

# *Blood Royal*

*Charles Mosley*

*Blood Royal*, published by Smith's Peerage Limited to mark the Golden Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II, is a book to which the adjective "coffee-table" can properly be applied. Its pages are A4-sized and it is sumptuously illustrated with representations of portraits from the National Portrait Gallery, the Royal Collection and elsewhere, many being full-page.

*Blood Royal* purports to record all the rulers of the mainland of Great Britain "from the time of Alexander the Great to Queen Elizabeth II". This proves to be something of an exaggeration, for the earliest individual listed is Cassivellaunus, who may have been King of the Catuvellauni, a tribe of Belgic origin living in what are now Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire, and who commanded a British confederation which opposed Julius Caesar's incursion in 54BC. The link with the time of Alexander the Great is a decidedly indirect one, via the Roman Emperors, who from Claudius onward can properly be called rulers of Britain, if largely absentees, via Julius Caesar's liaison with Cleopatra, who descended from Ptolemy I of Egypt, originally one of Alexander's generals. Of course, all Alexander's campaigning was directed south and east from Macedon; he never came within a thousand miles of Britain and the rulers of Britain in his day must remain forever unknown to history. (Pytheas of Massalia, writing around 310BC, makes reference to the tin mines of what is now Cornwall, but his interest is purely in geography and trade.) Apart from the Roman emperors, coverage is anyway decidedly sparse until the sixth and seventh centuries, for which Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies are available, although their reliability for this period is unclear.

*Blood Royal* becomes much more comprehensive as the availability of records improves, from the eleventh century onwards, and increasingly includes non-royal lines of descent from British monarchs, not only among the British peerage but leading on to a number of American presidents. It is at this stage that this becomes an ideal volume for dipping into. I wonder what happened to X? Did Y leave any issue? Take, for example, James FitzJames, bastard son of James II and VII by Arabella Churchill, sister of the 1st Duke of Marlborough, and created Duke of Berwick by his father. Berwick, I knew already, had a distinguished military career under Louis XIV and became a Marshal of France. I am an inveterate dipper-into of reference books (what better way of spending a wet Saturday afternoon?) and vaguely remembered that the Duchess of Alba, listed in the *Guinness Book of Records* as the world's most titled individual (eight times a duchess, 15 times a marchioness, 21 times a countess

and 19 times a Spanish grandee), included FitzJames-Stuart in her multi-barrelled surname. Presumably she is a descendant of the Duke of Berwick, but how? *Blood Royal*, p.237, has the answer, or part of it, at least. James, 1st and last Duke of Berwick (attainted 1695), married twice and had an only son by his first marriage (to Honora, daughter of the 7th Earl of Clanricarde), James Francis, who succeeded him in the dukedoms of Liria and Xerica which he was granted by Philip V of Spain in 1707. There followed six generations of male descendants, who acquired further Spanish titles along the way, including the dukedom of Alba, until the 9th Duke (b.1849) dropped the use of the family's British titles (still subject to the attainder) in 1901. There, unfortunately, coverage of this particular line ends, presumably because after 1901 the family ceased to be of interest to the compilers of *Burke's Peerage*, from which the information is taken.

From James, Duke of Berwick, I was drawn inevitably to his cousin, James, Duke of Monmouth, eldest bastard of Charles II, on p.233. "Eldest bastard", I had thought, but *Blood Royal* records one James Stuart, born in 1646 to Margaret, daughter of Sir George Carteret, Governor of Jersey, in 1646 (when Charles was 16), who became a Jesuit novice and died in Rome in 1669. Further, there is room for doubt about Monmouth's paternity, as one Robert Sydney was conducting an affair with his mother, Lucy Walter, at the same time as Charles. Royal by-blow or not, Monmouth's career is summarised in *Blood Royal*, and note taken of his marriage on 20th April 1663 (aged 14) to Anne Scott, Countess of Buccleuch in her own right, but for his issue, whose right to their mother's peerages was not affected by his attainder, we are, frustratingly, referred to the entry for the Dukes of Buccleuch in *Burke's Peerage*. This, indeed, is the main limitation of the book: there is insufficient space to include more than a small selection of non-royal lines of descent. How those to be included were selected is unclear, and many of interest have been left out. The other limitation is that there is no index – to be fair, a comprehensive index which included all the necessary cross-referencing would probably have doubled the size of the book and made the cost prohibitive. But the most casual flicking-through the pages reveals all sorts of points of interest – Theodore Roosevelt, 26th President of the USA, was descended from James I of Scots through his third daughter, Joan, who, though a deaf mute from birth, married the 1st Earl of Morton and had issue who married into various Scottish noble families. Ten generations on, one John Irvine (1742-1808), settled in Georgia, and produced issue including a granddaughter who became the mother of the future president.

