight a successful guerrilla war which made the control of Wales an extremely expensive problem for the English. But after 1410 Glyndwr lost almost all his support as Welsh people realised that however hard they fought they would never be free of the English. Owain Glyndwr was never captured. He did for Wales what William Wallace had done for Scotland a century earlier. He created a feeling of national identity.



Cilgerran Castle, near Cardigan in southwest Wales, was captured by Owain Glyndwr in 1405. Although it had been built two hundred years earlier, it was clearly strong and must have been difficult to capture.

The struggle in France

By the end of the fourteenth century, the long war with France, known as the Hundred Years War, had already been going on for over fifty years. But there had been long periods without actual fighting.

When Henry IV died in 1413 he passed on to his son Henry V a kingdom that was peaceful and united. Henry V was a brave and intelligent man, and like Richard I, he became one of England's favourite kings.

Since the situation was peaceful at home Henry V felt able to begin fighting the French again. His French war was as popular as Edward III's had been. Henry had a great advantage because the king of France was mad, and his nobles were quarrelsome. The war began again in 1415 when Henry renewed Edward III's claim to the throne of France. Burgundy again supported England, and the English army was able to prove once more that it was far better in battle than the French army. At Agincourt the same year the English defeated a French army three times its own size. The English were more skilful, and had better weapons.

Between 1417 and 1420 Henry managed to capture most of Normandy and the nearby areas. By the treaty of Troyes in 1420 Henry was recognised as heir to the mad king, and he married Katherine of Valois, the king's daughter. But Henry V never became king of France because he died a few months before the French king in 1422. His nine-month-old baby son, Henry VI, inherited the thrones of England and France.

As with Scotland and Wales, England found it was easier to invade and conquer France than to keep it. At first Henry V's brother, John duke of Bedford, continued to enlarge the area under English control. But soon the French began to fight back. Foreign invasion had created for the first time strong French national feeling. The English army was twice defeated by the French, who were inspired by a mysterious peasant girl called Joan of Arc, who claimed to hear heavenly voices. Joan of Arc was captured by the Burgundians, and given to



Henry V is remembered as possibly the most heroic of English kings because of his brilliant campaigns in France. His death in 1422 brought to an end the English kings' hopes of ruling France.

the English. The English gave her to the Church in Rouen which burnt her as a witch in 1431.

England was now beginning to lose an extremely costly war. In 1435 England's best general, John of Bedford, died. Then England's Breton and Burgundian allies lost confidence in the value of the English alliance. With the loss of Gascony in 1453, the Hundred Years War was over. England had lost everything except the port of Calais.



The battle of Agincourt in 1415 was Henry V's most famous victory against the French. The English army with the royal standard attacks (left). The French royal standard is to be seen on the ground (bottom right) as French soldiers die. Although the English were outnumbered by more than three to one, Henry's archers destroyed the French feudal cavalry.

The Wars of the Roses

Henry VI, who had become king as a baby, grew up to be simple-minded and book-loving. He hated the warlike nobles, and was an unsuitable king for such a violent society. But he was a civilised and gentle man. He founded two places of learning that still exist, Eton College not far from London, and King's College in Cambridge. He could happily have spent his life in such places of learning. But Henry's simple-mindedness gave way to periods of mental illness.

England had lost a war and was ruled by a mentally ill king who was bad at choosing advisers. It was perhaps natural that the nobles began to ask questions about who should be ruling the country. They remembered that Henry's grandfather Henry of Lancaster had taken the throne when Richard II was deposed.

There were not more than sixty noble families controlling England at this time. Most of them were related to each other through marriage. Some of the nobles were extremely powerful. Many of them continued to keep their own private armies after returning from the war in France, and used them to frighten local people into obeying them. Some of these armies were large. For example, by 1450 the duke of Buckingham had 2,000 men in his private army.

The discontented nobility were divided between those who remained loyal to Henry VI, the "Lancastrians", and those who supported the duke of York, the "Yorkists". The duke of York was the heir of the earl of March, who had lost the competition for the throne when Richard II was deposed in 1399. In 1460 the duke of York claimed the throne for himself. After his death in battle, his son Edward took up the struggle and won the throne in 1461.

Edward IV put Henry into the Tower of London, but nine years later a new Lancastrian army rescued Henry and chased Edward out of the country. Like the Lancastrians, Edward was able to raise another army. Edward had the advantage of his popularity with the merchants of London and the southeast of

England. This was because the Yorkists had strongly encouraged profitable trade, particularly with Burgundy. Edward returned to England in 1471 and defeated the Lancastrians. At last Edward IV was safe on the throne. Henry VI died in the Tower of London soon after, almost certainly murdered.

The war between York and Lancaster would probably have stopped then if Edward's son had been old enough to rule, and if Edward's brother, Richard of Gloucester, had not been so ambitious. But when Edward IV died in 1483, his own two sons, the twelve-year-old Edward V and his younger brother, were put in the Tower by Richard of Gloucester. Richard took the Crown and became King Richard III. A month later the two princes were murdered. William Shakespeare's play *Richard III*, written a century later, accuses Richard of murder and almost everyone believed it. Richard III had a better reason than most to wish his two nephews dead, but his guilt has never been proved.

