

Athelstan Penguin Monarchs The Making Of England

'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.

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 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?

Part of the Penguin Monarchs series: short, fresh, expert accounts of England's rulers in a collectible format Queen Victoria inherited the throne at 18 and went on to become the longest-reigning female monarch in history, in a time of intense industrial, cultural, political, scientific and military change within the United Kingdom and great imperial expansion outside of it (she was made Empress of India in 1876). Overturning the established picture of the dour old lady, this is a fresh and engaging portrait from one of our most talented royal biographers. Jane Ridley is Professor of Modern History at Buckingham University, where she teaches a course on biography. Her previous books include *The Young Disraeli*; a study of Edwin Lutyens, *The Architect and his Wife*, which won the 2003 Duff Cooper Prize; and the best-selling *Bertie: A Life of Edward VII*. A Fellow of the Royal Society for Literature, Ridley writes for the *Spectator* and other newspapers, and has appeared on radio and several television documentaries. She lives in London and Scotland.

In 480 BC, Xerxes, the King of Persia, led an invasion of mainland Greece. Its success should have been a formality. For seventy years, victory - rapid, spectacular victory - had seemed the birthright of the Persian Empire. In the space of a single generation, they had swept across the Near East, shattering ancient kingdoms, storming famous cities, putting together an empire which stretched from India to the shores of the Aegean. As a result of those conquests, Xerxes ruled as the most powerful man on the planet. Yet somehow, astonishingly, against the largest expeditionary force ever assembled, the Greeks of the mainland managed to hold out. The Persians were turned back. Greece remained free. Had the Greeks been defeated at Salamis, not only would the West have lost its first struggle for independence and survival, but it is unlikely that there would ever have been such an entity as the West at all. Tom Holland's brilliant new book describes the very first 'clash of Empires' between East and West. Once again he has found extraordinary parallels between the ancient world and our own. There is no competing popular book describing these events.

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.

'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.

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.

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.

In an age of evocative names like Eric Bloodaxe and Egil Skallagrimson, one name has been lost in the mists of time: that of Athelstan, ruler of all Britain. From the first raids of the Vikings on the shores of Britain and Ireland, the book traces the response to the threat across the Anglo-Saxon and Celtic worlds. The rise of the kingdom of the Anglo-Saxons, and later, of the English, built from the debris of Viking destruction, is analysed in detail and compared to the struggle for independence in Northumbria.

'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.

A "marvelous" (Economist) account of how the Christian Revolution forged the Western imagination. Crucifixion, the Romans believed, was the worst fate imaginable, a punishment reserved for slaves. How astonishing it was, then, that people should have come to believe that one particular victim of crucifixion-an obscure provincial by the name of Jesus-was to be worshipped as a god. Dominion explores the implications of this shocking conviction as they have reverberated throughout history. Today, the West remains utterly saturated by Christian assumptions. As Tom Holland demonstrates, our morals and ethics are not universal but are instead the fruits of a very distinctive civilization. Concepts such as secularism, liberalism, science, and homosexuality are deeply rooted in a Christian seedbed. From Babylon to the Beatles, Saint Michael to #MeToo, Dominion tells the story of how Christianity transformed the modern world.

Egil's Saga tells the story of the long and brutal life of tenth-century warrior-poet and farmer Egil Skallagrimsson: a morally ambiguous character who was at once the composer of intricately beautiful poetry, and a physical grotesque capable of staggering brutality. The saga recounts Egil's progression from youthful savagery to mature wisdom as he struggles to avenge his father's exile from Norway, defend his honour against the Norwegian King Erik Bloodaxe, and fight for the English King Athelstan in his battles against Scotland. Exploring issues as diverse as the question of loyalty, the power of poetry, and the relationship between two brothers who love the same woman, Egil's Saga is a fascinating depiction of a deeply human character.

