Sixty-Seven Interesting Facts About The Kings and Queens of the English

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By

George Cottier
INTRODUCTION

Writing history is a very precipitous endeavour.

In the words of Dr David Starkey, “One of my most vivid memories of doing television was going back to that first series about Henry VIII. We did a piece on the Reformation, which is a hugely complicated and significant subject.”

In a way that is a lot like this book that I have written. The monarchy is a hugely complicated and significant subject. This book figuratively wrestles with that subject. The result? History.

I have not tried to write about something else. I won’t claim to have written a different book when I wrote this one. This book is about monarchs and that is exactly what I set out to write about in the first place.

George Cottier
Egberht, King of Wessex conquered Kent, Cornwall and Mercia before defeating the Welsh and the Danes. “Egberht” literally means “bright sword”.
Aethelwulf's name means "noble wolf", a name actually given by his enemies and truly negative in tone. Earliest sources find it in the words of Cyngen ap Cadell, cursing, "Scorn the favours of this bloody beast for he is only as noble as a noble wolf."
Æthelbald enraged church leaders by marrying his father’s wife and laughing about it all the time. Even if it was not being discussed, he would raise the issue and carry on laughing.
Æthelberht reigned during the building of the first house in England. He said he liked them and he wanted to see more of them.
Æthelred had himself thrown by boat at the Danes during the Battle of Merton, famously saying “Hurl me and my boat at the enemy. It’ll be brilliant.”
Alfred the Great bore justice of blood and blade against the heathen; strangling the heart and smashing the bones in an unspeakable rampage of divine carnage so terrific that the carrion abhorred the sight of scream-wrung faces cleft from heads and the endless mounds of distended intestinal tract.
Edward the Elder opened Kings of Wessex Community School, the first comprehensive secondary school in 10th century England.
Athelstan the Glorious always pretended not to understand what people were saying, so even if he genuinely didn’t understand what they were saying they would think that he probably did understand but he was just pretending that he didn’t like normally.
Edmund the Magnificent had a flap finger.
Edred pushed a little cross into an orange.
Eadwig was deliberately misinformed by his enemies about the German language. When speaking to Otto the Great he used identical syntax and intonation for declarative and interrogative forms. He looked really stupid.
Edgar the Peaceable’s catchphrase was “Get me one of those.”
Saint Edward the Martyr was murdered by everyone.
Æthelred the Unready is undeservedly remembered as an inept ruler. In fact his reign saw much development in English law, including an end to the London reggae riots of 994.
Edmund Ironside was king for a mere six months, but in that period Edmund Ironside personally beat up a million Welsh. Edmund Ironside.
Sweyn Forkbeard was dedicated to facing challenges and achieving success. He set goals, ruthlessly focusing his energies to moving forward, neutralising obstacles, and reaching his inner potential.
Canute, contrary to popular myth, never tried to hold back the tide. He actually tried to make the sun explode, harnessing its dormant consciousness with his “bizarre mind powers”.
Harold Harefoot once dirted himself during a conference and had to sit there for hours until he and an attendant snuck out to try changing in a nearby cupboard. A French delegate opened the door by mistake, saw what was going on and went “What are you doing?”
Harthacnut had a long bum.
Saint Edward the Confessor had an imaginary friend called Eric Barrels. They were always getting into scrapes.
Harold Godwinson is cooking in the kitchen. His late Wessex flavour got my nostrils twitching.
Edgar the Atheling was proclaimed king but everyone just mumbled it and kind of shrugged a bit, looking at the floor and wandering off whenever it was mentioned. It got really awkward.
William I, the Conqueror, was also known as “the bastard”, but not because he was a bastard. It was because he was a bastard.
Henry I is considered one of the most skilled rulers in English history. He issued the Charter of Liberties. He also shook hands with his wife every morning so I suppose everyone has their problems.
Stephen was notoriously unpopular with the barons. "Why?" he would say, "Why don't you like me? Why?"
Matilda was the first monarch to accede the English throne without a penis, testeses nor scrotus.
Henry II was the best one. If you don’t agree you should have your stubborn brains smashed out of your face with big swords in a cathedral. Do you want that to happen? You stupid, stupid prick.
Henry the Young King was the only king to be crowned after he died.
Richard I, the Lionheart, suffered many harmful rumours about his sexuality. He decisively put an end to these by sleeping with the King of France.
John introduced the Harkwick-Baens contractual convention, stipulating that land-tax ratio agreements to, by and for Crown/Church subcategories of formal summons had to be rendered as a non-counter negotiable sub-clause in a forced *entre-ses-dentes* informal custom(s), attributed to neighbouring regions of any given county, so long as a five-writ fee farm obligation were reticent. It is no longer used.
