

Royalty

Everything you never needed to know about some of the Kings of England ...

ALFRED THE GREAT, King of England (849-901)

Actually he was only really King of Essex, Kent and Wessex, and overlord of the rest of the kingdoms of the land.

EDGAR, King of England (944-75)

The younger son of King Edmund and great-grandson of Alfred the Great, King Edgar was reprimanded by Archbishop Dunstan for seducing a nun.

EADRED, King of England (reigned 946-955)

Little is known of King Eadred save that he died of a fatal quinsy (a disease of the throat in AD 955).

ETHELRED II, King of England (c. 968-1016)

Son of Edgar by his second wife Aelfthryth, his baptism was marked by him urinating in the font. It gives the wrong impression to call him Ethelred the Unready. He was called Rede-less from his inability to recognise good rede, or counsel.

CANUTE, King of England (c. 994-1035)

The son of Sweyn Forkbeard, King of Denmark, Canute claimed the English throne at the age of 19 on Sweyn's death. He is remembered chiefly for his attempt to hold back the waves. In his reign the penalty for an adulteress was to forfeit "both nose and ears".

EDWARD THE CONFESSOR, King of England (c. 1005-66)

Son of Ethelred the Unready and brother of Hardicanute, who invited him England in 1041. During his reign there was a byelaw in Gloucester "to protect Gloucestershire women from marauding Welshmen".

HAROLD II, King of the English (c. 1026-66)

Brother-in-law of Edward the Confessor, no relation of Harold I, known as Harold the Harefoot. After the battle of Hastings in 1066, King Harold's body was identified by a tattoo over his heart. It read: "Edith and England". He died on his birthday.

WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR, King of England (1027-1087)

He was an illegitimate child. His wife, Queen Matilda, was only 4 ft. 2 in. in height, making her the shortest monarch England has ever had. William the Conqueror died in 1087 when he burst open his bowels after being thrown on the pommel of his saddle.

WILLIAM II, King of England (1056-1100)

William Rufus (or the Red King), like his predecessor and father William the Conqueror, met his end in an accident. Out hunting with his friend Walter Tyrrel, the King's last words, on spotting a deer, were: "Shoot, Walter, shoot; as if it were the devil". Walter shot, but the arrow ricocheted off a tree and killed the King.

HENRY I, King of England (1068-1135)

Third surviving son of William the Conqueror and the only one to have been born in England. Had he been a dwarf, the yard would be much shorter than it is today. For he it was who decreed that a yard would be the length of his own arm, from finger to nose. He died in 1135 from a surfeit of lampreys (eel-like fish to which the King was evidently partial).

HENRY II, King of England (1133-89)

Son of Geoffrey of Anjou, who was the second husband of the Empress Matilda (or Maud), daughter of Henry I of England. In 1176 Henry II ordained the amputation of the right hand and right foot of anyone convicted of robbery, murder, arson or false coining. He also asked permission from Adrian IV, the only English Pope, to conquer Ireland.

RICHARD I, King of England (1157-99)

Affectionately known as Coeur de Lion, the Lionheart, Richard I is the nearest thing England has ever had to an absentee landlord. He spent only six months of his ten-year reign actually in England, and his queen,

Berengaria, is the only English queen never to have been in England. Wounded while besieging the castle of Chaluz in 1199, Richard need not have died had not the surgeon "so rankled the wound" in trying to extract the arrow, that it "mortified and brought on the end".

Source: all information from The Ultimate Irrelevant Encyclopaedia by Bill Hartson & Jill Dawson.