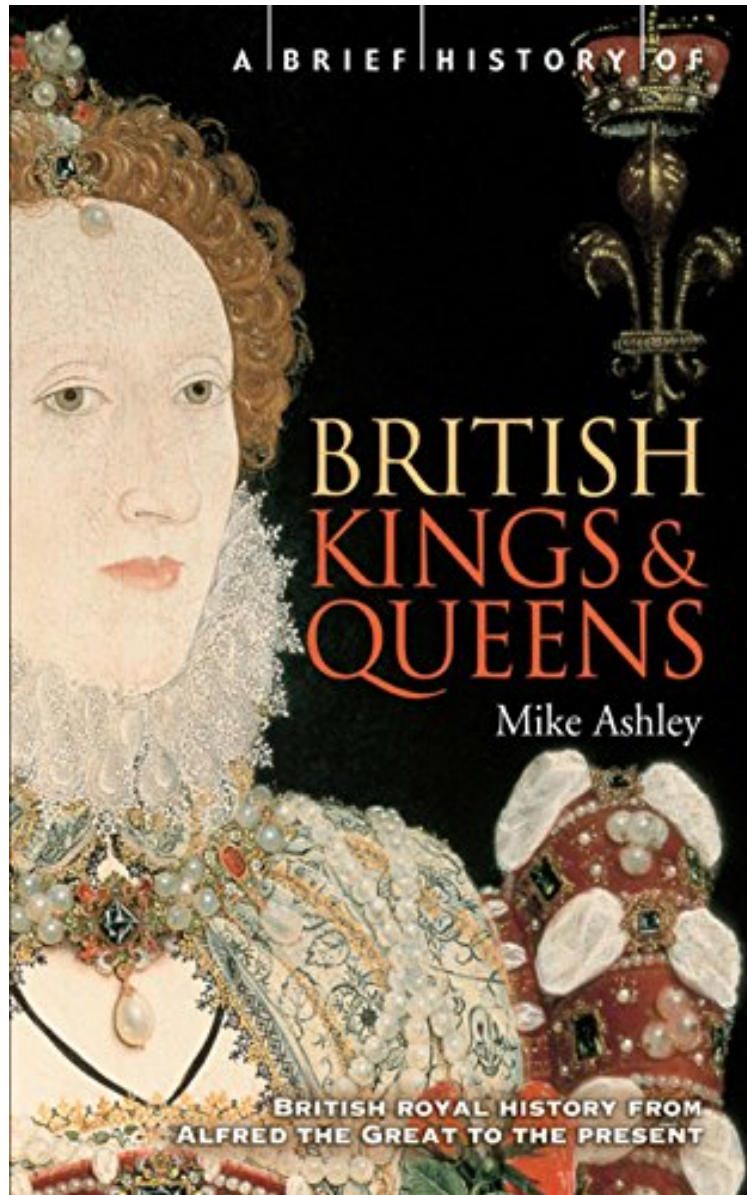


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## A Brief History of British Kings Queens (Brief Histories) (English Edition)

Von Mike Ashley

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Von Mike Ashley : A Brief History of British Kings Queens (Brief Histories) (English Edition) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Brief History of British Kings Queens (Brief Histories) (English Edition):

