

**Lesson
Four****Gaining control,
consolidating power****Aims**

In this lesson you will learn about how William and his successors extended their power:

- in England
- into other countries
- through the church and state

Context

This lesson builds on what you learnt about the Norman Conquest in Lesson Three.



Oxford Open Learning

Introduction

In the previous lesson we looked at how William gained control of England, and how he secured and consolidated his rule. Now we will look at how he and his successors to the English throne looked to *extend* their power into other countries and areas of life. We will move on from King William I and learn about other medieval kings.

Activity 1	Why do you think it was so important for medieval kings to try to extend their power? For one minute jot down some ideas about this.
	

Extension into other Countries

Many of the nobles to whom William loaned land already had land in their native France. They were pleased to be extending their individual 'empires' into another country. Yet before long the English became ambitious for more land, and looked to neighbouring countries – Wales, Scotland and Ireland.

William and Wales

From the outset of his reign William was nervous about the potential threat of a Welsh invasion. He never invaded Wales, but he did create three 'Lords of the Marches' to guard against any invasion from the Welsh. These Lords were noblemen given control of areas at Chester, Shrewsbury and Hereford (on the English-Welsh borders), and they built castles along the borders, and in parts of south Wales, to show English power.

It was not until the 1200s that the Welsh started making significant attempts to overthrow the English and remove

them from their land. Llewellyn the Great gained control of much of Wales, chased the English out, and by 1216 all of Wales recognised him as leader. This lasted for about fifty years, but in 1276-7 the English king Edward I invaded Wales and took control. Despite a Welsh rebellion in 1282-3 the English maintained control. They had defeated the Welsh.

Edward I

Facts	<p>Edward I (reigned 1272-1307)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edward won wars against the Welsh and the Scots. • He was determined to rule the whole of Britain. • He was keen to improve efficiency of royal justice system. • Edward was responsible for the expulsion of the Jews from England in 1290.
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Activity 2	<p>What do you think Edward I did when his men regained Wales? Think back to what William did when he first won England. Jot down some ideas.</p>
	

Edward needed to consolidate his control. He did this by:

- Building castles. He built 8 castles along the north coast of Wales to show his strength and to protect his land.
- Dividing Wales up to stop the Welsh uniting together. He created 5 counties.
- Bringing in Norman barons to rule to ensure English customs were followed.
- Encouraging English people to move there to make Wales more like England.
- Appointing his son Edward (who became King Edward II) the Prince of Wales.

Although there were some rebellions – most notably Owen Glendower in the 15th century – the Welsh remained under the control of the English and did not succeed in removing the English from their land.

Scotland

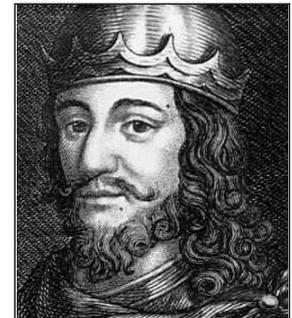
The Scots fared slightly better at maintaining their independence, possibly because the country itself is bigger, the terrain made it harder to control, and for most of the 1200s Scotland was stable and secure. Only when King Alexander of Scotland died in 1286 did trouble break out. Alexander had no son or direct heir, so thirteen Scots claimed that they should be king! Who do you think the Scottish turned to for help at this time? King Edward I of England.



Edward I

As we know from our study of Wales, Edward I was an ambitious and ruthless king. He helped the Scots to choose John Balliol as king on the understanding that Balliol would support him. When Balliol did not do this, Edward invaded. He was successful, and for a short time his English noblemen ruled Scotland. However, in 1297 William Wallace led a resistance against the English. After a second invasion from the English in 1298 the Scots were defeated.

Again, for a few short years the English ruled successfully over Scotland. But in 1306 a new leader of a rebellion, Robert Bruce, emerged. He had been one of the thirteen contenders to the throne in 1286. After an initial defeat by the English in 1306 he fled to Ireland, where he had himself crowned King.



Robert the Bruce

The following year, Edward I died and Robert Bruce returned to Scotland, where he found he had significant support from the Scottish people. Edward II sent 20,000 soldiers to Scotland to defeat him but they were unsuccessful. Bruce's 7000 men defeated Edward II's army at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314. Finally, in 1328 the two countries signed a truce in which the English recognised Bruce as King of Scotland. Scotland kept this independence until 1707.

