

THE BOOK OF KINGS

By Arnold McNaughton

A book review by Ken McNaughton

If you are interested in the royal families of Europe, this prodigious work by one of our own is a valuable resource. I borrowed the handsome leather-bound set from my local library and was amazed by the scope of its 9-1/2 x 12-1/2 in. large-print three-volume format [1-3].

The Foreword is written by Earl Mountbatten of Burma who at the time was President of the Society of Genealogists, London:

“Nearly twenty years ago a young Canadian, Arnold McNaughton, wrote to my wife for particulars of our family and our relationship with Queen Victoria. She replied offering to lend him a copy of my book *Relationship Tables* which I had written in India in 1947. It had been printed for private circulation by the Viceroy’s Press and contained the names of close on 1600 people who were related or connected with my family. As a result he and I became pen friends through our mutual interest in genealogy and an extensive correspondence started.

Soon it became clear that his special interest lay in tracing all the descendants of Queen Victoria, but when he read an article claiming that Charles, Prince of Wales, was descended 17 different ways from King George I he was so incredulous that he tried to trace the different descents for himself. To his amazement his researches confirmed this claim, and from then onwards he started trying to trace all the descendants of George I. He wrote to all the living ones he could discover and much to his gratification close on 150 answered his letters. What is more they helped him not only in tracing back their own families to George I but kindly helped him with information about other families.

This book might therefore be said to have been written by the descendants themselves and then brilliantly edited by Arnold McNaughton. He came over to London for the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953, when my niece, Margarita, Princess of Hohenlohe-Langenburg, introduced him to me. Subsequently I met him twice in Canada, where he also met that other genealogical enthusiast, the Duke of Edinburgh. Arnold McNaughton has met several prominent descendants of King George I and has collected over 7000 photographs of descendants.

He keeps me regularly informed of the births and deaths of Queen Victoria’s descendants, and in 1963 volunteered to provide up-to-date additions to my own *Relationship Tables* and produced a book of 40 pages giving all births, marriages and deaths in the previous 16 years. So, in spite of starting from scratch with little knowledge and few facts he has developed into the greatest Royal genealogist I know of. His book is a masterpiece in simple presentation of all available facts in a complex study which will not only be of real value to all students of genealogy but will, I feel sure, be of interest to many other members of the public. I am happy to have this chance of wishing it the success it deserves.”

Volume I contains an Introduction by Arnold McNaughton—dated September, 1972, Hemmingford, Quebec, Canada—and three pages of Acknowledgments. It then supplies genealogies for sixteen royal houses, from Guelph to Bernadotte, not in alphabetical order. The House of Guelph, for example (pp. 1-40) starts with a simple chart showing two streams from Ernst I (d. 1546), the right hand stream terminating with George I (d. 1727). The following pages give brief genealogical details on members of the family. The House of Hohenzollern (pp. 41-91) starts with a more complex chart, from Friedrich II (d. 1148) to Carol I (d. 1914).

Volume II consists of eight sections, about families of Great Britain; Spain, Portugal, France and Italy; the Low Countries and Scandinavia; the Balkans and the Middle East; Central Europe; Poland; Russia; and North and South America. The section on Great Britain, for example (pp. 513-536) lists forty-six families in alphabetical order, from Abel Smith to Wise, often with just one husband and wife and some offspring for each family. *Burke's Peerage* would contain a lot more information about Great Britain, but McNaughton's entries are based on people he was able to contact. He says in his Introduction that he developed the method of writing directly to people because he lived far away from a good reference library. There is an Addendum (pp. 1026-1086) that adds some entries perhaps received after the others had been set in type.

Volume III contains forty-seven pages of black-and-white plates—portraits and family groups—with an index at the end of the volume, an index of Family Names (pp. 51-73) and an index of personal names (pp. 77-388).

Thomas R. Holme is a big fan of Arnold McNaughton and lists some of McNaughton's writings on his Website [4]. Holme tells us that McNaughton (1930-1979) wrote a book about his Canadian McNaughton family in 1956 but it contains errors. McNaughton published another book with 122 pages of McNaughton family trees in 1975-77. The 1956 book is listed on Amazon (52 pp.) as out of print and does not appear in Abe Books. The 1977 book is not listed on Amazon or Abe. The writings by McNaughton on Holme's Website contain a lot of rambling speculation and do not inspire confidence in him as an historian. No doubt he discovered much about his Canadian family, but it seems doubtful he could add much to the scholarship of our Scottish historians, Angus Macnaghten and Duncan McNaughton. On the other hand, *The Book of Kings* is very carefully put together, even though McNaughton seems to have done all the cross-checking himself, without the help of an external editor.

REFERENCES

1. McNaughton, Arnold, "The Book of Kings: A Royal Genealogy," Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Company, 1973, Volume One, The Royal Houses, 511 pp.
2. Ibid, Volume Two, "The Families," pp. 512-1086.
3. Ibid, Volume Three, "Plates, Indexes," 394 pp.
4. Holme, Thomas R., The Dunderave McNaughtons
<http://www.trholme.com/mcnaughtonofdunderave/>

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