

KING HENRY VI, Portrait c. 1540, National Portrait Gallery



King Henry VI, artist unknown
Image Courtesy of: www.npg.org.uk

TREASURE DESCRIPTION:

This portrait of King Henry VI, who was crowned at Merton Priory, was commissioned after his death, most probably by Henry VIII as part of a record of English Kings and Queens. NPG: 2457

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Henry VI was king of England from 1422 to 1461 and again from 1470 to 1471, the last Lancastrian ruler of England.

He was born on 6 December 1421 at Windsor Castle and was only nine months old when he succeeded his father.

VOLUNTEER REFLECTIONS

Though a troubled and ineffective leader, this portrait of Henry VI depicts a quiet, fresh faced man who seems to have passion and a desire to succeed and to do good. I love the colour and evocative simplicity of this portrait.

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HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE Continued...

He was crowned King of England in 1429 and, as result of his father's successes against the French, he was crowned King of France in 1431.

A regency council ran England until Henry was old enough to rule in 1437. Henry VI is the only king of England to be crowned outside of Westminster Abbey in the last 1,000 years. A corona-

tion ceremony was held at Merton Priory in 1437. A break in his reign from 1453 to 1470 was due to a mental breakdown and the War of the Roses. Henry VI was imprisoned by Edward IV in the Tower of London and murdered in 1471.

He was passionate about education and founded Eton and King's College Cambridge.



Detail of Finger, King Henry VI, artist unknown
Image Courtesy of: www.npg.org.uk

SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE

The painting is one of a series of kings of England, thought to have been painted at the end of Henry VIII's reign, circa 1530s-1540s, by a workshop operating at that time.

Other key people associated with Henry VI are *Richard Duke of York*, who was protector until 1461 when the *Earl of Warwick*, switched sides and restored Henry to the throne in 1470. He married *Margaret of Anjou* in 1445.

MATERIALS USED

Painted in oil on wooden panel along with a series of others portraits of English Kings and Queens commissioned at the same time. The portraits are rotated in Room 1 of the National Portrait Gallery.

References:

NationalPortraitGallery.org.uk:
www.npg.org.uk/collections-landing.php