

William I Penguin Monarchs Englands Conqueror

For a man with such conventional tastes and views, George V had a revolutionary impact. Almost despite himself he marked a decisive break with his flamboyant predecessor Edward VII, inventing the modern monarchy, with its emphasis on frequent public appearances, family values and duty. George V was an effective war-leader and inventor of 'the House of Windsor'. In an era of ever greater media coverage--frequently filmed and initiating the British Empire Christmas broadcast--George became for 25 years a universally recognised figure. He was also the only British monarch to take his role as Emperor of India seriously. While his great rivals (Tsar Nicolas and Kaiser Wilhelm) ended their reigns in catastrophe, he plodded on. David Cannadine's sparkling account of his reign could not be more enjoyable, a masterclass in how to write about Monarchy, that central--if peculiar--pillar of British life.

On Christmas Day 1066, William, duke of Normandy was crowned in Westminster, the first Norman king of England. It was a disaster: soldiers outside, thinking shouts of acclamation were treachery, torched the surrounding buildings. To later chroniclers, it was an omen of the catastrophes to come. During the reign of William the Conqueror, England experienced greater and more seismic change than at any point before or since. Marc Morris's concise and gripping biography sifts through the sources of the time to give a fresh view of the man who changed England more than any other, as old ruling elites were swept away, enemies at home and abroad (including those in his closest family) were crushed, swathes of the country were devastated and the map of the nation itself was redrawn, giving greater power than ever to the king. When, towards the end of his reign, William undertook a great survey of his new lands, his subjects compared it to the last judgement of God, the Domesday Book. England had been transformed forever.

William I (Penguin Monarchs)England's ConquerorPenguin UK

The brilliantly compelling new biography of the treacherous and tyrannical King John, published to coincide with the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta. King John is familiar to everyone as the villain from the tales of Robin Hood — greedy, cowardly, despicable and cruel. But who was the man behind the legend? Drawing on contemporary chronicles and the king's own letters, bestselling historian Marc Morris brings the real John vividly to life. We see how a youngest son with limited prospects became the ruler of the greatest dominion in Europe, but at a terrible cost. His rise to power involved treachery, rebellion and murder, and his reign witnessed oppression on an almost unprecedented scale. It climaxed in conspiracy and revolt, and his leading subjects forced him to issue Magna Carta, a document binding him and his successors to behave better in future. John's rejection of the charter led to civil war and foreign invasion, bringing his life to a disastrous close. Authoritative and dramatic, Marc Morris's King John offers a compelling portrait of an extraordinary man at a momentous turning point in the history of Britain and Europe.

Edward the Confessor, the last great king of Anglo-Saxon England, canonized nearly 100 years after his death, is in part a figure of myths created in the late middle ages. In this revealing portrait of England's royal saint, David Woodman traces the course of Edward's twenty-four-year-long reign through the lens of contemporary sources, from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and the Vita Ædwardi Regis to the Bayeux Tapestry, to separate myth from history and uncover the complex politics of his life. He shows Edward to be a shrewd politician who, having endured a long period of exile from England in his youth, ascended the throne in 1042 and came to control a highly sophisticated and powerful administration. The twists and turns of Edward's reign are generally seen as a prelude to the Norman Conquest in 1066. Woodman explains clearly how events unfolded and personalities interacted but, unlike many, he shows a capable and impressive king at the centre of them.

_____ THE SUNDAY TIMES BESTSELLER 'A deep dive into one of the murkiest periods of our national history ... Splendid' DAN JONES, Sunday Times 'Beautifully written, incredibly accessible and deeply researched' JAMES O'BRIEN 'An absolute masterpiece' DAN SNOW 'Illuminates England's weird and wonderful early history with erudition and wit' IAN HISLOP _____

