

The
ARCHAEOLOGY
of the
MEDIEVAL ENGLISH
MONARCHY



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The
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JOHN STEANE



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The seal of Edward I. See Fig. 7.

Foreword

By HRH Prince Richard of Gloucester

The advance of modern technology has enabled archaeologists to deduce a great deal more information from the artifacts that they unearth than could their predecessors. It is not only the speed with which computers can supply information, but also the immensely powerful microscopes that can identify where things have originated and further processes that can date objects so much more accurately.

The use of these techniques to identify objects with certainty, removes much of the speculation about the distant past and provides a firm framework, from which historians can make the more interesting speculations as to why historical personalities may have behaved the way they did.

This country has always been rich in historical documents, much studied and reported on in the vast bibliography that can be extracted from libraries. However, the work of archaeologists provides further reference points to enable us to seek to answer the questions that interest us today, rather than only those that the chroniclers chose to write about at the time.

It is the archaeologist's skill to deduce a great deal from very little—like Sherlock Holmes—it comes from knowing what to look for and how to compare it with previous discoveries. They are then able to demonstrate to the public how to read the evidence—very often the very landscape we see in front of us—as proof of occupation by particular groups of people at a certain period.

I first met John Steane, the author of this book, when he was Headmaster of Kettering Grammar School. He spent six summers

excavating a deserted medieval village at Lyveden on my farm in Northamptonshire. Here he found and published his excavation of an industrial site which extended our understanding about the technology of the medieval pottery industry. His sixth formers were involved in the excavations and a number went on to become professional archaeologists. He enlarged his interests to include the whole man-made environment when he wrote *The Northamptonshire Landscape* (Hodder and Stoughton 1974). At this point he switched careers and joined the Oxfordshire Museum Service as its second County Archaeological Officer. He continued to foster the study of archaeology in schools as a member of the Council for British Archaeology's Schools Committee. But his developing interests brought him increasingly in contact with the medieval English monarchy. He had written on the royal fishponds of Northamptonshire as early as 1970 and subsequently made forays into the subjects of parks, forests and hunting. His interests in royal government were given expression in Chapter One of *The Archaeology of Medieval England and Wales* (Croom Helm, London 1984). He surveyed royal fishponds across the country in an article of 1988.

The present book attempts what I think no one has tried to do before. Traditionally the subject has been the preserve of historians who have used the incomparable wealth of documents and chronicles at their disposal. Here a survey is made of the material evidence for the activities and life-style of the medieval monarchy. The new facts coming

from excavations are combined with a meticulous study of the buildings which remain above ground. The few artifacts which have undeniable royal associations are also scrutinised. The result is a vivid and at times unusual reconstruction of the lives of perhaps the most prominent element in medieval society.

The eye of an excavating archaeologist has joined with the historical researcher to answer exactly those questions that we would most like to know about the medieval monarchy, but which the contemporary chroniclers could not or dared not tell us.

A medieval King had not the complicated machinery of a modern state to help him share the responsibility for the future of his people. His success as a King depended on his ability as a general, as well as an administrator and a moral leader. How much time he could afford to devote to his own interests of, maybe, hunting, music and architecture, or raising an heir capable of succeeding to his responsibilities, depended on his

other abilities and the economic fortunes of his times. Much of what was achieved was done by bluff, for the monarch's resources were only marginally greater than many of his more powerful subjects.

Shakespeare's histories speculate on the ambitions of these characters and the fates which brought them success or failure, but it is the archaeologist who can make the clearest distinction between the similarities and the differences between then and today.

The ruins of castles, abbeys and palaces found in all corners of the country mark the passing of this age, they also provide a sense of the significance of the past, not as just an inevitability, but monuments to exceptional individuals, who rose to prominence and influenced their communities for good or evil. I hope this book will provide many insights and bring a greater sense of understanding of the past and the way our present came to be created as a consequence of people and the conflicts of their ideas and beliefs.

Preface

Archaeology as a technique for shedding light on past human societies and activities has made major contributions during the last forty years to our understanding of medieval England. Material aspects of the medieval landscape such as field systems, forests, chases, parks, warrens, marshland, waste, villages and towns, roads and tracks have all been profitably studied (Cantor 1982, Rackham 1986). It is now some time since the pages of medieval economic, social and political historians were based exclusively on documentary sources. It is increasingly being realized that substantial, if fragmentary and scattered, remains of the medieval past lie buried or are upstanding throughout the country. English archaeologists have pioneered new techniques such as dendrochronology, the study of timber joints in buildings and the analysis of pottery, which all allow greater precision for dating structures.

Archaeological progress in the study of the medieval period, however, reflects twentieth-century preconceptions and obsessions. Ours is the century of the common man and much energy has been expended in reconstructing rural peasant life by studying medieval settlement. The doings of kings, nobles, barons and clerks no longer dominate the historical stage. The modern fashion for accumulating consumer goods has led students into spending perhaps a disproportionate amount of time in describing and analysing such common artifacts as pottery, knives and shoes (McCarthy and Brooks 1988, Cowgill *et al.* 1987, Grew and de Neergaard 1988). The current interest in ecology has fuelled the historical study of woodland and hedgerows (Rackham 1980, Hooper 1974). A further characteristic of the modern age which continues to excite and divide men is class. Social division is detected in the multifarious patterns of buildings, costume, accessories and food residues which appear in excavation reports. Most of these matters are discussed in my *The Archaeology of Medieval England and Wales* (Croom Helm 1984).

