History Holiday homework

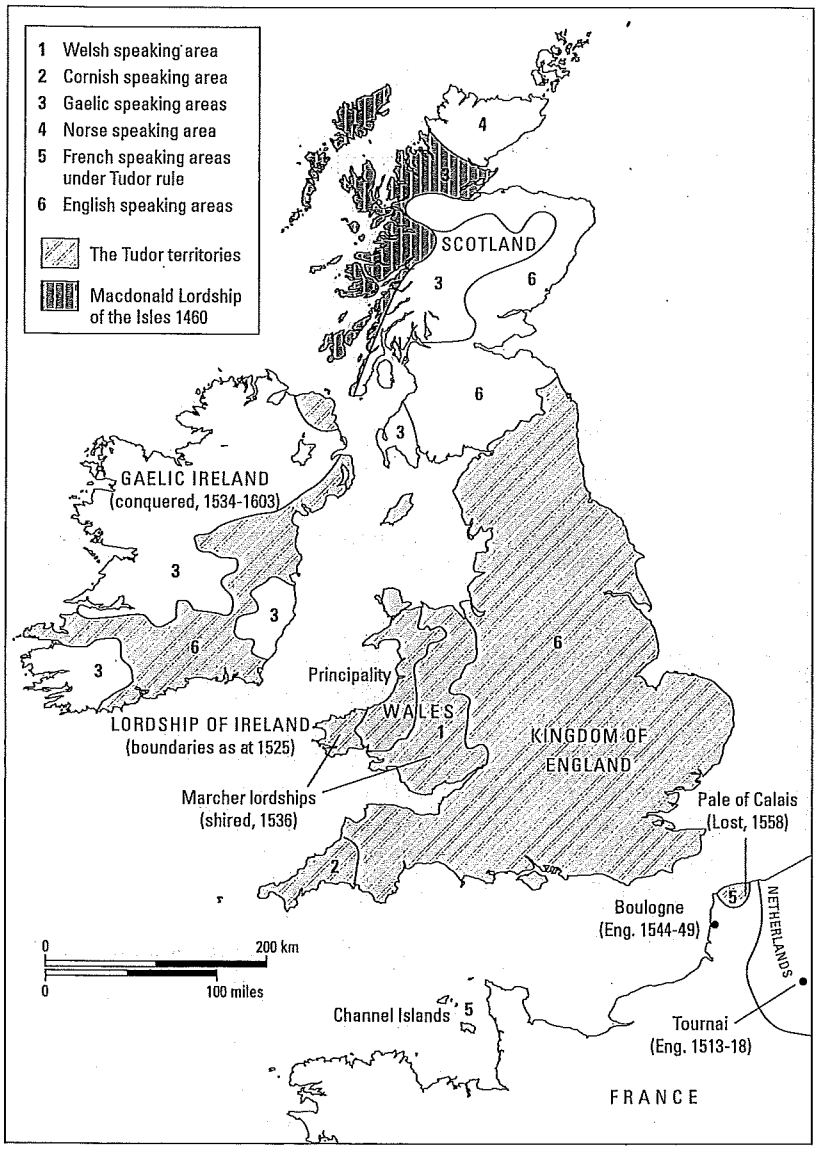
1. Read the two pieces entitled History parts 1-25 and 26 onwards. We will have a discussion on the reading in September

2. Read the document entitled History holiday reading “To what extent did the Tudors face threats to their rule” Summarise the major changes over the period in note form for discussion in September.

Mr Savill/ June 2022

1.1 To what extent did the Tudors face threats to their rule in England between 1485 and 1603?

The British Isles in the 16th century, showing Tudor territory and language boundaries



The Tudor period of English History (1485–1603) is regarded as a relatively stable period when compared to either the 15th century or the 17th century. The period was preceded by considerable political instability, known as the Wars of the Roses. Following the death of Elizabeth I in 1603, England entered a period of political instability, which led to the outbreak of civil wars in the 1640s.

However, the Tudor period was affected by a number of different threats to political stability. One type of threat were attempts to replace a Tudor monarch by a different dynasty. These were mainly associated with the reigns of Henry VII and Elizabeth I. However, in a technical sense, the only monarch to 'rule' in the period 1485 to 1603 who was not a Tudor was Lady Jane Grey, the Nine Days' Queen, in 1553 (see family tree on page 16).

Other threats included regional rebellions which affected the reigns of all the Tudor monarchs. These rebellions were caused by a variety of reasons such as economic hardship, religious and political factors. Finally, Tudor government was affected by factional conflicts between leading members of the Court and Government.

When Henry VII became king in 1485, England was in the grip of a period of political upheaval, known as the Wars of the Roses. In contrast to the 15th century, the 16th century was dominated by one dynasty. During this period England was saved from the problem. However, Henry VII's reign could have come to an abrupt end at the battle of East Stoke, in 1487, if he had not defeated the Yorkist pretender to the throne, Lambert Simnel. In this sense it was this battle, rather than Henry VII's victory at the battle of Bosworth Field, which marks the end to the Wars of the Roses. Later in his reign Henry VII was faced with a threat from another Yorkist pretender, Perkin Warbeck. Warbeck had powerful allies in Ireland and the continent but unlike Simnel he never posed a major military threat to Henry VII. In 1497 a major regional revolt broke out in Cornwall over taxation. For a brief period the Cornish Rebellion posed a major threat to political stability. The rebels were only defeated when they had reached Blackheath, just south of London.

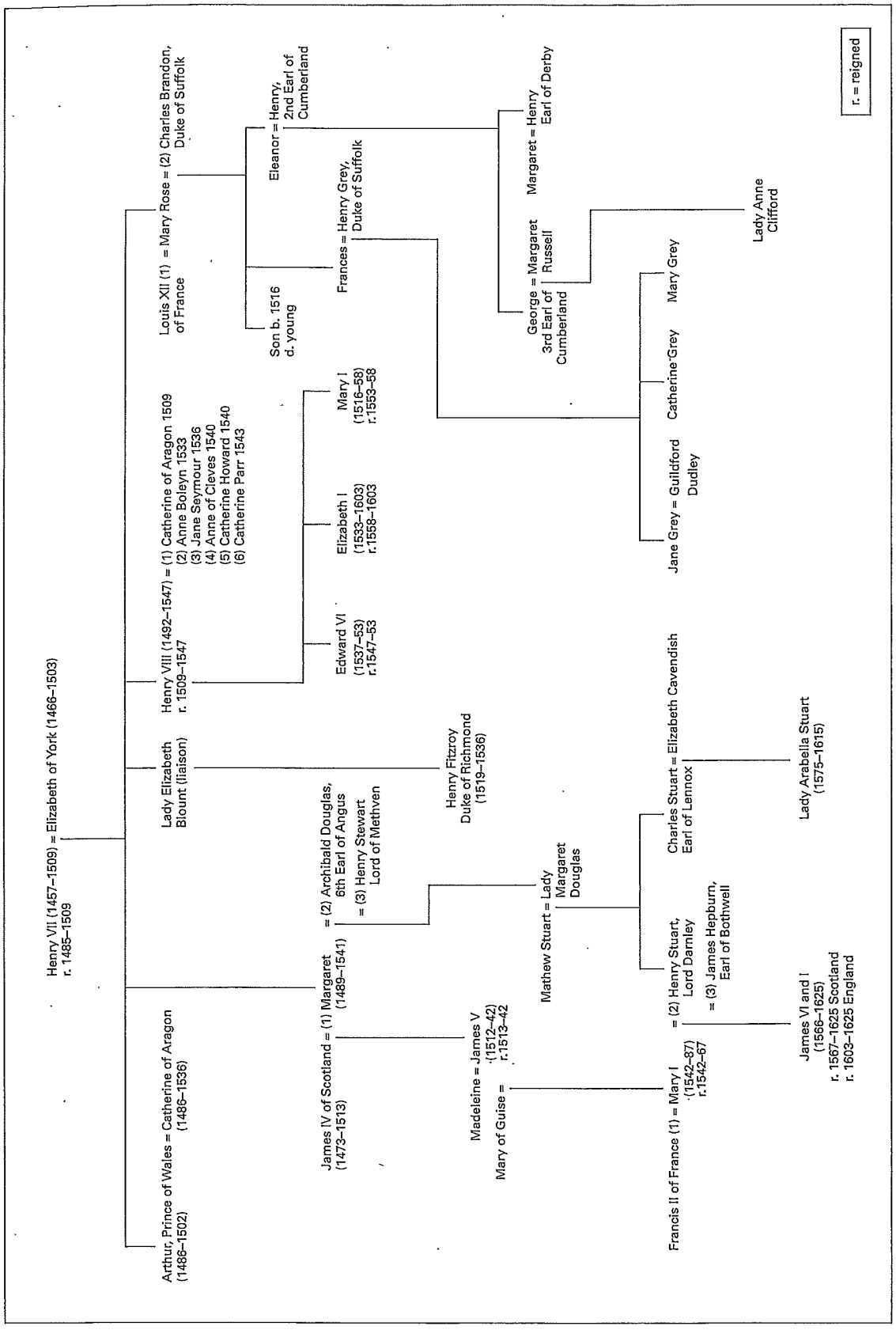
Henry VIII also faced threats to his rule. Rioting and opposition to the Amicable Grant of 1525 was the only time when government policy had to be abandoned in the face of widespread national opposition. The religious and political changes of the 1530s created opposition which led to the Pilgrimage of Grace of 1536. Although initially successful in the north of the country, Henry VIII's government was able to suppress the rebellion ruthlessly in 1536–37.