Sixteen hundred years ago Britain left the Roman Empire and swiftly fell into ruin. Grand cities and luxurious villas were deserted and left to crumble, and civil society collapsed into chaos. Into this violent and unstable world came foreign invaders from across the sea, and established themselves as its new masters. The Anglo-Saxons traces the turbulent history of these people across the next six centuries. It explains how their earliest rulers fought relentlessly against each other for glory and supremacy, and then were almost destroyed by the onslaught of the Vikings. It explores how they abandoned their old gods for Christianity, established hundreds of churches and created dazzlingly intricate works of art. It charts the revival of towns and trade, and the origins of a familiar landscape of shires, boroughs and bishoprics. It is a tale of famous figures like King Offa, Alfred the Great and Edward the Confessor, but also features a host of lesser known characters - ambitious queens, revolutionary saints, intolerant monks and grasping nobles. Through their remarkable careers we see how a new society, a new culture and a single unified nation came into being. Drawing on a vast range of original evidence - chronicles, letters, archaeology and artefacts - renowned historian Marc Morris illuminates a period of history that is only dimly understood, separates the truth from the legend, and tells the extraordinary story of how the foundations of England were laid. _____ 'A rich trove of ancient wonders' IAN MORTIMER 'A fascinating journey into the world of Anglo-Saxon Britain' THE TIMES, Best Books to Read for Summer 'A much-needed book - accessible, eminently readable ... It's a gripping story, beautifully told' BERNARD CORNWELL, author of The Last Kingdom 'This is top-notch narrative history ... A big gold bar of delight' SPECTATOR 'A vivid, sharply drawn story of seven centuries of profound political change ... Superbly clear and evocative' THOMAS PENN 'A thorough and accessible account of this important period' FINANCIAL TIMES 'Morris guides the reader with aplomb ... Rounded and nuanced' LITERARY REVIEW '[A] compelling narrative of this turbulent time' NEW STATESMAN 'Enter the world of The Dig with Marc Morris's The Anglo-Saxons' SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

'The experience of insecurity, it turned out, would shape one of the most remarkable monarchs in England's history' In the popular imagination, as in her portraits, Elizabeth I is the image of monarchical power. But this image is as much armour as a reflection of the truth. In this illuminating account of England's iconic queen, Helen Castor reveals her reign as shaped by a profound and enduring insecurity that was a matter of both practical politics and personal psychology.

In a sparkling, fast-paced narrative, Shakespeare's Kings chronicles the turbulent events that inspired Shakespeare's history plays, from Edward III to Richard III. In a time of uncertainty and incessant warfare - when the crown was constantly contested, alliances were made and broken, and the people rose up in revolt - this was the raw material that inspired Shakespeare's dramas. But what really happened between 1337 and 1485? Where did history stop and drama begin? John Julius Norwich establishes just how real Shakespeare's characters and events are and what liberties he took with the facts to entertain his audience. Shakespeare's Kings is an illuminating companion to history and to the richness of Shakespeare's imagination, with a body of work which still shapes our view of the past today.

The formation of England occurred against the odds: an island divided into rival kingdoms, under savage assault from Viking hordes. But, after King Alfred ensured the survival of Wessex and his son Edward expanded it, his grandson Athelstan inherited the rule of both Mercia and Wessex, conquered Northumbria and was hailed as Rex totius Britanniae: 'King of the whole of Britain'. Tom Holland recounts this extraordinary story with relish and drama, transporting us back to a time of omens, raven harbingers and blood-red battlefields. As well as giving form to the figure of Athelstan - devout, shrewd, all too aware of the precarious nature of his power, especially in the north - he introduces the great figures of the age, including Alfred and his daughter Aethelflaed, 'Lady of the Mercians', who brought Athelstan up at the

Mercian court. Making sense of the family rivalries and fractious conflicts of the Anglo-Saxon rulers, Holland shows us how a royal dynasty rescued their kingdom from near-oblivion and fashioned a nation that endures to this day.

Fifteen years in the making, a landmark reinterpretation of the life of a pivotal figure in British and European history In this magisterial addition to the Yale English Monarchs series, David Bates combines biography and a multidisciplinary approach to examine the life of a major figure in British and European history. Using a framework derived from studies of early medieval kingship, he assesses each phase of William's life to establish why so many trusted William to invade England in 1066 and the consequences of this on the history of the so-called Norman Conquest after the Battle of Hastings and for generations to come. A leading historian of the period, Bates is notable for having worked extensively in the archives of northern France and discovered many eleventh- and twelfth-century charters largely unnoticed by English-language scholars. Taking an innovative approach, he argues for a move away from old perceptions and controversies associated with William's life and the Norman Conquest. This deeply researched volume is the scholarly biography for our generation.