The mechanisms of political power are another favoured topic of the 1980s and 1990s. This book has arisen out of a reconsideration of Chapter One of the work just cited. I felt that the activities and preoccupations of kings, their families and their courtiers had been given inadequate treatment by medieval archaeologists (Clarke 1984, Hinton 1983). Royalty received scant attention in the *Research Objectives in British Archaeology* issued by the Council for British Archaeology (Thomas 1983). This dolefully claimed that the large corpus of excavated sites included only two royal palaces (Yeavering and Cheddar). Unknown, apparently, to its contributors were the excavations of medieval and Tudor palaces in the years just preceding and after the Second World War; such royal houses included Clarendon, Eltham, Greenwich, Whitehall, Bridewell, Nonsuch and the Tower of London.

The trouble was that the CBA's research priorities seem to have been topographical rather than political or social. Discrete categories of monuments within the landscape, such as moated sites and castles, were considered worthy of further study. The material apparatus of rulers responsible for government, expressed in highly symbolic artifacts such as crowns, croziers, seals and thrones, was not. Here then was a gap which needed to be filled.

One result of declining interest in organized religion and the reluctance of our generation to face up to the inevitability of death is that the medieval royal passion for the foundation of religious communities seems to our eyes an alien activity. However, the royal tombs of the English kings continue to exercise a mesmeric attraction to the thousands of tourists trampling through Westminster Abbey and St George's, Windsor.

For the purposes of this book I have defined the 'Middle Ages' as the period 1060–1547. Despite the exaggerated attempts in recent years to promote the idea of continuity between the late

Anglo-Saxon kingdom and its Norman successor, these dates mark two decisive events, the Norman Conquest, and the break with Rome at the Reformation. Since the latter event occurred in the middle of Henry VIII's reign, I have continued to draw on examples up to 1547. Henry VIII seems to me to be far more 'medieval' than 'Renaissance'.

'England' is an artificial power bloc of royal, baronial and ecclesiastical estates, rights and claims during this period. I was tempted to deal more equally with 'England and France' but for the four years 1985 to 1989 family preoccupations meant that I did no foreign travelling. Hence the references to France and Spain and the Netherlands, all areas of great interest and influence on the medieval English kings, are brief and fleet-

ing. I am grateful to my daughter, Anna, for living in the south of France and for encouraging me to visit her and my grandson. If there is a revised edition this is the direction in which I would shape the book.

I believe it is most important to visit and record one's own observations of each monument. The bulk of the photographs, apart from aerial views, are by the author.

I have attempted a synthesis; two major aspects, however, I have left for other books—the archaeology of government (that is to say law, justice, prisons, coinage) and the art of war.

John Steane
Oxford
May 1992

Preface to 1998 edition

I have had an opportunity owing to a change of publishers from Batsford to Routledge to revise this book and to bring it up to date. The revisions are the result of three influences. First, the reviews; second, the expansion of knowledge, particularly through excavations in the period 1992–8; third, the continuing development of my own interests. I have tried to incorporate the constructive suggestions of the reviews, and thank M.W.Thompson, J.Cherry and D.Gaimster in particular for their reflective and wise comments. I wish to thank the excavators and administrators for access to Windsor Castle, the Tower of London and Guildford Castle. In particular Stephen Brindle and Graham Keevil were most courteous and helpful in showing me their discoveries. I profited from the remarkable exhibition on 'Westminster Kings' at the British Museum, November 1995–January 1996. I thank Erhardt Dornberg, a friend of 40 years, for showing me Aachen Cathedral; also

the Provost and fellows of Eton College for access to the library, chapel and college buildings. I am grateful to Dr Malcolm Airs for organising an excellent conference on Medieval and Renaissance Palaces in Europe and Oxford in November 1997; to Maureen Mellor who provided me with some stimulating ideas on high-status ceramics; and to Vicky Peters and Nadia Jacobson of Routledge for suggesting this revised edition and promoting its progress with admirable efficiency. Finally, I have to report that the 'other book', on the *Archaeology of Government*, is well on the way. I hope it will result in continuing the approaches made in this volume into continental Europe during the Middle Ages.

John Steane
Oxford
May 1998

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the help of many friends, colleagues and students in the writing of this book, which has taken five years squeezed into a busy life of museum work. It is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Edith, who in her sixties and seventies was still lecturing on the monarchy and the capital on behalf of the City of London Society. I owe to her my early love of visiting ancient buildings. She unfailingly provided me with travelling costs from her limited resources and trusted me from the age of twelve to get there on my own.

I thank Professor Martin Biddle of Hertford College, Oxford, for inspiring me with his lectures, lending me the typescript of his book on the Winchester Round Table, and showing much enthusiasm towards the projects of his fellow students; Howard Colvin for writing the bulk of the medieval and early Tudor volumes of *The Kings Works*, an incomparable quarry for the would-be medieval archaeologist: its majestic scholarship, scrupulous accuracy and unpretentious style make it a pleasure to use; Professor Karl Leyser of All Souls College, Oxford, to whom I am indebted for my (limited) understanding of early medieval European history; Dr Tom James for reading Chapter 4, for allowing me to read his *The Palaces of Medieval England* in advance of publication and for accompanying me on a number of visits; Dr Gerald Harriss of Magdalen College, Oxford, for reading and suggesting improvements to Chapter 2; the President and fellows of Magdalen College for allowing a former demy to spread the papers of Chapter 7 over the tables of the McFarlane Library and for hospitality on a number of occasions; the staffs of the Bodleian, Ashmolean, Magdalen College and History Faculty Libraries for their unfailing courtesy in providing books and articles.

