

Why Commemorate the 800th Anniversary?

MAGNA
800th
CARTA

Magna Carta matters. It is the foundation stone supporting the freedoms enjoyed today by hundreds of millions of people in more than 100 countries.

Magna Carta enshrined the Rule of Law in English society. It limited the power of authoritarian rule. It paved the way for trial by jury, modified through the ages as the franchise was extended. It proclaimed certain religious liberties, "the English Church shall be free". It defined limits on taxation; every American remembers that "no taxation without representation" was the cry of the American colonists petitioning the King for their rights as free men.

For centuries it has influenced constitutional thinking worldwide including in France, Germany, Japan, the United States and India as well as many Commonwealth countries, and throughout Latin America and Africa. Over the past 800 years, denials of Magna Carta's basic principles have led to a loss of liberties, loss of human rights and even genocide. It is an exceptional document on which democratic society has been constructed.

The original Great Charter was agreed by King John on 15th June 1215 when he acceded to barons' and bishops' demands to limit his powers and directed that it be sealed. This version of Magna Carta was revised several times in the 13th Century. The 1297 version became part of English law.

Nearly five hundred years later it was central to both the American Declaration of Independence and Constitution. The newly-independent United States included many of its concepts in the 1791 Bill of Rights. In 1870 Bishop William Stubbs asserted "the whole of the constitutional history of England is a commentary on this Charter." In 1965 Lord Denning, the most celebrated English judge of the 20th Century, described Magna Carta as "the greatest constitutional document of all times – the foundation of the freedom of the individual against the arbitrary authority of the despot."

Another lasting legacy is seen in the UN Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948. Speaking at the UN General Assembly as she submitted the UN Declaration, Mrs Eleanor Roosevelt argued that "we stand today at the threshold of a great event both in the life of the United Nations and in the life of mankind. This declaration may well become the international Magna Carta for all men everywhere".

The 800th anniversary of Magna Carta is an occasion to deepen understanding of the crucial role it has played in our development. It is a time to commemorate the individual rights we enjoy today. It is an opportunity to strengthen human rights around the world.

The Magna Carta 800th Anniversary Commemoration Committee

The Magna Carta Trust's 800th Anniversary Commemoration Committee is charged by the Magna Carta Trust to co-ordinate activities, raise the profile of the anniversary and deliver a number of key national and international aspirations. These, and much else, can be found at www.magnacarta800th.com

For more information please contact
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Highlight Events 2014 & 2015

**MAGNA
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- Interfaith conference at Temple Church, June 2014
- Bury St Edmunds 800th commemorations in 2014 (main events in Nov)
- Library of Congress Exhibition, November – December 2014
- British Library Exhibition, largest ever held, April – July 2015
- UK Supreme Court Exhibition, August, September 2015
- UK Parliament Exhibition, National Archives
- Events at Temple Church, Inns of Court, January 2015
- Runnymede pageant (TBC), Egham Museum, June 2015
- Events across Magna Carta Towns 2015 beginning with London (January)
- National and international conferences and symposiums UK, US, Poland, Trinidad, other countries
- First Day launch(es) and circulation of commemorative coins
- American Bar Association conferences, meetings and displays
- British Library, Salisbury and Lincoln 1215 Magna Carta on display, also Durham, London, National Archives, Oxford, etc.

The Magna Carta 800th Anniversary Merchandise Shop



These, and much more, can be found at www.magnacarta800th.com/shop

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