

## Henry I 1100-1135 (Norman) Establishing Royal Control



Henry was the fourth and most able of the Conqueror's sons and became king after the suspicious death of his brother William. He wasted no time in claiming the throne, riding to seize the treasure at Winchester just ahead of William of Breteuil, a supporter of the claim of Duke Robert of Normandy. He came to throne under some suspicion and throughout his reign he was haunted by a recurring nightmare in which he was attacked by barons, the Church and peasants. However Henry already had several advantages.

### **WHAT PROBLEMS DID HENRY I FACE ON BECOMING KING?**

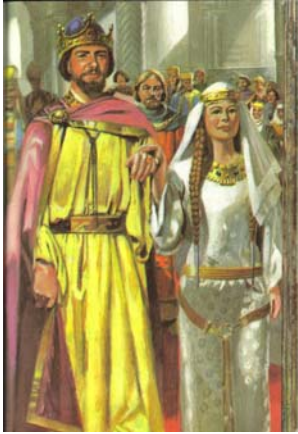
- 1: Suspicion over brother's death in New Forest
- 2: Monarchy under William I and William II unpopular with barons and Saxons.
- 3: Robert his brother wanted to be king and had followers in England.
- 4: William II had fallen out with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Anselm.
- 5: Pope Gregory was keen to increase the power of the pope over monarchs.

### **WHAT ADVANTAGES DID HENRY HAVE ON BECOMING KING?**

- William II was unpopular with the some barons and churchmen and very few appear too upset about his death.
- Henry was the first Norman king to be born in England (Selby, Yorkshire).
- He was the only son of William I to be born when he was King of England (1068)

**But like William II he would have to deal with barons (landowners) with divided loyalties.**

## How did Henry increase his popularity and strengthen his position?



- He filled vacant bishoprics (with men loyal to him!)
- He recalled Anselm from exile in France.
- He dismissed Ranulf Flambard, William II's adviser and ordered his arrest.
- He issued a **Charter of Liberties**. He promised to abolish all the evil practices of William II.
- He married Edith, the daughter of Edgar (1066), (Matilda after marriage) thereby linking himself to the Saxon Royal House. (like Henry VII) (Married by Anselm, despite fact that Edith had taken vows of nun)