Henry's immediate successors perhaps faced the most serious threats of all. The reign of Edward VI (1547–53) coincided with a period of considerable political and religious change as well as social and economic problems. The Ket Rebellion and the Western Rebellion, both in 1549, were important factors in the overthrow of Protector Somerset's government. Edward VI's successor was faced by the most serious threat of all in Wyatt's Rebellion of 1554 against the Spanish marriage between Mary Tudor and Philip II. It began in Kent and reached London.

During Elizabeth I's long reign (1558–1603), political opposition was associated with religious and regional issues. The Rebellion of the Northern Earls of 1569–70 was the last major regional rebellion in English History. Also, the period 1571–86 saw the discovery of numerous Catholic plots, associated with replacing Elizabeth by the catholic Mary Stuart.

All of these rebellions and attempts to overthrow Tudor monarchs failed. Their failure was due in part to the fact that they were localised. Anthony Fletcher in the third edition of *Tudor Rebellions* states: 'Tudor Rebellions ... were essentially the responses of local communities to local grievances.' Anthony Fletcher also notes that 'only one clear theme of national significance ran through the rebellions. This was the opposition of a conservative and pious society to the English Reformation.'

This factor was important in the Pilgrimage of Grace, in 1536, and in the Rebellion of the Northern Earls in 1569–70. However, their failure also reflects other reasons. There was a strong feeling of support for royal authority in England in the 16th century which made potential rebels reluctant to challenge the monarch directly. Instead rebels challenged the


Henry VII (1457–1509) = Elizabeth of York (1466–1503)
r. 1485–1509
Arthur, Prince of Wales = Catherine of Aragon
(1486–1502) (1486–1536)
Lady Elizabeth Blount (liaison)
Henry VIII (1492–1547) = (1) Catherine of Aragon 1509
r. 1509–1547 (2) Anne Boleyn 1533
(3) Jane Seymour 1536
(4) Anne of Cleves 1540
(5) Catherine Howard 1540
(6) Catherine Parr 1543
Louis XII (1) = Mary Rose = (2) Charles Brandon,
of France Duke of Suffolk
Son b. 1516
d. young
Eleanor = Henry,
2nd Earl of
Cumberland
Frances = Henry Grey,
Duke of Suffolk
Edward VI
(1537–53)
r.1547–53
Elizabeth I
(1533–1603)
r.1558–1603
Mary I
(1516–58)
r.1553–58
George = Margaret
3rd Earl of Russell
Cumberland
Margaret = Henry
Earl of Derby
Lady Anne
Clifford
Jane Grey = Guildford
Dudley
Catherine Grey
Mary Grey
James IV of Scotland = (1) Margaret
(1473–1513) (1489–1541)
= (2) Archibald Douglas,
6th Earl of Angus
= (3) Henry Stewart
Lord of Methven
Henry Fitzroy
Duke of Richmond
(1519–1536)
Madeleine = James V
Mary of Guise = (1512–42)
r.1513–42
Mathew Stuart = Lady
Margaret
Douglas
Charles Stuart = Elizabeth Cavendish
Earl of Lennox
Lady Arabella Stuart
(1575–1615)
Francis II of France (1) = Mary I
(1542–87)
r.1542–67
= (2) Henry Stuart,
Lord Darnley
= (3) James Hepburn,
Earl of Bothwell
James VI and I
(1566–1625)
r. 1567–1625 Scotland
r. 1603–1625 England
r. = reigned

authority of royal officials. In the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536 opposition was centred on the King's advisers, in particular Thomas Cromwell. Even the Wyatt Rebellion of 1554 was more against the marriage of Mary I to Philip II of Spain than against the queen herself. Defeat of these rebellions could also be explained by the growing power and stability of Tudor monarchs to deal with political and social threats. Although the 1590s was a decade of war, harvest failure and economic hardship, Elizabeth I's government did not face any serious challenge from the general public. Conflict in the 1590s was centred on political faction at Court and in the Privy Council.

In the Tudor Court, and the major government institution, the Privy Council, the aristocracy and leading government officials formed political groupings to further their own interests. Faction proved to have a significant impact on Tudor government and policy on a number of occasions. In the reign of Henry VIII, factional rivalry helps explain the rise and fall of Anne Boleyn and Thomas Cromwell. During Edward VI's reign, factional conflict led to the rise and fall of the Duke of Somerset. In Elizabeth I's reign, the Earl of Leicester's faction supported the pursuit of a Protestant foreign policy and direct aid for the Dutch against Philip II of Spain. The last years of Elizabeth's reign saw the Council split between rival factions led by Robert Cecil and the Earl of Essex. In 1601 the Earl of Essex failed in an attempt to defeat the Cecil faction, which led to his arrest and subsequent execution for treason.

The issue of faction should not be seen in isolation. The political rivalry at Court and in the Council helps explain both the Pilgrimage of Grace of 1536 and the Rebellion of the Northern Earls in 1569–70.

1. What kind of political threats did Tudor monarchs face?

2. During whose reign do you think political threats to Tudor rule were the most serious?

1.2 In what ways did English government and administration change in the years 1485–1603?

During the Tudor era the operation of government and administration altered considerably. To the vast majority of England government meant local government as administered by a local member of the aristocracy. These local magnates maintained law and order. This was most apparent in the borderlands with Scotland, along the Welsh border and in eastern Ireland. The area of effective control for a Tudor monarch was limited. Even Elizabeth I, who was noted for her tours of her kingdom, never visited the West Country, the North or Wales. The failure to control local magnates (see reference to 'over-mighty subjects' in Chapter 2) was a factor in the political instability of the Wars of the Roses.

Henry VII is credited with reducing the power of the aristocracy and establishing a financially independent monarchy. These developments have been regarded by some historians as creating a 'New Monarchy' in England, similar to those created in France and Spain. However, as Alexander Grant has pointed out in *Henry VII*, the first Tudor monarch did not introduce a new system of government and administration to England but used traditional methods of government and finance in new ways. Rather than see 1485 as the beginning of a new era for English government, Henry VII's reign had more in common with his immediate Yorkist predecessors, in particular Edward IV (1469–70; 1471–83) and Richard III (1483–85). In securing financial independence, Henry VII was fortunate not to have

brothers to reward. His avoidance of war also aided the growth of financial independence. Nevertheless, the rise of the Council Learned (see page 29) and the use of the Star Chamber give an indication that Henry VII was willing to develop new aspects of administration.

Star Chamber: Nickname given to members of the Royal Council who dealt with certain legal matters and some aspects of law enforcement.

A traditional form of government employed by Henry VII was the use of regional magnates to rule borderlands. In Ireland the earls of Kildare were used to enforce control in the Pale and in eastern Ireland, just as his Yorkist predecessors had done. In the Marches of Wales and the border with Scotland (see map on page 14) control and jurisdiction was given to families such as Percy and Dacre.

Under his son Henry VIII, historians have talked of a 'Tudor Revolution in Government'. Geoffrey Elton stated that during the 1530s English government was transformed and modernised by Thomas Cromwell. Although considerable change did occur, it is questionable whether they constituted a revolution. In many ways Cromwell improved the system of government and administration which was already in existence. Nevertheless, the 1530s did see major changes. Cromwell centralised the control of finance in the Exchequer at the expense of the Chamber. The Privy Council headed a more centralised administration which served the king's leading ministers. Cromwell also oversaw the incorporation of Wales into English-style county administration and the administrative changes brought on by the religious changes of the 1530s. These are discussed in detail in Chapter 6 on government, politics and foreign affairs 1529–47 (section 6.3).

Also of significance was the recognition in the 1530s that England was an independent sovereign state. The preamble to the Act of Supremacy, 1533 claimed that England was 'an empire' free from outside authority. In addition, Henry VIII's reign saw the Act of Union with Wales in 1536 and the creation of the Kingdom of Ireland in 1540. By 1547 the beginnings of a 'British' state had been established.

Much debate about the nature of Tudor government and the importance of faction has centred on the reigns of Edward VI and Mary I. So much so that, in the past, this period has been referred to as 'A Mid-Tudor Crisis'. However, during the years 1547–58, there was a considerable degree of continuity both with Henry VIII's and Elizabeth I's reigns. The Privy Council continued to develop as the main instrument of government.

Throughout the Tudor period the Privy Council was the most important government institution. The historian Geoffrey Elton regards the Privy Council as one of the important 'points of contact' linking the monarch with the influential figures in England who comprised the political nation. It contained leading aristocrats, churchmen and administrators and it fulfilled the role most closely associated with the Cabinet today. The size of the Council varied through the period. However, its role ranged from offering advice to the monarch and giving instructions to justices of the peace (JPs) and lords lieutenant, to attempts to regulate wages.

