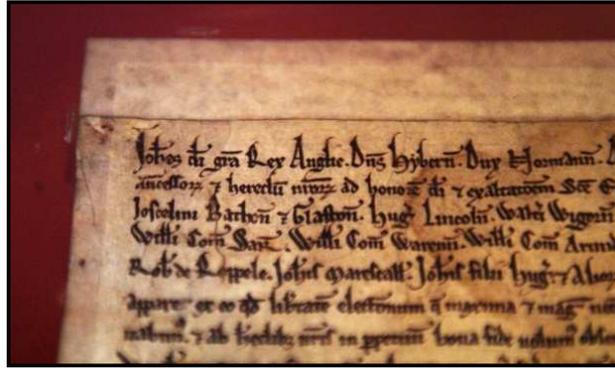


What is the Magna Carta?

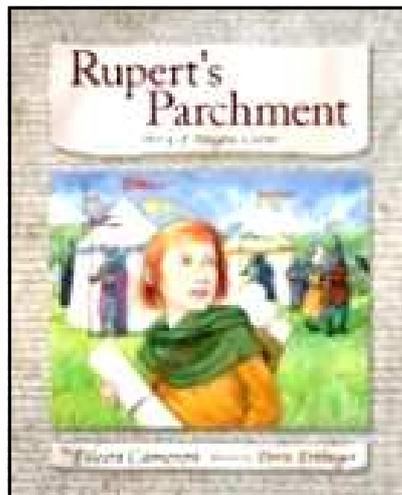
Have you heard of the Magna Carta? Do you know what it is, or why it's so important? On the 800th anniversary of the signing of the Magna Carta at Runnymede, Eileen Cameron fills you in...



This is a page from the actual Magna Carta, the first time human rights are recognised by law for ordinary people. There are only four copies of this incredible document in the whole world.

Not surprising when you think it was written 800 years ago.

Photograph: FACUNDO ARRIZABALAGA/EPA



Eileen Cameron: my story is based on a fictional character called Rupert, but it's about real events that took place 800 years ago. Illustration: Doris Ettlinger

Overwhelmed, you walk through the field, weave in and out of all these important people and listen to their conversations. It seems that everyone is mad at the King.

You shudder - you've heard tales of King John abusing his people. You know that he has raised taxes to the point where ordinary people cannot pay them, seized whole castles from barons, taken timber from the forests that grow on their land and the grain needed for bread from their fields, without paying any money to the owners. You hear another man saying he was pulling a cart of cabbages he had grown to market to sell, and had been stopped by the King's sheriffs and forced to hand over all his produce.

This isn't fair, you think. But what can be done about it? The King is the King after all!

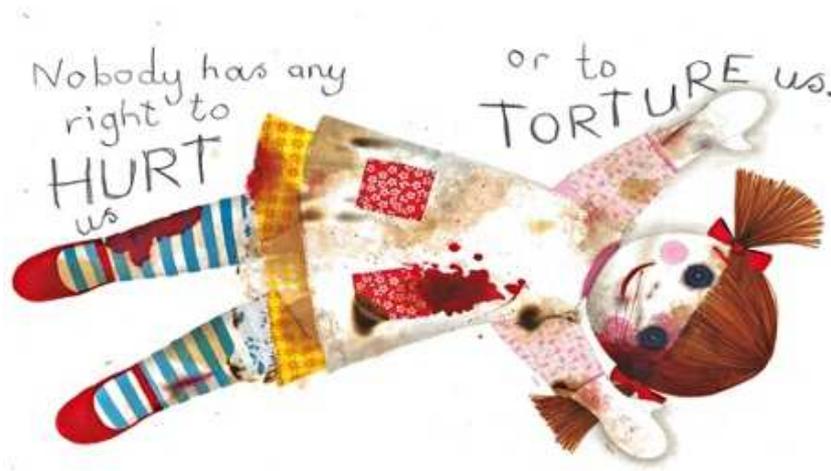
That's where the Magna Carta comes in.

800 years ago the king of England was challenged about how he treated his people. Churchmen, barons and knights challenged the king's rule and took control (by force) of the rich city of London. The king needed control over the city, since it was so wealthy and was an enormous source of income for him, and so he heeded the demands of the people, and vowed to stop taking their goods.

And that is when the Magna Carta was born. It is a document or "charter" which lays out the rights of the people and states that the law applies to everyone. Even the king.



Here's an image of King John signing the Magna Carta at Runnymede in Surrey on 15 June 1215
Painted around 1860. Photograph: Print Collector/Getty Images



The Magna Carta is celebrated for creating the very idea of human rights, the idea that “all men are equal” and was the start of people’s human rights being protected in the UK and elsewhere. A section of the document reads: “No free man shall be imprisoned or stripped of his rights or possessions... except by the lawful judgment of his equals or by the law of the land.”

Translation: nobody will be put in prison or punished unless they are found guilty by trial. AND those in power (kings, queens, prime ministers) cannot just send someone to prison, or take their things because they feel like it - the person has to have been found guilty of breaking a law.

Essentially the Magna Carta protected normal, every day people from being completely controlled by their rulers, giving them the freedom to live their lives the way they choose, own things without fearing they will be taken away, and have freedom and independence. It also allowed the general population to hold their rulers to account. Before the Magna Carta, the king could take whatever he felt like from anyone, but after signing the charter, if the king tried to take something that didn’t belong to him, he could be arrested and put in prison the same as the rest of the people in his kingdom.

The Magna Carta has been called “The Foundation of Liberty”, because it has evolved over past 800 years and influenced change in many countries. The American Founding Fathers for example, used the Magna Carta as evidence when they were trying to gain independence from England. Without the Magna Carta, the United States might have been a very different place, or perhaps not existed as we know it at all!

(Taken from an article in the Guardian newspaper 15th June 2015)



RECIPE OF THE MONTH



Cheesy Garlic Bread

Ingredients

500g strong white bread flour
7g sachet/1½ tsp fast-action yeast
1tsp salt
2tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp clear honey
2 garlic cloves, crushed
25g soft butter
100g mature cheddar, grated
handful thyme leaves

Method

1. Measure the flour, yeast and salt into a large bowl. Mix 300ml hand-hot water with the oil and honey in a jug, then pour into the dry mix, stirring all the time to make a soft dough.
2. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface, then knead for 5 mins until the dough no longer feels sticky, sprinkling with a little more flour as you need it. Now stretch it to fit the Swiss roll tin.
3. Mix the garlic with the butter, then dot over the dough. Sprinkle over the cheese and snip over the thyme. Cover the bread with lightly oiled cling film, then leave in a warm place to rise for 40 mins.
4. Heat oven to 200C/fan 180C/gas 6. Remove the cling film, then bake the bread for 30 mins until golden and risen. Leave to cool for 10 mins, then cut into 12 pieces and serve