



England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings, 1075-1225

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*An account of a period in history when England was more closely tied with Europe than ever before.

England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings, 1075-1225 Details

Date : Published August 8th 2002 by Oxford University Press (first published January 1st 2000)

ISBN : 9780199251018

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Format : Paperback 772 pages

Genre : History, Nonfiction, Medieval History, Historical, Medieval, European Literature, British Literature, European History



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Andrew says

Incredible! In writing "England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings", Bartlett has created a tome for the ages. I have never come across a history book whose breadth and depth are as comprehensive as this one. In fact, this book is so all-encompassing that it just about has to represent a summary of all extant scholarship about life in 12th century England. Indeed, I have to believe that no book exists which covers a particular place at a particular time, so thoroughly as this one.

I do have to say, though, that this a challenging book to read and probably has a limited audience of people who would attempt it. In short, you've really got to love history in order to even get a quarter way through this book. Others might remark on the book's more soporific qualities. Either way, I have to applaud Bartlett for writing a book that will no doubt be used for reference for centuries to come.

Definitely a book for the advanced history buff!

Elizabeth says

The strength and weakness here is that Bartlett is presenting an encyclopedic view of this period of English history. As such, there isn't the strong thesis that makes his *The Making of Europe* exceptionally good. On the other hand, Bartlett covers everything from the political scene to the meaning and place of animals in the long-12th century mind.

N.W. Martin says

I've read around this book for the last few years. Never finishing it chronologically, using it for research mostly... Excellent. The best book during the Angevin Period I've come across.

Mark says

Robert Bartlett's contribution to the New Oxford History of England series is about a kingdom in transition. In 1075, England was a newly conquered realm of William of Normandy, who was transforming the sleepy monarchy of the Anglo-Saxons into a powerful feudal state. A century and a half later, his great-great-great grandson, Henry III, issued a modified Magna Charta that served as the foundation of English common law, establishing the right of the English aristocracy against the king. How this evolution took place forms just one aspect of this exceptional book, which addresses nearly every aspect of England's politics, culture, and society during this period.

In doing this, Bartlett adopts an analytical rather than narrative approach. Events are studied within the context of the broader patterns and developments of the era. This makes for a more challenging read but also

a much more rewarding one, with insights contained on every page. Readers unfamiliar with the period should start with a survey such as David Carpenter's *The Struggle for Mastery: Britain, 1066-1284*, but even knowledgeable students of the period will learn much from Bartlett's clear writing and perceptive analysis.

Ryan says

England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings, 1075-1225 (The New Oxford History of England #3)

Robert C. Bartlett

Read it in Hardcover at 772 pages with a very generous biblio, appendix, maps, and all those other goodies.

If the High Middle Ages are your thing than this is your jam.

Bartlett is more than qualified to write this very detailed account of the nuts and bolts of the Norman and Angevin Kings as the Wardlaw Professor of Mediaeval History at the University of St Andrews. The text and structure require that the reader already grasp the events and Kings that reign in this time period as Bartlett doesn't spend a lot of time outlining these rulers in whole. The book is intended as a much granular view of the administrations and dependencies in the structure of ruling and so much more. Bartlett also covers cultural patterns, town and trade, religious life and institutional Christianity, among others. It's large and I've listed the sectional chapter header composition below.

Bartlett, like most historians, excels primarily on conclusions that he can directly source from charters, lists, etc. These kind of records are more plentiful than the sources he can draw for some of the cultural inferences which have their own level of ambiguity. In a lot of these instances an entire book itself can be lent to the topics discussed but Bartlett is able to steer the boat correctly and gives the reader more than enough wind in the sails. There is a plethora of charts, graphs, and maps for each topics covered as needed and the bibliography is really impressive.

Out of the below, my favorites were #'s 1, 4, 6, 7, and 8. Especially #4 which is full of fantastic pageantry and structure with details:

"...chess was not a division for eggheads, but, just like dice, a game on which money was staked. Hence both forms of gaming could lead to quarrels. It was thought necessary to advise the aristocracy, 'If you lose money playing at dice or chess, do not let anger plant savage rage in your heart.' "

Section Headers

1. Political Patterns
2. England and Beyond
3. Lordship and Government
4. The Aristocracy
5. Warfare
6. The Rural Foundations
7. Towns and Trade
8. The Institutional Church
9. Religious Life
10. Cultural Patterns
11. The Course of Life
12. Cosmologies

All of these are incredibly detailed and sourced written in a manner easy to consume with those familiar in historic works. I highly recommend this if the High Middle is your thing.

Dean Irwin says

Having read A. L. Poole's book a while back which was the edition of the old Oxford History of England which Bartlett has redone, this was a superb successor. Certainly, Bartlett is a historian par excellence who knows more about this period than perhaps any other historian currently writing. That expertise comes out in this book which looks at every aspect of English history during this period. Indeed, Bartlett even goes so far as to consider the Jews of medieval England, which is unusual for such a mainstream book (Poole certainly didn't consider them in any depth). However, this book is quite long and academically written so not for the faint hearted.

My only complaint is that this book is sparsely footnoted and there is only the most basic bibliography is provided. However, not everybody is a footnote freek like me so that probably won't matter to most readers.

