

Why did Medieval Kings struggle to rule England?

Key factors

Wars – A Medieval king was expected to protect his people from invasion and to be a good fighter/warrior. If he won battles then the plunder and land gained could be shared with his barons. King John lost many battles losing control of much of the Angevin empire. By contrast Edward won battles against the Welsh and Scottish.

Barons – A Medieval king needed to have a good working relationship with his barons. John frequently fell out with his barons as they complained about taxes like Scutage and forced him to sign Magna Carta. When he went against Magna Carta they went to war with John (First Barons War) and with the help of the King of France forced John to retreat. Henry III faced the Second Barons War and was arrested and defeated by Simon DeMontfort after the Battle of Lewes. However, Henry's son Edward I led an army that defeated Simon Demontfort at the Battle of Evesham.

Religion – A Medieval king needed to show respect and support for the Catholic church. King John was excommunicated after a disagreement with the pope about who should be the next Archbishop. King Henry III was threatened with the same punishment after failing to keep a promise he made to the Pope. Henry III did however, spend a lot of money rebuilding Westminster Abbey. Edward I showed his loyalty to the church by leading a crusade shortly before he was crowned king.

Angevin Empire at the beginning of King John's reign



Timeline of Key Events



1199

King John is crowned

1209

He is Excommunicated

1215

Magna Carta & First Barons War

1216

King Henry III is crowned



1258

Provisions of Oxford

1264-67

Second Barons War



1265

First Parliament

1272

King Edward is crowned



Key terms

Church = The whole Catholic religion.

church = A single building.

Rebel = To oppose (Go against) the leader (King).

Scutage = Tax Barons paid to avoid fighting in a war.

Statute = A written law.

Excommunicate = Exclude from the services of the Catholic church (People at the time believed this would stop them getting to heaven).

Crusades = Religious wars.

Magna Carta = A charter (Written document) giving rights.

Homage = To publically pay respect to your Lord and Feudal allegiance.

Provisions of Oxford = An agreement made between rebel barons (Including Simon DeMontfort) and King Henry III that meant the king had to listen to a council of fifteen.

Key people

King John

(Younger brother to Richard I)

Nickname 'Softsword'



King Henry III (Son of John)

Rebuilt Westminster Abbey



Simon DeMontfort

(Rebel Baron and creator of parliament)



Edward I (Son of Henry III)

Nicknames 'Longshanks' and 'Hammer of the Scots'