Henry III was crowned when he was only nine years old but he got older afterwards so there was not that problem any more then.
Edward I, Longshanks, was played by Patrick McGoohan in Mel Gibson’s ‘Braveheart’. “Mel will always be Mad Max,” commented McGoohan, referring to the movie franchise that made Gibson famous.
Edward II was murdered by having a hot poker pushed up his anus. They then popped poo in his gob and threw scissors at his tits.
Edward III was held in such high esteem by his descendants that his specially varnished corpse was present at all royal births. George III’s children, whose nursery he occupied, referred to him as ‘Big Horrible Eddie’.
Richard II was an ordinary 10-year-old boy, until one day his grandfather King Edward died. Now he’s the king, and he’s about to find out whether being a king is as tough as being a kid. Richard II, starring in ‘Thronin the Heir’.
Henry IV commissioned the first Crystal Maze in 1405 intended to use up a surplus of pre-booked canoeing holidays. He died during the construction of the Aztec zone when a weight-bearing bamboo structure collapsed.
Henry V was another one.
Henry VI is Hollywood actor Wesley Snipes’ least favourite King. “I really don’t see the appeal,” says the star, “He lost the crown twice and thereby doubly shamed his house.”
Edward IV was made king, 65 million years after the extinction of the dinosaurs. Even at the height of his powers their demise was irrevocable. There was nothing he could do to save them.
Edward V was locked in the Tower of London because he had said his uncle had bad muscles and that’s why girls didn’t like him.
Richard III is the subject of much historical interest.
Henry VII. Imagine a cross between a really aggressive man and a really insecure one. That's basically what you're dealing with.
Henry VIII executed his six wives with a club in the Globe Theatre. It was very shocking at the time.
Edward VI died from absorption.
Jane looked at her knees, wiping something from her lap. She hadn’t looked anyone in the eye that morning. She raised her head. Guilford smiled weakly at her. She broke his gaze. Down again. Down. Only looking down now.
Mary I was known as "Bloody" Mary because of her fondness for qualifying proper nouns with adjectives.
Elizabeth I liked clothes. Do you like clothes?
James I was the first King of England, Scotland and Ireland. He decreed that a palace be built on the border of all three until somebody had a word with him.
Charles I's beheading inspired the 1986 movie Highlander. The novelisation of the film is based on the movie, so that's also inspired by him as well. There was a television series and a cartoon but they weren't very good.
Charles II made women compulsory. Lack of demand for women during the interregnum had brought their number as low as five. Vast fleets of huge cargo ships sailed to and from foreign countries, bringing lots of women who had literally no idea what was going on.
James II infuriated Parliament by awarding numerous non-Anglicans with scandalous favours of privilege and position. Famously, High Shaman Batwam Pi-Di-Ti-Buntuki was given an ace hat.
William III, of Orange, tickled his pickle and bottled the spottle his nozzle had drozzled.
Joe Montana - NFL quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers and the Kansas City Chiefs. Three-time Super Bowl MVP, three-time First Team All-Pro and eight-time Pro Bowler. Career passer rating: 92.3. 3,409 pass completions of 5,391 attempts, 273 touchdowns, 139 interceptions and 40,551 yards passing.
Mary II frequently accompanied her husband William III on bullying visits. She was required to point at the victim, saying "Yeah," and repeating his last taunt. Sometimes her responsibilities reached even further.
Anne had the Joigles exterminated. Little now remains of their culture, but there are numerous accounts of these mischievous people leaping from rooftop to rooftop, singing their high-pitched cheery melodies and carving toys for the children of London. They had their heads ripped off by the army.
George I, a native German speaker, was believed to speak no English at all. Only on his deathbed did it emerge that he spoke it perfectly. "Nobody asked, so I never thought to bring it up," he said, defending his thirteen years of being a nuisance to everyone.
George II insisted on naming Handel’s anthem for the coronation after his favourite fictional space explorer, Zadok, even though it made no sense for a song about a biblical king being crowned.
George III was not mad. He was confident.
George IV founded the British Guild of Poofters in 1826.
William IV was accompanied constantly by an unnamed vaporous figure with a screaming skull face.
Victoria’s reign lasted for the entirety of the Victorian age.
Edward VII slapped everyone he spoke to. From 1903 to 1910 it also became standard royal protocol to be roundhouse kicked in the chest by the king if you stood within 10 feet of him.
George V, when H. G. Wells wrote about Britain’s “alien and uninspiring court”, replied “You can fuck right off. Seriously go and fuck off now you twat. You’re just... fucking hell! What a knob!”
Edward VIII renounced his identity in 1936, insisting that his physical body should be regarded as a mere quirk of the cosmos.
George VI would never sit or lie down. At night he would walk very quickly in and out of corridors and rooms, staring silently at bewildered palace staff.
Elizabeth II vvrrrrrrroooooooooooomm!