



THE RICHEST AND MOST
GLAMOROUS HEIRESS OF HER
TIME, QUEEN OF FRANCE AND
THEN OF ENGLAND, MOTHER AND
GRANDMOTHER OF THE DYNASTY
OF PLANTAGENET KINGS

by Julianna Lees

ALIÉNOR D' AQUITAINE

ELEANOR WAS ALSO A TRAGIC FIGURE WHO SAW BOTH HUSBANDS AND EIGHT OF HER TEN CHILDREN BURIED.

There are no contemporary biographies of Aliénor : all references to her are in the context of writings by churchmen. They tended to be conservative and disapproving of women, especially a powerful, attractive woman who dared to break out of the mould and rebel against male authority. In her time Eleanor was accused of flirtation, adultery, and worse. Before long she was credited with cruelty and even murder.

The eldest child of the mighty Guilhem IX, Duke of Aquitaine, Aliénor was probably born at the castle of Belin near Bordeaux in 1122. Much of her girlhood would have been

spent in the palace of Maubergeon, the Poitiers home of the Counts of Poitiers and Dukes of Aquitaine. You can still visit it, as it is now the Palais de Justice, but all that remains of the great hall, built four years before Aliénor's death, is the elegant room known as the "Salle des Pas Perdus".

Aliénor's Grandfather - Duke Guilhem IX - died in 1127, when she was five, and was interred at Poitiers, in the monastery of Moutier-Neuf, which he founded. The church is still there, on the outskirts of the city. Three years later, in 1130, Aénor, Aliénor's mother died, and was buried at Talmont where the Dukes had their favourite hunting grounds and kept their prized falcons. The beautiful church, splendidly situated on a cliff over the sea near Royan is well worth a visit. The village with its whitewashed cottages, blue shutters and hollyhocks looks peaceful now, but was witness to terrible acts of cruelty and bloodshed in distant times.