I am grateful for the secluded facilities of St Deiniols Library, Hawarden, Wales where much of this book was written; to F.E. Thompson and Hugh Chapman for facilitating the permission of the Society of Antiquaries to photograph books

and objects in the Society's possession; to Professor Sheppard Frere for loans of books; to Julian Munby for books and many ideas connected with Westminster; to Dr Ian Goodall for a loan of his thesis; to my aunt, Mrs Rich, for accompanying me to Nonsuch; to Trevor Rowley, Deputy Director of Oxford University Department for External Studies for organizing a conference on palaces in 1989; to Dr John Blair of Queens College who has again read and commented critically and I hope fruitfully on the whole book; to Brian Durham of the Oxford Archaeological Unit for sharing his ideas on palaces; to Dr Paul Stamper, Brian Dix and Bob Croft, former students of Kettering Grammar School, for providing me with up-to-date information about archaeology of Shropshire, Northamptonshire and Somerset respectively; to Arthur McGregor (Ashmolean Museum) and John Cherry (British Museum) for allowing me to study the objects in their care; to my brother, Christopher, for an abiding interest in building materials and for information on French cathedrals; to Georgina Stonor for her mine of knowledge and enthusiastic support; to Dr Martin Henig for sharing his massive scholarship with me; to my daughter Kate for recent references to the city of Lincoln; to my niece, Mary Anne, for the loan of her dissertation on Charlemagne and Aachen; to Mr Foster, formerly Clerk of Works at Westminster Abbey for making accessible the upper parts of that building; to James Bateman, Carol Anderson and Martin Brown of the Oxfordshire County Museum Services for encouragement and support; to Cynthia Bradford and Vernon Brooke for help with photographs, to Lisa Toogood, Elsebeth Wulff, and Samantha Hatzis for typing the successive drafts of the manuscripts; to Jennifer Mossop, Audrey Cruse and Elaine Fullard for accompanying me on many expeditions: two pairs of eyes are better than one. Finally, I am grateful for the prompt and efficient services of Tony Seward and Sarah Vernon-Hunt and to Peter Kemmis Betty, who has encouraged the writing of the book in its later stages.

CHAPTER ONE

Symbols of power

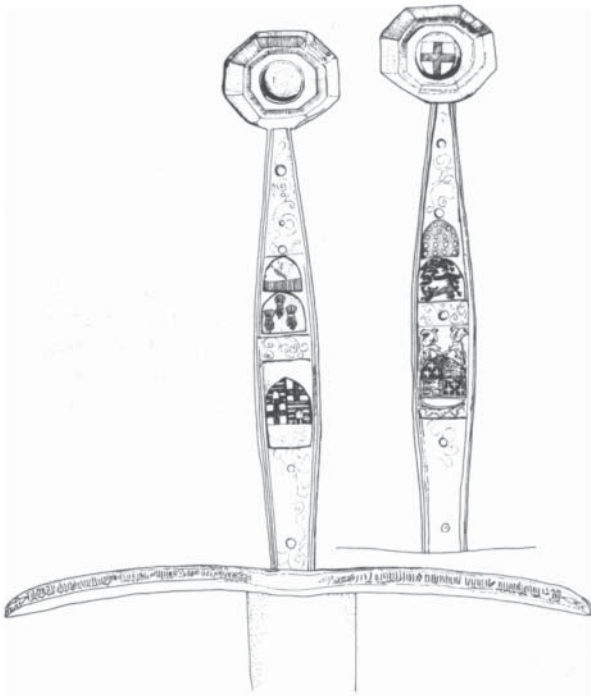
The European Middle Ages are dominated by the concept of kingship. The Norman, Angevin, Plantagenet, Capetian and Hohenstaufen dynasties lend their names to periods in English, French and German history. The politics of the period are virtually synonymous with the attempts of rulers to fulfil monarchical ambitions by means of marriage, diplomacy or war. Kings were also constantly expanding their influence into the spiritual sphere and thus conflicting with churchmen as well as barons. The ideal medieval king meant different things to different sections of the people who made up the kingdom (Barracough 1957). He was a leader of his magnates in war; a priest-king protecting the interests of the church, appointing bishops and abbots; an administrator and tax-gatherer upholding and supported by the interests of the class of royal officials, the *ministeriales*. He was also a judge, the fount of law, and was likely to satisfy his more lowly subjects if he was prepared to distribute justice, however sternly, with an even hand.

This irradiation of monarchy throughout society was helped in England by a number of circumstances. Historical accident produced three 'strong' kings in succession: William I, William II and Henry I, who created or improved institutions too powerful to be destroyed by the 20 years' anarchy of Stephen's reign. Henry I, by begetting 30 bastards and systematically slotting them into positions of political importance in his dominions consolidated his family's grip on widely scattered possessions (Given-Wilson 1988, 61). Henry II cemented alliances by marrying his children to other ruling houses throughout Europe. The concept of primogeniture, the unresisted acceptance of the heir to the throne, usually the king's eldest son, had become the norm as far as England was

concerned by the end of the thirteenth century. Edward I succeeded his father almost immediately in 1272 although he was absent on crusade; he was sufficiently assured of the succession to postpone his coronation until 1274. Edward II was the first king to date his regnal years from the day after his father's death. In this way continuity was assured; a close bond was forged between the royal dynasty and the royal office. This was demonstrated symbolically by the fact that the arms of the Plantagenet dynasty (Latin *plantagenista*= broom), 'Gules three lions passant guardant or' became the arms of the kingdom of England. The identification of the king with the nation meant that his achievements became the achievements of England—Edward I's conquest of Wales, and Edward III's military victories over the French at Crécy, 1346, and Poitiers, 1356. Similarly, the symbol of the French nation, the Fleur de Lys, bonded the separate parts of France together (Beaune 1991, 201–26).

The rapid development of effective departments of government meant that strong monarchical administration was carried on despite periods of royal weakness and crisis. Royal government could survive minorities such as Henry III's (1216–27), and baronial revolts (those of Simon de Montfort 1258–65 and Thomas of Lancaster 1321–2). Kingship as an institution emerged unscathed through the reigns of such flawed characters as Henry III and Edward II.

