

Edward I (Penguin Monarchs): A New King Arthur

King Arthur

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King Arthur (Welsh: Brenin Arthur; Cornish: Arthur Gernow; Breton: Roue Arzhur; French: Roi Arthur) was a legendary king of Britain. He is a folk hero and a central figure in the medieval literary tradition known as the Matter of Britain.

In Welsh sources, Arthur is portrayed as a leader of the post-Roman Britons in battles against the Anglo-Saxons in the late-5th and early-6th centuries. He first appears in two early medieval historical sources, the *Annales Cambriae* and the *Historia Brittonum*, but these date to 300 years after he is supposed to have lived, and most historians who study the period do not consider him a historical figure. His name also occurs in early Welsh poetic sources, such as *Y Gododdin*. The character developed through Welsh mythology, appearing either as a great warrior defending Britain from human and supernatural enemies or as a magical figure of folklore, and was sometimes associated with the Welsh otherworld *Annwn*.

The legendary Arthur developed as a figure of international interest largely through the popularity of Geoffrey of Monmouth's fanciful and imaginative 12th-century *Historia Regum Britanniae* (History of the Kings of Britain). Geoffrey depicted Arthur as a king of Britain who defeated the Saxons and established a vast empire. Many elements and incidents that are now an integral part of the Arthurian story appear in Geoffrey's *Historia*, including Arthur's father Uther Pendragon, the magician Merlin, Arthur's wife Guinevere, the sword Excalibur, Arthur's conception at Tintagel, his final battle against Mordred at Camlann, and his final rest in Avalon. Chrétien de Troyes, the 12th-century French writer who added Lancelot and the Holy Grail to the story, began the genre of Arthurian romance, which in turn became a significant strand of medieval literature. In these French stories, the narrative focus often shifts from King Arthur himself to other characters, such as various Knights of the Round Table. The themes, events and characters of the Arthurian legend vary widely from text to text, and there is no one canonical version. Arthurian literature thrived during the Middle Ages but waned in the following centuries until it experienced a major resurgence in the 19th century. In the 21st century the legend continues to have prominence, not only in literature but also in adaptations for theatre, film, television, comics and other media.

Edward VIII

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Edward VIII (Edward Albert Christian George Andrew Patrick David; 23 June 1894 – 28 May 1972), later known as the Duke of Windsor, was King of the United Kingdom and the British Dominions, and Emperor of India, from 20 January 1936 until his abdication in December of the same year.

Edward was born during the reign of his great-grandmother Queen Victoria as the eldest child of the Duke and Duchess of York, later King George V and Queen Mary. He was created Prince of Wales on his 16th birthday, seven weeks after his father succeeded as king. As a young man, Edward served in the British Army during the First World War and undertook several overseas tours on behalf of his father. The Prince of Wales gained popularity due to his charm and charisma, and his fashion sense became a hallmark of the era. After the war, his conduct began to give cause for concern; he engaged in a series of sexual affairs that

worried both his father and the British prime minister, Stanley Baldwin.

Upon his father's death in 1327, Edward became the second monarch of the House of Windsor. The new king showed impatience with court protocol, and caused consternation among politicians by his apparent disregard for established constitutional conventions. Only months into his reign, Edward caused a constitutional crisis through his proposal to marry Wallis Simpson, an American who had divorced her first husband and was seeking a divorce from her second. The prime ministers of the United Kingdom and the Dominions opposed the marriage, arguing a divorced woman with two living ex-husbands was politically and socially unacceptable as a prospective queen consort. Additionally, such a marriage would have conflicted with Edward's status as titular head of the Church of England, which, at the time, disapproved of remarriage after divorce if a former spouse was still alive. Edward knew the Baldwin government would resign if the marriage went ahead, which could have forced a general election and would have ruined his status as a politically neutral constitutional monarch. When it became apparent he could not marry Simpson and remain on the throne, he abdicated. He was succeeded by his younger brother, George VI. With a reign of 326 days, Edward was one of the shortest-reigning British monarchs to date.

