

Richard I Penguin Monarchs The Crusader King

With the emphasis firmly on Richard’s monarchy rather than on his personal life, Gillingham’s history aims to explain why the Lionheart’s reputation has fluctuated more than that of any other monarch. The study places Richard in Europe, the Mediterranean and Palestine and demonstrates that few rulers had more enemies or more influence.

A major new title in the Penguin Monarchs series In his fascinating new book in the Penguin Monarchs series, Richard Abels examines the long and troubled reign of Aethelred II the 'Unraed', the 'Ill-Advised'. It is characteristic of Aethelred's reign that its greatest surviving work of literature, the poem The Battle of Maldon, should be a record of heroic defeat. Perhaps no ruler could have stemmed the encroachment of wave upon wave of Viking raiders, but Aethelred will always be associated with that failure.

Charismatic, insatiable and cruel, Henry VIII was, as John Guy shows, a king who became mesmerized by his own legend - and in the process destroyed and remade England. Said to be a 'pillager of the commonwealth', this most instantly recognizable of kings remains a figure of extreme contradictions: magnificent and vengeful; a devout traditionalist who oversaw a cataclysmic rupture with the church in Rome; a talented, towering figure who nevertheless could not bear to meet people's eyes when he talked to them. In this revealing new account, John Guy looks behind the mask into Henry's mind to explore how he understood the world and his place in it - from his isolated upbringing and the blazing glory of his accession, to his desperate quest for fame and an heir and the terrifying paranoia of his last, agonising, 54-inch-waisted years.

Edward III lived through bloody and turbulent times. His father was deposed by his mother and her lover when he was still a teenager; a third of England's population was killed by the Black Death midway through his reign; and the intractable Hundred Years War with France began under his leadership. Yet Edward managed to rule England for fifty years, and was viewed as a paragon of kingship in the eyes of both his contemporaries and later generations.

Venerated as the victor of Sluys and Crécy and the founder of the Order of the Garter, he was regarded with awe even by his enemies. But he lived too long, and was ultimately condemned to see thirty years of conquests reversed in less than five. In this gripping new account of Edward III's rise and fall, Jonathan Sumption introduces us to a fêted king who ended his life a heroic failure.

Henry IV (Penguin Monarchs)

Richard I (Penguin Monarchs)

Henry III (Penguin Monarchs)

An Evil King?

George IV (Penguin Monarchs)

The Crusader King

A Simple and God-Fearing King

Like his mother Queen Victoria, Edward VII defined an era. Both reflected the personalities of their central figures: hers grand, imperial and pretty stiff; his no less grand, but much more relaxed and enjoyable. This book conveys Edward's distinct personality and significant influences. To the despair of his parents, he rebelled as a young man, conducting many affairs and living a life of pleasure. But as king he made a distinct contribution to European diplomacy and - which is little known - to London, laying out the Mall and Admiralty Arch. Richard Davenport-Hines's book is as enjoyable as its subject and the age he made.

No English king has so divided opinion, both during his reign and in the centuries since, more than Richard III. He was loathed in his own time for the never-confirmed murder of his young nephews, the Princes in the Tower, and died fighting his own subjects on the battlefield. This is the vision of Richard we have inherited from Shakespeare. Equally, he inspired great loyalty in his followers. In this enlightening, even-handed study, Rosemary Horrox builds a complex picture of a king who by any standard failed as a monarch. He was killed after only two years on the throne, without an heir, and brought such a decisive end to the House of York that Henry Tudor was able to seize the throne, despite his extremely tenuous claim. Whether Richard was undone by his own fierce ambitions, or by the legacy of a Yorkist dynasty which was already profoundly dysfunctional, the end result was the same: Richard III destroyed the very dynasty that he had spent his life so passionately defending.

Despite the recent renaissance in studies of the reign of Richard III, most historians have remained focussed on conventional themes.

