

In the Middle Ages, England had to contend with a string of usurpers who disrupted the British monarchy and ultimately changed the course of European history by deposing England's reigning kings and seizing power for themselves. Some of the most infamous usurper kings to come out of medieval England include William the Conqueror, Stephen of Blois, Henry Bolingbroke, Edward IV, Richard III, and Henry Tudor. Did these kings really deserve the title of usurper or were they unfairly vilified by royal propaganda and biased chroniclers? In this book we examine the lives of these six medieval kings, the circumstances which brought each of them to power, and whether or not they deserve the title of usurper. Along the way readers will hear stories of some of the most fascinating people from medieval Europe, including Empress Matilda, the woman who nearly succeeded at becoming the first ruling Queen of England; Eleanor of Aquitaine, the queen of both France and England who stirred her own sons to rebel against their father, Henry II; the cruel and vengeful reign of Richard II which caused his own family to overthrow him; the epic struggle for power between Henry VI, Margaret of Anjou, Richard of York, and Edward IV during the Wars of the Roses; the notorious Richard III and his monstrous reputation as a child-killer; and Henry VII who rose from relative obscurity to establish the most famous royal family of all time: the Tudors.

The Earl, The Kings, And The Chronicler is the first full length biography of Robert (c.1088-1147), grandson of William the Conqueror and eldest son of King Henry I of England (1100-35), who could not succeed his father because he was a bastard. Instead, as the earl of Gloucester, he helped change the course of English history by keeping alive the prospects for an Angevin succession through his leadership of its supporters against his father's successor, King Stephen (1135-54) in the civil war known as the Anarchy. Robert of Gloucester is one of the great figures of Anglo-Norman history (1066-1154). He occupies important niches in the era's literature, from comprehensive political studies of Henry I's and Stephen's reigns and an array of specialized fields to the 'Brother Cadfael' novels of Ellis Peters. Gloucester was one of only three landed super-magnates of his day, a model post-Conquest great baron, Marcher lord, borough developer, and patron of the rising merchant class. His trans-Channel barony stretched from western Lower Normandy across England to south Wales. Robert was both a product and a significant agent of the contemporary cultural revival known as the Renaissance of the Twelfth Century, being bi-lingual, well educated, and a significant literary patron. In this last role he is especially notable for commissioning the greatest English historian since Bede, William of Malmesbury, to produce a history of their times which justified the empress Matilda's claim to the English throne and Earl Robert's support of it.

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"The Anarchy, the protracted struggle between Stephen of Blois and the Empress Matilda for the English crown between 1135 and 1154, is often seen as a disastrous breakdown of one of the best-governed kingdoms of medieval Europe. But perhaps the impact of the conflict has been overstated, and its effect on the common people across the country is hard to judge. ... Kingship in England and the quarrel over the succession are reconsidered, together with the contrasting claims and character and the principal protagonists. Anglo-Scottish and Anglo-Welsh relations are an essential part of the story, as is the response of the Church and the wider population to the collapse of central authority. There is a close analysis of the purely military side of events. The influence of the [Crusades], the relative importance of mounted knights, infantry and archers, the use of mercenaries, the evolution of armour and the strengths and weaknesses of English, Welsh and Scottish fighting methods."--Book jacket.

The turbulent reign of Stephen, King of England (1135-54), has been styled since the late 19th century as 'the Anarchy', although the extent of political breakdown during the period has since been vigorously debated. Rebellion and bitter civil war characterised Stephen's protracted struggle with rival claimant Empress Matilda and her Angevin supporters over 'nineteen long winters' when, according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, 'Christ and his Saints slept'. Drawing on new research and fieldwork, this innovative volume offers the first ever overview and synthesis of the archaeological and material record for this controversial period. It presents and interrogates many different types of evidence at a variety of scales, ranging from nationwide mapping of historical events through to conflict landscapes of battlefields and sieges. The volume considers archaeological sites such as castles and other fortifications, churches, monasteries, bishops' palaces and urban and rural settlements, alongside material culture including coins, pottery, seals and arms and armour. This approach not only augments but also challenges historical narratives, questioning the 'real' impact of Stephen's troubled reign on society, settlement, church and the landscape, and opens up new perspectives on the conduct of Anglo-Norman warfare.

