

**Volume 5**

**Number 090**

**King John and the Great Charter - III**

**Lead: In the summer of 1215, rebellious barons of England forced their King to sign accept a reservation of rights popularly known as Magna Carta.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: King John has been one of the most despised of all English monarchs. His parents, Henry II and Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine and his brother Richard I, the Lion Heart, were powerful and popular rulers.**

**John's inheritance included much of provincial France, which he lost in a series of fumbled campaigns against the King of France. Oppressive taxation to support this warfare and a long-running dispute with Pope Innocent III over the appointment of church officials further eroded his support in England. By 1215 he had been the subject of at least one murder plot and the electricity of rebellion was sweeping the kingdom.**

**After lengthy negotiations, open civil warfare broke out in May. When London cast its fortunes with the rebels John was forced to deal. On June 19, 1215 near Runnymede, a meadow on the Thames, southeast of**

**London, John reluctantly indicated provisional acceptance of the rebellious barons' conditions. Their cause was embodied in Magna Carta or the Great Charter, which in a preamble and 63 clauses simply reaffirmed feudal obligations and restated the heart of English law which the barons felt John had violated. The great agreement almost immediately collapsed due to the resistance of John's most radical opponents and Pope who sided with John and nullified Magna Carta. John continued the civil struggle until his death in 1216 made compromise possible. His son, young King Henry III, affirmed the Charter's provisions at least three times and in subsequent**

**generations it entered the popular imagination as one provisional foundations of English liberties.**

**Research assistance for this series on King John and Magna Carta by Dawn Palmer, at the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

### Resources

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