

History of the Monarchy

Henry II

Born in 1133

Ascended in 1154

Died in 1189, aged 56

Reigned for 35 years

Married to Eleanor of Aquitaine bearing 5 sons and 3 daughters.

Henry II was the first of the House of Plantagenet. This name comes from the Latin *planta genista* or flowering broom - a nickname given to Geoffrey of Anjou, Henry's father.

It was during Henry's reign that the Pope gave permission for England to invade Ireland and bring it under the Catholic faith. However, he had misjudged the king who was trying to gain control of the powerful church in his own country. To do this, in 1162 he instated Thomas à Becket (chancellor of England) as archbishop of Canterbury, the most senior post in England.

Becket had previously been more a rich soldier than a clergyman and the king hoped to win over him. However, soon after gaining his post, he staunchly refused any royal intervention into church law in England. Becket was murdered in the Cathedral by four of the king's knights who had heard the king say, *Of the cowards that eat my bread is there none will rid me of this turbulent priest?*

Henry and his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine, had five sons and 3 daughters, but she had already been married to and divorced from Louis VII of France. She was a powerful woman and later encouraged his son, Henry, to rebel against him.