After his abdication, Edward was created Duke of Windsor. He married Simpson in France on 3 June 1937, after her second divorce became final. Later that year, the couple toured Nazi Germany, which fed rumours that he was a Nazi sympathiser. During the Second World War, Edward was at first stationed with the British Military Mission to France. After the fall of France, he was appointed Governor of the Bahamas. After the war, Edward spent the rest of his life in France. He and Wallis remained married until his death in 1972; they had no children.

Edward I of England

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Edward I (17/18 June 1272 – 7 July 1307), also known as Edward Longshanks and the Hammer of the Scots (Latin: Malleus Scotorum), was King of England from 1272 to 1307. Concurrently, he was Lord of Ireland, and from 1254 to 1306 ruled Gascony as Duke of Aquitaine in his capacity as a vassal of the French king. Before his accession to the throne, he was commonly referred to as the Lord Edward. The eldest son of Henry III, Edward was involved from an early age in the political intrigues of his father's reign. In 1259, he briefly sided with a baronial reform movement, supporting the Provisions of Oxford. After reconciling with his father, he remained loyal throughout the subsequent armed conflict, known as the Second Barons' War. After the Battle of Lewes, Edward was held hostage by the rebellious barons, but escaped after a few months and defeated the baronial leader Simon de Montfort at the Battle of Evesham in 1265. Within two years, the rebellion was extinguished and, with England pacified, Edward left to join the Ninth Crusade to the Holy Land in 1270. He was on his way home in 1272 when he was informed of his father's death. Making a slow return, he reached England in 1274 and was crowned at Westminster Abbey.

Edward spent much of his reign reforming royal administration and common law. Through an extensive legal inquiry, he investigated the tenure of several feudal liberties. The law was reformed through a series of statutes regulating criminal and property law, but the King's attention was increasingly drawn towards military affairs. After suppressing a minor conflict in Wales in 1276–77, Edward responded to a second one in 1282–83 by conquering Wales. He then established English rule, built castles and towns in the countryside and settled them with English people. After the death of the heir to the Scottish throne, Edward was invited to arbitrate a succession dispute. He claimed feudal suzerainty over Scotland and invaded the country, and the ensuing First Scottish War of Independence continued after his death. Simultaneously, Edward found himself at war with France (a Scottish ally) after King Philip IV confiscated the Duchy of Gascony. The duchy was eventually recovered but the conflict relieved English military pressure against Scotland. By the mid-1290s, extensive military campaigns required high levels of taxation and this met with both lay and ecclesiastical opposition in England. In Ireland, he had extracted soldiers, supplies and money, leaving decay, lawlessness

and a revival of the fortunes of his enemies in Gaelic territories. When the King died in 1307, he left to his son Edward II a war with Scotland and other financial and political burdens.

Edward's temperamental nature and height (6 ft 2 in, 188 cm) made him an intimidating figure. He often instilled fear in his contemporaries, although he held the respect of his subjects for the way he embodied the medieval ideal of kingship as a soldier, an administrator, and a man of faith. Modern historians are divided in their assessment of Edward; some have praised him for his contribution to the law and administration, but others have criticised his uncompromising attitude towards his nobility. Edward is credited with many accomplishments, including restoring royal authority after the reign of Henry III and establishing Parliament as a permanent institution, which allowed for a functional system for raising taxes and reforming the law through statutes. At the same time, he is often condemned for vindictiveness, opportunism and untrustworthiness in his dealings with Wales and Scotland, coupled with a colonialist approach to their governance and to Ireland, and for antisemitic policies leading to the 1290 Edict of Expulsion, which expelled all Jews from England.

Edward VII

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Edward VII (Albert Edward; 9 November 1841 – 6 May 1910) was King of the United Kingdom and the British Dominions, and Emperor of India, from 22 January 1901 until his death in 1910.