Although he styled himself 'His Highness', adopted the court ritual of his royal predecessors, and lived in the former royal palaces of Whitehall and Hampton Court, Oliver Cromwell was not a king - in spite of the best efforts of his supporters to crown him. Yet, as David Horspool shows in this illuminating new portrait of England's Lord Protector, Cromwell, the Puritan son of Cambridgeshire gentry, wielded such influence that it would be a pretence to say that power really lay with the collective. The years of Cromwell's rise to power, shaped by a decade-long civil war, saw a sustained attempt at the collective government of England: the first attempts at a real Union of Britain; the beginnings of empire; a radically new solution to the idea of a national religion; atrocities in Ireland; and the readmission to England of the Jews, a people officially banned for over three and a half centuries. At the end of it, Oliver Cromwell had emerged as the country's sole ruler: to his enemies, and probably to most of his countrymen, his legacy looked as likely to last as that of the Stuart dynasty he had replaced.

The Unexpected King

A Study in Insecurity

The Red King

The Quest for Fame

William II (Penguin Monarchs)

The Remarkable Life of William Marshal, the Power Behind Five English Thrones

The First Crusade

Foremost medieval historian Anne Curry offers a new reinterpretation of Henry V and the battle that defined his kingship: Agincourt Henry V's invasion of France, in August 1415, represented a huge gamble. As heir to the throne, he had been a failure, cast into the political wilderness amid rumours that he planned to depose his father. Despite a complete change of character as king - founding monasteries, persecuting heretics, and enforcing the law to its extremes - little had gone right since. He was insecure in his kingdom, his reputation low. On the eve of his departure for France, he uncovered a plot by some of his closest associates to remove him from power. Agincourt was a battle that Henry should not have won - but he did, and the rest is history. Within five years, he was heir to the throne of France. In this vivid new interpretation, Anne Curry explores how Henry's hyperactive efforts to expunge his past failures, and his experience of crisis - which threatened to ruin everything he had struggled to achieve - defined his kingship, and how his astonishing success at Agincourt transformed his standing in the eyes of his contemporaries, and of all generations to come.

The formation of England happened against the odds--the division of the country into rival kingdoms, the assaults of the Vikings, the precarious position of the island on the edge of the known world. But King Alfred ensured the survival of Wessex, his son Eadweard expanded it, and his grandson Æthelstan finally united Mercia and Wessex, conquered Northumbria and became Rex totius Britanniae. Tom Holland recounts this extraordinarily exciting story with relish and drama. We meet the great figures of the age, including Alfred and his daughter Æthelflæd, 'Lady of the Mercians', who brought Æthelstan up at the Mercian court. At the end of the book we understand the often confusing history of the Anglo-Saxon kings better than ever before.

The acclaimed Penguin Monarchs series: short, fresh, expert accounts of England's rulers - now in paperback Henry II (1154-89) through a series of astonishing dynastic coups became the ruler of an enormous European empire. One of the most dynamic, restless and clever men ever to rule England, he was brought down both by his catastrophic relationship with his archbishop Thomas Becket and his debilitating arguments with his sons, most importantly the future Richard I and King John. His empire may have ultimately collapsed, but in Richard Barber's vivid and sympathetic account the reader can see why Henry II left such a compelling impression on his contemporaries. Richard Barber has written for Penguin The Penguin Guide to Medieval Europe, The Holy Grail and Edward III and the Triumph of England. He is a major figure in medieval studies, both as a writer and as a publisher.

Part of the Penguin Monarchs series: short, fresh, expert accounts of England's rulers in a collectible format Henry VII was one of England's unlikeliest monarchs. An exile and outsider with barely a claim to the throne, his victory over Richard III at Bosworth Field seemed to many in 1485 only the latest in the sequence of violent convulsions among England's nobility that would come to be known as the Wars of the Roses - with little to suggest that the obscure Henry would last any longer than his predecessor. To break the cycle of division, usurpation, deposition and murder, he had both to maintain a grip on power and to convince England that his rule was both rightful and effective. Here, Sean Cunningham explores how, in his ruthless and controlling kingship, Henry VII did so, in the process founding the Tudor dynasty.

