

THE MAGNA CARTA

Hello readers! I'm at the British Library studying the Magna Carta.

This important document is 800 years old this month – so NG KIDS' time-travelling mouse, Max, nips back in time to find out more about it...

Written in 1215, this document has become the benchmark for protecting people's human rights!

Our story starts in the early 13th Century, with possibly England's most useless monarch, King John. Not only did his people despise him, but he also managed to lose the crown jewels in quicksand in Norfolk!

Dops.

Such a loser.

King John was rubbish at war, and lost lots of battles in France. He increased taxes to pay for more wars, but this upset all the Barons (men loyal to the king) and they started a Civil War against him!

But, you're meant to be on my side!

He lost that war, too!

So the next month, in June 1215, the Barons drew up the Magna Carta, a charter forcing the king to be liable to English laws and ensuring free men had rights. The king reluctantly put his royal seal on it.

Seeing as you asked so nicely. Gulp!

Unfortunately, being a scallywag, John sought the help of Pope Innocent III, who agreed that the Magna Carta was unlawful.

I knew I could rely on you! Fist bump!

Of course, dude!

Pope Innocent, such a smoothie!

Backed by the pope, John went back to the Barons and rejected the Magna Carta. This started another Civil War!

Gasp!

This is what I think of your stupid piece of paper!

RIP!

Within a year, John was dead. His 9-year-old son Henry III wanted peace, so he issued a revised version of the Magna Carta.

I've made a few changes.

He made two more changes to it during his reign.

The deal between the monarch and a council of nobles led directly to the foundation of Parliament, the place where common men make the laws. No kings or queens are allowed in!

Not even a peek?

Lesser mortals only!

The Magna Carta became important for keeping unruly monarchs in check. It was even used against tyrannical King Charles I, who was condemned to death by parliament in 1649.

Are you sure about this?

It's all in the Magna Carta. I'll pop it in the basket for you to have a good look at in a minute.

The Magna Carta has served as a blueprint for similar documents throughout the world, including the United States Bill Of Rights and the European Convention On Human Rights.

The Human Rights Act, protecting the rights of ordinary people has taken over where Magna Carta left off. Without it, cruel governments can treat us badly, so let's make sure we never lose it!

FREEDOM IS A RIGHT!

HUMAN RIGHTS FOR ALL! (Even mice!)

SUPPORT HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE UK!

Illustration and words: Gary Northfield.