## Establishing His Authority

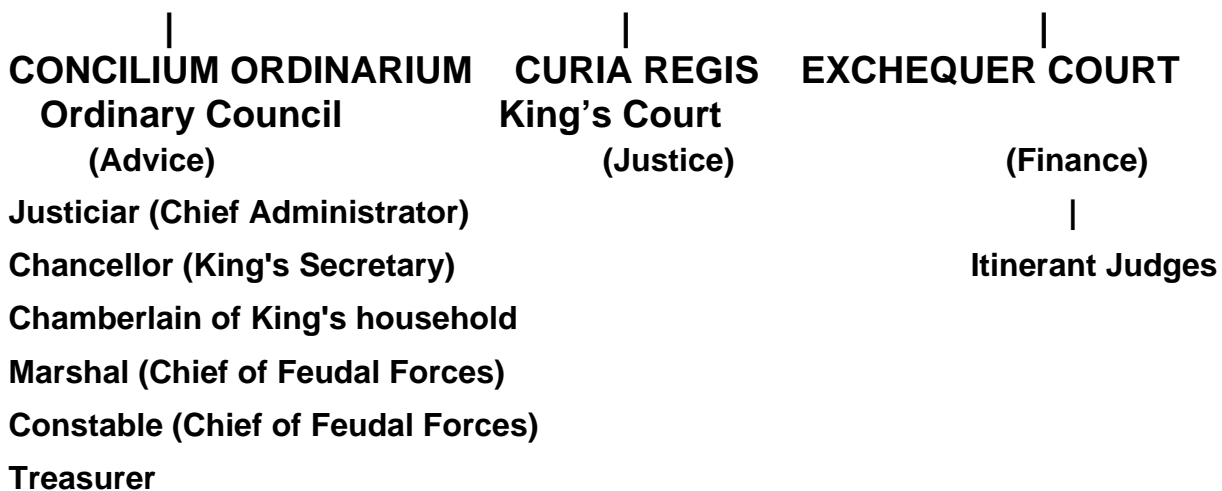
- From the start, Henry made it quite clear that he intended **to re-establish the authority** of the crown. Many of the leading Barons of Normandy who held lands in England came to England to pay homage, though many of them preferred Robert as their lord and plotted to replace Henry. They were helped by Ranulf Flambard, who had escaped his captors, returning to Normandy to help organize an expedition to place Robert on the English throne. Henry could count on the support of his English subjects; his leading barons would wait to see which side could benefit them most.
- In 1101, **Robert landed at Portsmouth** with a large army. Henry with the support of the Saxon fyrd and some loyal barons met Robert at Alton. Surprisingly, Robert lost his nerve and decided to negotiate rather than fight. By the **Treaty of Alton**, Robert agreed to return to Normandy after receiving 3000 marks. Henry also promised him military aid in Normandy
- When Robert had returned home, Henry then took **full revenge** on those English barons who had supported his brother. Their lands were seized and all were exiled.
- In 1102, there was a rebellion by the powerful **Earl of Shrewsbury**. Henry promised South Wales to a Welsh Prince forcing the **Montgomeries** to negotiate for peace. Henry was unforgiving and wanted to set an example. The Montgomeries lost all their land in England. He was now supreme, free from any serious rival.
- Henry decided that he **could not ignore the constant threat** posed by his brother Robert and other Barons in Normandy. He made **alliances** with the Count of Flanders and the King of France. This made his position in Europe stronger.
- In 1105, Henry sailed to Normandy with a mainly Saxon army, and defeated Robert at the **Battle of Tinchebrai in 1106**. Robert was captured and was held captive in Cardiff Castle until his death in 1134. It is believed that he was blinded.
- In 1114, Henry arranged the marriage of his **daughter Matilda to Henry V**, Emperor of Germany. Other illegitimate daughters were married to suitable husbands.

- However, Robert's son **William Clito** continued to cause problems in Normandy with rebellions in 1112, 1118 and 1123, hoping to free his father from captivity. William got help from the king of France, but Henry I defeated both, at the Battle of Bremule in 1119. William Clito eventually died in 1128.
- He **prohibited** the custom of **private war**,
- Banned the building of castles or fortified dwellings without his permission
- Insisted that every under-tenant regard the King as his chief lord.

## REORGANISING THE MAGNUM CONCILIIUM

Henry reorganised the Magnum Concilium (Great Council) into three smaller councils. He realized the importance of having officials doing jobs that they understood or were trained for. This system increased efficiency.

### MAGNUM CONCILIIUM



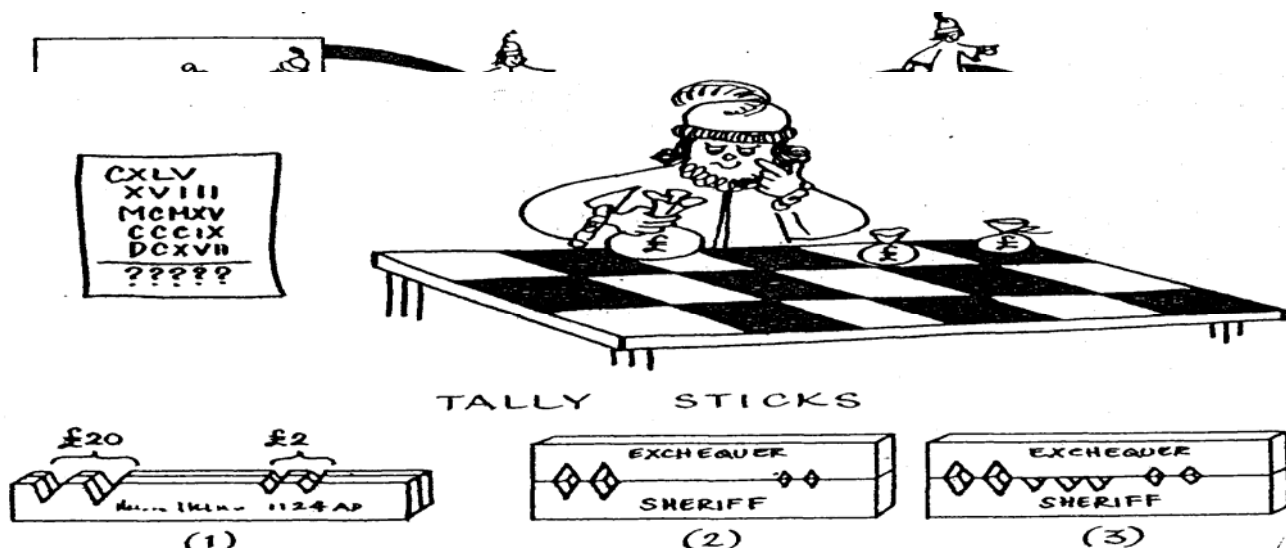
## HENRY REORGANISES THE LEGAL SYSTEM (LAW)

