

BOOK REVIEW

THE ANCESTRY OF CHARLES II, KING OF ENGLAND: A MEDIEVAL HERITAGE [Twelve Generations]

Dr Neil D Thompson and Col. Charles M Hanson

*Published by The American Society of Genealogists, 2012
ISBN 978-0-615-57920-7*

Reviewed for FMG by Dr Nick Barratt¹

Foundations (2013) 5: 102

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Medieval genealogy for most people is notoriously tricky to research properly, as few of our ancestors appear above the obscurity of rural life. That's not to say it is impossible; many records survive that allow diligent researchers to identify positively distant relatives outside the period of civil registration and census returns, but it will depend on place and circumstance – and more often than not, status. Parish registers often capture basic family relationships, but unless someone owned personal possessions of sufficient quantity, or held land from the local manor, the evidence required to establish the necessary level of certainty about a link between generations can be elusive. We often rely on spotting a gateway ancestor to provide a link to a well-established genealogy, usually via a military connection or a link to lesser nobility or gentry.

This remarkable book brings together over thirty years of scholarship,² and summarises the antecedents of Charles II for the previous twelve generations. Out of the 2,048 direct ancestors that are mathematically extant (bearing in mind many are duplicated through inter-marriage, especially at this rarefied level of society), 1,772 have been identified (including these duplicates) leaving only 276 unaccounted for.

However, this is more than a list of names. The authors have provided bibliographies and footnotes, explaining where they obtained the information – though they have, somewhat unsurprisingly, weighted their research towards standard genealogical reference works and pedigrees, as well as printed calendars and documentary collections, as opposed to the original sources. Nevertheless this is an impressive volume and would be useful for anyone who is seeking a gateway ancestor to connect your own family tree to the English royal family.

A copy of the book has been placed in the FMG library at CMRS, Oxford, where it may be consulted by FMG members.

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² Serialised in *The Genealogist* between 1981 and 2012.