Archaeology provides a window into the contemporary perceptions of monarchy. Kingship was surrounded and bolstered by ceremonies and symbols, many of which have left structural and artifactual vestiges. The most significant was the ceremony of coronation whereby the king was invested by the Archbishop of Canterbury



1 A royal sword now in the British Museum. This is northern German in manufacture and dates to the mid-fifteenth century. It was carried before the Prince of Wales and bears the royal arms on the principal side of the grip and the pommel as well as those of Wales, Cornwall, and St George. On the other side are those of Mortimer quartering Burgh. It may have been used by the eldest son of Edward IV, created Prince of Wales and Earl of Chester in 1471. Alternatively, it may have been used by the son of Richard III, Prince Edward, 1473–84, invested as Prince of Wales and Earl of Chester in 1483.

with spiritual power as God's anointed, like the kings of Israel before him. Hence forward the anointed king was set apart from his subjects, at least on a par with, and to some extent superior to, churchmen. His periodic crown wearings reminded recalcitrant subjects of this divine stamp of approval. The effect of such ceremonies was strengthened by the dissemination of the royal coinage and of seals attached to documents, carrying images of the royal *persona* to every part of the land. Palaces were painted and churches filled with glass and images, further powerful projections of royal power. Apart from the crown and sceptre the third most potent symbol of royal power

was the sword (Fig. 1). Kings were recorded on a number of occasions as giving the sword from their own sides as a mark of special favour. With the sword the king knighted his followers. The chivalric code was reflected in the 'Matter of England', the tales of King Arthur and his Round Table. The cult of personality which backed their political pretensions was further fostered by the fact that medieval kings spent their lives in progresses throughout their dominions, characterized by conspicuous consumption; and when they died their obsequies were carried out on a magnificent scale and their bodies buried under tombs of great splendour. This chapter will survey four main aspects of these symbols of power: portraits and images, seals and regalia.

Portraits of kings

If by portraits we mean realistic and recognizable representations of the faces of people, then this genre can hardly be said to have started before the medieval period had largely run its course. For one thing, only the rulers in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were represented in art in any numbers; they were shown, monarchs and bishops, loaded with the symbols of their office—crowns, sceptres and so on. Their faces lack personal features, and without their beards, sceptres and crowns could easily be mistaken for those of saints; yet by means of the symbols the identifications are made clear. It seems that at this time the symbols of power were more potent than the idea of portraiture. There are, however, qualifications to be made. Some kings acquired attributes which were taken up by artists and repeated. Such is the long beard which is found in representations of Edward the Confessor. He is depicted on his coins, on his great seal and on the Bayeux Tapestry with a long beard, unlike any of his predecessors or successors (Whittingham 1974, 99). Even in the fifteenth-century glass at Great Malvern he is shown with flowing white hair and a beard (Rushforth 1936, 123–4).

The Norman conquerors, however, are shown as clean-shaven in the near-caricatures of their rulers stamped on their coins and embroidered on the Bayeux Tapestry. Some full-face coins of William I show him with long moustaches. The

impression of his great seal is unfortunately too indistinct to settle the question of whether the Bayeux Tapestry or these coins are correct in this detail (Wyon and Wyon 1887, 5–7). Clearly, if we are not even sure whether the Norman kings were bearded or shaven we are not going to get very much nearer to solving the question of their personal appearance.

During the twelfth century the idea of the portrait had still hardly germinated in western Europe. The image of the ruler, on the other hand, was strongly rooted in the visual scene; rulers had themselves been interpreted by artists in wall paintings, sculptures, bronzework and manuscripts as incarnations of justice. They are shown very much as Christ was depicted on the sculptured tympana over the doorways of great churches, seated in judgement on thrones, bearded, crowned, holding swords and sceptres. Their icons demonstrate little humanity and less individuality. The last thing one would call these solemn and soulless representations of monarchy is portraiture. Towards the middle of the century funeral monuments began to take the form of sculptured effigies. The first of these to survive in Italy were the papal effigies. It is possible that Henry I and Stephen were similarly commemorated but their monuments have been destroyed. The earliest monumental effigies in England are those of Roger and Jocelyn, bishops of Salisbury (d. 1139 and 1184 respectively) (Shortt 1958–9, 217–19). Those of the Angevin kings and queens at Fontévrault followed soon after. They are shown as *gisants*, stretched out as in death, remote, statuesque and withdrawn; surrounded by and clothed with the symbols of earthly power, devoid of individuality.

The thirteenth century, however, saw a move in two directions: the monuments to the dead begin to be idealized, and there is a tendency towards realism, though hardly naturalism, before the end of the century. One reason for this in England must be the great increase in artistic patronage during the reign of Henry III. There are no less than 19 references in royal records to the making of royal portrait images (this includes king, queen and members of the immediate royal family in stone, glass and metalwork) during his reign, 1216–72 (Whittingham 1974, Appendix 2). Three instances may be cited of the idealization of royal

portraits. Eleanor of Castile's effigy in Westminster Abbey shows her as a considerably younger woman than the matron who had born Edward I's 15 children. Edward II's alabaster effigy at Gloucester is another idealized version. It is an example of a very common feature of the mid-fourteenth century—that men had to be represented at the perfect age of about 33 (the supposed age of the crucified Christ)—as they hoped to appear at the General Resurrection (Gardner 1940, 24). Edward III, when commemorating the death of his children, Blanche of the Tower and William of Windsor (Fig. 2), had effigies made of well-grown striplings of the age of 10 despite the fact that both had died as babies (Tanner 1953, 34). An example of the somewhat uncertain move towards realism is the generalized portrait effigy of Henry III at Westminster—its rather lack-lustre handling may be due to the clumsiness of the bronze-founder (Plenderleith and Maryon 1959, 87–8).

