

Isabel of Angouleme, the kidnapped bride

We have three infamous Isabellas in the family tree: Isabella MacDuff, Isabella of Angouleme, and Isabella of France

Isabella of Angouleme and Isabella of France were both were very pretty French girls famous for their beauty and intelligence.

Isabella MacDuff was the great-granddaughter of Isabella of Angouleme. She was Scottish and was probably a little older, but for all three their important family connections caused a great deal of trouble for themselves and for many others.

This is the story of Isabella of Angouleme who was engaged to Hugh, kidnapped by King John, and later married to Hugh. It is also the story of the three-sided squabbles, partly personal though certainly political, of the families of Isabella, Blanche of Castille, and Beatrice of Savoy. Blanche and Isabella had sons married to Beatrice's daughters. Isabella and these in-laws were all very famously beautiful. A little jealousy and competitiveness among beauty queens may be the root cause. But these girls were actually Queens - each of them married to a King.

Isabel of Angouleme

Our 21st Great grandmother was Isabella of Angouleme. She was the great granddaughter of King Louis IV of France and his wife - the "ugly" queen Adelaide. Angouleme is a county in southwest France, rich and important back in those days.

Isabella was apparently not ugly as she was called "the Helen of the middle ages."

By the age of twelve, she had been engaged to Hugh de Lusignan who was ten. They were going to wait a while before getting married.

But King John of England, the one who had the trouble with Robin Hood and the Magna Carta Barons, saw her and managed to kidnap her to be his queen. To marry Isabella of Angouleme, King John had to divorce his first wife, Hawise de Clare. He did it on grounds of "consanguinity". They were seventh cousins. Obviously this was just an excuse.

John and Isabella were married in 1200 with her being just age 12. King Phillip II of France confiscated John's land in France partly because of

the kidnapping and partly because he could. It started another short war between France and England.

This kidnapped child-bride situation probably bothered many, but what really horrified them was what a spoiled brat she was. You can understand though how, in the circumstances - her county of Angouleme had just been devastated by Richard I and now Richard's brother has kidnapped her, lost fiancé, no friends, parents in France, and all that - she might be a bit peevish if not outraged.

John and Isabella did wait a while to have children: While they were waiting, John had at least 12 other children scattered around.

Isabella eventually bore five children with John, starting at age 19:

- * Henry III (1207-1272), King of England. **Our 22nd great-grandfather.**
Married Eleanor of Provence, the sister of Sanchia of Provence
- * Richard (1209-1272), 1st Earl of Cornwall. Married Sanchia of Provence who was sister of the wife of Louis IX.
- * Joan (1210-1238), Queen Consort of Alexander II of Scotland.
- * Isabella (1214-1241), Consort of Frederick II, Holy Roman Emperor.
- * Eleanor (1215-1275), at age 9 was married to William Marshal

John died in 1216 and Isabella went back to France and married her childhood sweetheart Hugh de Lusignan in 1220. She and Hugh had nine children.

1. Hugh XI of Lusignan (1221-1250), Count of La Marche
2. Aymer de Valence (1222-1260), Bishop of Winchester
3. Agnès de Lusignan (1223-1269), married William II de Chauvigny
- 4. Alice le Brun de Lusignan (1224 - 9 February 1256), married John de Warenne, 7th Earl of Surrey. She was our 21st great-grandmother which makes all these others grand-aunts and grand-uncles.**
5. Guy de Lusignan (c. 1225 - 1264), killed at the Battle of Lewes.
6. Geoffrey de Lusignan (c. 1226 - 1274),
7. William de Valence, 1st Earl of Pembroke (c. 1228 - 1296)
8. Marguerite de Lusignan (c. 1229 - 1288)
9. Isabelle de Lusignan (1234 - 14 January 1299)

One of the children of Hugh and Isabella is Alice le Brun de Lusignan who is an ancestor of the Garners.

One of the children of John and Isabella is Henry III who is an ancestor of the Garners and of the Summeralls.

You would think that motherhood would keep Isabella busy enough, but she had developed a taste for politics. This may have been a family problem. Louis IX's wife was Marguerite of Provence and two of Marguerite's sisters were married to Isabella's sons Richard and Henry. The fourth sister was married to the brother of Louis IX. These in laws were the daughters of **Ramon Berenguer IV**, Count of Provence. Ramon and Beatrice had four daughters, all of whom married kings:

- Marguerite of Provence (1221–1295), wife of **Louis IX** of France
- **Eleanor** of Provence (1223–1291), wife of **Henry III** of England
- Sanchia of Provence (1228–1261), wife of **Richard**, Earl of Cornwall
- Beatrice of Provence (1234–1267), wife of Charles I of Sicily

Charles I and Louis IX were brothers who married sisters Marguerite and Beatrice. Isn't this all just one nice big cozy family?

Eleanor is our 22nd great grandmother, Ramon is our 23rd Great-grandfather.

Eventually, Isabella was accused of plotting against King Louis IX of France in 1244. This was early in the reign of Louis IX while his mother, Blanche of Castile, was still one of his main counselors. Was Isabella really plotting against Louis or was she squabbling with his mother?

Either way, the matter became serious. Isabella fled to the very famous Fontevraud Abbey, where she took refuge (claimed sanctuary?) from King Louis IX. She lived in the Abbey until she died on May 31, 1246. She was buried there, as were Henry II, Eleanor of Aquitaine, and several other members of that family.

At her own insistence Isabel was buried in the churchyard rather than inside the church, as an act of repentance "for her many misdeeds".

[Louis IX was later canonised as **Saint Louis** in 1297. His feast day is 25th of August. **He is our 22nd great-grand-uncle.**]

On a visit to Fontevraud, her son King Henry III of England was shocked to find her buried outside the Abbey and ordered her immediately moved inside. She was finally placed beside Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine who were the parents of her first husband King John. During the French Revolution the burials were disturbed. They have been restored, in part. Her tomb is now beside that of King Richard I, "the Lion Hearted".

There is a picture of the grave of Isabella of Angouleme in Wikipedia:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fontevraud_Abbey

Because of the plotting of their mother, many of the Lusignans went to England to the court of their half brother Henry III where they continued to cause trouble for him and then for Edward II. Many of Edward II's associates were the descendants of Isabel of Angouleme and Hugh Lusignan.

Plotting seemed to run in the family at that time. The Lusignan faction was part of what caused the rebellion by our Aunt Isabella of France and Roger Mortimer with the barons against Edward II. That is the story of Aunt Isabella's Revenge.