Also regarded as one of Geoffrey Elton's 'points of contact' was the Royal Court. This institution did not possess the formal powers and procedures of the Privy Council but still had political influence and was most closely associated with political faction. The Court contained those members of the aristocracy who attended the monarch for social rather than political reasons. Its function did not change radically during the Tudor period. However, in the 1530s and 1590s, Court politics associated

with faction became a major issue. The fall of Anne Boleyn and the fall of the Earl of Essex were closely associated with political faction at Court. For a more detailed discussion see Chapter 9 (section 9.2).

The role of parliament in the Tudor period has been a major issue among historians for a considerable period of time. Whig historians (in the 19th century) – who saw English political history as the gradual rise in political power of parliament at the expense of the monarch – regarded the 16th century as an important period of development, laying the foundations for the conflict between monarch and parliament in the 17th century.

There is evidence that the power and authority of parliament did increase. The judge's decision of 1489 decreed that the House of Commons had to agree before a bill could become an Act. Also, during Henry VII's reign, parliament began to develop its own administration outside the Court of Chancery.

Court of Chancery: A court which could override decisions of the ordinary law courts in the interests of fair play. This court came into being by the time Henry VII came to the throne.

However, the two significant developments in parliamentary history are associated with religious change. Between 1529 and 1536 the Reformation Parliament passed wide-ranging legislation which established England as an independent state in control of its own Church. In doing so it established clearly the idea of the king working with parliament as the ultimate legal authority in England.

Parliament was also important in the Elizabethan Church Settlement, at the start of the reign of Elizabeth I. The Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity of 1559 were the foundation stones of the Church of England. However, parliament did not exist as a permanent institution. It could be called only on the authority of the monarch. Throughout the Tudor period it fulfilled its traditional role as a source of revenue for the monarch and a method of disposing of potential rivals through the use of Acts of attainder (see page 54).

The belief among historians that 'a Protestant choir' in the House of Commons forced Elizabeth I to produce a more radical church settlement in 1559 is no longer accepted. Nor is the belief that the House of Commons was developing its independence by the 1590s. During Elizabeth's reign the monarch was effective in silencing parliamentary opposition to the religious settlement of 1558–59. The opposition to monopolies (see page 115) in the parliaments of 1597 and 1601 was more an exception rather than the rule in the role of Tudor parliaments.

It must be remembered that the House of Lords played a very important role in Tudor parliaments. The House of Lords contained the aristocracy who dominated political and economic life.

An important change in government and administration in Tudor England was in local government. The Councils of the North and the Welsh Marches still existed by 1603. However, most of England and Wales was administered through county administrations where justices of the peace played a major role. This unpaid office became the backbone of Tudor local government administering justice and the poor law. In addition to the JP, the lord lieutenant became an important local official. Charged with the responsibility of raising troops to fight for the monarch, lords lieutenant were appointed from time to time. After 1585 and the outbreak of war with Spain they were appointed in each county on a permanent basis. The improvement in the English army by 1603 can be attributed to the 'trained bands' established by lords lieutenant.

1. Draw a diagram showing the different parts of government in Tudor England.

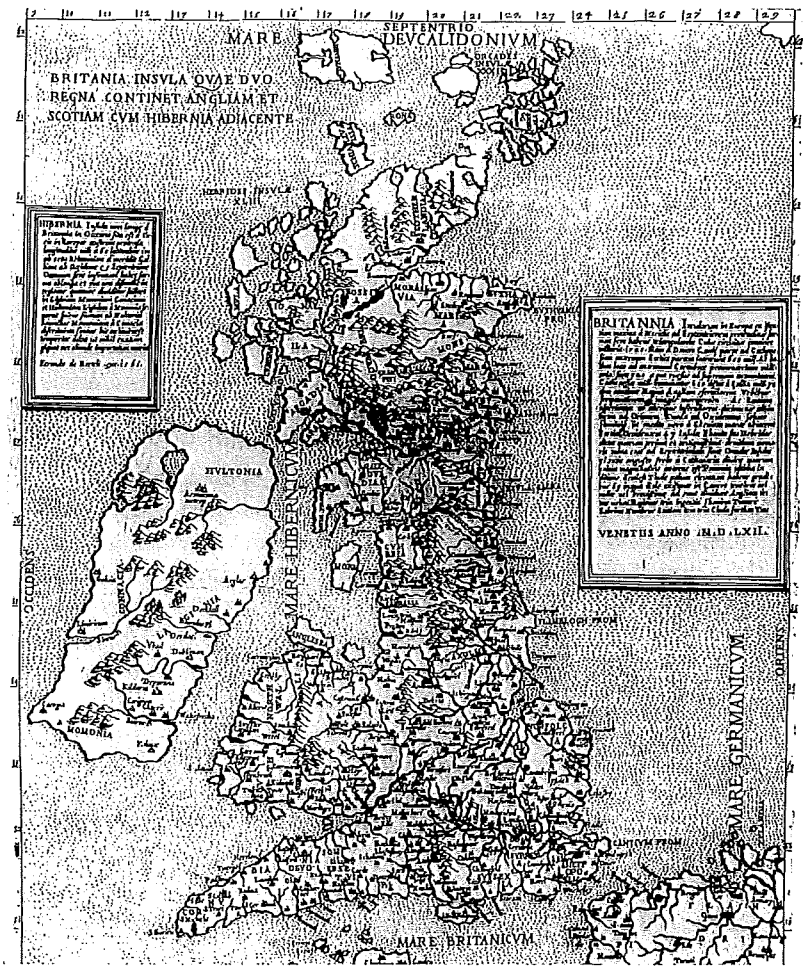
2. Which part of government do you think changed most during the Tudor period? Give reasons to support your answer.

In the past historians have referred to the creation of a 'Tudor despotism' (dictatorship) in the 16th century. They have pointed to the Statute of Proclamations of 1539 as an example of this development. It is clear that there was an improvement in the quality of administration and control from London as the century progressed. However, it would be difficult to describe the Tudor regime as a dictatorship when local government played such an important part in the government of the country.

1.3 How far did the economy and society change in the period 1485–1603?

Throughout the Tudor period England was overwhelmingly an agricultural country. The wealth of the country was linked directly to events such as the size and quality of the harvest. Periods of harvest failure led inevitably to a rise in grain prices and, in some cases, starvation. The 1590s saw one of the worst periods of harvest failure and starvation in the whole Tudor period.

Map of the British Isles produced in about 1534



Principal noble families in England, 1547

Principal noble families in England, 1603

Refer to the maps on page 21. In what ways did the principal noble families change between 1547 and 1603?

Most Englishmen and women lived in villages and engaged in subsistence agriculture, producing just enough food to feed themselves. In the early part of the period some enterprising landowners attempted to improve agriculture through creating enclosures (see page 111). This process created considerable debate about its effects on rural unemployment and rural depopulation throughout the century. As late as 1598 Parliament passed an Act on husbandry and tillage (see page 301) in a bid to prevent rural depopulation.

England possessed a wide variety of agricultural regions. The historian Joan Thirsk, in *The Agrarian History of England 1500–1640*, identifies farming practices associated with different types of landscape and soil from marshland associated with cattle raising, through vales, downlands, forest, heathlands and moorland.

Sheep farming was an important activity which provided the raw material for England's main exports, wool and woollen cloth. The export of woollen goods remained the backbone of English trade throughout the Tudor period. Under the control of the Staple and the Merchant Adventurers (see page 46) this trade was centred mainly on the Netherlands city of Antwerp. During the Dutch Revolt and the war with Spain after 1585, this trade was disrupted. Although alternative outlets for English wool were sought at Emden and Hamburg, Antwerp remained the chief port for these exports.

Staple: A place where a company or organisation, such as the Merchant Adventurers, had the exclusive right to buy and sell goods.

As the century progressed, new outlets for English trade were developed. These are usually associated with chartered companies given responsibility for trade. The Muscovy and Levant companies handled trade with Russia and the eastern Mediterranean respectively. However, these new outlets of trade remained small in comparison to the wool trade. In this respect, the Tudor period can be seen as laying the foundations for the future. This is illustrated with the creation of the East India Company in 1600.

Chartered companies: Donations from the monarch to certain companies granting them rights and privileges.

The dominant class in England was the aristocracy. They numbered about 200 families. They were the largest landowners and were the most influential group in politics. They were represented at Court and in the Privy Council. They also had considerable local power. Some, like the Percy family of Northumberland, played a major role in the government of the Scottish borders. Others, like the Stanleys in Lancashire and the Howard family, controlled regions of north-western and central England respectively (see maps on page 21).

Some historians have suggested that the aristocracy declined in importance during the 16th century. This was due to the rise in importance of a new class of landowner, the gentry (see page 111). There were several thousand gentry families. Events such as the Dissolution of the Monasteries helped members of the gentry to acquire land. However, although the gentry grew in numbers and social and economic status there is only limited evidence to suggest any change in the position of the aristocracy by 1603.

An important feature of 16th-century economic history is the price revolution. Today this is known as a period of price rises, or 'inflation'. The Tudor period faced two major periods of inflation: the 1540s to the 1550s and the 1590s. A wide variety of explanations have been put forward for the rise in prices. One view is that a rise in population without a significant increase in food supplies caused prices to rise. However, the link between these two factors is most apparent at times of harvest failure, which leads to a major drop in the supply of food. The first major period

Renaissance: Period of European history covering the 15th century to 17th century. It was associated with the re-discovery of Ancient Greek and Roman literature and the study of man. Also associated with the spread of literacy to the lay (non-clerical) population.

