

Life and Government in England 1189-1216

The Feudal System

Since 1066, hierarchy based on holding land in return for service.

All land belonged to king; gave land to tenants-in-chief (barons and bishops) in return for tax, advice, knights' service; gave land to knights in return for military service; provided land for peasants to work, they farmed their food, and had to work for lord each week and gathering harvest.

In return for land, had to swear oath of fealty (loyalty). 5,000 Knights had to serve in king's army for 2 months and give 40 days guarding lord's castle.

The Church

Religion dominated life – people had to attend religious services and pray to get into heaven. Most of Europe was Catholic, loyal to the pope, god's representative on earth: even kings were subject to pope's authority. Church owned lots of land (20% of England) and people gave money to secure place in heaven – so very rich.

Archbishop of Canterbury was head of church in England (supported by Archbishop of York in North). Bishops responsible for the priests and monks in their area, who performed services, baptism, marriage, burials. Senior churchmen had to supply knights to king's army and some advised the king.

Kingship

King had to control kingdom, keep it safe from attack and administer justice. King was given authority by god, so could not be questioned by subjects

In principle, eldest legitimate son inherited throne when king died, but in some cases the next king was nominated by king or selected by barons.

King passed laws, he and his court (advisers) travelled around kingdom making legal judgements; being "seen" by subjects and carrying out rituals. Also had to be good military leader (often led army into battle).

Richard I Summary

Known as Coeur de lion, Lionheart. Reputation as great warrior king, also showed Christian duty by going on crusade. Guided by idea of chivalry – strong in battle, honourable in dealings with others and love, protected the weak.

He was third son of Henry II (oldest legitimate son), became king as was favourite of mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine. Fought alongside Phillip II of France against his Henry II to secure throne as feared Henry would make youngest son John king.

Once he had secured crown wanted to go on crusade so he: made peace with enemies from war vs Henry; appointed trusted advisers to rule country while he was away; gave John land in Normandy; banned brothers from country for 3 years to prevent rebellion



John Summary

Known as a villainous king. Known as "lackland" as did not inherit land; but weaker than Richard, so no chance of being king while he was alive.

When Richard died John's claim supported by Eleanor of Aquitaine and leading knight/baron William Marshall. Also supported by barons. But rival claim to throne Arthur of Brittany (eldest son of John's brother), supported by barons in France and Philip II of France.

Arthur only 12, so John crowned king in 1199. Travelled to France agreed to give some Angevin land and do homage to Philip. But peace did not last long and Arthur joined forces with Philip. John captured Arthur in battle, but rather than ransom or put him on trial he murdered him. This broke Chivalric code, so many barons turned against him.

Reign began well as he chose good advisers and showed good judgement and military leadership by supporting Richard. But he was short tempered and cruel, so lost trust of many people.



Government

Govt based on maintaining law and order and collecting taxes to defend kingdom. Richard only present in England twice during 10 year reign, for 6 months. 1189, crowned and raised money to pay for crusade. Made agreements with rivals to secure kingdom; appointed trusted advisers to run England in his absence, led by William Longchamp.

1191 while Richard was away, John rebelled, set up court and ruled kingdom: demanded huge taxes to pay for Richard's release, allied with Philip. When Richard returned in 1194,

John had to beg for his mercy; Richard forgave him, but humiliated him. First 6 years of John's reign spent defending land in France; but when lost Normandy in 1204 he returned to England. He soon became v unpopular: chose "new men" (not barons) as advisers; cruel punishments for those who disobeyed him – so poor relationship with barons

Finance

Taxes never popular, both Richard and John demanded huge taxes for wars (and Richard's ransom):

Royal demesne: land, forest, towns owned by king.

Tallage: tax paid by freemen and those living in royal towns

Wardship fine: when baron died, if heir was young king would be responsible for him and the land.

Forest fines: barons, knights, peasants had to pay to use king's land

Scutage: money paid in return for not having to fight. Barons thought this should only be demanded in an emergency, but John demanded 11 times in 16 years.

Thirteenth: tax based on goods and income of every man, only demanded once as v unpopular.

Taxes collected by sheriff: had to collect a fixed amount, could keep any extra. Sheriff could become v rich, so Richard made a lot of money by selling sheriff offices.

