

British History Series: Episode 11 - Mother of Parliaments

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Key Figures & Events

1. King John (1199–1216)

- Notorious for losing Normandy to France and draining England's coffers.
- Forced to sign the **Magna Carta** in 1215 at Runnymede, limiting royal power.
- Died of dysentery in 1216 after losing the crown jewels in **The Wash** (a muddy estuary).

2. Henry III (1216–1272)

- Crowned at age 9 in **Gloucester Cathedral** (the only post-1066 coronation outside Westminster Abbey).
- Reigned for 56 years, relying on regent **William Marshall** to defeat rebel barons.
- Revived the Magna Carta but clashed with nobles over taxes and French advisors.

3. Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester

- Led the **Second Barons' War** against Henry III.
- Called the first Parliament with commoners (knights and burgesses) in 1265, a precursor to the **House of Commons**.
- Killed at the **Battle of Evesham** (1265) by Edward I's forces.

4. Edward I (Longshanks)

- Henry III's warrior son; defeated de Montfort and later crushed Welsh/Scottish rebellions.
 - Established the **Model Parliament** (1295), formalizing representation for towns and shires.
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Key Moments

- **1215 Magna Carta:** Established that even kings must obey the law. Only **3 clauses remain today**, including protections against unlawful imprisonment.
 - **1265 de Montfort's Parliament:** First to include non-nobles, setting a precedent for democratic representation.
 - **1295 Model Parliament:** Edward I's structured Parliament with Lords, Commons, clergy, and burgesses – the blueprint for today's system.
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Did You Know?

- **Liverpool's Origins:** Founded as a fishing village under King John, who sold market charters to fund wars. A statue of John still stands there!
 - **Lost Crown Jewels:** John's treasure sank in The Wash (East Anglia) – still buried in mud for metal detectorists to find!
 - **Robin Hood Legends:** Emerged during Henry III's reign, reflecting anger over sheriffs' heavy taxation.
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Why This Matters

The struggles between kings and nobles shaped **800 years of British democracy**:

- **Magna Carta** inspired future rights movements (e.g., U.S. Constitution).
- **Parliament's evolution** from advisory councils to a sovereign body shows how power gradually shifted from monarchs to the people (well, wealthy commoners at first!).