When Henry IV seized the throne from his cousin Richard II, some commentators saw it as a hopeful new beginning for England. The first monarch to have English as his mother tongue since the Norman conquest, Henry seemed to embody the ideals of chivalric kingship: mercy, piety, military prowess and learning. Yet deposing a crowned monarch was not a stable foundation on which to build a reign, and Henry IV found himself challenged from all sides, plagued by conspiracies, rebellions, assassination attempts, and crippling debts. His tense relationships with parliament and with his own son, Shakespeare's Prince Hal, saw his grip on power falter. Nevertheless, he was the first king and founder of a Lancastrian dynasty which would go on to shape England for centuries to come. In this lively study, Catherine Nall reappraises a monarch who weathered upheaval and uncertainty, and held on to the throne through sheer force of will.

The first in a ground-breaking two-volume history of Henry III's rule "Professor Carpenter is one of Britain's foremost medievalists...No one knows more about Henry, and a lifetime of scholarship is here poured out, elegantly and often humorously. This is a fine, judicious, illuminating work that should be the standard study of the reign for generations to come."--Dan Jones, The Sunday Times Nine years of age when he came to the throne in 1216, Henry III had to rule within the limits set by the establishment of Magna Carta and the emergence of parliament. Pacific, conciliatory, and deeply religious, Henry brought many years of peace to England and rebuilt Westminster Abbey in honor of his patron saint, Edward the Confessor. He poured money into embellishing his palaces and creating a magnificent court. Yet this investment in "soft power" did not prevent a great revolution in 1258, led by Simon de Montfort, ending Henry's personal rule. Eminent historian David Carpenter brings to life Henry's character and reign as never before. Using source material of unparalleled richness--material that makes it possible to get closer to Henry than any other medieval monarch--Carpenter stresses the king's achievements as well as his failures while offering an entirely new perspective on the intimate connections between medieval politics and religion.

'A reputation as a ruthless ruler was sealed that would last beyond his lifetime. In that respect, at least, Cnut had succeeded...' Cnut, or Canute, is one of the great 'what ifs' of English history. The Dane who became King of England after a long period of Viking attacks and settlement, his reign could have permanently shifted eleventh-century England's rule to Scandinavia. Stretching his authority across the North Sea to become king of Denmark and Norway, and with close links to Ireland and an overlordship of Scotland, this formidable figure created a Viking Empire at least as plausible as the Anglo-Norman Empire that would emerge in 1066. Ryan Lavelle's illuminating book cuts through myths and misconceptions to explore this fascinating and powerful man in detail. Cnut is most popularly known now for the story of the king who tried to command the waves, relegated to a bit part in the medieval story, but as this biography shows, he was a conqueror, political player, law maker and empire builder on the grandest scale, one whose reign tells us much about the contingent nature of history.

Henry IV (1399-1413), the son of John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, seized the English throne at the age of thirty-two from his cousin Richard II and held it until his death, aged forty-five, when he was succeeded by his son, Henry V. This comprehensive and nuanced biography restores to his rightful place a king often overlooked in favor of his illustrious progeny. Henry faced the usual problems of usurpers: foreign wars, rebellions, and plots, as well as the ambitions and demands of the Lancastrian retainers who had helped him win the throne. By 1406 his rule was broadly established, and although he became ill shortly after this and never fully recovered, he retained ultimate power until his death. Using a wide variety of previously untapped archival materials, Chris Given-Wilson reveals a cultured, extravagant, and skeptical monarch who crushed opposition ruthlessly but never quite succeeded in satisfying the expectations of his own supporters.

