

1000 Years of English Coins



CANUTE (CNUT THE GREAT) 1016 – 1035

Canute became king of all England following the death of Edmund II. The son of Sweyn Forkbeard, he ruled well and gained favor with his English subjects by sending most of his army back to Denmark.

In 1017, Canute married Emma of Normandy, the widow of Aethelred II and divided England into the four earldoms of East Anglia, Mercia, Northumbria and Wessex. Perhaps inspired by his pilgrimage to Rome in 1027, legend has it that he wanted to demonstrate to his subjects that as a king he was not a god, he ordered the tide not to come in, knowing he would fail.

Succeeded by Harold Harefoot, Harthacnut, and Edward the Confessor



EDWARD THE CONFESSOR 1042-1066

Following the death of Harthacanute, Edward restored the rule of the House of Wessex to the English throne. A deeply pious and religious man, he presided over the rebuilding of Westminster Abbey, leaving much of the running of the country to Earl Godwin and his son Harold. Edward died childless, eight days after the building work on Westminster Abbey had finished. With no natural successor, England was faced with a power struggle for control of the throne.

Succeeded by Harold II, and William I



WILLIAM I (The Conqueror) 1066- 1087

Also known as William the Bastard (but not 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 while besieging the French city of Nantes. He is buried at Caen.

Succeeded by William II, Henry I, Stephen, Henry II and Richard I



RICHARD I (The Lionheart) 1189 - 1199

Richard was the third son of Henry II. By the age of 16, he was leading his own army putting down rebellions in France. Although crowned King of England, Richard spent all but 6 months of his reign abroad, preferring to use the taxes from his kingdom to fund his various armies and military ventures. He was the leading Christian commander during the Third Crusade. On his way back from Palestine, Richard was captured and held for ransom. The amount paid for his safe return almost bankrupted the country. Richard died from an arrow-wound, far from the kingdom that he so rarely visited. He had no children.

Succeeded by John, Henry III, and Edward I



EDWARD I 1272 - 1307

Edward Longshanks was a statesman, lawyer and soldier. He formed the Model Parliament in 1295, bringing the knights, clergy and nobility, as well as the Lords and Commons together for the first time. Aiming at a united Britain, he defeated the Welsh chieftains and created his eldest son Prince of Wales. He was known as the 'Hammer of the Scots' for his victories in Scotland and brought the famous coronation stone from Scone to Westminster. When his first wife Eleanor died, he escorted her body from Grantham in Lincolnshire to Westminster, setting up Eleanor Crosses at every resting place. He died on the way to fight Robert Bruce.

He was succeeded by Edward II and Edward III



EDWARD III 1327 - 1377

Son of Edward II, he was a bold warrior and astute ruler. He reigned for 50 years after wresting the crown from his mother and her lover at age seventeen. His ambition to conquer Scotland and France plunged England into the Hundred Years War. The two great victories at Crecy and Poitiers in France made Edward and his son, the Black Prince, the most renowned warriors in Europe, though the war was very costly. The outbreak of the 'Black Death' in 1348-1350 killed half the population of England despite his efforts to control it.

Succeeded by Richard II, Henry IV, Henry V, Henry VI, and Richard III



RICHARD III 1483 - 1485

Brother of Edward IV. Responsible for many reforms, including the courts and the right to bail. Stories of his unpopularity, and that he arranged the murder of his nephews in the tower are the creation of his successor. In 1485 Henry Richmond, descendant of John of Gaunt, father of Henry IV, landed in west Wales, gathering forces as he marched into England. At the Battle of Bosworth Field in Leicestershire he defeated and killed Richard in the last important battle in the Wars of the Roses. His body was brought to Leicester, buried at Greyfriars, but went missing. Archaeological investigations in 2013 at a car park in Leicester revealed a skeleton, confirmed by DNA to be that of Richard III. His body was re-interred at Leicester Cathedral on 22nd March 2015.

