



The Oxford Illustrated History of the British Monarchy (Oxford Illustrated Histories)

John Cannon, Ralph Griffiths

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The rich pageant of Britain's history emerges nowhere more colorfully than in the story of its kings and queens. This spectacular book offers the most authoritative account of the British monarchy ever published for the general reader. With over 400 illustrations--a third of them in color--it traces the crown's full history from Anglo-Saxon times to the present.

The authors present a vivid picture of the lives of individual monarchs as well as of the monarchy as a political and social force. They begin the story in the fifth century with the rise of recognizable kingdoms in Scotland, Wales, and England and conclude with a discussion of the crown's constitutional role, which emerged in Queen Victoria's reign, and how this has affected the symbolic and popular monarchy of today. Along the way, we gain a clear view of how key traditions evolved: the right of succession, coronations and marriages, oaths of loyalty and military service, the granting of lands and titles, and the propagation of a powerful image of royalty.

The book not only explains the monarch's political struggles and styles of governing; it is filled with fascinating details that give the story life. We learn, for instance, that Elizabeth I's famous journeys to various corners of her realm were not simply to show her off to her subjects: "The standard of Tudor sanitation," the authors note, "meant that the royal palaces became unbearable after several weeks of occupation and the court's absence for several months in the summer gave an opportunity to clean up." We discover that Victoria's coronation was "a splendid mixture of majesty and muddle": when it came time for the Archbishop to bestow the ceremonial ring, the already befuddled cleric placed it on the Queen's wrong finger, "causing considerable delay [and] some pain." And we read George VI's touching wedding message to his daughter (the present queen): "Your leaving us has left a great blank in our lives but do remember that your old home is still yours."

Supporting the text and carefully selected pictures are sidebars on each of the monarchs and on key general themes; color maps; an illustrated section on royal residences and tombs; a consolidated list of monarchs; genealogies; annotated lists of further reading; and a full index with personal dates.

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