Richard I's reign is both controversial and seemingly contradictory. One of England's most famous medieval monarchs and a potent symbol of national identity, he barely spent six months on English soil during a ten-year reign and spoke French as his first language. Contemporaries dubbed him the 'Lionheart', reflecting a carefully cultivated reputation for bravery, prowess and knightly virtue, but this supposed paragon of chivalry butchered close to 3,000 prisoners in cold blood on a single day. And, though revered as Christian Europe's greatest crusader, his grand campaign to the Holy Land failed to recover the city of Jerusalem from Islam. Seeking to reconcile this conflicting evidence, Thomas Asbridge's incisive reappraisal of Richard I's career questions whether the Lionheart really did neglect his kingdom, considers why he devoted himself to the cause of holy war and asks how the memory of his life came to be interwoven with myth. Richard emerges as a formidable warrior-king, possessed of martial genius and a cultured intellect, yet burdened by the legacy of his dysfunctional dynasty and obsessed with the pursuit of honour and renown.

William II (1087-1100), or William Rufus, will always be most famous for his death: killed by an arrow while out hunting, perhaps through accident or perhaps murder. But, as John Gillingham makes clear in this elegant book, as the son and successor to William the Conqueror it was William Rufus who had to establish permanent Norman rule. A ruthless, irascible man, he frequently argued acrimoniously with his older brother Robert over their father's inheritance - but he also handed out effective justice, leaving as his legacy one of the most extraordinary of all medieval buildings, Westminster Hall.

'He seems to have laboured under an almost child-like misapprehension about the size of his world. Had greatness not been thrust upon him, he might have lived a life of great harmlessness.' The reign of Edward II was a succession of disasters. Unkingly, inept in war, and in thrall to favourites, he preferred digging ditches and rowing boats to the tedium of government. His infatuation with a young Gascon nobleman, Piers Gaveston, alienated even the most natural supporters of the crown. Hoping to lay the ghost of his soldierly father, Edward I, he invaded Scotland and suffered catastrophic defeat at the Battle of Bannockburn. After twenty ruinous years, betrayed and abandoned by most of his nobles and by his wife and her lover, Edward was imprisoned in Berkeley Castle and murdered - the first English king since the Norman Conquest to be deposed.

Part of the Penguin Monarchs series: short, fresh, expert accounts of England's rulers in a collectible format Henry VII was one of England's unlikeliest monarchs. An exile and outsider with barely a claim to the throne, his victory over Richard III at Bosworth Field seemed to many in 1485 only the latest in the sequence of violent convulsions among England's nobility that would come to be known as the Wars of the Roses - with little to suggest that the obscure Henry would last any longer than his predecessor. To break the

cycle of division, usurpation, deposition and murder, he had both to maintain a grip on power and to convince England that his rule was both rightful and effective. Here, Sean Cunningham explores how, in his ruthless and controlling kingship, Henry VII did so, in the process founding the Tudor dynasty.

Although he styled himself 'His Highness', adopted the court ritual of his royal predecessors, and lived in the former royal palaces of Whitehall and Hampton Court, Oliver Cromwell was not a king - in spite of the best efforts of his supporters to crown him. Yet, as David Horspool shows in this illuminating new portrait of England's Lord Protector, Cromwell, the Puritan son of Cambridgeshire gentry, wielded such influence that it would be a pretence to say that power really lay with the collective. The years of Cromwell's rise to power, shaped by a decade-long civil war, saw a sustained attempt at the collective government of England; the first attempts at a real Union of Britain; the beginnings of empire; a radically new solution to the idea of a national religion; atrocities in Ireland; and the readmission to England of the Jews, a people officially banned for over three and a half centuries. At the end of it, Oliver Cromwell had emerged as the country's sole ruler: to his enemies, and probably to most of his countrymen, his legacy looked as likely to last as that of the Stuart dynasty he had replaced.

'James was a king tragically trapped by principle. Yet was it wise to attempt to change the national religion?' The short reign of James II is generally seen as one of the most catastrophic in British history, ending in his exile after he unsuccessfully tried to convert England to Catholicism, a crisis that would haunt the monarchy for generations.