1. Produce a time chart using the three sub-headings: Economy, Social affairs, Learning and literature.

Write down the major changes which took place during the Tudor period.

2. Which aspect of the economy and society of England changed most during the Tudor period? Give reasons to support your answer.

of inflation (1540s–1550s) is associated with the rise in the cost of warfare and the debasement of the coinage (see page 115 for definition). One of the successes of the first years of Elizabeth I's reign was a revaluing of the coinage and an end to inflation. In the 1590s the rise in prices was associated more with harvest failure than anything else. But price rises were not limited to England. Across Europe prices rose in the second half of the 16th century. This has been explained, in part, by the arrival in Europe of large quantities of silver from the Spanish mines in Peru (south America).

One of the major problems facing Tudor government at both local and national level was poverty and vagrancy. During the 16th century a large number of measures were taken to help the poor and to deter vagrancy. The Dissolution of the Monasteries removed one possible source of aid for the poor, especially in the North of England. However, during Elizabeth I's reign legislation was passed by Parliament which provided the basis of a national scheme of aid for the poor and a deterrent to vagrancy (for a more detailed coverage, see Chapter 12).

In education and literature the 16th century is seen as a period of significant development. The **Renaissance** led to the 'New Learning' (see page 74). By the reign of Henry VII, scholars across Europe were studying the ancient world of Greece and Rome as well as subjects such as medicine and science. In England this development helped the growth of grammar schools and university learning at Oxford and Cambridge. Perhaps the most significant impact of these changes came later in the century, during the reign of Elizabeth I. The literary works of William Shakespeare (1564–1616), the poetry of Edmund Spenser (1552–1599) and the plays of Ben Jonson (?1572–1637) make the Elizabethan period a 'golden age' of English literature.

1.4 How important was the issue of religious change?

In 1485 England comprised two provinces of the western Christian or Catholic Church, Canterbury and York. By 1603 a separate and distinct Church of England had been created. The Pope's authority over England had been abolished. The monarch had become Supreme Governor of the Church of England. Why did these changes take place?

There has been considerable debate about the popularity and strength of the Catholic Church in England before 1530. Protestant writers have emphasised issues such as corruption and lack of enthusiasm among the general public for the Church at that time. However, research by historians such as J. J. Scarisbrick and Eamon Duffy has shown that the Church was popular in England on the eve of Henry VIII's break with Rome. In fact, the traditional Catholic religion remained the religion of the majority of the population well into Elizabeth I's reign. Protestantism was centred in London and south-east England until the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. One of Elizabeth's achievements was the establishment of the moderate Protestant Church of England by the time of her death.

Although Protestant ideas had reached England by the 1530s, Henry VIII's break with Rome was based mainly on dynastic reasons. Henry VIII's failure to get an annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon led directly to the end of the Pope's authority in England through laws passed by the Reformation Parliament from 1529 to 1536. Henry VIII

also acquired considerable wealth by confiscating Church property through the Dissolution of the Monasteries. Some changes did occur in religious belief and practice by 1547, such as the provision of an English Bible in each church. However, by Henry VIII's death in 1547 religious belief in England was very similar to that followed before 1530. The English Church could be regarded as a form of National Catholicism.

The reign of Edward VI is associated with more radical changes in religious belief and practice. The Books of Common Prayer of 1549 and 1552 moved the Church closer to the Protestant churches of Germany and Switzerland. However, the short length of Edward's reign allowed his sister, Mary I, to re-introduce the Catholic religion relatively quickly after 1553.

A major turning point in the development of religious change came with the reign of Elizabeth I. The Church Settlement of 1559 established the Church of England in terms of its organisation and religious belief. The Church was a distinct version of moderate Protestantism which was disliked by both Catholics and more extreme Protestant, known as Puritans. In spite of this opposition, Elizabeth I's reign saw the permanent establishment of the Church of England without any fundamental change after 1559.

1. What do you regard as the most important religious changes which took place in the Tudor period?

2. When do you think England became a Protestant country? Give reasons to support your answer.

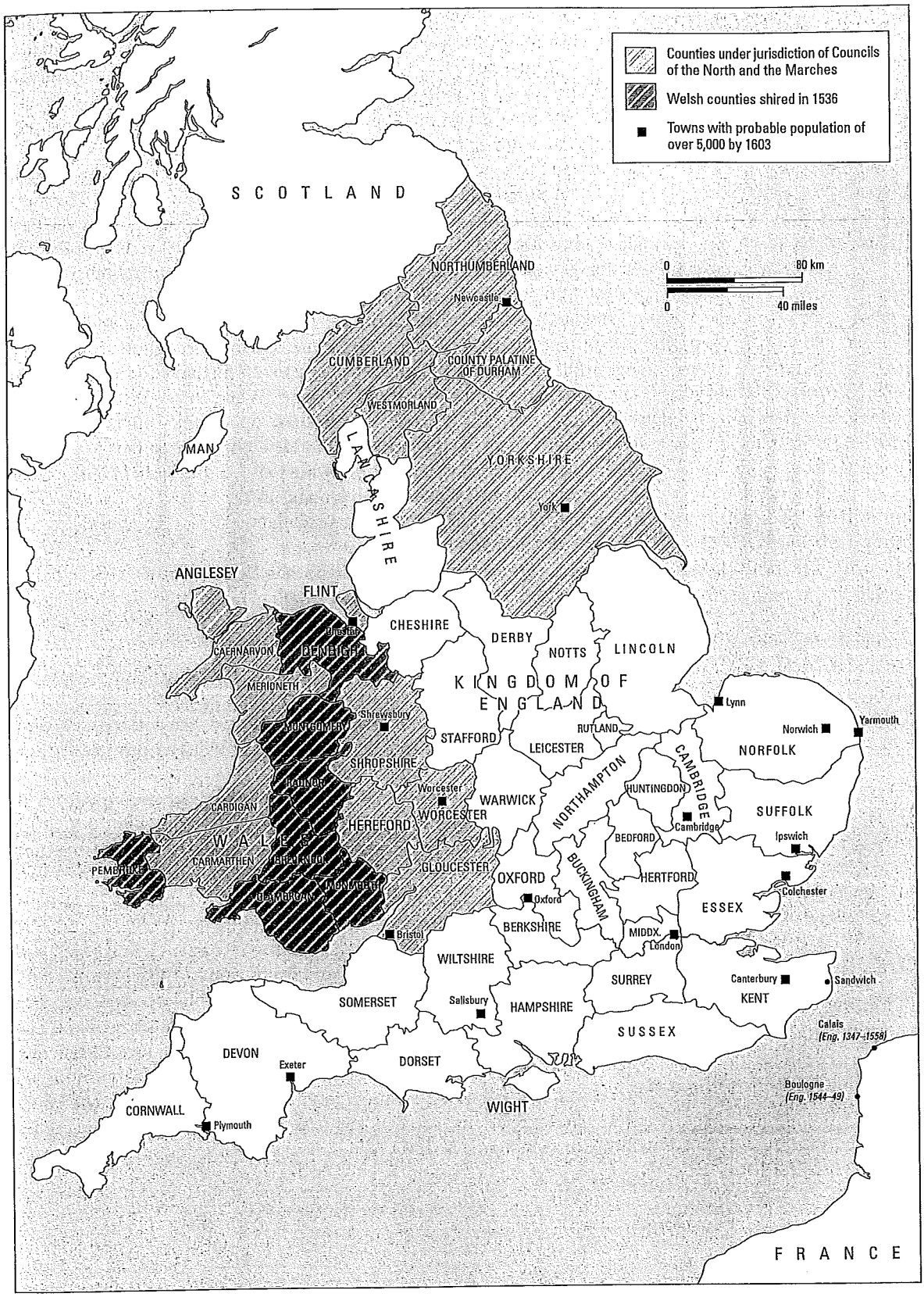
1.5 To what extent did England dominate the British Isles between 1485 and 1603?

In 1485 the British Isles was divided into a number of political units. The most important state was the Kingdom of England. The independent state of Scotland existed to the north. To the west of England lay Wales which was technically part of the English Kingdom but had its own administration which was under the control of the local aristocracy (see map opposite). Although English monarchs were Lords of Ireland, English control was limited. A small area around Dublin, known as The Pale, was under direct English control. Much of eastern Ireland was under the control of Anglo-Irish aristocrats such as the earls of Kildare who administered the area for the English monarch. Most of western and southern Ireland was outside any form of English control. This area was inhabited by Gaelic-speaking Irish clans (see map on page 14). In Europe England controlled the Pale of Calais, the last remnant of the English Empire in France which had been lost in the years before 1453 during the 100 Years' War.

By 1603 things had changed. Calais had been lost during Mary I's reign. English county administration had been extended to include all of Wales. The accession of James VI and I had brought a 'union of Crowns' between England and Scotland. In Ireland the defeat of the Tyrone Rebellion at the battle of Kinsale in 1601 had brought Gaelic Irish resistance to English rule to an end. These developments laid the foundations for the eventual political unification of the British Isles in the 18th century.