English society

Most people lived and worked on the land. Peasants lived on manor, owned by lord. Work supervised by Reeve: divided work, collected rent. Village land divided into 2/3 fields: one left fallow while other was farmed. Divided into strips to be farmed; took crops to mill (paid fee to lord for using mill). Also kept some animals. Hard physical work, long hours, only basic tools

During C12th towns grew and new towns founded. Paid for Royal charter: gave town freedom, had law court and local government.

Range of different jobs; Guilds: group of people with same trade paid for right to practice their trade in town.

Jews separate community in many towns, approx. 5,000 in England in 1200. Protected by royal charter, in exchange for high taxes (eg Jews had to pay £3,375 for Richard's ransom). Jews involved in money lending (Christians were banned from doing this), so v important in economy. But this made them unpopular. Also antisemitism, as Jews blamed for Christ's death. Pogroms (anti-Jewish riots) after Richard became king, even though John ordered them to stop. Mob killed 150 Jews in York 1190

Key words

Angevin Empire – lands held by Henry II and Richard I in England and France

Bailiff – official who looked after lord's land

Chivalry – code of conduct for medieval knights

Crusade – holy war fought to claim land for Christianity

Fief – piece of land

Forfeiture – if vassal broke oath land taken away

Freeman – peasant who paid rent, so free to move around

Homage – demonstration of loyalty

Primogeniture – land and title inherited by eldest son

Sheriff – official who collected taxes and managed king's castle

Succession – inheriting throne, title or land

Vassal – a man who held land in exchange of doing homage

Villein – peasant owned by lord, could not move to a different village.



Involvement Overseas 1189-1204

The Crusades

Holy war fought by Christians. 1095 the Holy Land (including Jerusalem) controlled by Muslims, pope called for Crusade. Christianity was against violence, but this was a "Just War" (acceptable to fight). Those who fought in the crusades were granted a full indulgence (they would be forgiven their violence and be allowed into heaven). First Crusade captured Jerusalem, but it was recaptured by powerful Muslim leader Saladin, so another Crusade needed.

Three armies set off on Third Crusade in 1190: England + Angevin Empire (led by Richard), Holy Roman Empire (led by Frederick I) and French (led by Philip II).

17,000 English crusaders, mostly knights and squires (knights in training), leading churchmen, nearly 3,000 Welsh archers. They joined the crusade because: religious belief; offered Indulgence; they could gain conquered land (important for younger sons, because all land inherited by eldest son); debts cancelled; didn't have to pay Saladin Tithe (expensive tax to pay for Crusade).



Most English people supported the Crusades. It was a godly act to go on Pilgrimage (particularly to the Holy Land), but this had become more difficult since capture by Muslims. Richard was seen by his people as a defender of the faith. The Pogroms of 1189 showed that there was enthusiasm for religious violence. But there were some concerns about the Crusade: knights would be away for a long time so harder to manage their lands; cost (required heavy taxes); some argued that king should be in England to protect and rule the kingdom.

Richard – Crusader King

Richard swore to go on Crusade 1187, before becoming king; started preparing to leave as soon as he was crowned. His was motivated by: religious devotion; personal glory; his great grandfather had been King of Jerusalem; as new king he had wealth and power.

Even before leaving there was tension between Richard and Philip. Philip wanted to take land from the Angevin Empire for France; Richard controlled the Vexin (an important strip of land in Normandy) – he had been promised this as dowry for marrying Philip's sister, but he didn't marry her). But they agreed that they would not attack each other's land while on Crusade.

Holy Roman Emperor Frederick drowned in 1190 and many of his troops returned home, so Richard and Philip quarrelled over who would be leader of the Crusade. Richard given better reception in Sicily on way, which made Philip jealous; Richard then married in Cyprus – this humiliated Philip as he had been betrothed to his sister. Richard conquered Cyprus – this gave him, lots of extra money, and a source of food for the Crusade. Philip thought he should have half as they had agreed to share conquests, but Richard refused as Philip had not been involved.

