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EDITORIAL

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This Summer has seen a number of anniversaries: seventy years since the end of the Second World War, two hundred years from the Battle of Waterloo, eight hundred years since the sealing of Magna Carta at Runnymede in 1215. Each of these anniversaries marks a watershed – a time after which, if not a new world order, then at least a new European or national order took hold. The end of the Second World War, still very much in living memory, gave rise to new and different ways of nations relating to one another in post-war Europe: a new-found peace in the West offset by the raising of an 'Iron Curtain' in the East. The end of the Napoleonic Wars likewise effected a new order in Europe and, in this country, led (through massive demobilisation of men from the Army and, in particular, the Royal Navy) to a great shift in populations and years of economic turmoil.

Magna Carta had less immediate impact in 1215. It did not re-draw national boundaries or cause great shifts in populations. However, what it did was to start off a journey and laid the foundations for all those self-evident goods that are associated with it: liberty, freedom, democracy and the rule of law.

Churchmen were heavily involved in the production of Magna Carta. Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury, was one of the principal brokers of it and recent research has shown that it was scribes from monasteries who ensured that it was transcribed, published and preserved. Controversy followed not long after the sealing of the charter at Runnymede as Pope Innocent III annulled the charter just nine weeks later. However, it was reaffirmed the following year and many times thereafter, and parts of it remain in force today.

The themes associated with Magna Carta surface in a number of guises in this issue of the *Journal*. Rupert Bursell continues his exploration of oaths with an article on the clerical oath of allegiance, in which the enduring relationship between the Church and the Crown is developed and played out. Carolyn Shelbourn examines freedom of speech and the picketing of funerals, while Graham Duncan and Anthony Egan consider the role of the churches in South Africa under apartheid, a regime which drove a coach and horses through human rights and human dignity. Your editor offers a reflection on a curious excursus in seventeenth-century history in a tragic episode in the story of Archbishop George Abbot. While this might not immediately conjure

up links with Magna Carta, reference was drawn in the case at the time to the Charter of the Forest – Magna Carta's twin charter. The more famous charter is called 'Magna' on account of it being the greater of these.

There is no doubt that, as Lord Judge pointed out in a lecture earlier this year,[1] while Magna Carta does not contain the words 'parliament', 'democracy' or 'trial by jury', it does lay the foundations for many constitutional and legal principles and the freedoms that, even today, cannot be taken for granted.

1 I Judge, 'Magna Carta: luck or judgment', lecture given at the Inner Temple, 19 February 2015, text available at <http://www.middletemple.org.uk/lord-judge-magna-carta-luck-or-judgment>, accessed 17 June 2015.

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