The reign of King Stephen (1135-54) is famous as a period of weak government, as Stephen and his rival the Empress Matilda contended for power. This is a study of medieval kingship at its most vulnerable. It also shows how individuals and institutions enabled the monarchy to survive.

Sparked by the invasion of Earth, regular citizens take up arms against a technically superior foe In the year 2075, Earth's Central Government provokes an assault on the home world led by The Alliance, a group of disgruntled second-generation earthlings who left the planet years ago only to return now with a sense of vengeance. Due to Earth's close proximity to the only known slipstream hub, many factions within the Alliance vow to take over the planet and seize all of its assets. Alexander Popuff, a prominent member of The Alliance, will stop at nothing to infiltrate and destroy Earth's Central Government, gaining a crucial piece of galactic real-estate. It's up to Earth's last line of defense, The Ahmardian Corporation to protect humanity from the threat of annihilation, which becomes imminent when The Alliance commandeers a powerful intergalactic starship known as The Alpha Centauri. Captain Adam of The Ahmardian Corporation knows that it is only a matter of time before Popuff figures out how to utilize the ship's destructive weaponry, which could ice a planet in seconds.

This compelling new biography provides the most authoritative picture yet of King Stephen, whose reign (1135-1154), with its "nineteen long winters" of civil war, made his name synonymous with failed leadership. After years of work on the sources, Edmund King shows with rare clarity the strengths and weaknesses of the monarch. Keeping Stephen at the forefront of his account, the author also chronicles the activities of key family members and associates whose loyal support sustained Stephen's kingship. In 1135 the popular Stephen was elected king against the claims of the empress Matilda and her sons. But by 1153, Stephen had lost control over Normandy and other important regions, England had lost prestige, and the weakened king was forced to cede his family's right to succession. A rich narrative covering the drama of a tumultuous reign, this book focuses well-deserved attention on a king who lost control of his destiny.

*Includes pictures *Includes a bibliography for further reading "We, conquered by William, have liberated the Conqueror's land." So reads the memorial to the British war dead at Bayeaux, Normandy. Commemorating those who gave their lives to free France in 1944, it also serves to remind us of an earlier conflict. For the English, the Norman conquest remains deeply embedded in the national psyche. As the last contested military invasion to have succeeded in conquering this proud island nation, the date of 1066 is the one every citizen can remember. For them, William will forever be the "Conqueror", the last invader to beat them in an open fight. For others, notably the French, he is the "Bastard", a

reference not only to his lineage. William's conquest of the island arguably made him the most important figure in shaping the course of English history, but modern caricatures of this vitally important medieval figure are largely based on ignorance. William is a fascinating and complex figure, in many ways the quintessential warrior king of this period. Inheriting the Duchy of Normandy while still an infant and forced to fight for his domain almost ceaselessly during his early years, William went on to conquer and rule England, five times larger and three times wealthier. In doing so, he demonstrated sophisticated political and diplomatic skill, military prowess and administrative acumen. Although he lived by the sword, he was a devout man who had only one wife, to whom he remained faithful. William is one of history's most famous conquerors, but the efforts to consolidate his rule in England were complicated from the start, both due to external enemies and those jockeying for his position while he was still alive. William ultimately decided to split Normandy and England. His son Robert, still in open revolt, would nonetheless inherit Normandy, while the next in line, his second son William, would rule England. The two states that William left behind were hardly united or at peace. Soon after his death, Odo conspired with Robert to oust his brother from the English throne and re-establish a united state, but the revolt failed, and King William "Rufus" II would rule England until his suspicious death in 1100. His younger brother Henry inherited the throne, and in 1106 he imprisoned Robert after their sibling battle at Tinchebray had achieved unity once more, but any political unity would not last long. Today, "The Anarchy" is used to describe the period in English history from the death of Henry I in 1135 to the Treaty of Winchester signed by King Stephen and his successor Henry II in 1153. Despite the name, it was an episode of civil war rather than of lawlessness and is interesting for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that it was the first time in English history that a woman claimed the throne of England in her own right. It occurred after the death of the last Norman king of England and laid the grounds for a distinctively English monarchy as opposed to a Norman colony. This bloody era provides a fascinating glimpse into the lives, characters, and power struggles of the Norman-French nobility who had conquered England less than 100 years prior. Even as unrest and violence followed William the Conqueror's campaign, the two cultures slowly merged with each other, from modes of dress to language and political outlook. England, first under the Normans and then the Plantagenets, began to emerge as a powerful nation in its own right, rather than a divided and somewhat barbarous island off the coast of Europe, and it had an unmistakably French shading to its culture. Thus, whereas at the beginning of the struggle, England was little more than a territory of mediocre importance, by the end of the 12th century it was reunified and had the makings of a major European power.

