

# THE PAST

In the heart of medieval Sherwood Forest lies the royal deer park of Clipstone and within Castlefield, the ruins of King John's Palace. This park was the centre of royal hunting and politics in Sherwood Forest from the late 12th to the end of the 14th century. Medieval Sherwood Forest consisted of trees, open spaces and farmland, but all were subject to Forest Law under the King.

We know there has been human activity on the site since prehistoric times as previous finds include a Bronze Age spearhead and an arrowhead. A flint flake, waste from flint knapping, found during an excavation in 2012 is further evidence for prehistoric activity.

The Domesday Book of 1086 mentions Clipstone where its name is "Cliestune", but like many villages in Nottinghamshire it has its roots in the Scandinavian language of the Vikings who settled here. Clipstone may have been part of the "Sciryuda" meaning Shire Wood, now referred to as Sherwood. The earliest reference to Nottinghamshire occurs in 1016. Place names tell us a lot about who first settled there, if they end in 'by' (Thoresby) that's Scandinavian in origin, 'thorpe' (Bilsthorpe) are Danish, 'feld' (Mansfield) are Roman and 'tun' (Clipstone) are Anglo-Saxon. Clipstone was renamed Kings Clipstone in 2003.

The first mention of the royal connection to the site is in 1164 and it is likely that the King's Houses (as they were then known) were only timber buildings, but its location was linked to the rising importance of the Royal Forest of Sherwood.

King John's Palace was visited by all eight monarchs from Henry II to Richard II. They had a significant impact on medieval England. The dynasty they founded, the Plantagenets, would rule England for over 300 years until 1485. The Plantagenet Empire was to stretch from the borders of Scotland to the Spanish Pyrenees. The Plantagenet Kings would exert great influence over Medieval Sherwood Forest through the enforcement of Forest Law. The boundaries and extent of the Forest would vary over the centuries.



The links between Clipstone and the royal pastime of hunting can be seen in 1178-80 when a deer park was enclosed (a 10km boundary) with a pale fence. This became known as Clipstone Park by the 18th century. The total cost of works between 1176 and 1180 exceeded £500 and included a fishpond, a stone chamber and a chapel. That's over a quarter of a million pounds in today's money! Richard I (King John's older brother) visited Clipstone on 2nd April 1194 to meet William the Lion, King of Scotland and shows that the site was palatial enough to impress on an international scale.



Medieval image of King John hunting

Edward III's reign saw a number of visits to the palace and the subsequent petitions by the local communities led to the reversal of most of Edward II's changes to the park. By the mid-1300s the King's Houses (the Palace) were a sprawling complex that was similar to other great palaces such as Clarendon in Wiltshire.

Richard II was the last monarch to visit in 1393, and his successor Henry IV gave the site away. The number of palaces and castles under direct royal control dwindled during the 1400s. As the Royal Household increased from around 120 servants in the reign of Henry I to 800 under Henry VI, fewer but more impressive palaces became the preference. By March 1568 it seems that substantial clearance of the ruins had occurred as local people took the valuable stone for their own ends.

# MAGNA CARTA

Magna Carta is Latin for 'The Great Charter', the first written constitution in the world. It was sealed (not signed) by King John at Runnymede, near Windsor, on 15th June 1215. It was a remarkable document which set limits on the powers of the king and laid out the obligations of the barons who were objecting to his harsh taxation and lack of respect for their status as nobility.

The Magna Carta was not initially successful, but with modifications eventually became an influential document for the rights of freemen in the medieval period. Its influence on a global scale continues to this day, with the American Constitution of 1789 citing it as a major influence and is a true icon of liberty today, with politicians and campaigners alike. In 2015 Magna Carta celebrates its 800th anniversary, and undoubtedly the world will continue to hold its influence in high regard for centuries to come.



King John's seal

# THE FUTURE

King John's Palace has become the focus for excavation and exploration during recent years, and the story of its rise and fall and how important the site was needs to become as integral to Sherwood Forest as Robin Hood. This site is one of the most important in Medieval Sherwood Forest, alongside Laxton Castle, the old town of Nottingham, and the surviving woods of Birklands and Bilhaugh. This is reflected with its legal protection as a Grade II listed building and Scheduled Ancient Monument.



