



# **MEDIEVAL ENGLAND**

## **LECTURE 4**

# Plan

- 1. Plantagenet dynasty. Henry II. King Richard**
- 2. John I. Magna Carta or Great Charter**
- 3. Henry III. Origins of Parliament.**
- 4. Life in Medieval England.**
- 5. University of Oxford and University of Cambridge**



# Plantagenet dynasty. Henry II

- The House of Plantagenet ruled England from 1154 to 1485.
- Henry II (Geoffrey Plantagenet) was crowned in 1154 and was only 21.
- was a tough, intelligent, well educated, ambitious, ruthless, had violent temper and enormous energy.
- restored the royal administration in England by retake power from the powerful barons.
- started the basis of English Common Law by changing judicial system.
- restored his own royal authority over the church.
- gained full control over his lands in England and in France (the Counties of Anjou and Maine, the Duchy of Normandy, the Kingdom of England, Aquitaine, Poitou and Brittany, recognized as overlord by Welsh princes and the king of Scotland.
- regained the system of royal finances.

# Henry II

- Henry's sons (9) opposed their father's intention to split his lands equally amongst them.
- The eldest son, known as Henry the Young King did not want his inheritance broken apart.
- Henry the Young King headed the revolt. His brother Richard assisted him as well as many barons from England and Normandy.
- Henry II managed to defeat this year-long rebellion
- The Young King died of illness and the heir of the throne was now Richard.
- The final few years of Henry's reign up until his death in 1189, were full of disputes with his sons.

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# King Richard

- was born on 8 September 1157 in Oxford, he was the third son of Henry II,
- openly fought against his father in 1173 and, in 1189,
- became King of England in 1189,
- acquired a reputation as a leader and warrior becoming known as Richard 'The Lion Heart',
- chief ambition was to organise the Third Crusade, and capture Jerusalem. To finance this, he sold sheriffdoms and in 1190 he departed for the Holy Land,
- during his 10-year reign he spent only six months in England.
- spoke only French (his mother was French),
- was not interested in ruling the UK,
- during his absence in the UK his brother John was ruling the country.

# King Richard

- arrived in the Holy Land in June 1191.
- managed to capture Acre, Arsuf and Joppa.
- couldn't conquer Jerusalem, his main objective. Reason: quarrels between him and his supporters from France, and Germany.
- spent a few years near the Jerusalem' walls and was not able to capture this city.
- In a few years Richard made a truce with Saladin and started his journey home.
- while going home he was imprisoned. He was released in February 1194 when the ransom was paid.
- returned at once to England and was crowned for a second time, fearing that the ransom payment had compromised his independence.
- in a month he went to Normandy, never to return.
- died on 6 April 1199.
- was, a popular king in his own time as well as the hero of countless romantic legends, a favorite hero with troubadours and romancers, wrote lyrics of no mean quality.

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# John I

- succeeded his brother Richard,
- trannical, greedy and lawless ruler,

## **Achievement:**

- tried to strengthen the monarchy,
- collected a new land tax from the knights and the barons,
- modernised the government and kept good records,
- tried to force the Church to accept his candidate for Archbishop of Canterbury,
- increased his control over Ireland and Wales, and built up his forces in northern England. The King of Scotland signed a peace treaty with John.

# John I

Lost all of his father's empire (in France) except Aquitaine, earning the nickname of Lackland.

## **John's actions angered many people:**

- ✓ barons and knights for having to pay taxes for wars John I lost,
- ✓ nobleman for taking away their power and an attack on their freedom,
- ✓ the Church didn't want to be told what to do,
- ✓ The Irish, Welsh and Scots hated the power John had in their countries.

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# Magna Carta or Great Charter

- in May 1215, 40 barons, with French and Scottish support, formed an army (called “the Army of God”) and on 17 May they captured London.
- John met the rebels at Runnymede, near London, on 15 June 1215, and sign Magna Carta.
- Magna Carta contained 63 promises in an **attempt to limit royal power in matters of taxation, justice, religion and foreign policy.**
- It also set up a Council of 25 barons to make sure John kept his promises.

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# Magna Carta or Great Charter

- Magna Carta was the first document imposed upon a King of England in an attempt to limit his powers by law and protect the rights.
- The charter is widely known throughout world as an important part of the historical process that led to the rule of constitutional law in England.
- The Charter required King John to proclaim certain liberties and accept that his will was not arbitrary.
- The Magna Carta influenced common and constitutional law, as well as political representation and the development of parliament.
- The charter is associated with ideals of democracy, limitation of power, equality and freedom under law.
- The ideas in Magna Carta are regarded as the foundation of the freedom and human rights in other European countries and inspired later constitutional documents, including the USA Constitution.

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# John I. Magna Carta or Great Charter

- Soon John I refuse to follow Magna Carta.
- The reason: he had been forced to sign it.
- His rejection of Magna Carta caused another rebellion by the barons.
- He was already ill at this time and died shortly afterwards.

# Henry III

- the son of John,
- was nine when his father died and he became king,
- Henry III reigned from 1216 until his death in 1272 (one of the longest-serving English monarch),
- was the most obsessive patron of art and architecture ever to have occupied the throne of England.  
(Westminster, Westminster Abbey, Tower of London, the Great Hall at Winchester Castle, Windsor),
- issued the new version of Magna Carta and the 1225 version "The Great Charter of the Liberties of England, and of the Liberties of the Forest", still remains on the statute books of England and Wales,
- formed the Parliament.

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# Origins of Parliament

The ***Provisions of Oxford*** (1258) was created. A 15-member privy council limited the king's powers: could not govern without their consent. Parliament was to be held three times a year to advise the king and oversee the entire administration.

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# Life in Medieval England

- by 1300 over four million,
- most lived in villages in southern and eastern parts of England,
- villagers lived in the simplest houses and ate cereals and vegetables, pork meat for special occasions,
- the growth of population, high taxes and cruel forest laws, were the source for the legend about Robin Hood.
- cities and towns increased, many new towns appeared.
- peasants came to town to sell their produce,
- townspeople freed themselves from feudal ties, gaining their “charters of freedom”, appeared brotherhoods of separate kinds of merchants or skilled workers,
- towns were dirty places to live: no sewage system, rats spread the diseases (epidemic of plague),
- houses in towns - made of wood, caused fires.

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# Life in Medieval England

- the twelfth-century Renaissance - the growth of literacy,
- schools were established in many towns and cities, some attached to a cathedral, others “public” or independent,
- at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century - two universities (at Oxford and Cambridge),
- books were hand-written, rare and expensive.
- printing was invented in the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century in Germany by Johann Gutenberg and brought to England by William Caxton who set the first printing press in London in 1476.

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# The University of Oxford

- evidence of teaching in 1096,
- the oldest university in the English-speaking world, and the world's second-oldest surviving university (the first is Bologna),
- grew rapidly from 1167 (Henry II banned English students from attending the University of Paris).

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# The University of Cambridge

- founded in 1209,
- is the second-oldest university in the English-speaking world,
- formed by scholars leaving the University of Oxford after a dispute with townsfolk.

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