English Essay, Research Paper

History of England The Ice Age ended about 8000 BC, during which the Neanderthals and Cro-Magnons lived in Great Britain. Because of the melting ice the water level rose and the English Channel was created, making Great Britain an island. The Middle Stone Age passed in this new forest and swamp, followed by the New Stone Age when the practice of farming began. During this period a lot of new people came to Britain. By 2500 BC the Beaker people had moved there. They were named after their pottery, and noted for their bronze tools and huge stone monuments, like Stonehenge. These Monuments prove they had an excellent economic organization as well as their technical skill and ability. Around 1000 BC the Celts took over the British Isles, they also took over most of western Europe. Because of their iron plows, iron weapons, and horse-drawn chariots, they were able to take over the inhabitants of the islands. Their priests dominated their society. King Alfred became king of Wessex in one of England’s darkest hours. The Danes, viking forces that had raided the English coasts in the 8th century, planned to take over England. All that stood in their way were Wessex and Alfred. After Alfred’s victory at Edington in 878 AD he made the Danish king Guthrum accept baptism and a division of England took place. The two parts were Wessex and Danelaw. By creating a navy, reorganizing the militia, allowing warriors to switch between farming and fighting, and building forts, Alfred was able to take over London and begin to take over tthe Danish. The battel to take over the Danish was completed by Alfred’s son, Edward the Elder, and by his grandson Athelstan. Athelstan won a battle at Brunanburth in 937 AD and most of the rest of the century was peaceful. Saint Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury was able to restore the Church. The conquest of the Danelaw meant the creation of unified government for all of England. Despite this the Danish invasions came again during Ethelred II’s reign. In 1154 Henry II took the throne. During his reign he strengthened the government, developed the common law, created the grand jury, and attempted to reduce the jurisdiction of church courts. He was opposed by Thomas Becket, his former chancellor, who King Henry had made archbishop. His anger at Becket led to his murder. His empire included half of France and lordship over Ireland and Scotland. Richard I, the Lion-Hearted, was busy fighting in the Crusades. So he was not in England very often. During his absence land was lost to France, but the goverment continued to function, collecting taxes to support him in his wars and to pay his ransom. John was forced to accept the Magna Carta in 1215 which was also known as the Great Charter. By this he admited his errrors and promised to respect English law. He died one year later. He lost Normandy in 1204, although at the time it seemed to be a disgrace, it left England free to develop without outside interference. John died in 1216 and the barons accepted his nine-year old son as King Henry III. They took control of the government and confirmed the Magna Carta, this took place in 1225. Henry also did when he got old enough two years later. Because of this the tradition of royal confirmation of the Magna Carta began. This brought on the idea that it was the fundamental statement of English law and of the limited government. The 12th and 13th centuries were a prosperous time for England. Sheep raising and selling wood became extremely important. Some of the towns like London became centers of trade and wealth, resulting in the right of self-government. Universities were established like Oxford and Cambridge. The populataion more than doubled going form about 1.5 million to more than 3 million. The monasteries, mostly those of Cistercians, became very wealthy by leading the rural expansion. More than a dozen cathedrals were built, and also many abbeys and parish churches. Which all added to the increasing the wealth of England and its church. Friars, Franciscans and Dominicans arrived in England around the 1220s. They improved the quality of preaching and became the leading scholars in the universities. Despite Henry III not being a very good king, he fought with the barons who thought that they should hold major offices instead of the Henry’s favorites. In 1258 the Provisions of Oxford tried to give the control of the government to a committee of barons. The baronila leader Simon de Montfort came briefly to power, as cicil war broke out in 1264. However in the Battle of Evesham Monfort was killed. This returned power to Henry and his son Edward. This has been some of the history of England from the early ages to the reign of King Henry III. It is by no means a complete history and barely touches on the many events that took place in England during this time period.

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