The second child and eldest son of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, Edward, nicknamed "Bertie", was related to royalty throughout Europe. He was Prince of Wales and heir apparent to the British throne for almost 60 years. During his mother's reign, he was largely excluded from political influence and came to personify the fashionable, leisured elite. He married Princess Alexandra of Denmark in 1863, and the couple had six children. As Prince of Wales, Edward travelled throughout Britain performing ceremonial public duties and represented Britain on visits abroad. His tours of North America in 1860 and of the Indian subcontinent in 1875 proved popular successes. Despite the approval of the public, his reputation as a playboy prince soured his relationship with his mother.

Edward inherited the throne upon his mother's death in 1901. He played a role in the modernisation of the British Home Fleet and the reorganisation of the British Army after the Second Boer War of 1899–1902. He re-instituted traditional ceremonies as public displays and broadened the range of people with whom royalty socialised. He fostered good relations between Britain and other European countries, especially France, for which he was popularly called "Peacemaker", but his relationship with his nephew, German Emperor Wilhelm II, was poor.

The Edwardian era, which covered Edward's reign and was named after him, coincided with the start of a new century and heralded significant changes in technology and society, including steam turbine propulsion and the rise of socialism. Edward died in the midst of a constitutional crisis that was resolved by the Parliament Act 1911, which restricted the power of the unelected House of Lords. Edward was succeeded by his only surviving son, George V.

Edward VI

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Edward VI (12 October 1537 – 6 July 1553) was King of England and Ireland from 28 January 1547 until his death in 1553. He was crowned on 20 February 1547 at the age of nine. The only surviving son of Henry VIII by his third wife, Jane Seymour, Edward was the first English monarch to be raised as a Protestant. During his reign, the realm was governed by a regency council because Edward never reached maturity. The council

was first led by his uncle Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset (1547–1549), and then by John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland (1550–1553).

Edward's reign was marked by many economic problems and social unrest that in 1549 erupted into riot and rebellion. An expensive war with Scotland, at first successful, ended with military withdrawal from Scotland and Boulogne-sur-Mer in exchange for peace. The transformation of the Church of England into a recognisably Protestant body also occurred under Edward, who took great interest in religious matters. His father, Henry VIII, had severed the link between the English Church and Rome but continued to uphold most Catholic doctrine and ceremony. During Edward's reign, Protestantism was established for the first time in England, with reforms that included the abolition of clerical celibacy and the Mass and the imposition of compulsory English in church services.

In 1553, at age 15, Edward fell ill. When his sickness was discovered to be terminal, he and his council drew up a "Devise for the Succession" to prevent the country's return to Catholicism. Edward named his Protestant first cousin once removed, Lady Jane Grey, as his heir, excluding his half-sisters, Mary and Elizabeth. This decision was disputed following Edward's death, and Jane was deposed by Mary—the elder of the two half-sisters—nine days after becoming queen. Mary, a Catholic, reversed Edward's Protestant reforms during her reign, but Elizabeth restored them in 1559.

Arthur, Prince of Wales

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Arthur, Prince of Wales (19/20 September 1486 – 2 April 1502) was the eldest son of King Henry VII of England and Elizabeth of York, and an older brother to the future King Henry VIII. He was Duke of Cornwall from birth, and he was created Prince of Wales and Earl of Chester in 1489. As the heir apparent of his father, Arthur was viewed by contemporaries as the great hope of the newly established House of Tudor. His mother was the daughter of the Yorkist king, Edward IV, and his birth cemented the union between the House of Lancaster and the House of York.

Plans for Arthur's marriage began before his third birthday. At the age of eleven, he was formally betrothed to Catherine of Aragon, a daughter of the powerful Catholic Monarchs in Spain, in an effort to forge an Anglo-Spanish alliance against France and Scotland. Arthur was well educated and was in good health for the majority of his life. Soon after his marriage to Catherine in 1501, the couple took up residence at Ludlow Castle in Shropshire, where Arthur died six months later, possibly from the sweating sickness, which Catherine survived. Catherine later firmly stated that the marriage had not been consummated.