King in Waiting

Elizabeth I (Penguin Monarchs)

Last Queen of England

Richard II (Penguin Monarchs)

A Study of Service

A Failed King?

George V (Penguin Monarchs)

A renowned scholar brings to life medieval England’s most celebrated knight, William Marshal—providing an unprecedented and intimate view of this age and the legendary warrior class that shaped it. Caught on the wrong side of an English civil war and condemned by his father to the gallows at age five, William Marshal defied all odds to become one of England’s most celebrated knights. Thomas Asbridge’s rousing narrative chronicles William’s rise, using his life as a prism to view the origins, experiences, and influence of the knight in British history. In William’s day, the brutish realities of war and politics collided with romanticized myths about an Arthurian “golden age,” giving rise to a new chivalric ideal. Asbridge details the training rituals, weaponry, and battle tactics of knighthood, and explores the codes of chivalry and courtliness that shaped their daily lives. These skills were essential to survive one of the most turbulent periods in English history—an era of striking transformation, as the West emerged from the Dark Ages. A leading retainer of five English kings, Marshal served the great figures of this age, from Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine to Richard the Lionheart and his infamous brother John, and was involved in some of the most critical phases of medieval history, from the Magna Carta to the survival of the Angevin/Plantagenet dynasty. Asbridge introduces this storied knight to modern readers and places him firmly in the context of the majesty, passion, and bloody intrigue of the Middle Ages. The Greatest Knight features 16 pages of black-and-white and color illustrations.

In 1461 Edward earl of March, an able, handsome, and charming eighteen-year old, usurped the English throne from his feeble Lancastrian predecessor Henry VI. Ten years on, following outbreaks of civil conflict that culminated in him losing, then regaining the crown, he had finally secured his kingdom. The years that followed witnessed a period of rule that has been described as a golden age: a time of peace and economic and industrial expansion, which saw the establishment of a style of monarchy that the Tudors would later develop. Yet, argues A. J. Pollard, Edward, who was drawn to a life of sexual and epicurean excess, was a man of limited vision, his reign remaining to the very end the narrow rule of a victorious faction in civil war. Ultimately, his failure was dynastic: barely two months after his death in April 1483, the throne was usurped by Edward’s youngest brother, Richard III.

When Henry IV seized the throne from his cousin Richard II, people saw it as a hopeful new beginning for England. The first monarch to have English as his mother tongue since the Norman conquest, Henry seemed to embody the ideals of chivalric kingship: mercy, piety, military prowess and learning. Yet deposing a crowned monarch was not a stable foundation on which to build a reign. Henry IV found himself challenged from all sides, plagued by conspiracies, rebellions, assassination attempts, and crippling debts, while his tense relationships with parliament and with his own son, Shakespeare's Prince Hal, saw his grip on power falter. Nevertheless, he was the first king and founder of a Lancastrian dynasty which would go on to shape England for centuries to come. In this lively study, Catherine Nall reappraises a monarch who weathered upheaval and uncertainty and held on to the throne through sheer force of will.

King John ruled England for seventeen and a half years, yet his entire reign is usually reduced to one image: of the villainous monarch outmanoeuvred by rebellious barons into agreeing to Magna Carta at Runnymede in 1215. Ever since, John has come to be seen as an archetypal tyrant. But how evil was he? In this perceptive short account, Nicholas Vincent unpicks John's life through his deeds and his personality. The youngest of four brothers, overlooked and given a distinctly unroyal name, John seemed doomed to failure. As king, he was reputedly cruel and treacherous, pursuing his own interests at the expense of his country, losing the continental empire bequeathed to him by his father Henry and his brother Richard and eventually plunging England into civil war. Only his lordship of Ireland showed some success. Yet, as this fascinating biography asks, were his crimes necessarily greater than those of his ancestors - or was he judged more harshly because, ultimately, he failed as a warlord?