Argument continued after victory at Acre: Richard had been able to pay soldiers higher wages, and they disagreed about who should become King of Jerusalem. Richard left the Crusade and returned to France (he was ill, he was angry about Richard's arrogance and he feared France would be attacked as Count of Flanders had died so France weaker). Richard faced problems: feared that Philip might attack Angevin Empire; had poor relationship with other Crusader leaders; Leopold of Austria was furious after Richard's men had taken down his banner at Acre (as Leopold was not a King).



Acre, Arsuf and Jerusalem

Acre (July 1191) was an important port town – could be used to supply food and troops for Crusading army. Christian army had besieged Acre since 1189, but unable to capture. Philip and Richard arrived with men and catapults, broke through city walls. 12 July Muslims surrendered, agreement made with Saladin (hand over weapons, pay 200,000 gold coins, release Christian prisoners, return of the True Cross. Saladin did not keep his agreement. Richard's men beheaded 2,700 Muslim prisoners outside Saladin's camp. Criticised because he could have ransomed them; but it is argued that he massacred them because it was difficult to look after/feed so many prisoners.

Army marched south towards Jaffa. It was summer and v hot, but stayed close to sea to had enough supplies/water. Saladin gathered army at Arsuf (Sept 1191) to meet Richard. Richard ordered his army to stay in formation and charge together. Some broke ranks, but Richard managed to restore order, charge and win battle. Battle demonstrated Richard's leadership and military skills.

Jerusalem (Oct 1191 - July 1192). First march to city was slow because of rain; Christians feared Saladin's army would surround them; they would not be able to get supplies from coast; they would not be able to hold Jerusalem. Richard ordered a retreat, but marched again 5 months later. Got to within 12 miles of Jerusalem but Richard stopped the march (same fears), and return to the coast.

July 1192 Saladin attacked Jaffa but Richard's skill and courage defeated them. Richard needed to return home, so agreed a truce with Saladin: stop fighting, Muslims retain control of Jerusalem; but Christian pilgrims free to visit.



Richard's capture and ransom

Richard had to return home because John had allied with Philip and attacked Angevin territory and enemies had given him a bad name in Europe.

Had to travel home disguised as a pilgrim, but was shipwrecked, arrested and imprisoned by Leopold of Austria. Leopold sold his prisoner to Holy Roman Emperor Henry VI. Leopold, Henry and Philip demanded massive ransom of 150,000 marks.

English had already paid lots of taxes to pay for Crusade. John did not want to pay, and had done homage to Philip in hope of gaining Angevin land. He and Philip tried to pay Henry 80,000 marks to keep Richard locked up..

Eleanor took charge of collecting taxes to pay ransom: land tax for every landowner; gold from churches; taxes from Scotland and Jews; 25% tax on all income and goods. Took 6 months to collect and left English poor; still resented paying tax when John became king 5 years later. Richard eventually released after a year and a week. He returned to England, crushed John's revolt, then left for France to restore control over Angevin lands.

The loss of Normandy

Richard's success

Philip wanted control of all of France. By the time Richard got there Normandy was weak as a result of John and Philip's attacks. Philip had gained control of Vexin (land between France and Normandy) and great castle at Gisors. Richard immediately asked for mercy from Richard, Richard forgave him (so only had one enemy, Philip, to fight). Together Richard and John had series of victories and bribed local lords to support them, but Philip took custody (control) of Arthur of Brittany. In order to win back lands, Richard ordered the building of Chateau Gaillard in the Vexin. Cost £12,000 and completed in just 2 years. It was a royal palace; v well defended (rounded walls, so no weak corners vulnerable to attack by catapult); and a base for Richard to launch his campaign to recapture lands. Richard was doing well – had pushed Philip back to Gisors Castle. But in March 1199, while out surveying a siege of small castle in Limoges he was shot by crossbow – wound became infected and he died.