As well as genealogies, *Blood Royal* includes a number of historical essays on the various ruling dynasties, produced by Mr Mosley himself. Here, the book is less satisfactory. Mr Mosley's style is that of a raconteur, and he is too often historian

as gossip columnist. Take, for example, Mr Mosley on the subject of Richard I's sexual tastes, on pp.126-27:

...It was not just unchivalrous of him to throw over his fiancée of twenty years, Alice of France, however much he may have believed her pleasuring his father [Henry II] made her an undesirable bride for himself (in both senses of the word given his alleged sexual tastes). It greatly upset Philip Augustus of France – or appeared to. The latter, widely regarded as the most cynical, treacherous, slippery operator on the late-12th – early-13th century international scene, appears to have been unexpectedly sensitive about this matter.

It is of course stock hillbilly morality to insist on a man's marrying your sister after deflowering her. Surely that didn't have to apply to the deflowerer's son? And Philip Augustus was no hillbilly. In the end he took 10,000 marks to let Richard off marrying her. Is it utterly perverse to speculate that his injured honour – all 10,000 marks worth – arose not so much from the repudiation of his sister (not even of the full blood but half-sister) as the falling away by a male bed-fellow?

Yes, Mr Mosley, it is utterly perverse, or the next best thing to perversity. He relies on the chronicler Roger of Howden, who informs us that when Richard rebelled against his father in 1187 and elicited the support of Philip Augustus, the two not only ate from the same dish during the day but slept in the same bed at night. Academic historians have traditionally been cautious about this statement. Until very recent times single beds and solitary sleeping were the exception rather than the rule. That persons of the same sex sleeping in one bed need have no sexual connotation whatsoever in Richard's day is neatly indicated by an early 13th-century window in Cologne Cathedral which shows the Angel Gabriel appearing to the Three Wise Men – all asleep in the same bed. For a medieval monarch or nobleman to invite a fellow to share his bed was simply a mark of favour; three centuries after Richard, when Edward IV, notorious to contemporaries for his womanising, pursued a charm offensive against Henry Beaufort, Duke of Somerset, he invited him into his bed and bath. Mosley acknowledges this context, but continues in nudge-nudge-wink-wink fashion:

...It is all very well Richard's most recent academic biographer insisting that late-12th century men kissing and openly holding hands didn't mean anything more than political sympathy. No doubt that was often true. But was it invariably true? We must first try and think ourselves back to a time when such things were normal. In England men no longer even walk arm in arm, though they do on the continent, in Italy for instance. Yet they did also in England as recently as the 19th century, as literature of the period testifies .....

Arab gentlemen of the old school hold hands in public, or did in living memory, and both Richard and Philip had campaigned together, brothers in arms if one may employ the expression, out East. [In fact, neither of them went anywhere near the Holy Land until well after 1187.] One may accept that something like the Arab practice took place in late-12th century Western Europe [May we? I've not heard of it?] But how were men who did fancy each other supposed to express their feelings? Elsewhere, Richard's current biographer, John Gillingham, says, "It is not possible to argue that he [Richard] was not homosexual." This would seem to be nearly as unequivocal as one can get, even though Gillingham then adds cryptically that he is not at all concerned with that statement.

And so on. In fact, when the relevant passage is read in context, it becomes clear that Professor Gillingham does no more than to acknowledge the difficulty of proving a negative (for his discussion on the subject, in much more sober and reasoned tones than that of Mr Mosley, see *Richard I*, Yale English Monarchs Series 1999, pp.263-66). One might also mention that although there were rumours that Henry II took Alice of France as a mistress during the years she spent at his court after her betrothal to Richard, there is no evidence that the rumours were well-founded.

However, Mr Mosley is not an academic writing for an academic audience, though this particular academic has thoroughly enjoyed reading his views and taking issue with them (one of the greatest pleasures of knowing something about any subject is that you can then disagree with the opinions of others with similar knowledge). I recommend [the book](#) to all who enjoy dipping into genealogies, though those who have not subscribed to the [Burke's Peerage website](#) may experience the frustrations that I did.

Charles Mosley, the author of *Blood Royal*, was the Editor of the most recent edition of *Burke's Peerage*.

Ann Lyon, who contributed this review, will have her *Constitutional History of the United Kingdom* published by [Cavendish](#) in early March.