

## Medieval Britain, c. 1000–1500

Though England was the emerging super-state in the medieval British Isles, its story is not the only one Britain can offer; there is a wider context of Britain in Europe, and the story of this period is one of how European Latin and French culture and ideals colonised the minds of all the British peoples. This engaging and accessible introduction offers a truly integrated perspective of medieval British history, emphasising elements of medieval life over political narrative, and offering an up-to-date presentation and summary of medieval historiography. Featuring figures, maps, a glossary of key terms, a chronology of rulers, timelines and annotated suggestions for further reading and key texts, this textbook is an essential resource for undergraduate courses on medieval Britain. Supplementary online resources include additional further reading suggestions, useful links and primary sources.

David Crouch is Professor of Medieval History at the University of Hull. He is the author of many books, including *The Reign of King Stephen* (2002), *The Birth of Nobility: Constructing Aristocracy in England and France, 1000–1300* (2005), *The Normans* (2005), *The English Aristocracy, 1070–1272: A Social Transformation* (2011), *Lost Letters of Medieval Life: English Society, 1200–1250* (with Martha Carlin, 2013), *The Acts and Letters of the Marshal Family 1156–1248* (2015) and *William Marshal* (3rd edn, 2016).

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# Medieval Britain, c. 1000–1500

David Crouch



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## Preface

This book is intended as an introduction to half a millennium of British history for degree-level students, though its breadth of coverage would make it useful also as a senior school text. It is not intended as a reference book so much as a guide to broad social, political and cultural change in a very long period of history. Because of the complexity of the intertwining story of the three nations of Great Britain (the English, Scots and Welsh), the emphasis of the book is on themes rather than events. It is not a reign-by-reign account of the kingdoms of Britain. A thematic approach does make more clear what political histories often fail to, that the history and lives of those three peoples did have a powerful ‘British’ rather than national dimension. Indeed, looked at in this way the period can be seen to have experienced a major shift in the idea of what Britain was. As a result, the book is organised in two narrative sections: before and after what is called here ‘the great divorce’, the collapse of the ancient understanding of the British peoples as being united under the informal presidency of the English king. After 1306 Britain was partitioned between two mutually hostile, warring states: England and Scotland. There was no healing of the rift within the rest of the period of this book. The thematic sections, however, make plain that the unrelenting hostility was an overlay on societies and states which were otherwise responding to the same developments in culture, agriculture, economy, disease and social change, and that all three peoples were interacting with forces beyond the British Isles. Ireland (which is part of the British Isles, but not Great Britain) is not specifically addressed in this study, as that would have made the book unmanageable and indeed incoherent. Nonetheless, reference is made to developments concerning Ireland which have a British context.

Within this book there are some major changes which have a significance for vocabulary. One is the change in understanding of the Gaelic kingdom of the north, which under David I (1124–1153) moved into the mainstream of European monarchies. So, before his reign, it is called by its ancient name of Alba, and after by the name it was increasingly given within and outside its borders, Scotland (*Scotia*). Likewise for England, the ruling dynasty which acquired the throne in 1154 and carried on until the very end of the period is called the ‘Angevins’ while it still maintained a claim to its ancient homeland in northern France (Anjou) and ‘Plantagenets’ thereafter (with



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no reference to its Lancastrian and Yorkist branches which became important after 1399). At the end of each section are reading lists, with those called ‘Key Texts’: landmark studies which offer the most authoritative as well as broadest coverage. ‘Further Reading’ includes important studies which have informed the writing of the chapter and which can form the basis for student research. The online companion site for this book offers further opportunities for research, including primary source material.