

Not everything in the intervening period had gone Richard's way. He had been forced to invade Brittany in 1196 when Geoffrey's widow refused to submit herself or her son Arthur to Richard. Although he had captured the territory, Arthur had escaped to Philip's court. Philip had also found it easy to stir up rebellion against Richard among the barons in Aquitaine. Nevertheless, by the time a truce was agreed in February 1199 it was clear that Richard had the upper hand. Under the terms of the truce Philip was forced to renounce virtually all of the territorial gains and castles that he had won, with the notable exception of Gisors in the Vexin.

Although Philip appeared to have lost the war it was his intriguing, once again, with rebel barons in Aquitaine that created the situation in which Richard lost his life. Richard travelled south in March 1199 intending to punish the serial rebels including the Count of Angouleme and the Viscount of Limoges. Richard besieged the rebel castle of Chalus-Chabrol but a stray crossbow bolt caught the King between the shoulder and neck. It did not seem to be a serious injury at first but the wound festered. Richard's mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, rushed to her son's sickbed and less than a week later, and on 6 April 1199 he died at the age of 41.

Social and economic developments

Richard I's economic exactions and their impact on England

Richard I's reign is marked by almost continual war and the need to pay for it. From the beginning he raised funds for his crusade. His capture upon his return meant that further enormous amounts of money had to be raised to pay his ransom and secure his release. From 1194 until his death in 1199 he was engaged in virtually continuous war with Philip II of France to recover those continental possessions that Philip had seized from him during his captivity. The amounts of money raised were staggering and dwarfed the financial exactions that his father and any previous English king had imposed upon England. There is, therefore, a debate as to the consequences of this. Historians have argued about the degree to which Richard bankrupted England and the economic consequences of the exactions, as well as the political fallout for both Richard and, more crucially, his successor, John.

One of the most well-known of Richard I's financial exactions technically predated his reign. The so-called Saladin tithe, had been approved by Henry II in 1188 but as its collection took time and it was intended to support a crusade, which was ultimately led by Richard I, so it has become associated with the later king. The Saladin tithe was 10% of all revenues and moveable properties. Failure to pay it was met with ecclesiastical censure and it was undoubtedly unpopular. Nevertheless, it raised huge sums of money and was just one of many methods undertaken to ensure that the king of England had enormous financial resources at his disposal. Under the so-called 'quit claim of Canterbury' Richard I released William the Lion of Scotland from the terms of the treaty of Falaise in return for 10 000 marks. Richard also sold a wide range of royal offices, most notably the position of sheriff, to those most willing to pay. By the end of 1189 only five pre-existing sheriffs remained in their posts. But it was not only these positions but a whole array of others, including constables of royal castles, that were effectively for sale. It has been alleged that in undertaking this Richard placed royal authority in jeopardy by allowing the accumulation of power by local **magnates** that his father had so systematically undermined following Stephen's reign.

Richard also alienated valuable royal demesne lands. Some of these were granted to his brother John and others sold. This raised money for the King in the short term but with (arguably) major long-term consequences for royal finances. Richard's preparations for his crusade in 1189 and 1190 were unprecedented but more in scale than in scope. Little that Richard had done was without precedent and in theory all could be reversed upon his return, but the sums of money raised were huge. The

ACTIVITY 4.3

How successfully did Richard I deal with the major challenges of his reign? Give him marks out of 10 and explain your scores. Think about whether he emerged stronger or weaker from each issue and in what way:

1. preparations for his absence on the Third Crusade
2. the Third Crusade
3. the governance of England, 1194–1199
4. the war with Philip II in France, 1194–1199.



Key term

Magnate: a term used to describe a great lord, and referring to the most powerful barons.

50.
e

exchequer records of 1190 show that he had raised the staggering total of £31 000 in that year,⁴ far more than his father had ever achieved.

Once it became clear that Richard I had been captured and was a captive of the German emperor, efforts began to raise the money needed to ransom him and secure his release. The massive sum of 150 000 marks was finally agreed by the negotiators. A suitably huge tax of 25% of revenues, and probably also upon moveable properties, was imposed upon all laymen as well as upon the English Church. A **feudal aid** was raised from Richard's knights amounting to £1 per knight's fee. The figures involved were astronomical and unprecedented. The rest of Richard's territorial possessions contributed but the lion's share undoubtedly came from England. Raising the ransom inflicted real financial hardship and much of the silver and gold plate from English churches was seized to contribute.



Key term

Feudal aid: financial duties required of a feudal tenant to his lord. These could include a money payment upon the knighting of the lord's firstborn son, the marriage of the lord's eldest daughter or a ransom.