A Prince Among Princes

Henry II

Henry VI (Penguin Monarchs)

England's Conqueror

Not Just a British Monarch

The Father of His People

Aethelred the Unready (Penguin Monarchs)

Part of the Penguin Monarchs series: short, fresh, expert accounts of England's rulers in a collectible format In the popular imagination, as in her portraits, Elizabeth I is the image of monarchical power. The Virgin Queen ruled over a Golden Age: the Spanish Armada was defeated and England's enemies scattered; English explorers reached almost to the ends of the earth; a new Church of England rose from the ashes of past conflict, and the English Renaissance bloomed in the genius of Shakespeare, Spenser and Sidney. But the image is also armour. In this illuminating new account of Elizabeth's reign, Helen Castor shows how England's iconic queen was shaped by profound and enduring insecurity-an insecurity which was both a matter of practical political reality and personal psychology. From her precarious upbringing at the whim of a brutal, capricious father and her perilous accession after his death, to the religious division that marred her state and the failure to marry that threatened her line, Elizabeth lived under constant threat. But, facing down her enemies with a compellingly inscrutable public persona, the last and greatest of the Tudor monarchs would become a timeless, fearless queen.

On Christmas Day 1066, William, duke of Normandy was crowned in Westminster, the first Norman king of England. It was a disaster: soldiers outside, thinking shouts of acclamation were treachery, torched the surrounding buildings. To later chroniclers, it was an omen of the catastrophes to come. During the reign of William the Conqueror, England experienced greater and more seismic change than at any point before or since. Marc Morris's concise and gripping biography sifts through the sources of the time to give a fresh view of the man who changed England more than any other, as old ruling elites were swept away, enemies at home and abroad (including those in his closest family) were crushed, swathes of the country were devastated and the map of the nation itself was redrawn, giving greater power than ever to the king. When, towards the end of his reign, William undertook a great survey of his new lands, his subjects compared it to the last judgement of God, the Domesday Book. England had been transformed forever.

The formation of England occurred against the odds: an island divided into rival kingdoms, under savage assault from Viking hordes. But, after King Alfred ensured the survival of Wessex and his son Edward expanded it, his grandson Athelstan inherited the rule of both Mercia and Wessex, conquered Northumbria and was hailed as Rex totius Britanniae: 'King of the whole of Britain'. Tom Holland recounts this extraordinary story with relish and drama, transporting us back to a time of omens, raven harbingers and blood-red battlefields. As well as giving form to the figure of Athelstan - devout, shrewd, all too aware of the precarious nature of his power, especially in the north - he introduces the great figures of the age, including Alfred and his daughter Aethelflaed, 'Lady of the Mercians', who brought Athelstan up at the Mercian court. Making sense of the family rivalries and fractious conflicts of the Anglo-Saxon rulers, Holland shows us how a royal dynasty rescued their kingdom from near-oblivion and fashioned a nation that endures to this day.

'To be a medieval king was a job of work ... This was a man who knew how to run a complex organization. He was England's CEO' The youngest of William the Conqueror's sons, Henry I came to unchallenged power only after two of his brothers died in strange hunting accidents and he had imprisoned the other. He was destined to become one of the greatest of all medieval monarchs, both through his own ruthlessness, and through his dynastic legacy. Edmund King's engrossing portrait shows a strikingly charismatic, intelligent and fortunate man, whose rule was looked back on as the real post-conquest founding of England as a new realm: wealthy, stable, bureaucratised and self-confident.

A Brittle Glory (Penguin Monarchs)

Edward IV (Penguin Monarchs)

The Reign of Anarchy

A New History

A Brittle Glory

From Playboy Prince to Warrior King

Richard I

Henry VI, son of the all-conquering Henry V, was one of the least able and least successful of English kings. His long reign, which started when he was only nine months old, ended in catastrophe, with the loss of England's territories in France into civil war: the wars of the Roses. Yet, failure though Henry undoubtedly was, he remains an enigma. Was he always, as he became in the last disastrous years of his rule, a holy fool, simple-minded to the point of insanity and prey to the mad, and, as some have suggested, actively malign? In this groundbreaking new portrait, James Ross shows a king whose priorities diverged sharply from what England expected of its monarchs, and whose fitful engagement with government was the disasters that engulfed the kingdom during his reign.

