

*There have been 63 monarchs of England and Britain spread over a period of approximately 1200 years.*

The British Monarchy is a constitutional system where the Sovereign (currently King Charles III) acts as Head of State, providing national unity and stability while reigning but not ruling. Key features include political neutrality, ceremonial duties, and the "royal prerogative" powers, such as appointing the Prime Minister and granting Royal Assent to legislation

### **Core Features of the British Monarchy**

- **Constitutional Role:** The King serves as the Head of State, but political and executive power resides with an elected Parliament and Prime Minister.  
**Political Neutrality:** While the monarch formally appoints the Prime Minister and meets with them weekly, they must remain neutral in political affairs.
  - **Royal Prerogative:** These are powers still held by the monarch, including the ability to appoint ministers, issue passports, and command the armed forces.
  - **Head of the Commonwealth:** The monarch acts as the head of the Commonwealth of Nations, a voluntary association of 56 independent countries.
  - **State Ceremonies:** The monarch performs crucial state duties, such as the State Opening of Parliament, Trooping the Colour, and hosting state visits.
  - **Head of the Church of England:** The monarch holds the title of Supreme Governor of the Church of England.
  - **Succession:** The position is hereditary, passed down through a predetermined line of succession.
- **National Identity:** The Monarchy acts as a focal point for national identity, unity, and pride.

### **Key Symbols and Traditions**

- **The Crown Jewels:** Held in the Tower of London, these are part of the Royal Collection, including the St Edward's Crown used in coronations.
- **Royal Coat of Arms:** A symbol of the monarch's authority, with different versions used in England and Scotland.
- **Royal Residences:** Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle, and Holyroodhouse are among the official residences.

## **SAXON KINGS**

### **EGBERT 827 – 839**

*Egbert (Ecgherht) was the first monarch to establish a stable and extensive rule over all of Anglo-Saxon England. After returning from exile at the court of Charlemagne in 802, he regained his kingdom of Wessex. Following his conquest of Mercia in 827, he controlled all of England south of the Humber. After further victories in Northumberland and North Wales, he is recognised by the title Bretwalda (Anglo-Saxon, "ruler of the British"). A year before he died aged almost*

70, he defeated a combined force of Danes and Cornish at Hingston Down in Cornwall. He is buried at Winchester in Hampshire.

### **AETHELWULF 839 – 858**

*King of Wessex, son of Egbert and father of Alfred the Great. In 851 Aethelwulf defeated a Danish army at the battle of Oakley while his eldest son Aethelstan fought and defeated a Viking fleet off the coast of Kent, in what is believed to be “the first naval battle in recorded English history”. A highly religious man, Athelwulf travelled to Rome with his son Alfred to see the Pope in 855.*

## **NORMAN KINGS**

### **WILLIAM I (The Conqueror) 1066- 1087**

*Also known as William the Bastard (but not normally to his face!), he was the illegitimate son of Robert the Devil, whom he succeeded as Duke of Normandy in 1035. William came to England from Normandy, claiming that his second cousin Edward the Confessor had promised him the throne, and defeated Harold II at the Battle of Hastings on 14th October 1066. In 1085 the Domesday Survey was begun and all of England was recorded, so William knew exactly what his new kingdom contained and how much tax he could raise in order to fund his armies. William died at Rouen after a fall from his horse whilst besieging the French city of Nantes. He is buried at Caen.*

## **PLANTAGENET KINGS**

### **HENRY II 1154-1189**

*Henry of Anjou was a strong king. A brilliant soldier, he extended his French lands until he ruled most of France. He laid the foundation of the English Jury System and raised new taxes (scutage) from the landholders to pay for a militia force. Henry is mostly remembered for his quarrel with Thomas Becket, and Becket's subsequent murder in Canterbury Cathedral on 29th December 1170. His sons turned against him, even his favourite John.*

## **HOUSE OF LANCASTER**

### **HENRY IV 1399 – 1413**

*The son of John of Gaunt (third son of Edward III), Henry returned from exile in France to reclaim his estates previously seized by Richard II; he was accepted as king by Parliament. Henry spent most of his 13 year reign defending himself against plots, rebellions and assassination attempts. In Wales Owen Glendower declared himself Prince of Wales and led a national uprising against English rule. Back in England, Henry had great difficulty in maintaining the support of both the clergy and Parliament and between 1403-08 the Percy family*

*launched a series of rebellions against him. Henry, the first Lancastrian king, died exhausted, probably of leprosy, at the age of 45.*

## **THE TUDORS**

### **HENRY VII 1485 – 1509**

*When Richard III fell at the Battle of Bosworth, his crown was picked up and placed on the head of Henry Tudor. He married Elizabeth of York and so united the two warring houses, York and Lancaster. He was a skillful politician but avaricious. The material wealth of the country increased greatly. During Henry's reign playing cards were invented and the portrait of his wife Elizabeth has appeared eight times on every pack of cards for nearly 500 years.*

## **THE STUARTS**

### **JAMES I and VI of Scotland 1603 -1625**

*James was the son of Mary Queen of Scots and Lord Darnley. He was the first king to rule over Scotland and England. James was more of a scholar than a man of action. In 1605 the Gunpowder Plot was hatched: Guy Fawkes and his Catholic friends tried to blow up the Houses of Parliament, but were captured before they could do so. James's reign saw the publication of the Authorised Version of the Bible, though this caused problems with the Puritans and their attitude towards the established church. In 1620 the Pilgrim Fathers sailed for America in their ship *The Mayflower**

## **THE HANOVERIANS**

### **GEORGE I 1714 -1727**

*Son of Sophia and the Elector of Hanover, great-grandson of James I. The 54 year old George arrived in England able to speak only a few words of English with his 18 cooks and 2 mistresses in tow. George never learned English, so the conduct of national policy was left to the government of the time with **Sir Robert Walpole** becoming Britain's first Prime Minister. In 1715 the Jacobites (followers of James Stuart, son of James II) attempted to supplant George, but the attempt failed. George spent little time in England – he preferred his beloved Hanover, although he was implicated in the South Sea Bubble financial scandal of 1720.*

## **HOUSE OF SAXE-COBURG AND GOTHA**

### **EDWARD VII 1901 – 1910**

*A much loved king, the opposite of his dour father. He loved horse-racing, gambling and women! This Edwardian Age was one of elegance. Edward had all the social graces and many sporting interests, yachting and horse-racing – his horse *Minoru**

won the Derby in 1909. Edward married the beautiful Alexandra of Denmark in 1863 and they had six children. The eldest, Edward Duke of Clarence, died in 1892 just before he was to marry Princess Mary of Teck. When Edward died in 1910 it is said that Queen Alexandra brought his current mistress Mrs. Keppel to his bedside to take her farewell. His best known mistress was Lillie Langtry, the 'Jersey Lily'.

## **HOUSE OF WINDSOR**

*Name changed in 1917*

### **GEORGE V 1910 – 1936**

*George had not expected to be king, but when his elder brother died he became the heir-apparent. He had joined the Navy as a cadet in 1877 and loved the sea. He was a bluff, hearty man with a 'quarter-deck' manner. In 1893 he married Princess Mary of Teck, his dead brother's fiancée. His years on the throne were difficult; the First World War in 1914 – 1918 and the troubles in Ireland which led to the creation of the Irish Free State were considerable problems. In 1932 he began the royal broadcasts on Christmas Day and in 1935 he celebrated his Silver Jubilee. His latter years were overshadowed by his concern about the Prince of Wales and his infatuation with Mrs. Simpson.*