Royal portraiture took a marked step forward in the latter part of Edward III's reign, with the French effigy of Queen Philippa of Hainault, who died in 1369 (Noppen 1931). This is no idealized woman but the realistic portrayal of a plain, rather stout, middle-aged lady, whose alabaster image still succeeds in arousing our sympathies.

The advent of realism coincides with the use of the death-mask. This has been first traced in the case of Edward III, whose death-mask it is thought was employed to make the head of the king's effigy used for the funeral celebrations (Howgrave-Graham 1961, 160–1). Henceforward there is a real possibility that when we are looking at a royal monument or a royal portrait we are gazing at a more or less accurate delineation of royal features. At this stage, however, portraiture was only regarded as an additional means of identification. It still took second place to heraldry and nomenclature. The male members of the royal family depicted in the fourteenth-century St Stephen's Chapel wall paintings (see Fig. 89) were shown wearing heraldic surcoats, and all the figures were labelled with their names; portraiture functioned here only as a kind of 'belt and braces' means of identifying figures represented on large-scale public paintings. The famous Westminster Abbey portrait of Richard II is in a sense labelled by means of the crowned letter Rs patterning the royal robe (Hepburn 1986, 91).



2 Effigies of William and Blanche, children of Edward III in Westminster Abbey, London. These children were still babies when they died but are portrayed in idealized form as ten-year-olds. (Photograph: RCHM England.)

While the funeral effigy of Edward III may give us an accurate delineation of his face, the icon which the bronze founder made of his royal visage is shown wrapped in an enormous beard which inevitably obscures some of the lower features of his face. It may well be that epochs of beardlessness went with periods of realistic portraiture (Whittingham 1974). Certainly, we have a clearer idea of Richard II's face because he chose to sport a comparatively meagre forked beard which is combined with a long narrow nose and hooded eyes on the Westminster picture and the tomb effigy.

The unsigned and undated panel portraits of the later Plantagenets have recently been subjected to dendrochronological analysis (Fletcher 1974, 250–8) which provides a date, *c.* 1518–23, for the painting of the portrait in the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle of Henry V and confirms that it was painted at the same time as the two other portraits in the Royal Collection showing Henry VI and Richard III (Hepburn 1986, 27). They are all identical in size and a comparison of the patterns of the tree rings from the boards which make them up indicates that the main board of all three panels was cut from the same tree.

Despite the fact that Henry V's portrait was painted nearly a hundred years after his death it is thought to be a close copy of a contemporary Gothic votive painting. The king's face may be slightly stylized but it comes through as recognizably youthful, firm and determined; he is 25 years old, long-featured, handsome, and with more than a touch of the *dévot*. The Royal Collection portrait of Henry VI, on the other hand, tends to bear out contemporary observations that as an adult the king looked naive and childlike; it shows a ruler whose mental health was precarious. In fact 'the Kyng was simple and lad by covetous counseyle...the quene with such as were of her affynyte rewled the reame as her lyked' (quoted by Wolffe 1981, 20).

Dr Fletcher suggests that alone among the works of the later medieval rulers which have survived in the Royal Collection the portrait of Edward IV's queen, Elizabeth Woodville, is an original work dating from *c.* 1471–80 (Fletcher 1974, 256). Other lines of evidence, however, such as the costume, the jewellery and the composition suggest that it was a later copy (Hepburn 1986, 56–7). A more likely contemporary representation of Elizabeth and her husband is the excellent stained glass kneeling figures in the north window of the north-west transept of Canterbury Cathedral (Caviness 1981, 251–61). Here are accurately portrayed the same high forehead, large eyes, straight nose and small pointed chin which so captivated

Edward IV that he was prepared to set half his kingdom in an uproar in order to marry this bewitching (widowed) commoner. The fact that they are kneeling is significant. The royal family is seen as a human group, taking part in an act of worship. This is far from the God-like figures of royal judges seen three hundred years before.

Edward himself was reckoned to be a handsome man, if somewhat corpulent in his later years. The best of a group of three surviving portraits from the so-called 'Cast Shadow Workshop' shows the king wearing a richly brocaded cloth-of-gold gown; this painting was dated by tree-ring analysis to 1520–35 (Fletcher 1974, 256, 257, Table 2). The oriental-looking cast of the eyes, the straight nose, the small pinched mouth, bear a close resemblance to the standard facial type which appears in late fifteenth-century English alabaster figures. No likeness survives of little Edward V. Richard III, on the other hand has been the subject of a plethora of portraits; he is the first English king for whom there is evidence to suggest that two panel-portraits of him were produced during his lifetime (Tudor Craig 1973, 80–95). Both are known now through later copies, the most important being that in the Royal Collection at Windsor. It is clear that this picture has been tampered with; the right shoulder has been raised in order to suggest that the subject was crook-backed. The eye similarly has been straightened to give it a sinister glint; both doubtless to reflect Tudor smear campaigns. It seems from verbal descriptions that King Richard was a short man, 'of bodily shape comely enough, only of low stature'; he also very likely suffered from an overwhelming sense of anxiety. His face in the portraits shows strain but is toughly determined in contrast to the bland self-confidence of his brother Edward. The body beneath the face is lean, with a thin neck: insofar as both the shoulders are rather drawn up and the head juts forward slightly, the image also reflects Richard's alleged round-shoulderedness (Hepburn 1986, 84–5).