- When Henry first came to the throne, there had been different laws for different people according to where they lived. For example, West Saxons were treated differently from Mercians.
- However, the King's Court, the **Curia Regis** of Henry's, refused to recognize these differences.
- The rule was that the law of the King's Court must stand above all other law and was the same for all.
- Henry distrusted many of the Barons and Bishops and therefore in running the country he decided to use loyal, trained officials. One man in particular who helped him was Roger of Salisbury. Roger and Henry began to reorganise the legal system.
- Henry was given the name 'Beauclerk' and later 'The Lion of Justice'.
- His changes laid the foundations for future developments, many of which are seen in our justice system today.
- Henry's itinerant judges travelled to the Shire Courts to supervise financial and legal business

## THE EXCHEQUER COURT AT WESTMINSTER

- Henry I knew from his father's Domesday Book (1086) just how much money he could expect from each part of the country (shire), and from each sheriff.
- Twice every year at **Easter and Michaelmas**, the Sheriffs of every shire handed over money owed to the king. Most sheriffs squeezed more than the correct amount from their people, and after paying off the king's share, they pocketed the rest for themselves.
- The sheriffs took the taxes to the king's office. As calculations were so difficult to do in the clumsy Roman numerals, the addition and subtraction was done on a table covered with a checkered cloth of black and white squares. It was marked out into columns for pounds, shillings and pence. This is how taxes were calculated. Because of this cloth the place became known as the Exchequer and the man in charge was known as the **Chancellor of the Exchequer**.
- The sheriff was given a receipt for the money that he had paid in, but as so many people could not read or write, and a scrap of paper could be easily lost, the receipt was made of wood.
- It was called a **tally stick**, because it kept a tally of the amount of cash handed over. To make a tally, two similar pieces of wood were fastened together and notches were made in both at the same time, deep cuts for large sums, smaller cuts for lesser amounts. The date and total sum was written on one stick for the benefit of the Exchequer, and the other was given to the sheriff. If the sheriff tried to cheat by cutting a few extra notches on his stick and claiming his next visit that he had paid more the previous time than he actually had, the fraud was easily discovered when the two tally sticks were placed side by side

- All financial transactions were kept on great rolls of parchment, called the **Pipe Rolls**.
- When the sheriff had finished his business and was ready to return home he was given the latest commands from the King to take back to his area. By this means the government could make sure that the latest laws reached every part of the land, though whether anyone obeyed them was quite a different matter!
- Court officials settled local financial disputes.
- Henry was very careful with money.



## The White Ship Disaster



On the 25th November 1120 a disaster struck in the English Channel that had a dramatic effect on the history of England.

The Norman kings had not long been on the English throne. Henry I had two surviving legitimate children and his hopes for his family were firmly secured by the birth of his only son, William. After the successful campaign of 1119 that resulted in King Louis VI of France's defeat, Henry I and his entourage were finally preparing to return to England. Henry was offered, *the White Ship*, in which to set sail for England, but the King had already made his travelling arrangements and suggested that his son, William should sail in her.