Once Richard had been released from captivity in 1194 the financial exactions from England did not ease. On the contrary, Richard was determined to recapture the lands in France that Philip II had seized during his captivity. The exchequer, under the capable governance of Hubert Walter, provided what he asked, but at potentially great cost to the future strength of Angevin kingship and the relationship with the English barons. Fines received for wardships increased under Richard from an average of 176 marks to 1158 marks, funds from baronial widows rose from a total of 2096 marks in Henry II's entire reign, then to 1689 marks in 1198 alone. A widely hated forest eyre commenced in 1198, with proceeds that rose from £22 in 1197 to £748 in 1198.⁵ Additionally, yet more of the royal demesne was sold off, so that whereas Henry II had been able to utilise 60% of the real value of the royal demesne this had shrunk to just 39% by 1198.⁶

Towns and trade

The towns of England, crucial engines of internal and external trade, were affected by two significant developments during Richard's reign, one positive and the other negative.

Richard I's reign was characterised by warfare and his need to raise funds for it. There were two particularly key periods for Richard: the first was in 1189 as he sought to raise money to fund his enormously expensive crusading force, and the second was in 1194, when he returned from captivity to find his French lands in jeopardy. One of Richard's means of raising funds was to grant charters to towns. In 1189 he sold charters to towns including Hereford, Bath, Colchester and Northampton. In 1194 charters were sold to Norwich, Doncaster and Portsmouth. Charters were a relatively painless short-term means of extracting money from wealthy townsmen. But the reason they were so willing to pay for them was that they granted them rights which, in the long term, increased the profitability of their economic activities and granted them a larger say in how they administered themselves. Thus the sale of royal charters, not unique to Richard but certainly on a larger scale than previously, stimulated the economic growth of English towns and their increasing prosperity. In November 1196 Hubert Walter ordered that weights and measures should be standardised, an act which also increased economic activity and confidence in trade.

In 1194 Richard I, recently returned from captivity and determined to regain his lands in France, enforced an embargo on English trade with Flanders. This economic warfare was a response to the alliance between Baldwin VIII of Flanders and Philip II of France. It had a serious impact upon trade, and therefore upon certain towns, because Flanders was a major importer of English wool and grain. Flemish goods were seized and sold in England and merchants trading with them were fined. The merchant Simon Kime, for example, was fined 1000 marks for allowing Flemish merchants to leave from Boston fair in Lincolnshire with their goods.⁷

Baldwin VIII died in December 1195 but his successor, Baldwin IX, renewed his alliance with Philip II which resulted in Richard I tightening the trade embargo. Flemish merchants were seized at Lynn fair and imprisoned in Hertford Castle.⁸ This economic warfare did have a real impact on Flanders and the wealth of its count and undoubtedly it contributed to the decision of Baldwin IX to forge an alliance with Richard I in July 1197. In the intervening three years, even accounting for evasion and the purchase of licences of exemption, the prohibition on trade with Flanders must have had an impact on English towns and trade. Economic power was a weapon that Richard I was more than willing to wield, first and foremost, for his own diplomatic purposes.

Persecution of the Jews

The Jewish population of England, although never large, had grown and prospered in the reign of Henry II. The old king's alleged favouritism towards them invited considerable contemporary criticism, especially from monastic writers. What is clear is that Henry II certainly used the Jews as a source of revenue. By the end of Henry's reign major Jewish lenders, most famously Aaron of Lincoln, had become an essential part of royal finances. As noted in Chapter 3, a separate exchequer was established upon his death to ensure that all the debts to him were repaid: Jews were essentially royal property, so debts owed to them were regarded as debts to the Crown. By the time Richard I became king of England it had become increasingly standard for the king to levy a form of tax (or **tallage**) upon the Jewish community rather than borrow from them. However, because all other sections of English society, most notably nobles and monasteries, increasingly turned to the Jews as moneylenders, it was profitable for the Crown to do this.

Economic resentment towards the Jews, as a consequence of the debts owed to them, was one reason for the growing anti-Semitism that became particularly evident in England during Richard I's reign. There were other developments that also contributed to this. The Third Lateran Council of 1179 had ordered Christians to minimise their contact and relations with Jews. The news of the surrender of the Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1187, after the crushing of its army by Saladin at Hattin, was probably the immediate catalyst for the outbreak of violence that occurred in England shortly after Richard I's accession. The King had announced his intention to crusade and recover the Holy City and to do so he needed wealth. The wealth of the Jews was visible (as they were forbidden to hold land) and as they were equally regarded as enemies of Christ then it seemed fitting to many to seize their possessions and attack them in place of the Muslim forces led by Saladin in the distant east. Hostility towards them had been building for some time even before this, as fictitious and fanciful tales spread of the alleged dark arts performed by their community, and false tales of the sacrifice of Christian children had become increasingly common.