This book, first published in 1994, studies aristocratic politics and government in Yorkshire in the century after 1066.

'Stephen risked being seen as a man who never quite transcended the essential flawed-ness of his claim to be king. His actions betrayed uneasiness in his new skin' Remembered as a time in which 'Christ and his saints slept', Stephen's troubled reign plunged England into anarchy. Without clear rules of succession in the Norman monarchy, conflict within William the Conqueror's family was inevitable. But, as this resonant portrait shows, there was another problem too: Stephen himself, unable to make good the transition from nobleman to king.

A biography of King Stephen (1134-54), the last Norman monarch whose reign was key in English history as well as the subject of much controversial assessment. Traditionally regarded as a period of anarchy and civil war, recent research has presented a more balanced perspective.

Before approaching that struggle between King Stephen and his rival, the Empress Maud, with which this work is mainly concerned, it is desirable to examine the peculiar conditions of Stephen's accession to the crown, determining, as they did, his position as king, and supplying, we shall find, the master-key to the anomalous character of his reign. The actual facts of the case are happily beyond question. From the moment of his uncle's death, as Dr. Stubbs truly observes, "the succession was treated as an open question." Stephen, quick to see his chance, made a bold stroke for the crown. The wind was in his favour, and, with a handful of comrades, he landed on the shores of Kent. His first reception was not encouraging: Dover refused him admission, and Canterbury closed her gates. On this Dr. Stubbs thus comments: "At Dover and at Canterbury he was received with sullen silence. The men of Kent had no love for the stranger who came, as his predecessor Eustace had done, to trouble the land." But "the men of Kent" were faithful to Stephen, when all others forsook him, and, remembering this, one would hardly expect to find in them his chief opponents. Nor, indeed, were they. Our great historian, when he wrote thus, must, I venture to think, have overlooked the passage in Ordericus, from which we learn, incidentally, that Canterbury and Dover were among those fortresses which the Earl of Gloucester held by his father's gift. It is, therefore, not surprising that Stephen should have met with this reception at the hands of the lieutenants of his arch-rival. It might, indeed, be thought that the prescient king had of set purpose placed these keys of the road to London in the hands of one whom he could trust to uphold his cherished scheme.

King Stephen and the Anarchy Pen & Sword Military

Known as 'the anarchy', the reign of Stephen (1135-1141) saw England plunged into a civil war that illuminated the fatal flaw in the powerful Norman monarchy, that without clear rules ordering succession, conflict between members of William the Conqueror's family were inevitable. But there was another problem, too: Stephen himself. With the nobility of England and Normandy anxious about the prospect of a world without the tough love of the old king Henry I, Stephen styled himself a political panacea, promising strength without oppression. As external threats and internal resistance to his rule accumulated, it was a promise he was unable to keep. Unable to transcend his flawed claim to the throne, and to make the transition from nobleman to king, Stephen's actions betrayed uneasiness in his role, his royal voice never quite ringing true. The resulting violence that spread throughout England was not, or not only, the work of bloodthirsty men on the make. As Watkins shows in this resonant new portrait, it arose because great men struggled to navigate a new and turbulent kind of politics that arose when the king was in eclipse.

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