Prince William was to be accompanied by some three hundred fellow passengers: including his half-brother, Richard and his half-sister, Matilda. There was a mood of celebration in the air and the Prince had wine brought aboard ship by the barrel-load to help the party go with a swing. Both passengers and crew soon became very drunk: shouting abuse at one another and ejecting a group of churchmen who had arrived to bless the voyage. Some passengers, including Stephen of Blois, who was ill with diarrhoea, appear to have sensed further trouble and decided to take a later ship.

The onboard partying had delayed *the White Ship's* departure and it only finally set out to sea, after night had already fallen. Prince William found that most of the King's forces had already left him far behind yet, as with all young rabble-rousers, he wished to be first back home. He therefore ordered the ship's master to have his oarsmen row full-pelt and overtake the rest of the fleet. Being as drunk as the rest of them, the master followed orders and the ship soon began to race through the waves.

Many a boat was lost on the most routine of trips and people did not travel over the water unless they really had to. Soon, the White Ship hit a rock in the dark of the night and the portside timbers cracked wide-open to reveal a gaping hole.

Prince William's quick-thinking bodyguard immediately rushed him on deck and bundled him into a small boat. They were away to safety even before the crew had begun to make their futile attempts to hook the vessel off the rocks. However, back aboard ship, the Prince could hear his half-sister calling to him, begging him not to leave her to the ravages of the merciless sea. He ordered his little boat to turn round, but the situation was hopeless. As William grew nearer once more, *the White Ship* began to sink beneath the waves. More and more people were in the water now and they fought desperately for the safety of the Royal boat. The turmoil and the weight were too much. The Prince's little boat was capsized and sank without trace.

It is said that the only person to survive the wreck to tell the tale was a Rouen butcher, called Berold, who had only been on board to collect debts owed him by some of the party.

After King Henry heard of the disaster, it is said that he never smiled again. Desperate to secure his family's succession, he had the English barons swear an oath to uphold the rights of his only remaining legitimate child: his daughter Matilda who they were to recognise as their Queen after Henry's death.

### **HOW SUCCESSFUL WAS HENRY'S REIGN?**

- Henry was often absent from England having to deal with problems in Normandy. However he "so restrained the rebellious by the terror of his name that peace remained undisturbed in England. Good man he was and there was great awe of him. In his day no man dared to harm another"
  - The changes to the tax system were important.
  - Henry made England a prosperous and safe country.
1. London's booming trade attracted immigrants from the continent. This included many rich Jews.
  2. Towns grew,
  3. Abbeys and monasteries were built.
  4. Oxford University was founded.
  5. London was granted a charter in 1130 that removed some of the old taxes paid to the King.

From all the varying tribes that lived in England, with their different dialects, legal customs and traditions, a new nation was developing out of the people's respect for the King's wishes. People accepted the need for a common law, and they trusted the king to protect them. Henry, the "Lion of Justice" gave the English a sense of national unity totally lacking in other lands. In many respects, he was a great and successful king and laid solid foundations on which hopefully his successors would build. However, the suspicion over his brother's death has never gone away. Sadly, trouble returned upon the king's death in 1135.

When Henry died in 1135, the council of barons and bishops met. Many thought a woman unfit to rule and others referred to the Salic Law that banned women from taking the throne. The time had not yet come for a woman to be accepted on the English throne. Consequently they offered the throne to Stephen of Blois. This was to be the start of 19 years of civil war in which much of the good achieved by Henry I was to be undone.

### **Examples of cruelty**

1. Had his brother Robert blinded and castrated.
2. One of his illegitimate sons rebelled against him. In retaliation Henry had two of his granddaughters blinded.
3. A supporter of Robert approached Henry and told Henry of Robert's plan. Henry took this man to a top of a tower and pushed him off for betraying his brother!
4. There was a suspicion that some English coins had been forged. Henry had every moneyer called in, and had their right hands chopped off as a warning to others.