John's failure

John became king in 1199. He soon married 12-year-old Isabelle of Angouleme. The marriage gave him control of important lands; but she was already betrothed to John's Vassal Hugh du Lusignan. This was v unchivalrous. Hugh turned to Philip for justice. Philip was John's overlord (John had done homage to him in effort to gain lands while Richard was on Crusade). John refused Philip's demand that he go to Paris to answer charges: this meant that Philip forfeited all John's lands; he accepted Arthur of Brittany's homage. John was a reasonable military leader, and had some early success. He captured Arthur at Mirebeau in 1202. But as a result of his murdering Arthur many of his barons defected to fight for Philip instead: murder of Arthur was unchivalrous, and refusal to obey Philip broke feudal law. He was also short of money as Richard's crusade and ransom had cost so much. 1203 John returned to England, so Normans thought he had deserted them. John planned a campaign in Normandy, got barons to agree a Scutage to pay for war. Philip had been besieging Chateau Gaillard for over a year. John thought he had time, but was wrong. Without support/supplies Chateau Gaillard was captured by Philip – he was then able to easily capture the rest of Normandy. John nicknamed Softsword – a failed warrior king.

Key words

Beseige – to surround an enemy castle, attacking and stopping supplies getting in

Betrothed – engaged to be married

Defect – to change sides

Dowry – payment (in land or money) as a marriage gift

Holy Land – area of the Middle East where Christ lived

Papal Bull – official declaration by the pope

Pilgrimage – journey made for religious reasons

Scutage – tax paid by barons in return for not having to fight

Squire – a knight's servant, training to become a knight

Unchivalrous – an action that broke the knight's code of chivalry

Vexin – strategically important area of land between Paris and Normandy

King John's Downfall (1205-16)

Problems with the church

Medieval history written by monks (they were only people who could write) – John's conflict with pope meant that monks v critical of him.

John wanted to control the church, but Pope Innocent III wanted to show that kings were vassal of the papacy. In 1205 John argued with Canterbury monks about who should be appointed Archbishop of Canterbury (previous kings had been allowed to choose) – both sides appealed to pope for support; instead Pope chose, Stephen Langton (who had spent a lot of time in France, so John did not trust him). John was furious: refused to let Langton into Kingdom, expelled Canterbury monks and seized land of Italian church.

John expected this would force Pope to agree to his choice of Archbishop, but he did not. Instead he placed England under Interdict, which meant that people in England were not allowed to practice Christian ceremonies: sermons could only be preached in churchyard, marriage / baptism could not take place in church, Christian burial banned, so souls of dead could not go to heaven.

John blamed the churchmen who supported the pope, confiscated their money. Because this was a source of revenue John was in no rush to make peace with the Pope, also church services had been allowed to continue behind closed doors.

Because Interdict had not worked, November 1209 John was excommunicated. This meant that all Christians no longer had to obey him. Many barons became increasingly angry, bishops were encouraged to leave England (though this meant leaving behind land / property which John could confiscate).

At first excommunication made John richer (+£13,500 per year). But enemies in Europe (led by Prince Louis of France) were planning an attack. If John did not make peace with pope this attack would have been declared a crusade.

John and Innocent made peace: Langton became archbishop, churchmen who had left England allowed to return, John paid compensation to pope. John also agreed to surrender Kingdom of England to pope, so he became a vassal of the pope. Pope then allowed John to choose bishops, and was also able to rely on support from Pope when barons rebelled 1215-16.

Conflict with the barons

John in difficult economic situation: prices rising; Richard's crusade and ransom had cost huge amount of money; loss of Normandy reduced royal revenues. He needed to pay mercenaries to fight a war in France He was also a big spender (+£700 for robes to wear on Christmas!). John raised money by imposing heavy fines on barons (eg £405 fee for inheriting land, when the fine was previously £100). This meant that he could raise money, but became unpopular.

Arbitrary power: John made unfair decisions which caused problems. 1209-14 he closed law courts, and only judges approved by him could hear cases. Barons angry that he had taken control of justice to benefit himself, particularly to punish them when he was collecting money. William de Braose (baron who had been favoured by John) owed him money. John forced him into exile; de Braose's wife and son captured and starved to death.



Plot of 1212. John had led campaigns to try and capture land in Ireland and Wales that has been given to William de Braose. Llewelyn of Wales formed alliance with Philip of France; some barons led by Robert Fitz Walter joined them. John cancelled Welsh campaign and defeated plotters, but this showed him that he was facing serious opposition (it was probably what led him to make peace with Pope Innocent III).