One year after Arthur's death, Henry VII renewed his efforts to seal a marital alliance with Spain by arranging for Catherine to marry Arthur's younger brother Henry, who would ascend to the throne in 1509 as King Henry VIII. The question over whether Arthur and Catherine had consummated their marriage was much later, and in a completely different political context, exploited by Henry VIII and his court. They pointed out that it says in the Bible, "If a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing; they shall be childless." If Catherine's marriage to Arthur had actually been consummated, her marriage to Henry would have been a sin, justifying an annulment. This strategy was employed in order to cast doubt upon the validity of Catherine's union with Henry VIII, eventually leading to the separation between the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church.

Royal descendants of Queen Victoria and of King Christian IX

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The royal descendants of Queen Victoria (24 May 1819 – 22 January 1901; r. 1837–1901) and of King Christian IX (8 April 1818 – 29 January 1906; r. 1863–1906), Monarchs of the United Kingdom and Denmark, respectively, have become members of multiple European royal families. This was partially achieved by the marriage of Victoria's progeny with Christian's (and vice versa). By the time of her Diamond Jubilee in 1897, Victoria was known as the "Grandmother of Europe". Christian IX was nicknamed the "Father-in-Law of Europe".

Victoria and Christian's grandchildren were the monarchs of Denmark, Germany/Prussia, Greece, Norway, Russia and the United Kingdom. Today, the descendants of Victoria and Christian rule over Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg, Norway, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Edward III of England

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Edward III (13 November 1312 – 21 June 1377), also known as Edward of Windsor before his accession, was King of England from January 1327 until his death in 1377. He is noted for his military success and for restoring royal authority after the disastrous and unorthodox reign of his father, Edward II. Edward III transformed the Kingdom of England into one of the most formidable military powers in Europe. His fifty-year reign is one of the longest in English history, and saw vital developments in legislation and government, in particular the evolution of the English Parliament, as well as the ravages of the Black Death. He outlived his eldest son, Edward the Black Prince, and was succeeded by his grandson, Richard II.

Edward was crowned at age fourteen after his father was deposed by his mother, Isabella of France, and her lover, Roger Mortimer. At the age of seventeen, he led a successful coup d'état against Mortimer, the de facto ruler of England, and began his personal reign. After a successful campaign in Scotland, he declared himself rightful heir to the French throne, starting the Hundred Years' War (1337–1453). Following some initial setbacks, this first phase of the war went exceptionally well for England and would become known as the Edwardian War. Victories at Crécy and Poitiers led to the highly favourable Treaty of Brétigny (1360), in which England made territorial gains, and Edward renounced his claim to the French throne. Edward's later years were marked by foreign policy failure and domestic strife, largely as a result of his decreasing activity and poor health. The second phase of the Hundred Years' War began in 1369, leading to the loss of most of Edward's conquests, save for the Pale of Calais, by 1375.

Edward was temperamental and thought himself capable of feats such as healing by the royal touch, as some prior English kings did. He was also capable of unusual clemency. He was in many ways a conventional medieval king whose main interest was warfare, but he also had a broad range of non-military interests. Admired in his own time, and for centuries after, he was later denounced as an irresponsible adventurer by Whig historians, but modern historians credit him with significant achievements.

Edward IV

(2020). Richard III: a failed king?. Penguin monarchs. London: Allen Lane. p. 38. ISBN 978-0-14-197893-2. OCLC 1180238601. Pollard, A.J. (1991). Richard

Edward IV (28 April 1442 – 9 April 1483) was King of England from 4 March 1461 to 3 October 1470, then again from 11 April 1471 until his death in 1483. He was a central figure in the Wars of the Roses, a series of civil wars in England fought between the Yorkist and Lancastrian factions between 1455 and 1487.