The acclaimed Penguin Monarchs series: short, fresh, expert accounts of England's rulers - now in paperback Edward I (1272-1307) is one of the most commanding of all English rulers. He fought in southwest France, in Wales, in Scotland and in northern France, he ruled with ruthlessness and confidence, undoing the chaotic failure of his father, Henry III's reign. He reshaped England's legal system and came close to bringing the whole island of Great Britain under his rule. He promoted the idea of himself as the new King Arthur, his Round Table still hanging in Winchester Castle to this day. His greatest monuments are the extraordinary castles - Caernarfon, Beaumaris, Harlech and Conwy - built to ensure his rule of Wales and some of the largest of all medieval buildings. Andy King's brilliant short biography brings to life a strange, complex man whose triumphs raise all kinds of questions about the nature of kingship - how could someone who established so many key elements in England's unique legal and parliamentary system also have been such a harsh, militarily brutal warrior?

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.

The powerful and innovative King Aethelstan reigned only briefly (924-939), yet his achievements during those eventful fifteen years changed the course of English history. He won spectacular military victories (most notably at Brunanburh), forged unprecedented political connections across Europe, and succeeded in creating the first unified kingdom of the English. To claim for him the title of "first English monarch" is no exaggeration. In this nuanced portrait of Aethelstan, Sarah Foot offers the first full account of the king ever written. She traces his life through the various spheres in which he lived and worked, beginning with the intimate context of his family, then extending outward to his unusual

multiethnic royal court, the Church and his kingdom, the wars he conducted, and finally his death and legacy. Foot describes a sophisticated man who was not only a great military leader but also a worthy king. He governed brilliantly, developed creative ways to project his image as a ruler, and devised strategic marriage treaties and gift exchanges to cement alliances with the leading royal and ducal houses of Europe. Aethelstan's legacy, seen in the new light of this masterful biography, is inextricably connected to the very forging of England and early English identity.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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. From New York Times bestselling Conn Iggulden comes a new novel set in the red-blooded days of Anglo-Saxon England. This is the original game for the English throne. In the year 937, the new king of England, a grandson of Alfred the Great, readies himself to go to war in the north. His dream of a united kingdom of all England will stand or fall on one field—on the passage of a single day. At his side is the priest Dunstan of Glastonbury, full of ambition and wit (perhaps enough to damn his soul). His talents will take him from the villages of Wessex to the royal court, to the hills of Rome—from exile to exaltation. Through Dunstan's vision, by his guiding hand, England will either come together as one great country or fall back into anarchy and misrule . . . From one of our finest historical writers, *The Abbott's Tale* is an intimate portrait of a priest and performer, a visionary, a traitor and confessor to kings—the man who can change the fate of England.

In the 6th century AD, the Near East was divided between two great empires: the Persian and the Roman. A hundred years on, and one had vanished for ever, while the other was a dismembered, bleeding trunk. In their place, a new superpower had arisen: the empire of the Arabs. So profound was this upheaval that it spelled, in effect, the end of the ancient world. But the changes that marked the period were more than merely political or even cultural: there was also a transformation of human society with incalculable consequences for the future. Today, over half the world's population subscribes to one of the various religions that took on something like their final form during the last centuries of antiquity. Wherever men or women are inspired by belief in a single god to think or behave in a certain way, they bear witness to the abiding impact of this extraordinary, convulsive age - though as Tom Holland demonstrates, much of what Jews, Christians and Muslims believe about the origins of their religion is open to debate. In *The Shadow of the Sword* explores how a succession of great empires came to identify themselves with a new and revolutionary understanding of the divine. It is a story vivid with drama, horror and startling achievement, and stars many of the most remarkable rulers ever seen.

Of all the civilisations existing in the year 1000, that of Western Europe seemed the unlikeliest candidate for future greatness. Compared to the glittering empires of Byzantium or Islam, the splintered kingdoms on the edge of the Atlantic appeared impoverished, fearful and backward. But the anarchy of these years proved to be, not the portents of the end of the world, as many Christians had dreaded, but rather the birthpangs of a radically new order. *MILLENNIUM* is a stunning panoramic account of the two centuries on either side of the apocalyptic year 1000. This was the age of Canute, William the Conqueror and Pope Gregory VII, of Vikings, monks and serfs, of the earliest castles and the invention of knighthood, and of the primal conflict between church and state. The story of how the distinctive culture of Europe - restless, creative and dynamic - was forged from out of the convulsions of these extraordinary times is as fascinating and as momentous as any in history.