Richard III was not popular. Lancastrians and Yorkists both disliked him. In 1485 a challenger with a very distant claim to royal blood through John of Gaunt landed in England with Breton soldiers to claim the throne. Many discontented lords, both Lancastrians and Yorkists, joined him. His name was Henry Tudor, duke of Richmond, and he was half Welsh. He met Richard III at Bosworth. Half of Richard's army changed sides, and the battle quickly ended in his defeat and death. Henry Tudor was crowned king immediately, on the battlefield.

The war had finally ended, though this could not have been clear at the time. Much later, in the nineteenth century, the novelist Walter Scott named these wars the "Wars of the Roses", because York's symbol was a white rose, and Lancaster's a red one.

The Wars of the Roses nearly destroyed the English idea of kingship for ever. After 1460 there had been little respect for anything except the power to take the Crown. Tudor historians made much of these wars and made it seem as if much of England had been destroyed. This was not true. Fighting took place for only a total of fifteen months out of the

whole twenty-five year period. Only the nobles and their armies were involved.

It is true, however, that the wars were a disaster for the nobility. For the first time there had been no purpose in taking prisoners, because no one was interested in payment of ransom. Everyone was interested in destroying the opposing nobility. Those captured in battle were usually killed immediately. By the time of the battle of Bosworth in 1485, the old nobility had nearly destroyed itself. Almost half the lords of the sixty noble families had died in the wars. It was this fact which made it possible for the Tudors to build a new nation state.

Scotland

Scotland experienced many of the disasters that affected England at this time. The Scots did not escape the Black Death or the other plagues, and they also suffered from repeated wars.

Scotland paid heavily for its “Auld Alliance” with France. Because it supported France during the Hundred Years War, the English repeatedly invaded the Scottish Lowlands, from which most of the Scots king’s wealth came. England renewed its claim to overlordship of Scotland, and Edward IV’s army occupied Edinburgh in 1482.

Like the English kings, the Scottish kings were involved in long struggles with their nobles. Support for France turned attention away from establishing a strong state at home. And, as in England, several kings died early. James I was murdered in 1437, James II died in an accident before he was thirty in 1460, and James III was murdered in 1488. The early death of so many Scots kings left government in the hands of powerful nobles until the dead king’s son was old enough to rule. Naturally these nobles took the chance to make their own position more powerful.

As in England, the nobles kept private armies, instead of using serfs for military service as they had done earlier. This new system fitted well with the Celtic tribal loyalties of the Highlands. The Gaelic word for such tribes, “clan”, means “children”, in other words members of one family. But from the

fourteenth century, a “clan” began to mean groups of people occupying an area of land and following a particular chief. Not all the members of a clan were related to each other. Some groups joined a clan for protection, or because they were forced to choose between doing so or leaving the area. The most powerful of the Highland clans by the fifteenth century was Clan Donald. The clan chiefs were almost completely independent.

By the end of the Middle Ages, however, Scotland had developed as a nation in a number of ways. From 1399 the Scots demanded that a parliament should meet once a year, and kings often gathered together leading citizens to discuss matters of government. As in England, towns grew in importance, mainly because of the wool trade which grew thanks to the help of Flemish settlers. There was a large export trade in wool, leather and fish, mostly to the Netherlands.

Scotland’s alliance with France brought some benefits. At a time when much of the farmland was repeatedly destroyed by English armies, many Scotsmen found work as soldiers for the French king. Far more importantly, the connection with France helped develop education in Scotland. Following the example of Paris, universities were founded in Scotland at St Andrews in 1412, Glasgow in 1451 and at Aberdeen in 1495. Scotland could rightly claim to be equal with England in learning. By the end of the fifteenth century it was obvious that Scotland was a separate country from England. Nobody, either in England or in Scotland, believed in the English king’s claim to be overlord of Scotland.

9 Government and society

Government and society • The condition of women • Language and culture

Government and society

The year 1485 has usually been taken to mark the end of the Middle Ages in England. Of course, nobody at the time would have seen it as such. There was no reason to think that the new King Henry VII would rule over a country any different from the one ruled over by Richard III. Before looking at the changes in England under the House of Tudor it might be worth looking back at some of the main social developments that had taken place in the late Middle Ages.

Society was still based upon rank. At the top were dukes, earls and other lords, although there were far fewer as a result of war. Below these great lords were knights. Most knights, even by Edward I's time, were no longer heavily armed fighters on horses. They were "gentlemen farmers" or "landed gentry" who had increased the size of their landholdings, and improved their farming methods. This class had grown in numbers. Edward I had ordered that all those with an income of £20 a year must be made knights. This meant that even some

Sir Geoffrey Luttrell with his family and retainers at dinner. Food was eaten without forks, at a simple table. However, young men in particular had to remember their manners. "Don't sit down until you are told to and keep your hands and feet still," they were told. "Cut your bread with your knife and do not tear it. Don't lean on the table and make a mess on the cloth or drink with a full mouth. Don't take so much in your mouth that you cannot answer when someone speaks to you." Several people shared the same cup, so a final piece of advice was "wipe your mouth and hands clean with a cloth, so that you do not dirty the cup and make your friends unwilling to drink with you."