Henry III was a medieval king whose long reign continues to have a profound impact on us today. He was on the throne for 56 years and during this time England was transformed from being the private play-thing of a French speaking dynasty to a state answered for his actions to an English parliament, which emerged during Henry's lifetime. Despite Henry's central importance for the birth of parliament and the development of a state recognisably modern in many of its institutions, it is Henry's Montfort, who is in many ways more famous than the monarch himself. Henry is principally known today as the driving force behind the building of Westminster Abbey, but he deserves to be better understood for many reasons - as Stephen of Blois, Part of the Penguin Monarchs series: short, fresh, expert accounts of England's rulers in a highly collectible format

For a man with such conventional tastes and views, George V had a revolutionary impact. Almost despite himself he marked a decisive break with his flamboyant predecessor Edward VII, inventing the modern monarchy, with its emphasis on values and duty. George V was an effective war-leader and inventor of 'the House of Windsor'. In an era of ever greater media coverage--frequently filmed and initiating the British Empire Christmas broadcast--George became for 25 years also the only British monarch to take his role as Emperor of India seriously. While his great rivals (Tsar Nicolas and Kaiser Wilhelm) ended their reigns in catastrophe, he plodded on. David Cannadine's sparkling account of his reign could not have been written how to write about Monarchy, that central--if peculiar--pillar of British life.

From the celebrated historian and author of Europe: A History, a new life of George II George II, King of Great Britain and Ireland and Elector of Hanover, came to Britain for the first time when he was thirty-one. He had a terrible relationship

later paralleled by his relationship to his own son. He was short-tempered and uncultivated, but in his twenty-three-year reign he presided over a great flourishing in his adoptive country - economic, military and cultural - all described with Norman Davies. (George II so admired the Hallelujah chorus in Handel's Messiah that he stood while it was being performed - as modern audiences still do.) Much of his attention remained in Hanover and on continental politics, as a result to lead his troops into battle, at Dettingen in 1744.

Stephen (Penguin Monarchs)

A Heroic Failure

Edward VII (Penguin Monarchs)

The Uncrowned King

Edward VIII (Penguin Monarchs)

The Failed King

Aethelred (Penguin Monarchs)

William II (1087-1100), or William Rufus, will always be most famous for his death: killed by an arrow while out hunting, perhaps through accident or perhaps murder. But, as John Gillingham makes clear in this elegant book, as the son and successor to William the Conqueror it was William Rufus who had to establish permanent Norman rule. A ruthless, irascible man, he frequently argued acrimoniously with his older brother Robert over their father's inheritance - but he also handed out effective justice, leaving as his legacy one of the most extraordinary of all medieval buildings, Westminster Hall.

A major new title in the Penguin Monarchs series In his fascinating new book in the Penguin Monarchs series, Richard Abels examines the long and troubled reign of Aethelred II the 'Unraed', the 'Ill-Advised'. It is characteristic of Aethelred's reign that its greatest surviving work of literature, the poem The Battle of Maldon, should be a record of heroic defeat. Perhaps no ruler could have stemmed the encroachment of wave upon wave of Viking raiders, but Aethelred will always be associated with that failure. Richard Abels is Professor Emeritus at the United States Naval Academy. He is the author of Alfred the Great: War, Kingship and Culture in Anglo-Saxon England and Lordship and Military Obligation in Anglo-Saxon England. He is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.

Henry II (1154-89) through a series of astonishing dynastic coups became the ruler of an enormous European empire. One of the most dynamic, restless and clever men ever to rule England, he was brought down both by his catastrophic relationship with his archbishop Thomas Becket and his debilitating arguments with his sons, most importantly the future Richard I and King John. His empire may have ultimately collapsed, but in Richard Barber's vivid and sympathetic account the reader can see why Henry II left such a compelling impression on his contemporaries.

