

**SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY OF  
BRITAIN:I  
MODULE I-EARLY HISTORY BRITISH ISLES**



**EARL AND EARLDOM  
I SEMESTER  
BA ENGLISH COMPLEMENTARY PAPER  
DR.SR.VALSA MA  
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR  
DEPARTMENT F HISTORY  
LITTLE FLOWER COLLEGE,GURUVAYOOR**



- Norman conquest of England introduced the Frankish title of “ count” into England.
- This title soon identified with the previous title of Anglo-Saxon “ earl” in England.
- An earl is a member of nobility.
- This title originated from the Old English “ eorl”, means “a man of the noble birth or rank”.
- In Anglo-Saxon England earl had authority over their own regions and right to judgment in Provincial Courts, as delegated by the king.



- The earls collected fines and taxes and in return received a “ third Penny”, one third of the money collected.
- In war times earls led the kings armies.
- During this period some shires were grouped together into larger units known as earldoms.
- The earldoms were headed by earldom or earl.
- Under Anglo Saxon king Edward the Confessor, important earldoms like Wessex, Mercia, East Anglia and Northumbria much larger reputed one.
- Earls originally functioned essentially as royal governors.



- After the Norman Conquest, William modified the traditional system according to his own likings.
- He made some restrictions to the power of earls and earldoms.
- Most old earldoms disappeared and new ones created such as Hereford, Shropshire, and Chester.
- Their power and regional jurisdictions were minimized.
- Norman king Stephan increased the number of earls to reward those loyal to him in the backdrop of an internal war with his cousins.
- He gave some earls right to hold royal castles or to control the Sheriff.



- By the end of Stephen's rule, some earls held courts of their own and even minted their own coins.
- But Henry II (1154-1189) curtailed the power of earls and earldom.
- He didn't create new earls or earldom.
- No earls was allowed to remain independent of royal control.
- Following are some imp earldom- East Anglia, Hereford, Kent, Northumbria, Cornwall, Dorset, Chester, Shrewsbury, Surrey, Gloucester, Buckingham.