Ultimately, David Womersley's biography shows, James was a man whose blindness to subtlety and political reality brought about his ruinous downfall.

James's reign marked one of the very rare major breaks in England's monarchy. Already James VI of Scotland and a highly experienced ruler who had established his authority over the Scottish Kirk, he marched south on Elizabeth I's death to become James I of England and Ireland, uniting the British Isles for the first time and founding the Stuart dynasty which would, with several lurches, reign for over a century. Indeed his descendant still occupies the throne. A complex, curious man and great survivor, James drastically changed court life in London and presided over such major projects as the Authorized Version of the Bible and the establishment of English settlements in Virginia, Massachusetts, Gujarat and the Caribbean. Although he failed to unite England and Scotland, he insisted that ambassadors acknowledge him as King of Great Britain and that vessels from both countries display a version of the current Union Flag. He was often accused of being too informal and insufficiently regal - but when his son, Charles I, decided to redress these criticisms in his own reign he was destroyed. How much of the roots of this disaster were to be found in James's reign is one of the many problems dramatized in Thomas Cogswell's brilliant and highly entertaining new book.

Foremost medieval historian Anne Curry offers a new reinterpretation of Henry V and the battle that defined his kingship: Agincourt Henry V's invasion of France, in August 1415, represented a huge gamble. As heir to the throne, he had been a failure, cast into the political wilderness amid rumours that he planned to depose his father. Despite a complete change of character as king - founding monasteries, persecuting heretics, and enforcing the law to its extremes - little had gone right since. He was insecure in his kingdom, his reputation low. On the eve of his departure for France, he uncovered a plot by some of his closest associates to remove him from power. Agincourt was a battle that Henry should not have won - but he did, and the rest is history. Within five years, he was heir to the throne of France. In this vivid new interpretation, Anne Curry explores how Henry's hyperactive efforts to expunge his past failures, and his experience of crisis - which threatened to ruin everything he had struggled to achieve - defined his kingship, and how his astonishing success at Agincourt transformed his standing in the eyes of his contemporaries, and of all generations to come.

The future William II was born in the late 1050s the third son of William the Conqueror. The younger William, - nicknamed Rufus because of his ruddy cheeks - at first had no great expectations of succeeding to the throne. This biography tells the story of William Rufus, King of England from 1087-1100 and reveals the truth behind his death.

An upstart French duke who sets out to conquer the most powerful and unified kingdom in Christendom. An invasion force on a scale not seen since the days of the Romans.

One of the bloodiest and most decisive battles ever fought. This riveting book explains why the Norman Conquest was the single most important event in English history.

Assessing the original evidence at every turn, Marc Morris goes beyond the familiar outline to explain why England was at once so powerful and yet so vulnerable to William the Conqueror's attack. Why the Normans, in some respects less sophisticated, possessed the military cutting edge. How William's hopes of a united Anglo-Norman realm unravelled, dashed by English rebellions, Viking invasions and the insatiable demands of his fellow conquerors. This is a tale of powerful drama, repression and seismic social change: the Battle of Hastings itself and the violent 'Harrying of the North'; the sudden introduction of castles and the wholesale rebuilding of every major church; the total destruction of an ancient ruling class. Language, law, architecture, even attitudes towards life itself were altered forever by the coming of the Normans. Marc Morris, author of the bestselling biography of Edward I, A Great and Terrible King, approaches the Conquest with the same passion, verve and scrupulous concern for historical accuracy. This is the definitive account for our times of an extraordinary story, a pivotal moment in the shaping of the English nation.

Charismatic, insatiable and cruel, Henry VIII was, as John Guy shows, a king who became mesmerized by his own legend - and in the process destroyed and remade England. Said to be a 'pillager of the commonwealth', this most instantly recognizable of kings remains a figure of extreme contradictions: magnificent and vengeful; a devout traditionalist who oversaw a cataclysmic rupture with the church in Rome; a talented, towering figure who nevertheless could not bear to meet people's eyes when he talked to them. In this revealing new account, John Guy looks behind the mask into Henry's mind to explore how he understood the world and his place in it - from his isolated upbringing and the blazing glory of his accession, to his desperate quest for fame and an heir and the terrifying paranoia of his last, agonising, 54-inch-waisted years.