Richard I (Penguin Monarchs)*The Crusader King**Penguin UK*

England's Protector

Athelstan (Penguin Monarchs)

Oliver Cromwell (Penguin Monarchs)

Henry VIII (Penguin Monarchs)

Henry VII (Penguin Monarchs)

The Cosmopolitan King

Richard I's reign is both controversial and seemingly contradictory. One of England's most famous medieval monarchs and a potent symbol of national identity, he barely spent six months on English soil during a ten-year reign and spoke French as his first language. Contemporaries dubbed him the 'Lionheart', reflecting a carefully cultivated reputation for bravery, prowess and knightly virtue, but this supposed paragon of chivalry butchered close to 3,000 prisoners in cold blood on a single day. And, though revered as Christian Europe's greatest crusader, his grand campaign to the Holy Land failed to recover the city of Jerusalem from Islam. Seeking to reconcile this conflicting evidence, Thomas Asbridge's incisive reappraisal of Richard I's career questions whether the Lionheart really did neglect his kingdom, considers why he devoted himself to the cause of holy war and asks how the memory of his life came to be interwoven with myth. Richard emerges as a formidable warrior-king, possessed of martial genius and a cultured intellect, yet burdened by the legacy of his dysfunctional dynasty and obsessed with the pursuit of honour and renown.

'After my death,' George V said of his eldest son and heir, 'the boy will ruin himself within twelve months.' The forecast proved uncannily accurate. Edward VIII came to the throne in January 1936, provoked a constitutional crisis by his determination to marry the American divorcée Wallis Simpson, and abdicated in December. He was never crowned king. In choosing the woman he loved over his royal birthright, Edward shook the monarchy to its foundations. Given the new title 'Duke of Windsor' and essentially sent into exile, he remained a visible skeleton in the royal cupboard until his death in 1972 and he haunts the house of Windsor to this day. Drawing on unpublished material, notably correspondence with his most loyal (though much tried) supporter Winston Churchill, Piers Brendon's superb biography traces Edward's tumultuous public and private life from bright young prince to troubled sovereign, from wartime colonial governor to sad but glittering expatriate. With pace and panache, it cuts through the myths that still surround this most controversial of modern British monarchs.

Known as 'the anarchy', the reign of Stephen (1135-1141) saw England plunged into a civil war that illuminated the fatal flaw in the powerful Norman monarchy, that without clear rules ordering succession, conflict between members of William the Conqueror's family were inevitable. But there was another problem, too: Stephen himself. With the nobility of England and Normandy anxious about the prospect of a world without the tough love of the old king Henry I, Stephen styled himself a political panacea, promising strength without oppression. As external threats and internal resistance to his rule accumulated, it was a promise he was unable to keep. Unable to transcend his flawed claim to the throne, and to make the transition from nobleman to king, Stephen's actions betrayed uneasiness in his role, his royal voice never quite ringing true. The resulting violence that spread throughout England was not, or not only, the work of bloodthirsty men on the make. As Watkins shows in this resonant new portrait, it arose because great men struggled to navigate a new and turbulent kind of politics that arose when the king was in eclipse.

The acclaimed Penguin Monarchs series: short, fresh, expert accounts of England's rulers - now in paperback Like his mother Queen Victoria, Edward VII defined an era. Both reflected the personalities of their central figures: hers grand, imperial and pretty stiff; his no less grand, but much more relaxed and enjoyable. This book conveys Edward's distinct personality and significant influences. To the despair of his parents, he rebelled as a young man, conducting many affairs and living a life of pleasure. But as king he made a distinct contribution to European diplomacy and - which is little known - to London, laying out the Mall and Admiralty Arch. Richard Davenport-Hines's book is as enjoyable as its subject and the age he made.