Important developments in this process took place during the reign of Henry VIII. The Act of Union with Wales and the proclamation of Henry as King of Ireland in 1540 reinforced the claim that England was an 'empire', or independent state made in the Act of Supremacy, 1533.

During the reign of Mary I, attempts were made to increase English influence in Ireland. The policy of 'surrender and regrant' was used to



The British Isles

encourage Gaelic chiefs to abandon their Gaelic noble titles and replace them with English titles, such as earl. Mary I also established the English colonies or plantations of King's and Queen's counties where Englishmen replaced the Gaelic Irish (see map on page 66).

The most important phase in the establishment of English control over Ireland came during the reign of Elizabeth I. English colonisation through plantations was extended to include the south of Ireland and east Ulster. These developments sparked off rebellions by the Gaelic Irish. The most serious began in the north Irish province of Ulster in 1596, led by the Earl of Tyrone. It took the English government six years and considerable financial expense to defeat the rebellion. However, by Elizabeth I's death in 1603 England had broken the resistance of the Gaelic Irish chiefs.

England's relations with Scotland went through several changes in the period. Scotland had been a traditional enemy throughout the Middle Ages. The Scots usually allied themselves with England's other traditional enemy, France, to form the 'Auld Alliance'. When Henry VIII went to war with France in 1512 the Scots used the opportunity to invade north England. In 1513, at the battle of Flodden, the Scots suffered a serious defeat and the death of their king, which ended the Scottish threat for a generation. Towards the end of his reign, in the 1540s, Henry VIII again became involved with war against Scotland, at the same time as the renewal of war with France.

During the short reign of Edward VI, the Duke of Somerset adopted an expensive and ultimately unsuccessful policy towards Scotland. He established English garrisons (soldiers in towns) across central and southern Scotland in an attempt to maintain English control. Unfortunately for Somerset, he had to abandon these garrisons. His Scottish policy was, in part, responsible for his fall in 1549.

Relations with Scotland deteriorated during Mary I's reign. With England's entry into war with France in 1557, Scotland provided a base for French troops. The 'Auld Alliance' was made more effective through the marriage of Mary Stuart to a French prince, who became king in 1559.

It was the reign of Elizabeth I which finally saw the end of the Scottish threat to England. In the years 1559 to 1560 English military action brought to an end the French presence north of the border with the Treaty of Edinburgh. Through much of Elizabeth I's reign support was given to Protestant Scottish noblemen who were sympathetic to England, such as the Earl of Morton. However, the main issue in Anglo–Scottish relations was the exile of Mary Stuart in England from 1568 to 1587. As a Catholic and an heir to the English throne, Mary created problems for Elizabeth I in domestic politics as well as for England's relations with Scotland and Europe. Mary became the centre for Catholic plots to remove Elizabeth I. The execution of Mary Stuart, for treason, and the English support for her Protestant son, James VI, ensured good relations between the two countries. These relations reached their peak when James VI succeeded Elizabeth as monarch in 1603.

1. Produce a time chart with the sub-heading of Scotland and Ireland. Write down the major changes which took place in England's relations with these two areas during the Tudor period.

2. How far did England dominate the British Isles by 1603?

1.6 Why did England's relations with France and Spain alter in the years 1485–1603?

Throughout the period 1485 to 1603 England was regarded as a second-class power in western Europe, compared with France and Spain. Traditionally, England's main enemy had been France. In the period before 1453 England and France had engaged in the 100 Years' War. Although at one stage England had controlled large areas of France, such as Normandy and Gascony, after 1453 English rule was limited to Calais and the Channel Islands (see map on page 14). This did not mean English monarchs gave up the hope of recapturing England's lost possessions.

During the reign of Henry VII, the main aim was to establish the Tudor dynasty. As a result, England followed a peaceful foreign policy. The marriage of Henry VII's sons to Catherine of Aragon and the marriage linking the houses of Tudor and Stuart (see family tree on page 16) were aimed at achieving this end. Henry VIII returned to a policy of warfare to recover England's French lands. In wars with France in 1512–14 and again in the 1540s attempts were made to win territory. However, English victories were limited to the temporary capture of Tournai and Boulogne.

The loss of England's last possession on the continent occurred in the reigns of Mary and Elizabeth. The French War of 1557–59 saw the capture of Calais by the French army. However, it was not until the Treaty of Troyes in 1564 that Elizabeth I gave up the hope of the return of Calais to English rule.

In many ways the 1560s mark a turning point in England's relations with western Europe. Before that date France was seen as England's main enemy. From 1562 to 1598 France was affected by the Wars of Religion. Instead the new threat to England was Spain under Philip II. In the space of a decade, from 1554 to 1564, Spain went from being England's ally to a possible threat. This was in part due to the religious conflict between Catholic and Protestant in late 16th-century Europe. Throughout his reign Philip II hoped to win England back to Catholicism. However, trade and economic considerations were also important. Philip II controlled the Netherlands, the main export market for the woollen trade.

Anglo–Spanish relations began to deteriorate rapidly between 1568 and 1572 because of the revolt of the Netherlands against Spanish rule. By 1585 fear of a Spanish victory in the Netherlands and a possible Franco–Spanish Catholic alliance against England had driven a reluctant Elizabeth I into war. From 1585 to 1604 England and Spain fought a war in the Netherlands, France, Ireland and across the north Atlantic.

1. Why did France rather than Spain become England's main enemy during the Tudor period?

2. Study the changes which took place in politics, government, the economy, society, religion and England's relations with other states. In which of the following periods did (a) most change occur; (b) least change occur? Give reasons to support your answer.

1485–1529

1529–1547

1547–1558

1558–1603

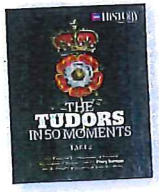
BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE

From the bloody death of Richard III to the final bow of the Virgin Queen, the Tudor age encompassed just a little more than a century but contained many of English history's most dramatic events and colourful characters. Over the pages that follow, historian Tracy Borman chronicles the first half of the Tudor era, picking out 25 moments that encapsulate the years when first Henry VII and then Henry VIII sought to bend England to their will.

Many of the events narrated here form the backdrop to Hilary Mantel's *Wolf Hall*, which is due to be shown on the BBC early in 2015. If you do happen to be watching then I hope you will find this a helpful companion to the series.

Rob Attar
Editor

Don't miss part 2, free with our January issue



In the concluding 25 moments, three more Tudor monarchs arrive on the throne where they face religious unrest, the threat of invasion and struggles for legitimacy.

Tracy Borman, the writer of *The Tudors in 50 Moments*, is a historian whose latest book is *Thomas Cromwell: The Untold Story of Henry VIII's Most Faithful Servant* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2014)

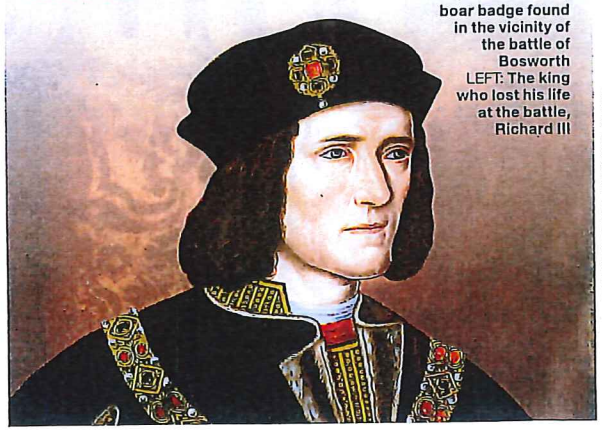
1 22 August 1485
Battle of Bosworth

The Tudor age began on a remote field in Leicestershire. The battle of Bosworth pitted the forces of the Yorkist king Richard III (below) against those of his Lancastrian challenger, Henry Tudor. Richard's reign had begun only two years before upon the death of his brother, Edward IV, who appointed him lord protector during the minority of his 12-year-old son and heir, Edward V. But Richard had soon declared Edward and his younger brother illegitimate and claimed the throne for himself. The two boys had disappeared in the Tower of London in the summer of 1483, and had almost certainly been put to death – at whose orders is still hotly debated.

The turbulence that followed presented Henry Tudor, who was waiting in the wings (or rather Brittany), with his chance. Although his claim to the throne was tenuous, he was one of the few surviving Lancastrian descendants and whipped up what support he could for an invasion. His forces were considerably outnumbered by those of the king, but Richard was undone by the treachery of the powerful Stanley brothers, who changed sides halfway through the fighting. He was hacked to death in the heat of the battle. Legend has it that his crown was found under a hawthorn bush and brought to Henry Tudor, who was proclaimed king.