Mercian Archaeological Services CIC Excavation 2014

Recent archaeological fieldwork and research has been undertaken by Mercian Archaeological Services CIC's Andy Gaunt, Sean Crossley and David Budge, alongside Senior Buildings Archaeologist James Wright. Their work to date has led to many new interpretations of the site, and helped locate some of the extensive boundaries of the palace and the location of a number of buildings including the medieval gatehouse, parts of which survive in people's houses in the village. Their work has also helped to show how the palace once sat within a designed landscape which stretched across the whole of Clipstone Parish and was surrounded by Sherwood Forest on all sides.

King John's Palace was repaired during 2009 as the ruins were about to collapse and all trace of the palace be lost forever. The crumbling structure was saved by a specialist team of stonemason and structural engineers.

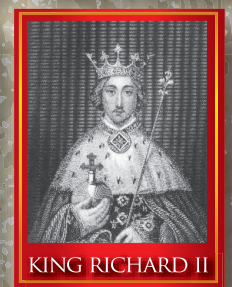
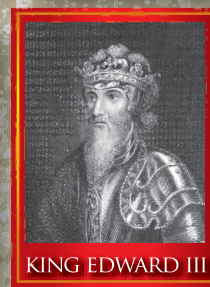
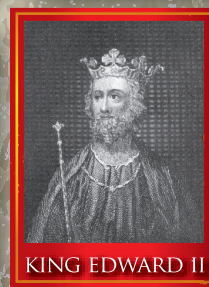
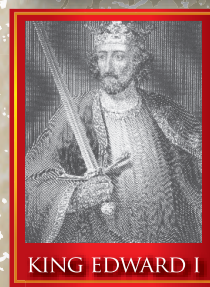
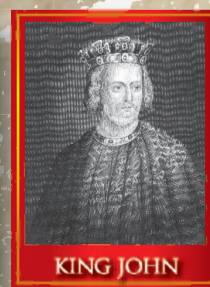
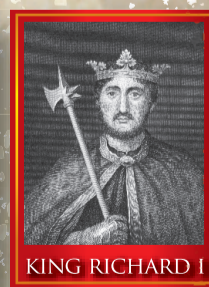
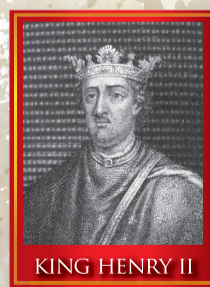
Channel Four's long running archaeology show 'Time Team' filmed an episode at the Palace during 2011. This really helped bring the site into people's living rooms.

During 2014 The Sherwood Forest Trust secured funding from Big Lottery and Magna Carta Committee for a yearlong project during 2015 called 'Discover King John's Palace'.

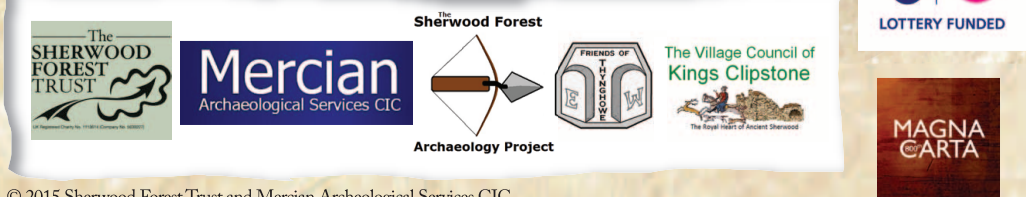
In the words of Mickie and Martin Bradley, the owners of the Castlefield and the guardians of King John's Palace, "I am constantly spellbound by tales of Sherwood Forest, of the Kings of England and our ancestors. With your help, and that of many others, we will be able to leave a legacy for our children. We need to inspire every generation and ensure King John's Palace is celebrated and protected for many years to come."