Hasselhh says

Once you get over the confusing beginning, it is a great book. Not a quick or easy one, but a detailed and informative one.

Tyler says

Absolutely incredible. This book is for those already familiar with the major players of the era and the historical beats of the particular timeline, but who want to take "the next step." Painstakingly researched (his bibliography of primary source material is fourteen pages alone) Bartlett covers very conceivable aspect of medieval life regarding its period: How kings specifically taxed and got thier money to which ones could actually speak English (ironically Richard was one), social classes and settlement patterns, the church and the formation of religious orders and their recruiting practices etc. etc.

The narrative is academic but approachable and clear. However be sure to set some time aside, as reading this definitely takes some commitment. Some sections can be trying, depending on your interests. Included are graphs, maps and charts. I'm looking forward to the next in this series and reading more from the author. A great addition, in fact essential, for any medieval library.

Michael Smith says

This first volume in the "New Oxford History of England" covers the period in British history of most interest to me -- from the conquest to the end of the Norman-Angevin dynasty and the loss of Normandy to France. It also covers those monarchs I find most fascinating: William I, William II, Henry I, Matilda, Henry

II, and John. One would expect a work of this sort to be chronological but Bartlett, a professor of medieval history at the University of St. Andrews, has chosen to approach his broad subject topically. He identifies twelve broad subjects and spends 50-60 pages on each, with some three to eight or nine subdivisions in each section, which means it's easy to pick up the book, read the whole of a section in a reasonable amount of time, and put it down again without having to pause in the middle of anything. Very nice for a 700-page book. The first sections are (not surprisingly) "Political Patterns" and "Lordship and Government," which also give a good overview of the issues of the times. I found the section on "Aristocracy," a special interest of mine, especially good. The others cover subjects like "Warfare," "Towns and Trade," "Religious Life," and so on. Bartlett is a very fluent writer and a plain, straightforward stylist, even when things get complicated. And he makes frequent use of extended examples from the original sources, such as (in "The Cross-Channel Aristocracy") the multigenerational struggle of the Laigle family, lords of Pevensey, to keep their superiors in both England and Normandy happy and off their backs. There are footnotes on every page, though there's no separate bibliography, but you'll have to be able to read Latin to pursue most of them. This is the sort of book I expect to be happily absorbing a little at a time for some months to come.

But I do have one gripe and that's the total inadequacy of the subject index. "Queens" with 35 undifferentiated locators? "Saints" with 40? Horses, of all things, with a string of 57 bare page numbers? Very bad practice, and completely useless to anyone trying to hunt something up. When a book is already 700 pages long, a subject index of fewer than eight pages is simply indefensible.

Andrew Staples says

Informative, modern overview of the turbulent and fascinating 12th century. Its predecessor in the 'old' Oxford History, From Domesday Book to Magna Carta, focused primarily on political history with lip service to social history; Bartlett reverses this to give an informative and highly readable, yet still scholarly, overview of how people lived and what they believed.

History at its finest.

Andrew Walter says

Incredible!

Perhaps not intended to be read cover to cover (as I did) this tome is a very comprehensive overview of not just politics and battles of these 150 years, but all aspects of daily life, names, religion, art, crime, medicine, love, death, the unexplained and on and on. With something this vast there will inevitably be parts which are less interesting depending on the reader (e.g crop rotation, in my case), but overall it is fascinating. It could easily be dipped into as a heading draws the eye, although for newcomers to the subject the first chapter is probably a must, dealing as it does with the kings in question. Much of this internecine, often intercontinental feuding may seem hard to keep abreast of at first, but I found the other chapters helped to anchor it with some context.

Many of the topics covered are brought to life with anecdotal accounts that elicit the full range of human emotions, from humour to pity to disgust. A dry listing of names and dates this is not.

I found particularly fascinating the final chapter about odd happenings attributed to "Beings Neither Human, Animal Nor Angel", probably the Norman English equivalent of UFO sightings and cryptozoology! The wild aquatic man of Orford Castle...the mind boggles.

A small niggle might be that it could have done with a glossary for a lot of the contemporary terms (particularly for some of the religious titles), but at 700 odd pages (not including the sources at the back) they were probably pushed for space.

An excellent book for people with an interest or a patient newcomer.

My first of the New Oxford History of England series, but definitely won't be the last if this one is anything to go by.

Kimberly says

A wonderful book. So full of great information that I find it a slow read, but well worth the effort.

Simon says

Fascinating. Though intended more as a reference work, I read it from cover to cover and thoroughly enjoyed it. If you are a student of the period, I think you will find it an invaluable overview, written with both erudition AND style, a seductive combination.

R. G. Nairam says

This book is just as awesome as I've always thought it would be. Loads of information, so many mentions of "twelfth century" I just got used to actually getting information on my time period...great resource. Well-written, too, with jabs of humor here and there (unless I just invented those after reading 30 thick pages).

Plus it gave me a lot of story ideas, for some reason (both for the current novel and ideas for different books).

Richard Thomas says

A thorough and interesting new history of the Norman and Plantagenet kings after the initial years of the conquest. I found the new interpretations convincing and in summary consider that this is a book which although a general history is indispensable for an understanding of difficult and confusing times.