There are a number of paintings of Henry VII but the most celebrated image is that sculptured in bronze for his funeral effigy in Westminster Abbey by the Florentine master, Pietro Torrigiano. This fine posthumous portrait was possibly based on that of the funeral effigy modelled in turn on a death mask. The effigy in

Westminster Abbey when repaired after the Second World War, was noted as having 'an open, bold and commanding face, entirely without the crafty and unpleasant expression seen in many inferior portraits' (Howgrave-Graham 1961, 167). When Torrigiano came to work on his other commission, that of a monument to Henry VII's mother, Lady Margaret Beaufort (the great educational benefactress, founder of St John's College, Cambridge), he was separated from his subject by two years and had to work from drawings prepared by the court painter. On 22 June 1513 payment was made 'to Maynarde paynter for makinge the picture and image of the seide ladye...33s 4d'. His contract mentions 'A Tabernacle of copper with an ymage lying at the fote of the same...with like pillars' (Scott 1914–15, 365–76). The result is a beautiful gothic effigy of an austere, veiled widow, her hands joined in prayer, in black and gold (RCHM 1924, 68).

Despite the magnificence of the surroundings of Henry VII's chapel and the panoply of the tombs themselves there is a reticence about the effigies of these early Tudors which contrasts with the vainglorious and rumbustious image of the young Henry VIII dominating the European stage on the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Lord Mountjoy wrote to Erasmus in 1509, with singular lack of perception, 'Our King is not after gold, or gems, or precious metals, but virtue, glory, immortality'. We have plenty of verbal descriptions of Henry VIII at different times in his reign to supplement the powerful visions provided by Holbein and other, lesser, artists. A Venetian, writing in 1515, probably was not flattering when he wrote

His Majesty is the handsomest potentate I ever set eyes on, above the usual height, with an extremely fine calf to his leg, his complexion very fair and bright with auburn hair combed straight and short, in the French fashion, and a round face so very beautiful, that it would become a pretty woman, his throat being rather long and thick. (Longford 1989, 209.)

It is surprising that Henry never exploited the full potential of the artists who offered their services to his court. Holbein, one of

the greatest international painters of the day, he despatched on foreign missions to paint possible wives for himself. The fact that his aristocratic sitters only allowed the painter limited three-hour sittings contributed to his distinctive flat patterns, elaborate dresses, aloof and inscrutable features (Waterhouse 1953, 8). When Holbein turned to paint the king himself in 1537, he designed a remarkable commemorative group in fresco of Henry VIII and Jane Seymour with Henry VII and Elizabeth of York, on the wall of the Privy Chamber in the Palace of Whitehall. The original perished in the Whitehall Fire in the seventeenth century but a copy had been made; and part of the original cartoon survives at Chatsworth, which shows the image of the king that every schoolboy knows.

The stance is dramatic. The king stands with legs wide apart—where are those fine calves? Small piggy eyes stare out suspiciously over a long straight nose and a narrow cruel mouth; below is a thick neck, an enormous trunk under a slashed, pleated, upholstered set of padded garments which would not be out of place on an American footballer. This cartoon was reused and the subsequent portraits copied and re-copied. Kings avoided sitting for artists.

During his last years, Henry showed signs of further physical and spiritual decline. Whether he was suffering from the complications arising from untreated syphilis (the traditional explanation of his medical problems) or a dreadfully bad diet leading to scurvy (the fashionable modern alternative (Kybett 1989, 19–25)) is not clear. He becomes gross; his eyes practically disappear into his face; he had himself painted huge and towering out of scale above the quivering barber-surgeons, granting a charter to them in 1541 (Ganz 1950, 290). By the time of his death he increasingly saw himself as the embodiment of King David (Tudor Craig 1989, 183–98), a form of self-delusion which gave him a kind of ideological stiffening, useful in the Age of Plunder when values, moral and economic, were collapsing all around him. His daughter, Elizabeth I, exploited the sacred nature of the portrait image (Strong 1963). Together with the royal arms displayed in churches, the Queen's portraits, distributed as presents to nobility and to foreign courts, became universally regarded as emanations of royal power.

Images of kingship

The other main tradition producing powerful images of kingship involved the creation of major representations of rulers in glass, painting or sculpture. This developed contemporaneously in France, England, Spain and Germany in the early Middle Ages. It began with the schematic trees of Jesse depicting the ancestors of Christ, the royal line of David. In c. 1130 a tree of Jesse was carved over the façade of Nôtre Dame la Grande at Poitiers. Fifteen years later the famous tree of Jesse glass window was made for St Denis Abbey, Paris. This church became one of the mausolea for the Capetian monarchy. The design was imitated shortly afterwards in one of the west windows at Chartres. The Romanesque west front of Lincoln Cathedral is thought to have had a tree of Jesse, since a few sculptured fragments remain (Zarnecki 1964, plates 21, 22a).

The tree could be transmuted into a horizontal scheme with the kings seated under niches. Great rows of sculptured kings integrated into the west fronts of the cathedrals of Paris, Chartres, Amiens and Rheims shed glory on kingship regardless of which kings they were supposed to commemorate—Capetian or of the stock of Judah (Mâle 1972, 168). It is significant that their production coincided with the reign of Philip Augustus (1180–1223) when the French monarchy was emerging from a long period of political difficulties, its prestige newly enhanced. This connection between royal and biblical was deliberately blurred in political life. Both the kings of England and France at this time claimed to have divine powers of healing (Bloch 1973).

The idea of using the west front or an interior screen of a cathedral as suitable places to display the panoply of royal power commended itself to the ruling powers, royal and episcopal, in England. The tree of Jesse theme was adopted in some places but there were two other ways in which rows of kings might be displayed. The first was a chronological scheme whereby a series starts with Anglo-Saxon saints and martyr-kings and works through a number of well-known individual monarchs of outstanding reputation, ending with the king in whose reign the scheme was ordered. The other is one with a more overtly political flavour which became usual in the fifteenth century; here the choice of

monarchs was dictated by their dynastic affiliations. Lancastrian kings chose respectable Lancastrian predecessors, Yorkists avoided those embarrassing to their cause. Clearly, each side regarded these impressive if stagey sculptural demonstrations as valuable visual props to their shaky causes.