The first major incident of Richard I's reign occurred at his coronation at Westminster in September 1189. The King had forbidden the Jewish delegation from entering the hall where he enjoyed his post-coronation feast. But, for whatever reason, some were pushed inside and this prompted a mass attack on the Jews by the crowd. This mob then spread throughout the city of London and there were attacks upon their persons and property that lasted until the next day. The anti-Semitic riot of 3–4 September led both to economic plunder and loss of life. The degree to which both occurred is not clear but Richard I was furious about the event. Jews were seen as a royal possession and therefore under the King's protection. Attacks against them were an affront to Richard's dignity and honour. It is clear though, that in this case, the government had been powerless to prevent the slaughter and no one was condemned for actions against the Jews. All that Richard I did before leaving England on his crusade was to despatch letters making clear that the Jews were to be left alone.



Key term

Tallage: a tax levied on boroughs as well as other groups identified with the Crown (e.g. the Jews).

ACTIVITY 4.4

Consider the social and economic developments that had occurred in England during the reign of Richard I. Construct a mind map that outlines the positives and negatives with examples from this book and your own research.

Shortly after Richard's departure the fruitlessness of his decree became apparent as there was a surge of attacks made against Jews throughout England. Riots broke out in Lynn and spread to towns such as Norwich, Stamford, Lincoln and Colchester. Fifty-seven Jews were massacred at Bury St Edmunds on Palm Sunday 1190.⁹

The most notorious of all the acts of anti-Semitism in Richard I's England occurred at York in March 1190. Nobles, knights and the citizens of York joined in the attacks on the small Jewish community within the city. Many were killed and those who survived sought refuge in the royal castle, known today as Clifford's Tower. They were immediately besieged by a mob led by the castellan, Richard Malebisse. Like many of the attackers, he was heavily indebted to the Jews and both economic resentment and religious fervour seem to have motivated the mob. By 16 March it was clear that the situation for the Jews inside the castle was hopeless. Rather than surrender to the cruelty of the besieging Christians, the heads of the Jewish families killed their wives and children before being killed by their rabbi, Yomtob, who then took his own life. Those few Jews who attempted to convert to Christianity were massacred by the mob anyway. It is noteworthy that records of the debts to the Jews were targeted for destruction. These events caused an outcry and William Longchamp, the chief justiciar, travelled to York in person to restore order and punish some of the guilty.

The long-term impact of the attacks reveals much about the economic importance of the Jews to the English Crown. Royal justices were formally established to oversee the tallage of the Jews to ensure that their wealth was fully exploited by the King. Debts to the Jews were to be formally recorded and stored in such a manner that the Crown could recover them after the deaths of the original lenders. One copy was retained by the lender and another placed in a chest, known as an archa, which was heavily secured. The destruction of the records at York were clearly more significant to the English government than the loss of life: the Jews were primarily viewed as an economic resource.

The social condition of England by 1199

England was a very wealthy and well-organised country. It is impossible to ascertain the degree to which it was bankrupted by all of Richard I's financial exactions. The pipe rolls indicate that funds continued to flow to John in substantial amounts after Richard's death. What is more important to note is that Richard's actions could only breed resentment, especially among the barons. While there was little overt opposition during Richard's reign, attempts by his brother John to undertake similar financial exactions, following the path laid out for him by Richard, had enormous political implications.

In many respects Richard's relatively brief reign could not have marked anything more than a continuation of the broader economic developments that had occurred during his father's much longer reign. Although English society remained overwhelmingly rural, towns were growing at an impressive rate in both number and size, and trade, both internally and externally, increased.

Further reading

Two significant works make excellent additional reading for Richard I's reign. The first is John Gillingham's *Richard I* (Yale University Press, new edn, 2002) and the second is Ralph Turner and Richard Heiser's *The Reign of Richard Lionheart: Ruler of the Angevin Empire, 1189–99* (London, Routledge, 2003). A much more hostile view to Richard's kingship can be found in John Appleby's *England Without Richard, 1189–1199* (London, Bell, 1965). Robert Bartlett's *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings, 1075–1225* (Oxford University Press, 2005) explores the economic changes in England across the period as well as the position of England's Jewish population.