Succeeded by Henry VII and Henry VIII



HENRY VIII 1509 - 1547

The best known fact about Henry VIII is that he had six wives. In succession, they were: Divorced, Beheaded, Died; Divorced, Beheaded, Survived. His first wife was Catherine of Aragon, his brother's widow, whom he divorced after 24 years to marry Anne Boleyn. This divorce caused the split from Rome and Henry declared himself the head of the Church Of England. The Dissolution of the Monasteries began in 1536 and Henry kept their money and awarded the properties to favored nobles. In an effort to have a son, Henry married four further wives, but only one frail son was born, to Jane Seymour. He soon died and Henry's two daughters came in succession to the throne: Mary, daughter of Catherine of Aragon, and Elizabeth, daughter of Anne Boleyn.

Succeeded by Edward VI and Mary I



MARY I 1553 - 1558

Daughter of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon. A devout Catholic, she married Philip of Spain. Mary attempted to enforce the wholesale re-conversion of England to Catholicism. She carried this out with the utmost severity. The Protestant bishops, Latimer, Ridley and Archbishop Cranmer were among those burnt at the stake. The country was plunged into a bitter bloody bath, which is why she is remembered as Bloody Mary. She died childless in 1558 at Lambeth Palace in London.

Succeeded by Elizabeth I



ELIZABETH I 1558-1603

Daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth was a remarkable woman, learned and wise. By the end of her life she could speak English, Latin, Italian, Flemish, Spanish, Greek, Welsh, Cornish, Scottish and Irish. She was popular with the people and chose capable advisors: Raleigh, Hawkins, the Cecils, Essex and more made England respected and feared. She completed the conversion of England to Protestantism without much bloodshed despite constant plots by Catholics to stop her. The Spanish Armada was decisively defeated in 1588 and Raleigh's first Virginian colony was founded. It was a great time in English culture; Shakespeare was at the height of his popularity and the entire period bears her name: Elizabethan. Elizabeth was courted by many, but never married.

She was succeeded by James I



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 wrote a book against witchcraft, but also set up the committee that translated the Bible into English, so superb a work that the Book remains the most widely published book in the world. In 1620 the Pilgrim Fathers sailed for America in their ship The Mayflower.

Succeeded by Charles I, [Oliver Cromwell, and Richard Cromwell], and Charles II



Charles II 1660 - 1685

Son of Charles I, known as the Merry Monarch. After the collapse of the Protectorate following the flight of Oliver Cromwell's son Richard to France, the Army and Parliament asked Charles to take the throne. Although very popular he was a weak king and his foreign policy was inept. He had 13 known mistresses, one of whom was Nell Gwyn. He fathered numerous illegitimate children but no heir to the throne. The Great Plague in 1665 and the Great Fire of London in 1666 took place during his reign. Many new buildings were built at this time. St. Paul's Cathedral was built by Sir Christopher Wren and also many churches still to be seen today.

Succeeded by James II, William III and Mary II, and Anne



ANNE 1702 - 1714

Second daughter of James II. She had 17 pregnancies but only one survived - William, who died of smallpox aged 11. A staunch high church Protestant, Anne was 37 years old when she came to the throne. A close friend of Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough. Sarah's husband, the Duke of Marlborough, commanded the English Army, won a series of major battles, and gained the country more influence in Europe than ever before. During Anne's reign the United Kingdom was created by the Union of England and Scotland. After Anne's death the succession went to the nearest Protestant relative of the Stuart line. This was Sophia, daughter of Elizabeth of Bohemia, James I 's only daughter, but she died a few weeks before Anne and so the throne succeeded to her son George.

Succeeded by George I, George II, and George III.



GEORGE III 1760 - 1820

He was a grandson of George II and the first English-born and English-speaking monarch since Queen Anne. His reign was one of elegance and the age of some of the greatest names in English literature - Jane Austen, Byron, Shelley, Keats and Wordsworth. It was also the time of great statesmen like Pitt and Fox and great captains like Wellington and Nelson. In 1773 the 'Boston Tea Party' was the first sign of the troubles that were to come in America. The American Colonies proclaimed their independence on July 4th 1776. George suffered from mental illness due to intermittent porphyria and eventually became blind and insane. His son ruled as Prince Regent after 1811 until George's death.