Why were kings associated with the west fronts of cathedrals and great churches? It was an oriental and Hellenistic-Roman custom for the ruler to be received in a most solemn way whenever he visited a city or entered his capital. When Christianized, this ceremonial entrance or *adventus* (if by the emperor) was seen as reflecting our Lord's Entry into Jerusalem. The city or the monastery which was approached by the Lord's Anointed became a Jerusalem (Kantorowicz 1958, 72–5). The western entrances of such great churches as Nôtre Dame, Paris, and Canterbury remind us of the façades of holy cities and were the traditional place of royal ingress. At Winchester, Biddle has argued that part of the sequence of crown wearings in Norman England may have involved a ceremony on a balcony on the west front of the Norman cathedral which in turn had replaced the west-work of the old minster dedicated in AD 980 (Biddle 1986, 62–3).

Royal figures appear on the west front of Wells Cathedral (Fig. 3), dating from *c.* 1230–55 (Cockerell 1851, 51, Stone 1955, 112). The old choir screen of Salisbury Cathedral dated to *c.* 1250 contained a series from Edgar down to Henry III (Wordsworth 1914, 566). Fifty years later the west front of Lichfield Cathedral was designed with sculptured figures of kings of England along the second tier (Dugdale 1846). Exeter Cathedral (Fig. 4) was given a splendid two-storeyed screen of kings by its politically ambitious bishop, Grandisson (1327–69). It is uncertain whether these were English kings, or kings on an unfinished tree of Jesse, but what is undoubted is that they were meant to be a paean in stone in praise of monarchy. A recent archaeological survey (Blaylock and Henderson 1987) (Fig. 5) has been completed which has revealed for the first time the extent of the former brilliant colouring of the scheme, the high quality of the remaining work, its vulnerability and the extent of the various restoration programmes. Lincoln Cathedral has a single row of kings above the Norman portal on its west front, carved in 1350–80 (Fig. 6).



3 Wells Cathedral. A seated figure of a king on the west front, thirteenth century. (Photograph: J.M. Steane.)

The kings at both Exeter and Lincoln are shown seated and in many cases their legs are crossed. This positioning of the legs is often seen in representations of rulers. In the Glazier Psalter (Bodleian Library) of *c.* 1230, David is shown being crowned; he sits with one leg lifted high over the other in what seems to modern eyes a nonchalant gesture. Such a convention is meant to express dignity and an exalted state. It is equally displayed by monarchs famed for



4 Exeter Cathedral. The image screen on the west front, the work of Bishop John Grandisson (1327–69), consisting of a lower tier of demi-angel figures supporting a row of mainly seated full figures of kings. (Photograph: J.M.Steane.)

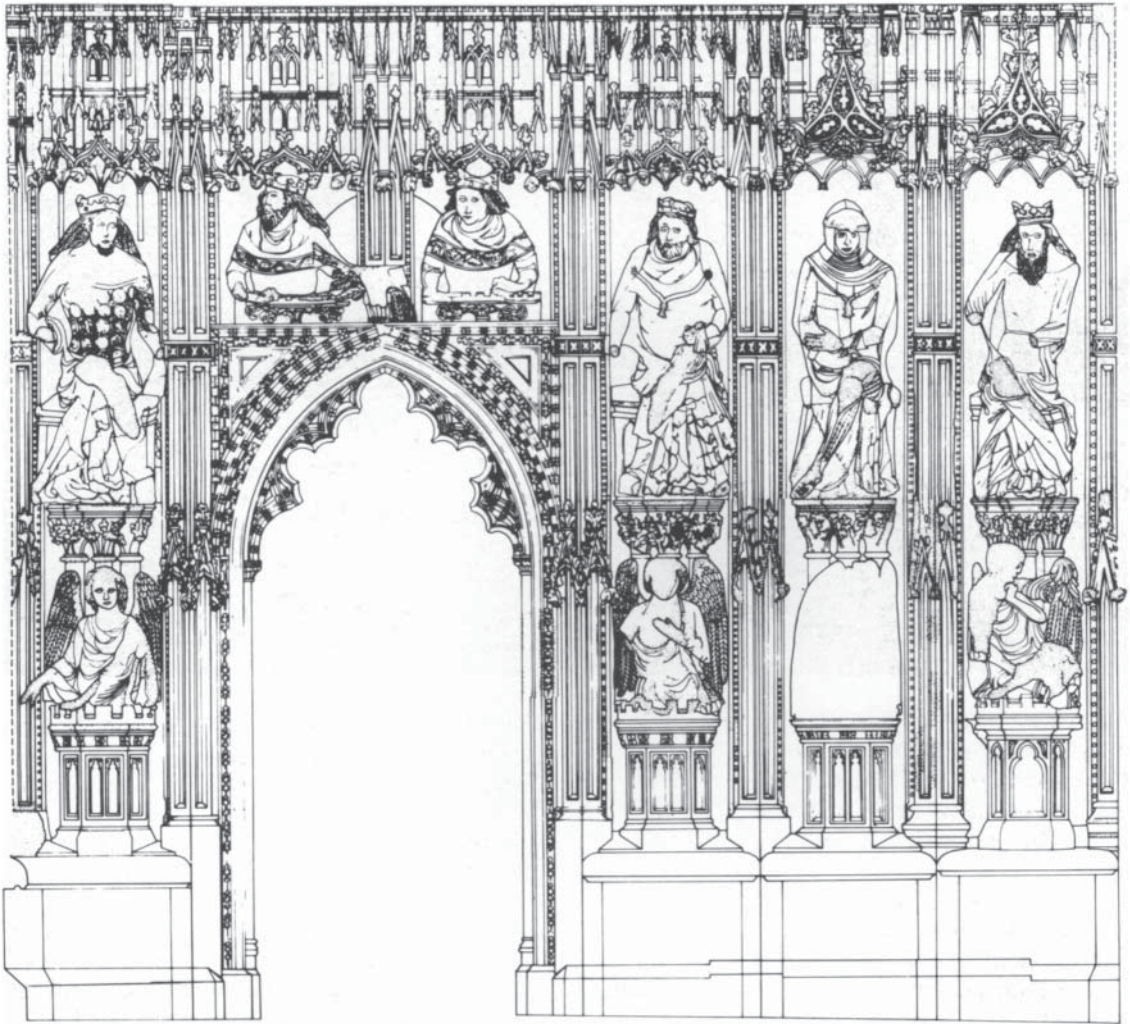
their wisdom or notorious for their tyranny and wickedness. Cross-legged effigies of knights of the thirteenth century have been claimed to be class signifiers, the variety of their attitudes reflecting their individualism (Tummers 1980, 125–6).