"His claim to the throne was tenuous, but Henry was one of the few **surviving Lancastrian descendants**"

ABOVE: **A silver boar badge found in the vicinity of the battle of Bosworth**
LEFT: **The king who lost his life at the battle, Richard III**



COVER IMAGE: DREAMSTIME/BRIDGEMAN - THIS PAGE: ALAMY

2 18 January 1486
Henry VII marries Elizabeth of York

The bronze effigies of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York that adorn their graves at Westminster Abbey

Henry Tudor may have triumphed at Bosworth, but his hold on the throne was by no means secure. Many of his subjects saw him as a usurper and there were other claimants with arguably stronger blood claims than his. Henry's own claim was on the side of his indomitable mother, Lady Margaret Beaufort. She was the great-granddaughter of John of Gaunt, fourth son of Edward III, and his third wife (and long-standing mistress) Katherine Swynford. But Katherine had given birth to Henry's great-grandfather when she was still John's mistress, so Henry's claim was through an illegitimate line. It was something of which he was painfully aware and it would make him increasingly paranoid about rival claimants, particularly those of Yorkist descent.

Henry therefore decided to boost the legitimacy of the new Tudor dynasty by marrying a bride of that house. And chief among the candidates was Elizabeth of York, the eldest daughter of Edward IV. Elizabeth's beauty and royal blood had attracted other suitors in the past – perhaps including her own uncle, Richard III, who was rumoured to have planned to marry her shortly before Bosworth. Elizabeth proved an excellent choice for his Tudor rival. Just eight months after the wedding, she gave birth to a son, Arthur. Six more children followed, three of whom survived into adulthood. The Tudor dynasty had been established.

3 16 June 1487
Battle of Stoke Field

Henry VII's paranoia about rival claimants grew stronger as his reign progressed – with good reason. The 30 years leading up to his accession had seen the crown change hands numerous times, and there was no reason to suspect that this latest king would survive any longer than the one he had usurped. The first serious challenge to Henry's authority came in 1487 in the form of the 10-year-old pretender, Lambert Simnel. Struck by the boy's resemblance to the sons of Edward IV, Simnel's tutor, Richard Simons, decided to turn kingmaker. At first he planned to masquerade Simnel as Richard, Duke of York, the younger of the two princes who had disappeared in the Tower. But when he heard rumours that the princes had been murdered, he switched the boy's identity to Edward, Earl of Warwick, son of Edward IV's brother George, Duke of Clarence.

Henry VII had taken the precaution of confining Warwick to the Tower, but Simons spread the rumour that he had escaped. Gaining support from those sympathetic to the House of York, he took the boy to Ireland and began to gather an invasion force. Bolstered by 2,000 Flemish, German and Swiss mercenaries sent over by Warwick's aunt, Margaret of York, Simnel's army landed in Lancashire on 5 June 1487. They were defeated by the king's forces at Stoke Field 11 days later in what is commonly regarded as the last battle of the Wars of the Roses. Henry pardoned Simnel and made him a spit-turner in his kitchens.

ALAMY

German mercenaries, led by Martin Schwartz, fight the cause of Lambert Simnel at the battle of Stoke Field

4 28 June 1491
Henry VIII is born

By 1491, Henry VII had reason to feel more secure on his throne. He had seen off the early threats to his authority, and his marriage to Elizabeth of York – which, somewhat against the odds, had grown into something of a love match – had yielded a male heir and a daughter, Margaret. Now, Elizabeth was pregnant again and, in June, she entered her confinement at the Palace of Placentia in Greenwich. Originally built by Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, in 1443, it remained one of the principal royal palaces for the next two centuries.

The birth of a second son was the cause of great rejoicing for the king, who always had an eye to strengthening his dynasty. The prince was christened Henry and later made Duke of York. He received an excellent education, becoming fluent in Latin and French, and showed a natural aptitude for sports. He spent a great deal of his childhood with his mother at Eltham Palace, and was devastated when she died in February 1503. Given that he had an elder brother, Henry was not expected to be king and it is possible that he was intended for the church – a career that this boisterous young prince was quite unsuited for.

A bust of Henry and Elizabeth's second-born son – Henry, Duke of York

5 23 November 1499
The last pretender is executed

Little is known of the early life of Perkin Warbeck (pictured right), although – according to his later confession – he was born in Tournai and began his training as a merchant in Antwerp and other key trading cities in the Netherlands. In 1490, at the age of about 16, he travelled to Burgundy and first made the claim that he was Richard of Shrewsbury, Duke of York, the younger son of Edward IV.

Burgundy was a centre for Yorkist sympathisers. Its regent, Margaret, was the sister of Edward IV and willing to support anyone who challenged Henry Tudor's rule. On 3 July 1495, Warbeck landed at Deal in Kent with a small army provided by Margaret. He was swiftly defeated by Henry's forces and fled first to Ireland and then Scotland, where he found favour with James IV, who promised to help him invade England. This came to nothing, and Warbeck was on the run once more.

In September 1497, he landed near Land's End and found ready support among the Cornishmen who had recently rebelled against Henry's rule. Having been declared Richard IV on Bodmin Moor, he and his army of 6,000 men marched eastwards towards London. But Warbeck was captured at Beaulieu Abbey in Hampshire.

Although Henry initially showed clemency towards the imposter, even welcoming him to court, Warbeck posed too great a danger to remain at liberty. He was confined to the Tower of London alongside Edward, Earl of Warwick, and the two were executed in November 1499.

6 14 November 1501
Prince Arthur marries Catherine of Aragon

Henry VII had ambitious marriage plans for his eldest son and heir, Arthur, Prince of Wales. He knew that securing a bride of sufficient stature would not only further legitimise his dynasty, but provide England with a much-needed international ally. The lady upon whom he had set his sights was Catherine, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain. Allying with these powerful Catholic monarchs would greatly strengthen Henry's hand against England's traditional enemy, France, so he pursued negotiations with vigour. The Treaty of Medina del Campo was duly signed on 27 March 1489, pledging Arthur and Catherine (then aged two and three) to be married when they came of age.

The Spanish princess eventually arrived in England in October 1501; she and Arthur were married the following month and took up residence at Ludlow Castle in the Welsh Marches. But Arthur's health soon began to fail and, on 2 April 1502, he died, aged just 15. His parents were devastated upon hearing the news – a contemporary account records how the weeping king and queen comforted each other in their grief. Meanwhile, England had a new heir: Henry, Duke of York.

Arthur, Prince of Wales, wouldn't live to see his 16th birthday, leaving Catherine of Aragon, his bride of just four months, a teenage widow

ROYAL COLLECTION TRUST © HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II 2014/BRIDGEMAN/ALAMY

The union of James and Margaret would ultimately lead to the Stuarts inheriting the English throne

7 8 August 1503
Margaret Tudor marries James IV of Scotland

The eldest daughter of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York, Margaret was born in 1489. Although it was sons that counted in royal families, daughters were useful for forging alliances; even before her sixth birthday, Henry had made plans for Margaret's marriage. Greatly troubled by the King of Scots' support for Perkin Warbeck, Henry resolved to tempt him into an alliance by offering his eldest daughter in marriage. A truce was concluded in 1497, but it wasn't until January 1502 that the marriage treaty was finally agreed. Some of Henry's councillors were against the match, arguing that it would give the Stuarts a claim to the English throne. But Henry retorted: "I foresee that our realm would suffer no harm, since England would not be absorbed by Scotland, but rather Scotland by England."

The marriage was completed by proxy a year later at Richmond Palace and, in August 1503, Margaret arrived in Scotland. The wedding ceremony between the 'thistle and the rose' was conducted soon after.

Just as Henry's councillors had predicted, it gave the Scottish rulers a claim to the English throne, although it was one that they would have to wait a while to capitalise upon. A century after the marriage, one of Margaret and James's descendants would take the English throne.

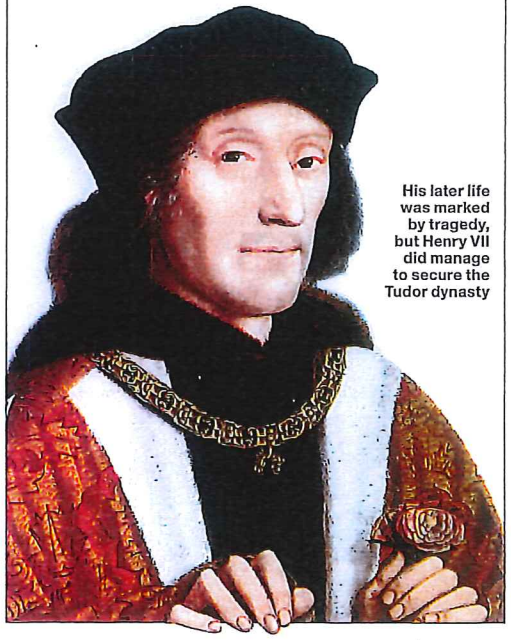
SCRAN/ALAMY

8 21 April 1509
Death of Henry VII; accession of Henry VIII

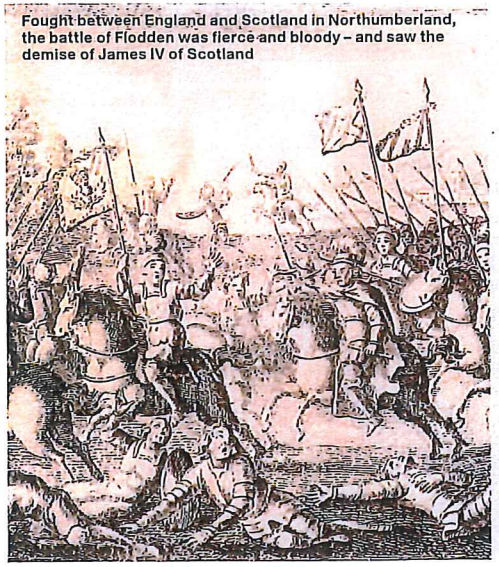
The death of his wife and eldest son had plunged Henry VII into a deep melancholy from which he never fully recovered. Increasingly paranoid and miserly, he had failed to win over the English people, but had succeeded in establishing a relatively stable new dynasty – as well as a much healthier treasury. This was the legacy that he passed on to his 17-year-old heir, Henry, upon his death at Richmond Palace in April 1509.