Failure to recapture Normandy 1214. John's harsh taxes (including another scutage) were to pay for campaign to regain lands lost in France. If he had been successful this would have restored relations with barons as they would be given conquered land and would have given John more money. He spent £135,000 on the campaign and had support of Holy Roman Emperor Otto; but defeated heavily at Battle of Bouvines. This was the end of any chance to regain lost land in France: barons were angry; soft sword (failed warrior); wasted money; no chance of regaining revenue from Normandy.

The Magna Carta

When John returned from failure in Normandy barons were rebellious. Angry barons met in Nov 1214 and forced John to accept Coronation Charter, an oath guaranteeing rights of freemen and promising good government. John delayed making a decision about whether he would accept, took crusader vows which meant the barons could not oppose him. Pope agreed to support John. No agreement made.

39 barons and 1,400 knights from around England gathered in Northamptonshire, rebelled against John (out of total 165 barons and 6,500 knights), but many others refused to support him. Rebels renounced their oath of fealty, selected Robert FitzWalter as their leader, captured London in May 1215 (so John lost more revenue).

Barons were not keen to fight a civil war as John: had more men and castles; bought more support by promising to give the lands of the rebels; supported by most important baron William Marshall. Stephen Langton sent by John to negotiate with rebels, but he was sympathetic to them.

Articles of the Barons written up; John met barons at Runnymede on 15th June and put his seal on the document: Magna Carta – the Great Charter. 14 copies made, signed and sent to courts around the kingdom. It had 63 clauses, covering 5 main areas: Church – free from king's interference
Feudal system – king could only demand scutage with permission of barons; barons fine for inheriting land limited to £100
Justice – trial by peers to decide guilt; king could not sell justice
Freemen – merchants given freedom to travel without permission; royal forests (land) limited; weights and measures standardised
Council of barons – 25 barons appointed to share power with king and advise him, so he had to keep his promises.



The Barons War

John signed Magna Carta as he hoped it would gain him more support of barons, but did not plan to stick to agreement. Pope Innocent III issued a Papal Bull declaring charter illegal as John had been forced to sign, anyone who tried to force John to follow it would be excommunicated.

After just 3 months John renounced (said he would ignore) Magna Carta. Angry barons invited Prince Louis of France to be King of England. Louis had support of barons, and France; John had support of mercenaries.

Siege of Rochester (Nov 1215). Important castle in South East on England. John besieged and captured it as this would make it difficult for Louis' French forces to join rebels in London. Rebels also had support of Scottish King Alexander (as they had promised him land in North). John marched north and captured Berwick Castle (Jan 1216), securing the North; then marched south capturing castles of his enemies.

Prince Louis landed (May 1216), immediately captured Rochester Castle and marched to London. Many of John's supporters assumed he would be defeated so defected.

John was v ill by this time. Marched north again – final humiliation as crown jewels sank in the mud and were lost. Died Oct 1216 in Newark. Few people mourned to death of an unpopular king.

Succession

John's heir was 9 year-old son Henry. Council of 13 barons led by William Marshal were trusted to care for the kingdom until Henry was old enough to rule. There was a danger that rebels (who still controlled London) would crown Louis King. Henry III crowned at Gloucester (this usually happened in London) Oct 1216. Henry did homage to the pope, so had the support of the church.

William Marshal headed government as King's Protector. This was a new role, so powers uncertain. Marshal in charge of government finance, campaigns against rebels, and had support of pope. One of his first acts as Protector was to restore Magna Carta. By 1217 Marshal succeeded in defeating the rebels, Louis returned to France.

By 1217 England was much weaker than it had been in 1189: child king; ruled by Protector; Louis of France, Llewelyn of Wales, Alexander of Scotland had captured some English land; kingdom was bankrupt; life and trade had been disrupted by Civil War; authority of the king had been reduced by Magna Carta; Angevin Empire lost.



Key words

Archbishop of Canterbury – most senior churchman in England

Arbitrary power – making an unfair decision without following usual rules

Civil War – war between two sides from the same country

Defect – to change sides

Excommunication – expelled from the church

Exile – when someone is forced to run away from their land

Interdict – Papal ban on religious ceremonies taking place

Mercenary – professional soldier who could be hired to fight for any side

Oath of fealty – swearing loyalty to the king

Papacy – the office of the pope

Revenue – money coming in

Royal seal – royal approval of a document (like a signature)