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Land of a thousand kingsVon Peter Durward HarrisI previously reviewed a book that gave a basic overview of the kings and queens of England, and while it is good for what it is, I eventually realized that I wanted a more detailed history that also covered Scotland. If it covered Wales and Ireland too, even better. This book covers Wales but not Ireland (though Ireland gets mentioned a few times), while having the additional merit of attempting to go right back to the earliest British kings, way before the Romans arrived. Very little is known about the really early kings, but it is good to find some information about them here. Because of the book's starting point, it covers the Roman period, but if you really want to read about the Roman Empire, you'll need a different book. This being a history of royalty, it covers the basics, including the walls built by Hadrian and Antonius. Well, not built by them personally, but built in their names. Of course, one could say the same about any given period. This book is an excellent history of British royalty, but while it mentions some of the major changes that took place in society, it cannot dwell on them. Actually, this book is titled a brief history because it is a carefully edited version of a much larger tome in which the same author provided a very comprehensive study of the subject. Apparently realizing that it would be too much for most people, he set about producing a book that was more readable while preserving the essence of the story. Not having read the mammoth book, I don't know for sure what he left out, though I can guess in some cases, where I've come across other pieces of information elsewhere. I'm not complaining anyway; there is more than enough information here for my needs just now. If I ever need to know more about a particular period, I'll look for another book. This book shows that up to around the middle of the last millennium, kings were mostly warriors who tended to spend a lot of their time as fighting soldiers, and plenty were killed in battle or murdered. In the early years, these battles were often between rival kingdoms within what we now know as England, Scotland and Wales, but eventually those three nations emerged (of a fashion) and battles between these three became the norm, while battles within any one of them were classed as civil wars. Meanwhile, there were other enemies in Normandy, France, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands and Ireland to contend with. Plenty of myths and legends have been handed down, among them being King Arthur, King Canute and Lady Godiva. The author gives his own thoughts on these, maintaining that while Arthur may have been a real person, he doesn't think that Arthur was ever a king. The episode involving King Canute is probably based on a real event but the legend as told is probably somewhat different from the truth of what really happened. The Lady Godiva story is probably very close to what really happened. The author thinks that history is very kind to Richard the Lion-heart, who apparently was anything but brave. While he may be flattered by history, other kings have been less fortunate. In particular, Shakespeare's Macbeth is much worse than the real Macbeth had been. Some of the minor details are quite amusing. The author suggests that Elephant and Castle (in central London) is actually a corruption of Eleanor of Castile. I always thought Elephant and Castle was an odd name, but if the author is correct, it's odder than I thought. One way or another, I knew the basic outline of the history presented here, but I found a lot of the detail fascinating. Also, by having to focus on the story, it brought home how easily things could have been so different. The story of Lady Jane Grey is tragic and well-known, but had she been spared execution, or had people not tried to make her queen in the first place, she or one of her descendants would have eventually inherited the throne following the death of Queen Elizabeth. I suspect that the crowns of England and Scotland would have been united through marriage eventually anyway. One thing that is clear from this book is that a lot of marriages between different European royal families were for political reasons rather than anything else. I was surprised to read that the marriages were not merely arranged for royal children to marry each other, but that in some instances, the marriages actually took place while they were still children. Another thing that becomes clear is that while a lot of people believe the weakening role of the monarchy began with the replacement of Charles I with Oliver Cromwell (and that no doubt played some part), the process was accelerated during the Hanoverian era, because the British didn't like being ruled by a foreign king, especially (in the case of George I) one whose command of English was poor at best. For me, the greatest interest lay in the early years about which I knew least and had most to learn. Even here, I dispute the author's assertion that Alfred the Great could not really be called the first king of England. It seems that will he was not king of all England as we now know it, he was king of a large part of it, much larger than any predecessor, so I think it fair that history records him as the first king of England. George Washington, the first American president, had power over a territory that is only a small portion of what we now know as the United States, with the last state joining as recently as 1960. So the argument that Alfred did not rule over all of England is a weak one, but does not spoil the book overall. I love this book, despite some disagreements with the author where he strays into opinion. Mostly, there are so many facts to squeeze in that there isn't much room for opinion beyond pointing out which kings and queens were good and which were bad. The author conspicuously avoids getting involved in the debate about the monarchy's future, content with noting that it has to remain relevant to the British people in a changing world. Of course, the big test will come when the next king is crowned, whether that be my eighth cousin Prince Charles or one of his sons. There are about 400 pages of text and a further 100 or so pages of lists and family trees. The lists cover all the kings, queens, Roman emperors and Roman governors of Britain that the author has identified, but the family trees are limited to England. There are more comprehensive family trees on the internet. For a thorough look at the history of British royalty, this book is likely to be hard to beat, though if you want something far more comprehensive, the author has written that

book too.0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Insightful and thoroughly interesting material Von Erika Schroeder-Eisenach One gets a concise and clear view of the difficult sometimes tangled history of British Royal characters, families and the local, geographical and temporal conditions that result in their history.

**Kurzbeschreibung** Here is the whole of recorded British royal history, from the legendary King Alfred the Great onwards, including the monarchies of England, Scotland, Wales and the United Kingdom for over a thousand years. Fascinating portraits are expertly woven into a history of division and eventual union of the British Isles - even royals we think most familiar are revealed in a new and sometimes surprising light. This revised and shortened edition of *The Mammoth Book of British Kings Queens* includes biographies of the royals of recorded British history, plus an overview of the semi-legendary figures of pre-history and the Dark Ages - an accessible source for students and general readers.

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