Maliyodoma Patrice Some was born in a Dagara Village, however he was soon to be abducted to a Jesuit school, where he remained for the next fifteen years, being harshly indoctrinated into European ways of thought and worship. The story tells of his return to his people, his hard initiation back into those people, which led to his desire to convey their knowledge to the world. *Of Water and the Spirit* is the result of that desire; it is a sharing of living African traditions, offered in compassion for those struggling with our contemporary crisis of the spirit.

'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.

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.

The Roman Republic was the most remarkable state in history. What began as a small community of peasants camped among marshes and hills ended up ruling the known world. *Rubicon* paints a vivid portrait of the Republic at the climax of its greatness - the same greatness which would herald the catastrophe of its fall. It is a story of incomparable drama. This was the century of Julius Caesar, the gambler whose addiction to glory led him to the banks of the Rubicon, and beyond; of Cicero, whose defence of freedom would make him a byword for eloquence; of Spartacus, the slave who dared to challenge a superpower; of Cleopatra, the queen who did the same. Tom Holland brings to life this strange and unsettling civilization, with its extremes of ambition and self-sacrifice, bloodshed and desire. Yet alien as it was, the Republic still holds up a mirror to us. Its citizens were obsessed by celebrity chefs, all-night dancing and exotic pets; they fought elections in law courts and were addicted to spin; they toppled foreign tyrants in the name of self-defence. Two thousand years may have passed, but we remain the Romans' heirs.

A vivid historical account of the social world of Rome as it moved from republic to empire. In 49 B.C., the seven hundred fifth year since the founding of Rome, Julius Caesar crossed a small border river called the Rubicon and plunged Rome into cataclysmic civil war. Tom Holland's enthralling account tells the story of Caesar's generation, witness to the twilight of the Republic and its bloody transformation into an empire. From Cicero, Spartacus, and Brutus, to Cleopatra, Virgil, and Augustus, here are some of the most legendary figures in history brought thrillingly to life. Combining verve and freshness with scrupulous scholarship, *Rubicon* is not only an engrossing history of this pivotal era but a uniquely resonant portrait of a great civilization in all its

extremes of self-sacrifice and rivalry, decadence and catastrophe, intrigue, war, and world-shaking ambition.

George I was not the most charismatic of the Hanoverian monarchs to have reigned in England but he was probably the most important. He was certainly the luckiest. Born the youngest son of a landless German duke, he was taken by repeated strokes of good fortune to become, first the ruler of a major state in the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation and then the sovereign of three kingdoms (England, Ireland and Scotland). Tim Blanning's incisive short biography examines George's life and career as a German prince, and as King. Fifty-four years old when he arrived in London in 1714, he was a battle-hardened veteran, who put his long experience and deep knowledge of international affairs to good use in promoting the interests of both Hanover and Great Britain. When he died, his legacy was order and prosperity at home and power and prestige abroad. Disagreeable he may have been to many, but he was also tough, determined and effective, at a time when other European thrones had started to crumble.

The acclaimed author of *Rubicon* and other superb works of popular history now produces a thrillingly panoramic (and incredibly timely) account of the rise of Islam. No less significant than the collapse of the Roman Republic or the Persian invasion of Greece, the evolution of the Arab empire is one of the supreme narratives of ancient history, a story dazzlingly rich in drama, character, and achievement. Just like the Romans, the Arabs came from nowhere to carve out a stupefyingly vast dominion—except that they achieved their conquests not over the course of centuries as the Romans did but in a matter of decades. Just like the Greeks during the Persian wars, they overcame seemingly insuperable odds to emerge triumphant against the greatest empire of the day—not by standing on the defensive, however, but by hurling themselves against all who lay in their path.