Such elaborate sculptural schemes were the result of episcopal patronage if not direct design; the first time that a king can be proved to have intervened in a great scheme involving sculptured standing kings occurred in Richard II's reign (1377–99). In 1385 £30 6s 8d was paid 'to Thomas Canon Marbler (of Corfe) for making 13 stone images in the likeness of kings to stand in the Great Hall'. This was the Great Hall at the Palace of Westminster which was reconstructed ten years later, evidently incorporating these statues (Cherry and Stratford 1995, 68–73). Although they are relatively crude pieces of sculpture, with their towering crowns, tall upright figures, long faces, wig-like hair and corkscrew beards, they were to have a profound effect on

royal images in the fifteenth century (Stone 1955, 194). Standing figures, moreover, were particularly appropriate for fitting into the multiple long lights of perpendicular windows.

Richard II's tendency towards absolutism and his realization of the uncertainty of his position are revealed by the fact that he felt it necessary to multiply these powerful images of his kingship. At Canterbury, the spiritual centre of the kingdom and first port of call for all foreign visitors entering the country via Dover, he had a great west window glazed with figures of kings. They are again shown standing in their robes of state, crowned, sceptred and orbéd. They are in historical sequence; the intention certainly would appear to have been to present them in such a way as to buttress the continuity of royal succession in the face of Lancastrian claims to the throne (Caviness 1981, 282–3).

Political motivation of this nature becomes more overt during the next century. The Lancastrian and Yorkist kings profited from the efforts of time-serving clerics who made available the large advertising spaces offered by the glass windows, west fronts and screens of England's two metropolitan cathedrals, Canterbury and York. Both provide an archaeological commentary on the dynastic fluctuations of the fifteenth century.



5 Exeter Cathedral. The image screen on the west front. This is from a survey recently made at scale of 1:10 based on the study of existing figures and the most useful previous illustrations of the west front by John Carter whose *Specimens of Ancient Figure Sculpture and Painting in England* was printed in 1794. (Blaylock and Henderson.)

Henry IV took advantage of the sacred aura offered by the popular martyr-saint St Thomas and willed his body to Canterbury for burial. He had earlier reinstated his supporter, Archbishop Arundel, to his see. The Lancastrian monarchy celebrated its connection with Canterbury visually by providing the subject matter for a series of royal images

in the choir screen under construction 1420–50, designed to emphasize its dynastic claims (Stone 1955, 204).

Similarly, when the Yorkist king Edward IV seized power he bound Archbishop Bourchier to him with ties of allegiance and even marriage. The Canterbury connection gave rise to the royal portraits in the north transept window. The change to kneeling figures has taken place. Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville, with their sons and daughters, are shown as kneeling donors, but there is no reason to suppose that the glass was a royal gift. It was begun as early as 1482 but was still unfinished after Henry VII had come to the throne and may have been completed as a kind of memorial (Caviness 1981, 258–61).



6 *Lincoln Cathedral. The screen of kings above the Norman doorway on west front. The screen was probably carved by London artists between 1350 and 1380. Some of the figures are in the mid-century cross-legged attitude and all wear tall crowns and deep tippets of the latter half of the century. (Photograph: J.M.Steane.)*

At York there is a screen similar to that at Canterbury containing original statues of 15 kings of England down to Henry VI, dating, it is thought, to c. 1470–80 (Hope 1916–17, 59–60, Stone 1955, 220). The glass here contains a number of political allusions. The so-called St Cuthbert window ‘was erected in order that all the world might see and know of the many kings, princes, and cardinals who came of that noble stock’; including John of Gaunt, founder of that princely line, Henry IV, Henry V, and Henry VII, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, and Cardinals Beaufort, Kemp and Langley. The last was the donor of the window (Knowles 1936, 183).

Another interesting variant is the series of kings in the painted glass in the west windows of the Old Library at All Souls’ College, Oxford (Hutchinson 1949, 51–4). Here Archbishop Chichele and King Henry VI were co-founders and the iconographic scheme was intended to record

the predecessors of the royal co-founders and Henry VI himself. Henry’s own religious instincts may be recognized by the inclusion of all the English kings who had been canonized. Constantine, reputed to have been born of an English (i.e. British) mother, who was proclaimed Emperor at York in AD 306, is also there; and the legendary Arthur is added for good measure. Alfred, Athelstan and Edgar, who had done most for the unification of England, are included. The Normans, never popular in the English folk-memory, are conveniently left out. ‘Edwardus Martir’, that is Edward II, popularly, but never canonically sainted, is present. Edward III’s son, John of Gaunt, qualifies by the fact that he assumed for a time the title of king of Castile and Leon by right of his wife Constance, daughter and heiress of Pedro the Cruel. The All Souls’ glass is an idiosyncratic example of the English medieval monarchy’s perception of its own past, true and legendary.

The great seals of the medieval English kings

Royal portraits were seen by a relatively small number of people. Statues in stone were by their very nature static. A more powerful method of