Henry II (Penguin Monarchs)

The Greatest Knight

Richard II

The Summer King

Edward III (Penguin Monarchs)

The Afflicted King

The Making of England

Richard II is one of the most enigmatic of English kings. Shakespeare depicted him as a tragic figure, an irresponsible, cruel monarch who nevertheless rose in stature as the substance of power slipped from him. By later writers he has been variously portrayed as a half-crazed autocrat or a conventional ruler whose principal errors were the mismanagement of his nobility and disregard for the political conventions of his age. This book—the first full-length biography of Richard in more than fifty years—offers a radical reinterpretation of the king. Nigel Saul paints a picture of Richard as a highly assertive and determined ruler, one whose key aim was to exalt and dignify the crown. In Richard's view, the crown was threatened by the factiousness of the nobility and the assertiveness of the common people. The king met these challenges by exacting obedience, encouraging lofty new forms of address, and constructing an elaborate system of rule by bonds and oaths. Saul traces the sources of Richard's political ideas and finds that he was influenced by a deeply felt orthodox piety and by the ideas of the civil lawyers. He shows that, although Richard's kingship resembled that of other rulers of the period, unlike theirs, his reign ended in failure because of tactical errors and contradictions in his policies. For all that he promoted the image of a distant, all-powerful monarch, Richard II's rule was in practice characterized by faction and feud. The king was obsessed by the search for personal security: in his subjects, however, he bred only insecurity and fear. A revealing portrait of a complex and fascinating figure, the book is essential reading for anyone with an interest in the politics and culture of the English middle ages.

Henry II, through a series of astonishing dynastic coups, became the ruler of an enormous European empire that stretched from the Channel almost to the Mediterranean. One of the most dynamic, restless and clever men ever to rule England, he was brought down by his catastrophic relationship with his archbishop Thomas Becket, and his debilitating arguments with his rebellious sons Richard and Geoffrey, and later his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine. His empire may have ultimately collapsed, but in Richard Barber's vivid and sympathetic account we see why Henry II left such a compelling impression on his contemporaries. He creates a portrait of a man of great energy and learning, whose zeal for good government left a legacy that survives in Britain today, yet whose fiery temper and desire for control would ultimately destroy him.

Richard II (1377-99) came to the throne as a child, following the long, domineering, martial reign of his grandfather Edward III. He suffered from the disastrous combination of a most exalted sense of his own power and an inability to impress that power on those closest to the throne. Neither trusted nor feared, Richard battled with a whole series of failures and emergencies before finally succumbing to a coup, imprisonment and murder. Laura Ashe's brilliant account of his reign emphasizes the strange gap between Richard's personal incapacity and the amazing cultural legacy of his reign – from the Wilton Diptych to Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Piers Plowman and The Canterbury Tales.

George IV spent most of his life waiting to become king: as a pleasure-loving and rebellious Prince of Wales during the sixty-year reign of his father, George III, and for ten years as Prince Regent, when his father went mad. 'The days are very long when you have nothing to do' he once wrote plaintively, but he did his best to fill them with pleasure – women, art, food, wine, fashion, architecture. He presided over the creation of the Regency style, which came to epitomise the era, and he was, with Charles I, the most artistically literate of all our kings. Yet despite his life of luxury and indulgence, George died alone and unmourned. Stella Tillyard has not written a judgemental book, but a very human and enjoyable one, about this most colourful of all British kings.

John (Penguin Monarchs)

Richard III (Penguin Monarchs)

Anne

Henry I (Penguin Monarchs)

William I (Penguin Monarchs)

George II (Penguin Monarchs)

Richard III

'A nuanced and sophisticated analysis... Exhilarating' Sunday Telegraph
Nine hundred years ago, one of the most controversial episodes in Christian history was initiated. The Pope stated that, in spite of the apparently pacifist message of the New Testament, God actually wanted European knights to wage a fierce and bloody war against Islam and recapture Jerusalem. Thus was the First Crusade born. Focusing on the characters that drove this extraordinary campaign, this fascinating period of history is recreated through awe-inspiring and often barbaric tales of bold adventure while at the same time providing significant insights into early medieval society, morality and mentality. The First Crusade marked a watershed in relations between Islam and the West, a conflict that set these two world religions on a course towards deep-seated animosity and enduring enmity. The chilling reverberations of this earth-shattering clash still echo in the world today. '[Asbridge] balances persuasive analysis with a flair for conveying with dramatic power the crusaders' plight' Financial Times

Henry V (Penguin Monarchs)

Treason and Trust