Activity 3	Why do you think the English invaders were more successful in Wales than in Scotland?
	

Ireland

Ireland was invaded by England and Scotland throughout the medieval era, but by the 1400s it was relatively independent. In 1171 King Henry II of England led a large invasion in Ireland, and over the next one hundred years the English gained the rule of the country and obtained much land. Interestingly, it was the Scottish who largely removed the English from Ireland.

They invaded Ireland themselves in 1315 and devastated the country, destroying towns and crops and killing thousands. They were unsuccessful in overruling the natives and the Irish defeated them in 1318, but English power had also been almost destroyed in the wars.

Despite attempts from Edward III and Richard II to re-impose English control on Ireland they were mostly unsuccessful, and by the 1400s the English ruled over only a small area of the country.

Investigate!	<p>You can see from what we have studied that the native people did not sit back when their country was invaded. Do some research to find out more about these rebels. Investigate either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Owain Glendower's rebellion in Wales, b) William Wallace's rebellion in Scotland, or c) the creation of the Statutes of Kilkenny in Ireland. <p>Imagine that you a journalist reporting the story for the local newspaper – write the front page story.</p>
	

Consolidating power in England

It was also important for the medieval kings to consolidate power in England. Henry II (1154-1189) both expanded into other counties and did a lot to increase his control of England. The years preceding his reign had been chaotic with the country on the verge of civil war (more on this in Lesson Five).

Henry II

Facts

Henry II (reigned 1154-1189)

- By the age of 19 Henry was married to Eleanor of Aquitaine and ruling much of France.
- Henry had boundless energy and was always hunting or riding or planning.
- He fell out with his wife, who turned their sons against him.

Henry II had real energy and ambition and was determined to use his strength to exercise his control. He did this by:

1. Making the Scottish King Malcolm IV hand back the land the Scots had taken in Northern England.
2. Forcing barons to take down castles which they had built without permission. Some barons had become increasingly self-important; Henry wanted to remind them who was king!

Henry II significantly reformed the legal system in England. In the chaos before his reign, land had been stolen illegally and disputes had been settled in 'trials by battles' (i.e. the strongest fighter wins!). Henry (left) introduced trial by jury, which was fairer. All free men could request a proper trial at a local court, or the King's court, which had judges, if necessary.



In 1180 a permanent royal court was established in London. The English court system today is still based on this key notion of trial by jury. Other aspects of Henry's legal system were less fair. Some suspects were put on 'trial by ordeal'. They were forced to pick a stone out of scalding water. If their skin blistered then they

were deemed guilty and sentenced to hanging or imprisonment.

Punishments were harsh in medieval England, and they were normally carried out in public. Crowds would come out to watch a man be hanged, put in the stocks or whipped. One figure who was publicly punished was, surprisingly, Henry II himself. How did this happen?

Thomas à Becket

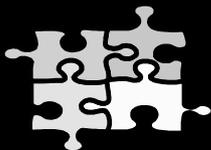
Henry II tried to increase control of every aspect of English life. He had appointed a close friend, Thomas à Becket, to the role of Archbishop of Canterbury (leader of the Church) for this reason. However, Henry then tried to take too much power, demanding that he should be able to choose other appointments (which was the Pope's job) and be given more control of the church.

Becket had become increasingly holy in his new role, reading his Bible and praying and he refused to allow Henry to corrupt the church. Becket also refused to allow his priests to be punished by the king's courts.

Henry II was furious. "Will no-one rid me of this turbulent priest?" he exclaimed. Four knights burst into Canterbury Cathedral and murdered Becket. People were very shocked and upset by this, and Henry was forced to repent. He walked barefoot over the place where Becket was killed in the cathedral. A shrine was set up for Becket and Canterbury became a centre for pilgrims.



Something to think about



What do you think about hearing that strong Henry II walked barefoot in disgrace?

Was he a good King?

Investigate!

Imagine that you are the local sheriff. You have been told of the death of Thomas Becket. Carry out some research into why and how and it happened, and then write up your report of the crime.

Thomas à Becket's death is important also because it shows us the struggle that took place between the monarch and the church during medieval times. We will learn more about this in Module Four.