The story of a medieval Boudicca, Alfred the Great's daughter, and her struggle to restore her people and reclaim their land

She ascended the thrones of England, Scotland and Ireland in 1702, at age thirty-seven, Britain's last Stuart monarch, and five years later united two of her realms, England and Scotland, as a sovereign state, creating the Kingdom of Great Britain. She had a history of personal misfortune, overcoming ill health (she suffered from crippling arthritis; by the time she became Queen she was a virtual invalid) and living through seventeen miscarriages, stillbirths, and premature births in seventeen years. By the end of her comparatively short twelve-year reign, Britain had emerged as a great power; the succession of outstanding victories won by her general, John Churchill, the Duke of Marlborough, had humbled France and laid the foundations for Britain's future naval and colonial supremacy. While the Queen's military was performing dazzling exploits on the continent, her own attention—indeed her realm—rested on a more intimate conflict: the female friendship on which her happiness had for decades depended and which became for her a source of utter torment. At the core of Anne Somerset's riveting new biography, published to great acclaim in England ("Definitive"—*London Evening Standard*; "Wonderfully pacy and absorbing"—*Daily Mail*), is a portrait of this deeply emotional, complex bond between two very different women: Queen Anne—reserved, stolid, shrewd; and Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough, wife of the Queen's great general—beautiful, willful, outspoken, whose acerbic wit was equally matched by her fearsome temper. Against a fraught background—the revolution that deposed Anne's father, James II, and brought her to power . . . religious differences (she was born Protestant—her parents' conversion to Catholicism had grave implications—and she grew up so suspicious of the Roman church that she considered its doctrines "wicked and dangerous") . . . violently partisan politics (Whigs versus Tories) . . . a war with France that lasted for almost her entire reign . . . the constant threat of foreign invasion and civil war—the much-admired historian, author of *Elizabeth I* ("Exhilarating"—*The Spectator*; "Ample, stylish, eloquent"—*The Washington Post Book World*), tells the extraordinary story of how Sarah goaded and provoked the Queen beyond endurance, and, after the withdrawal of Anne's favor, how her replacement, Sarah's cousin, the feline Abigail Masham, became the ubiquitous royal confidante and, so Sarah whispered to growing scandal, the object of the Queen's sexual infatuation. To write this remarkably rich and passionate biography, Somerset, winner of the Elizabeth Longford Prize for Historical Biography, has made use of royal archives, parliamentary records, personal correspondence and previously unpublished material. Queen Anne is history on a large scale—a revelation of a centuries-overlooked monarch.

From the celebrated historian and author of *Europe: A History*, a new life of George II George II, King of Great Britain and Ireland and Elector of Hanover, came to Britain for the first time when he was thirty-one. He had a terrible relationship with his father, George I, which was later paralleled by his relationship to his own son. He was short-tempered and uncultivated, but in his twenty-three-year reign he presided over a great flourishing in his adoptive country - economic, military and cultural - all described with characteristic wit and elegance by Norman Davies. (George II so admired the Hallelujah chorus in Handel's *Messiah* that he stood while it was being performed - as modern audiences still do.) Much of his attention remained in Hanover and on continental politics, as a result of which he was the last British monarch to lead his troops into battle, at Dettingen in 1744.

Part of the ALL-NEW LADYBIRD EXPERT SERIES. - Who was Æthelflæd? - What role did she play in the founding of England? - How has her legacy lasted to this day? DISCOVER the epic history of England's forgotten queen. Planting cities, sponsoring learning and defeating her people's enemies, Æthelflæd laid the foundations of a kingdom that lasts to this day. THE MOST INFLUENTIAL WOMAN THAT ENGLISH HISTORY FORGOT Tom Holland's *Æthelflæd* puts a spotlight on this formidable leader, pulling her out of the shadowy history of the dark ages.

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.

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