The site is not yet open regularly to the public, to arrange a visit contact: [info@sherwoodforesttrust.org.uk](mailto:info@sherwoodforesttrust.org.uk)

## DISCOVER...



AT KINGS CLIPSTONE, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE





## JOHN

Ruled 1199 to 1216

John was the son of Henry II and most of his reign was dominated by war with France. His oppressive policies and high taxation to fund the war brought him into conflict with his barons which became known as the Barons War. In 1215 rebel baron leaders marched on London where they were welcomed by an increasing band of defectors from John's royalist supporters. Their demands were drawn up in a document which became the Magna Carta. It did not buy him peace for long and the Barons War continued. He became ill with dysentery and died at Newark Castle in October 1216.



Q1: What animal is depicted in the shield on the front cover?



Medieval beast head discovered by famous archaeologist Philip Rahtz at King John's Palace 1958



The Palace is likely to have had a chamber on the first floor with an undercroft below. It bore a striking resemblance to St Mary's Guildhall in Lincoln

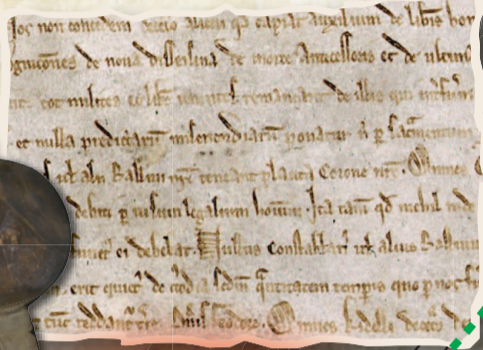
## EDWARD I

Ruled 1272 to 1307

Edward was the son of Henry III and nicknamed 'Longshanks' due to his tall stature and the 'Hammer of the Scots' due to his dispute about their independence. King Edward I was a fierce and brutal king and built many castles such as Conway castle, Caernarvon castle, Beaumaris castle, and Harlech castle as part of his imperial statement to conquer the Welsh. Edward held a parliament at Clipstone in 1290, but his reign saw Parliament move towards its modern form with the Model Parliament of 1295. He also spent much of his reign reforming royal administration and common law.



## Market Warsop



Q2: When was Magna Carta signed?

N

Key:

- Modern Road
- Footpaths
- Bridleway

Q3: Where or what is Klyppr's Farm?

Q6: Which pictures of the Kings are Victorian or Medieval?

Q5: What was the penalty for killing a deer in the Royal Forest?

Q4: How much did it cost to fence Clipstone Park in 1178-80 - £89, £189, £1089?

Background map based on Chapman's Map of Nottinghamshire 1774 with Modern Roads and Rights of Way

## EDWARD II

Ruled 1307 to 1327

Edward II was Edward I's son and has been considered a bully, incompetent and frivolous. The winter of 1315-16 was a time of famine, yet when Edward II his Earls, the Bishop of Bangor and envoys of the King of France visited King John's Palace they eat every morsel of food (over 1700 fish alone!), and horses and carts were sent to Lincolnshire to forage (or steal) provisions. Edward II was the most frequent royal visitor and in 1316-17 he ordered 200 acres of land to the southwest of the park to be enclosed, and a peel tower built at what is now called Spa Ponds



Q4: How much did it cost to fence Clipstone Park in 1178-80 - £89, £189, £1089?

Background image of King John's Palace Published 1784 by S. Hooper Titled 'King's Houfe at Clypfton, Nottinghamshire'

Q5: What was the penalty for killing a deer in the Royal Forest?



## Answers

- A1: The Royal Shield depicts Leopards, not Lions. Not a lot of people know that
- A2: It wasn't, it was sealed on 15th June 1215 using wax and King John's royal stamp.
- A3: It was the original name for Clipstone in the mid 800s, Klyppr was an old Viking name and 'turn' was the Anglo-Saxon word for farm or hamlet.
- A4: £89 which would be approximately £50,000 today.
- A5: Ouch, the death penalty or dismemberment but Corporal and capital punishment for taking the Kings Deer was prohibited under clauses in Magna Carta
- A6: The front cover images are Victorian, the centre page images are from the medieval period.