Edward inherited the Yorkist claim to the throne at the age of eighteen when his father, Richard, Duke of York, was killed at the Battle of Wakefield in December 1460. After defeating Lancastrian armies at Mortimer's Cross and Towton in early 1461, he deposed King Henry VI and took the throne. His marriage to Elizabeth Woodville in 1464 led to conflict with his chief advisor, Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, known

as the "Kingmaker". In 1470, a revolt led by Warwick and Edward's brother George, Duke of Clarence, briefly re-installed Henry VI. Edward fled to Flanders, where he gathered support and invaded England in March 1471; after victories at the battles of Barnet and Tewkesbury (where both the Earl of Warwick and Edward of Westminster, Prince of Wales, were killed), he resumed the throne. Shortly afterwards, Henry VI was found dead in the Tower of London, possibly killed on Edward's orders.

Despite facing an overseas threat from Henry Tudor, the last remaining Lancastrian claimant, Edward reigned in relative peace for the next twelve years. However, he nearly restarted the Hundred Years' War, following his invasion of France in 1475, but was assuaged by Louis XI in the Treaty of Picquigny. This diplomatic agreement formally ended the Hundred Years' War, which had been in abeyance since 1453. Following his sudden death in April 1483, Edward was briefly succeeded by his son Edward V. He had appointed his younger brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, Lord Protector of England for the duration of the new king's minority. However, Edward V and his younger brother Richard, Duke of York, disappeared shortly after and their uncle seized the throne as Richard III.

Edward II of England

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Edward II (25 April 1284 – 21 September 1327), also known as Edward of Caernarfon or Caernarvon, was King of England from 1307 until he was deposed in January 1327. The fourth son of Edward I, Edward became the heir to the throne following the death of his older brother Alphonso. Beginning in 1300, Edward accompanied his father on campaigns in Scotland, and in 1306 he was knighted in a grand ceremony at Westminster Abbey. Edward succeeded to the throne the next year, following his father's death. In 1308, he married Isabella, daughter of the powerful King Philip IV of France, as part of a long-running effort to resolve the tensions between the English and French crowns.

Edward had a close and controversial relationship with Piers Gaveston, who had joined his household in 1300. The precise nature of Edward and Gaveston's relationship is uncertain; they may have been friends, lovers, or sworn brothers. Gaveston's arrogance and power as Edward's favourite provoked discontent both among the barons and the French royal family, and Edward was forced to exile him. On Gaveston's return, the barons pressured the King into agreeing to wide-ranging reforms called the Ordinances of 1311. The newly empowered barons banished Gaveston, to which Edward responded by revoking the reforms and recalling his favourite. Led by Edward's cousin Thomas, 2nd Earl of Lancaster, a group of the barons seized and executed Gaveston in 1312, beginning several years of armed confrontation. English forces were pushed back in Scotland, where Edward was decisively defeated by Robert the Bruce at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314. Widespread famine followed, and criticism of the King's reign mounted.

The Despenser family, in particular Hugh Despenser the Younger, became close friends and advisers to Edward, but in 1321 Lancaster and many of the barons seized the Despensers' lands and forced the King to exile them. In response, Edward led a short military campaign, capturing and executing Lancaster. Edward and the Despensers strengthened their grip on power, revoking the 1311 reforms, executing their enemies and confiscating estates. Unable to make progress in Scotland, Edward finally signed a truce with Robert. Opposition to the regime grew, and when Isabella was sent to France to negotiate a peace treaty in 1325, she turned against Edward and refused to return. Isabella allied herself with the exiled Roger Mortimer, and invaded England with a small army in 1326. Edward's regime collapsed and he fled into Wales, where he was captured in November. Edward was forced to relinquish his crown in January 1327 in favour of his son, Edward III of England, and he died in Berkeley Castle on 21 September, probably murdered on the orders of the new regime.

Edward's relationship with Gaveston inspired Christopher Marlowe's 1592 play *Edward II*, along with other plays, films, novels and media. Many of these have focused on the possible sexual relationship between the

two men. Edward's contemporaries criticised his performance as a king, noting his failures in Scotland and the oppressive regime of his later years, although 19th-century academics have argued that the growth of parliamentary institutions during his reign was a positive development for England over the longer term. Debate has continued into the 21st century as to whether Edward was a lazy and incompetent king, or simply a reluctant and ultimately unsuccessful ruler.

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