"For the future, the whole world will talk of him," remarked the Venetian ambassador with remarkable foresight upon the accession of Henry VIII. Everyone was full of praise for this ebullient, charismatic, intelligent and pleasure-loving new king – a true Renaissance prince, and the antithesis of his father in almost every possible way.

Henry had inherited the charm, charisma and good looks of his mother's family, the House of York. Affable, quick-witted, idealistic and hugely generous, he was "the man most full of heart," according to Erasmus. As if to distance himself from the old king, one of Henry's first acts was to have his father's despised ministers, Richard Empson and Edmund Dudley, arrested and executed for high treason. He also took his late brother's widow, Catherine of Aragon, as his bride – this would have far-reaching consequences in the years ahead.



His later life was marked by tragedy, but Henry VII did manage to secure the Tudor dynasty



Fought between England and Scotland in Northumberland, the battle of Flodden was fierce and bloody – and saw the demise of James IV of Scotland

9 9 September 1513
Battle of Flodden

The treaty signed by Henry VII and James IV in 1502 was hardly one of 'perpetual peace', as it claimed to be. The long-standing hostilities had resumed soon afterwards and, in 1513, they spilled out into open conflict. James declared war on England to honour the Auld Alliance with France by diverting Henry VIII's troops away from their campaign against the French king Louis XII. Henry had already antagonised James by claiming to be overlord of Scotland and, in late August 1513, the Scottish king gathered his troops and marched south towards England.

He encountered the English force, under the command of the Earl of Surrey, near the village of Branxton (rather than Flodden, from which the battle takes its name) in Northumberland. What followed was the largest clash of arms ever between England and Scotland – and one of the most fiercely contested battles in history. "The battle was cruel, none spared other, and the king himself fought valiantly," stated one contemporary chronicler.

James paid a high price for his bravery: he was mortally wounded by an arrow as he was advancing upon Surrey. His wife, Margaret, was appointed the formal guardian of their infant son (by now James V), and initially given powers of regency, although these were withdrawn when she remarried.

10 24 December 1515
Wolsey is appointed lord chancellor

Thomas Wolsey's rise to power was thanks to his own political guile and the young king's obvious preference for pleasurable pursuits over the business of government. Having served Henry's father, Wolsey rapidly proved his worth to the new king. His servant, George Cavendish, observed how he "dayly attendyd uppon the kyng in the Court beyng in his especyall grace & favour". His ecclesiastical appointments – notably as archbishop of York and cardinal – were swiftly followed by political ones. Towards the end of 1515, Henry raised him to the position of lord chancellor.

Not long after, Erasmus, who spent some considerable time at Henry's court, described Wolsey as governing "more really than the king himself". The fact that Wolsey was merely the son of a butcher made his rise to prominence a bitter pill to swallow for the blue-blooded members of Henry's council and he soon had a coterie of dangerous enemies. But Wolsey cared little for that and his ambition knew no bounds. In the same year that he was made lord chancellor, he set about building a magnificent new palace for himself – Hampton Court – which he filled with priceless furnishings and works of art, together with a household of more than 400 staff. Soon, envious courtiers were whispering that Wolsey's magnificence was beginning to eclipse that of his royal master.

"Wolsey was **the son of a butcher** – a bitter pill for Henry's blue-blooded council"

As Henry VIII's closest confidant, Wolsey lived a life of power, influence and no small amount of luxury

ALAMY/BRIDGEMAN

11 18 February 1516
Birth of the future Mary I

Although the early years of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon's marriage were happy and harmonious, a string of stillbirths and miscarriages had started to put a strain on their relationship. The joy that accompanied the birth of a son on New Year's Day 1511 proved short-lived: the little prince died just seven weeks later. The birth of a healthy princess, christened Mary (pictured here later in life), in February 1516 eased relations between Henry and Catherine. Even though she was not the hoped-for son, she could still be useful in the international marriage market and, more importantly, she was proof that Catherine could bear healthy children.

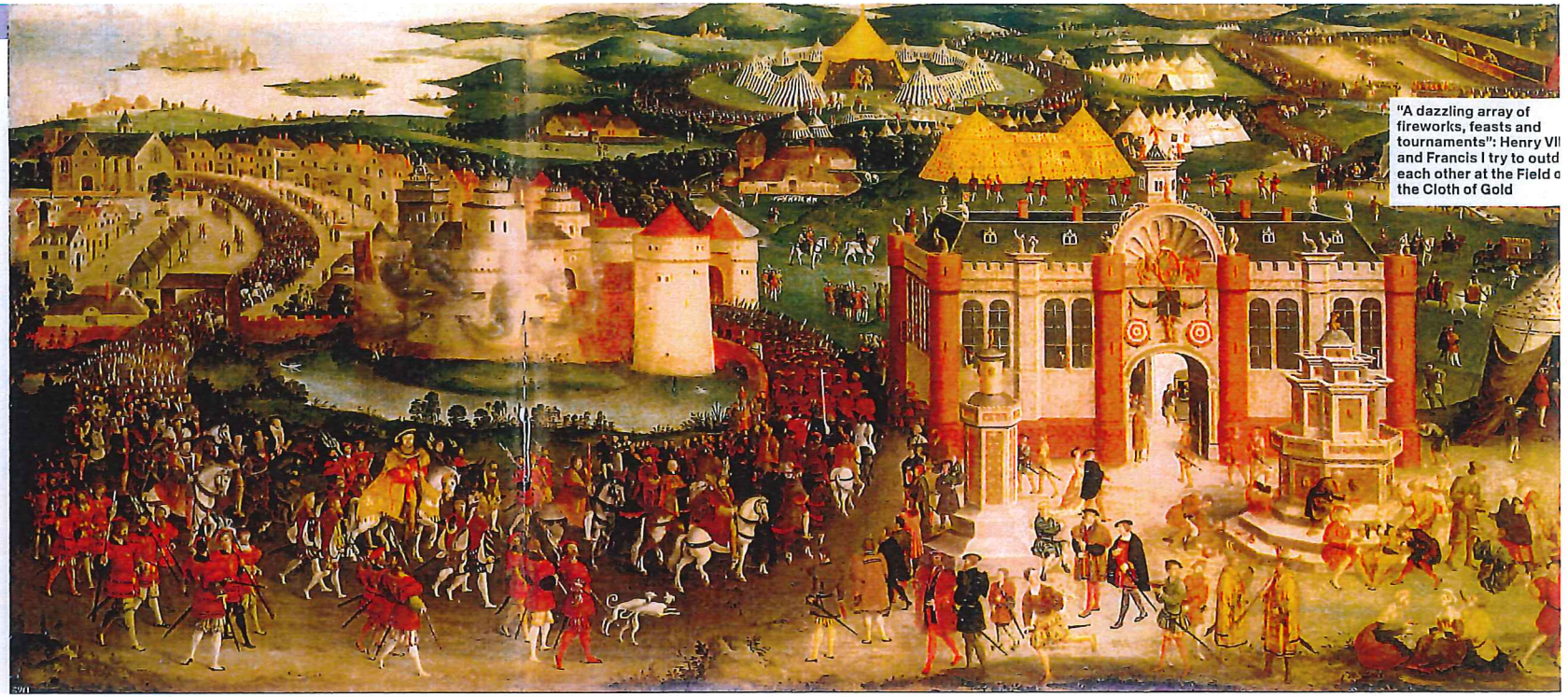
But Mary would be the only surviving child from the marriage, and Henry became increasingly convinced that he had displeased God by taking his late brother's widow as a bride. For the first few years of her life, though, Mary was a source of delight to her parents. A pretty and precocious child, she entertained a visiting French delegation with a performance on the virginals when she was just four and a half years old. She would grow to be particularly close to her mother, with whom she shared a devout Roman Catholic faith and a love of all things Spanish. By contrast, her relationship with her father became increasingly strained.

12 7-24 June 1520 The Field of the Cloth of Gold

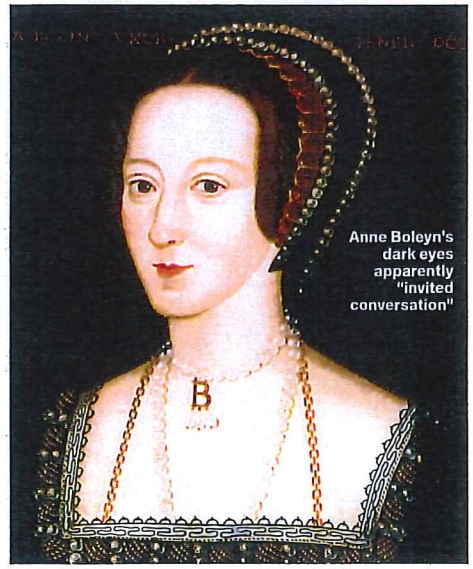
Henry VIII and Francis I, king of France, were natural rivals. Close in age, they were both lauded for their good looks, sporting prowess and cultural accomplishments, and had established magnificent courts. But on the surface, they were careful to maintain the impression of cordiality. To this end, they had signed a treaty in 1514 and, six years later, it was decided that the two kings should meet to "increase their bonds of friendship".

