

Henry I 1100-1135 (Norman) Establishing Royal Control

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.