Written by Philip Ziegler, one of Britain's most celebrated biographers, George VI is part of the Penguin Monarchs series: short, fresh, expert accounts of England's rulers in a collectible format. If Ethelred was notoriously 'Unready' and Alfred 'Great', King George VI should bear the title of 'George the Dutiful'. Throughout his life, George dedicated himself to the pursuit of what he thought he ought to be doing rather than what he wanted to do. Inarticulate and loathing any sort of public appearances, he accepted that it was his destiny to figure conspicuously in the public eye, gritted his teeth, battled his crippling stammer and got on with it. He was not born to be king, but he made an admirable one, and was the figurehead of the nation at the time of its greatest trial, the Second World War. This is a brilliant, touching and sometimes funny book about this reluctant public figure, and the private man. Philip Ziegler is the author of the authorised biographies of Mountbatten, Harold Wilson and Edward Heath. His other books include *The Duchess of Dino*, *William IV*, *The Black Death* and most recently *Olivier*. Initially a diplomat, he worked for many years in book publishing before becoming a full-time writer.

This first comprehensive biography of Henry I, the youngest son of William the Conqueror and an elusive figure for historians, offers a rich and compelling account of his tumultuous life and reign. Judith Green argues that although Henry's primary concern was defence of his inheritance this did not preclude expansion where circumstances were propitious, notably into Welsh territory. His skilful dealings with the Scots permitted consolidation of Norman rule in the northern counties of England, while in Normandy every sinew was strained to defend frontiers through political alliances and stone castles. Green argues that although Henry's own outlook was essentially traditional, the legacy of this fascinating and ruthless personality included some fundamentally important developments in governance. She also sheds light on Henry's court, suggesting that it made an important contribution to the flowering of court culture throughout twelfth-century Europe.

The youngest of William the Conqueror's sons, Henry I (1100-35) was never meant to be king, but he was destined to become one of the greatest of all medieval monarchs, both through his own ruthlessness and intelligence and through the dynastic legacy of his daughter Matilda, who began the Plantagenet line that would rule England until 1485. A self-consciously diligent and thoughtful king, his rule was looked back on as the real post-invasion re-founding of England as a new realm, integrated into the continent, wealthy and stable. Edmund King's wonderful portrait of Henry shows him as a strikingly charismatic and thoughtful man. His life was dogged by a single great disaster, the death of his teenage heir William in the White Ship disaster. Despite astonishing numbers of illegitimate sons, Henry was now left with only a daughter. This fact would shape the rest of the 12th century and beyond.

Often derided as weak-willed and insecure, Queen Anne was in fact one of Britain's most remarkable monarchs. In many ways a stolid, conventional woman, she nevertheless presided over some of the most momentous events in British history and led a personal life riven by passion, illness and intrigue.

King of Britain for sixty years and the last king of what would become the United States, George III inspired both hatred and loyalty and is now best known for two reasons: as a villainous tyrant for America's Founding Fathers, and for his madness, both of which have been portrayed on stage and screen. In this concise and penetrating biography, Jeremy Black turns away from the image-making and back to the archives, and instead locates George's life within his age: as a king who faced the loss of key colonies, rebellion in Ireland, insurrection in London, constitutional crisis in Britain and an existential threat from Revolutionary France as part of modern Britain's longest period of war. Black shows how George III rose to these challenges with fortitude and helped settle parliamentary monarchy as an effective governmental system, eventually becoming the most popular monarch for well over a century. He also shows us a talented and curious individual, committed to music, art, architecture and science, who took the duties of monarchy seriously, from reviewing death penalties to trying to control his often wayward children even as his own mental health failed, and became Britain's longest reigning king.