Succeeded by George IV, and William IV



WILLIAM IV 1830 - 1837

Known as the 'Sailor King' (for 10 years the young Prince William, brother of George IV, served in the Royal Navy), he was the third son of George III. Before his accession he lived with a Mrs. Jordan, an actress, by whom he had ten children. When Princess Charlotte died, he had to marry in order to secure the succession. He married Adelaide of Saxe-Coburg in 1818. He had two daughters but they did not live. He hated pomp and wanted to dispense with the Coronation. The people loved him because of his lack of pretension. During his reign Britain abolished slavery in the colonies in 1833. The Reform Act was passed in 1832, this extended the franchise to the middle-classes on a basis of property qualifications.

Succeeded by Victoria



VICTORIA 1837 – 1901

Only child of Princess Victoria of Saxe-Coburg and Edward Duke of Kent, fourth son of George III. The throne Victoria inherited was weak and unpopular. In 1840 she married her cousin Albert of Saxe-Coburg, who until his death was virtual ruler of the country. He was a pillar of respectability and was one of the organizers of the Great Exhibition of 1851. The money from the Exhibition funded several institutions: the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Science Museum, Imperial College and the Royal Albert Hall. Her reign saw the British Empire double in size and in 1876 she became Empress of India. When Victoria died in 1901, the British Empire and British world power had reached their highest point. She had nine children, 40 grand-children and 37 great-grandchildren, whom she married off all over Europe.

Succeeded by Edward VII and George V



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 lead 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 the prince's infatuation with Mrs. Simpson.

Succeeded by Edward VIII



EDWARD VIII June 1936 - abdicated December 1936

Edward was the most popular Prince of Wales Britain has ever had. Consequently when he renounced the throne to marry Mrs. Wallis Simpson the country found it almost impossible to believe. The people as a whole knew nothing about Mrs. Simpson until early in December 1936. Mrs. Simpson was an American, a divorcee with two husbands still living. This was unacceptable to the Church, as Edward had stated that he wanted her to be crowned with him at the Coronation which was to take place the following May. Edward abdicated in favor of his brother and took the title, Duke of Windsor. He married Mrs. Simpson and they went to live abroad, and frequently visited their good friend, Adolph Hitler.

Succeeded by George VI



GEORGE VI 1936 - 1952

George was shy and nervous with a bad stutter, the opposite of his brother the Duke of Windsor, but he inherited the steady virtues of his father George V. He was popular and well loved by the British people. The prestige of the throne was low when he became king but his wife Elizabeth and his mother Queen Mary were outstanding in their support of him. The Second World War started in 1939 and throughout the King and Queen set an example of courage. They remained at Buckingham Palace for the duration, in spite of the bombing. Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret spent the war years at Windsor Castle. George was in close touch with Winston Churchill throughout the war -- both had to be dissuaded from landing with the troops in Normandy on D-Day.

Succeeded by Elizabeth II



ELIZABETH II 1952 -

Elizabeth Alexandra Mary was born in London on 21 April 1926. During World War II she served in the women's branch of the British Army, training as a driver and mechanic. Elizabeth and her sister Margaret anonymously joined the crowded streets of London on VE Day to celebrate the end of the war. She married her cousin Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, and they had four children: Charles, Anne, Andrew and Edward. When her father George VI died, Elizabeth became Queen of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Pakistan, and Ceylon (Sri Lanka). In 2012 the nation celebrated the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, her 60th year as Queen. On 9 September 2015, Elizabeth became Britain's longest serving monarch, ruling longer than her great-great grandmother Queen Victoria who reigned for 63 years and 216 days. Congratulations Ma'am; **God Save the Queen!**