The elder daughter of Henry VIII, Mary I (1553-58) became England's ruler on the unexpected death of her brother Edward VI. Her short reign is one of the great potential turning points in the country's history. As a convinced Catholic and the wife of Philip II, king of Spain and the most powerful of all European monarchs, Mary could have completely changed her country's orbit, making it a province of the Habsburg Empire and obedient again to Rome. These extraordinary possibilities are fully dramatized in John Edward's superb short biography. The real Mary I has almost disappeared under the great mass of Protestant propaganda that buried her reputation during her younger sister, Elizabeth I's reign. But what if she had succeeded?

The acclaimed Penguin Monarchs series: short, fresh, expert accounts of England's rulers - now in paperback William III (1689-1702) & Mary II (1689-94) (Britain's only ever 'joint monarchs') changed the course of the entire country's history, coming to power through a coup (which involved Mary betraying her own father), reestablishing parliament on a new footing and, through committing Britain to fighting France, initiating an immensely long period of warfare and colonial expansion. Jonathan Keates' wonderful book makes both monarchs vivid, the cold, shrewd 'Dutch' William and the shortlived Mary, whose life and death inspired Purcell to write some of his greatest music.

No English king has so divided opinion, both during his reign and in the centuries since, more than Richard III. He was loathed in his own time for the never-confirmed murder of his young nephews, the Princes in the Tower, and died fighting his own subjects on the battlefield. This is the vision of Richard we have inherited from Shakespeare. Equally, he inspired great loyalty in his followers. In this enlightening, even-handed study, Rosemary Horrox builds a complex picture of a king who by any standard failed as a monarch. He was killed after only two years on the throne, without an heir, and brought such a decisive end to the House of York that Henry Tudor was able to seize the throne, despite his extremely tenuous claim. Whether Richard was undone by his own fierce ambitions, or by the legacy of a Yorkist dynasty which was already profoundly dysfunctional, the end result was the same: Richard III destroyed the very dynasty that he had spent his life so passionately defending.

'Æthelred's reign of nearly thirty-eight years was the longest of any Anglo-Saxon ruler. If he had died in AD 1000, history would have remembered him more kindly' Few monarchs of the Middle Ages have had a worse popular reputation than Æthelred II, 'the Unready', remembered as the king who lost England to Viking invaders. But, as Richard Abels shows, the failure to defend his realm was not entirely his alone. Æthelred was in many ways an innovative ruler but one whose challenges - a divided court, a fragile nascent kingdom, a voracious, hydra-headed enemy - were ultimately too great to overcome.

An authoritative life of Edward the Confessor, the monarch whose death sparked the invasion of 1066 One of the last kings of Anglo-Saxon England, Edward the Confessor regained the

throne for the House of Wessex and is the only English monarch to have been canonized. Often cast as a reluctant ruler, easily manipulated by his in-laws, he has been blamed for causing the invasion of 1066—the last successful conquest of England by a foreign power. Tom Licence navigates the contemporary webs of political deceit to present a strikingly different Edward. He was a compassionate man and conscientious ruler, whose reign marked an interval of peace and prosperity between periods of strife. More than any monarch before, he exploited the mystique of royalty to capture the hearts of his subjects. This compelling biography provides a much-needed reassessment of Edward's reign—calling into doubt the legitimacy of his successors and rewriting the ending of Anglo-Saxon England.

Part of the Penguin Monarchs series: short, fresh, expert accounts of England's rulers in a collectible format Henry VII was one of England's unlikeliest monarchs. An exile and outsider with barely a claim to the throne, his victory over Richard III at Bosworth Field seemed to many in 1485 like only the latest in the sequence of violent convulsions among England's nobility that would come to be known as the wars of the roses - with little to suggest that the obscure Henry would last any longer than his predecessor. To break that cycle of division, usurpation, deposition and murder, he had both to maintain a grip on power and to convince England that his rule was both rightful and effective. Here, Sean Cunningham explores how, in his ruthless, controlling and personal kingship, Henry VII did so; in the process founding the Tudor dynasty and, arguably, helping to lay the foundations for modern government. Sean Cunningham is a Principal Records Specialist at The National Archives. A Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, he has published widely on late medieval and early Tudor England. His books include, most recently, a historical biography of Henry VII.

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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