The event, which was organised by the Francophile Cardinal Wolsey and took place near Calais in June 1520, was one of the most ostentatious ever seen. This was an opportunity not just for a political rapprochement, but for each king to try to outshine the other. A dazzling array of fireworks, feasts and tournaments was staged, costing Henry and Francis millions in modern-day money. The tents, clothes and other fabrics displayed so much cloth of gold that it gave the meeting its name. The English king triumphed with an enormous temporary palace (covering an area of 10,000 square metres and erected by 6,000 men sent ahead for the purpose) and a wine fountain, but his French rival outwitted him in the field of combat.

Their natural competitiveness ensured that the meeting actually worsened, rather than cemented, their relationship. Within a short time, they were at war again.



"A dazzling array of fireworks, feasts and tournaments": Henry VII and Francis I try to outd each other at the Field o the Cloth of Gold



Anne Boleyn's dark eyes apparently "invited conversation"

ALAMY

13 Early 1522 Anne Boleyn arrives at court

In 1522 the ambitious politician and diplomat Thomas Boleyn secured a place for the younger of his two daughters, Anne, in Catherine of Aragon's household. Having taken up her appointment, Anne swiftly established herself as one of the leading ladies of the court. What set her apart was her style and sophistication, both of which had been honed to perfection during her service at the French court. Although she had strikingly dark eyes which "invited conversation", Anne was no great beauty. The Venetian ambassador was clearly bemused by Henry VIII's later fascination with her. "Madam Anne is not one of the handsomest women in the world," he wrote. "She is of middling stature, swarthy complexion, long neck, wide mouth, bosom not much raised."

The early relationship between Henry and Anne showed little of the intensity that it would later develop. Indeed, Anne had been at court for four years by the time there was any hint of romance. This was very different to Henry's previous infidelities; Anne proved to be the most unyielding of mistresses. She persistently held out against the king's increasingly fervent advances, insisting that while she might love him in spirit, she could not love him in body unless they were married. It was an extraordinarily audacious ploy. She would not be a mistress; she would be queen.

14 31 October 1529 Exit Wolsey, enter Cromwell

When Henry's VIII's chief adviser Cardinal Wolsey fell from grace in October 1529 for failing to gain his master an annulment from Catherine of Aragon, it was expected that his favourite servant, Thomas Cromwell, would fall with him. Cromwell feared this himself and wept bitter tears of regret. But he soon rallied, pronouncing that he would go to the court and "make or marre".

Acting as an intermediary between his fallen master and the king had all the makings of a thankless task, but Cromwell turned it to his advantage with spectacular success. Henry was quick to appreciate the skill of this self-trained lawyer and soon put it to his own use. Within days of his arrival, Cromwell had secured a seat in parliament and he was appointed a member of the council the following year. Far from being overawed by such a meteoric rise, he was outspoken and persuasive in his opinions, much to the annoyance of his higher-born colleagues. The similarity between this new kid on the block and the man whom he had effectively replaced could not have been lost on the king. Wolsey and Cromwell shared more than their humble birth: both were highly intelligent, ambitious, audacious and extraordinarily industrious.

But Henry had had his fingers burnt with the cardinal and was not about to entrust another adviser with as much power as he had enjoyed. Cromwell would have to work hard to gain his trust.

"Far from being overawed by his meteoric rise, **Cromwell was both outspoken and persuasive**"

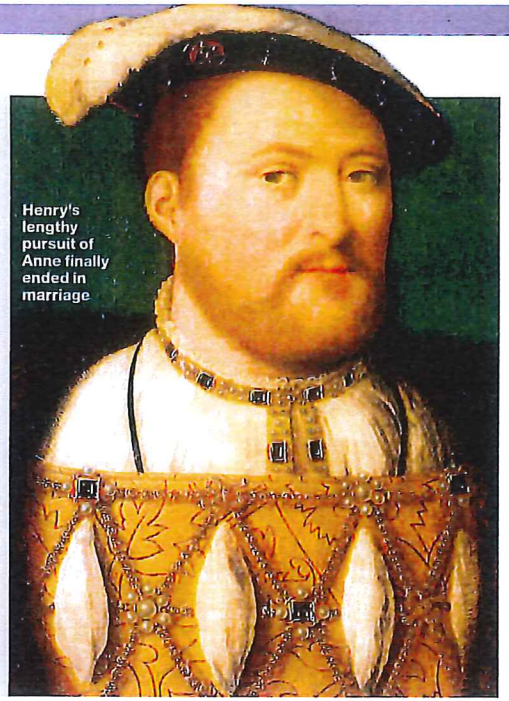
After Cardinal Wolsey's demise, Thomas Cromwell inherited the second most powerful position in the land

ALAMY

15 25 January 1533 Henry marries Anne Boleyn

In late 1532, Anne Boleyn finally submitted to Henry's advances and became his mistress. The gamble seemed to have paid off: Eustace Chapuys, the Holy Roman empire's ambassador to England, noted with some disgust that "the king cannot leave her for an hour". By December, Anne was pregnant. Her royal lover and his ministers now had to act fast if the baby was to be born legitimate. On 25 January 1533, Henry married Anne in his private chapel at Westminster. The ceremony was conducted in great secrecy, for the divorce from Catherine of Aragon had not yet been secured. Convinced that the child Anne carried was a son, the king immediately ordered Cromwell to legitimise their union. The very day after the wedding, parliament was recalled to pass the necessary legislation. The divorce was finally confirmed on 23 May, and Anne was crowned on 1 June.

But the child that was born to Anne on 7 September was not the expected son and heir. It was a girl. Henry was devastated. He had overturned the entire religious and political life of England in order to marry Anne, on the promise that she would give him the prince upon which the stability of his realm depended. Little did he know that this "useless girl", Elizabeth, would go on to become the longest-reigning of all the Tudor monarchs.



Henry's lengthy pursuit of Anne finally ended in marriage

This illustration portrays Henry VIII resting his feet on the prostrate Pope Clement VII

ALAMY

16 November 1534 First Act of Supremacy

In November 1534, during one of the most revolutionary parliaments of the Tudor age, the Act of Supremacy was passed. This legislation is often seen as the beginning of the English Reformation, although the foundations had been laid during the previous five years. It declared Henry VIII to be supreme head of the Church of England and rejected all "foreign authority".

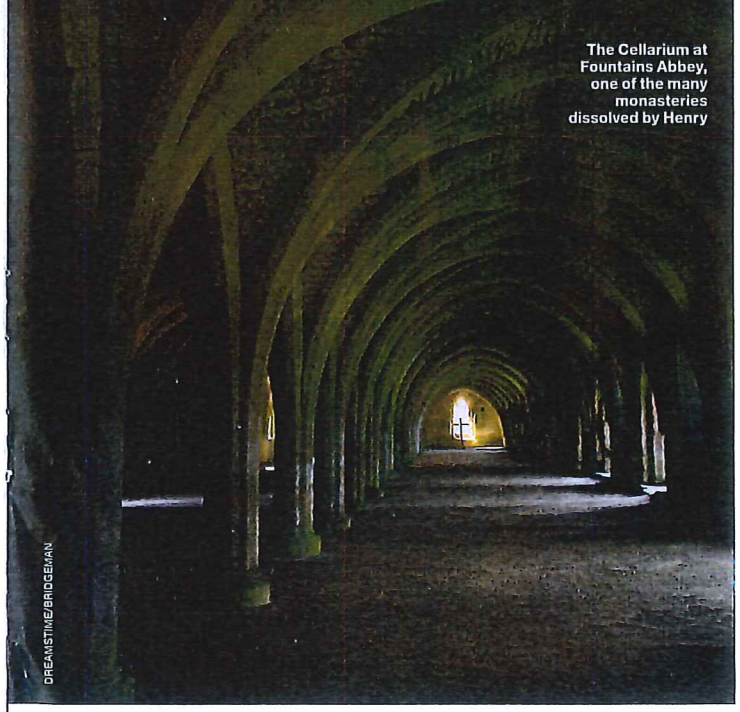
At a stroke, this ended centuries of papal jurisdiction over the religious life of England. The initial inspiration for this seismic shift had been the king's desire for a divorce from Catherine of Aragon: when the pope refused to grant it, Henry's ministers concluded that the only option was to reject his authority. But the wording of the act made it clear that there were more revolutionary changes to come. It stipulated that Henry and his heirs "shall have full power and authority from time to time to visit, repress, redress, reform, order, correct, restrain, and amend all such errors, heresies, abuses, offences, contempts, and enormities, whatsoever they be". This gave Cromwell carte blanche to undertake a thoroughgoing reformation of the English church, but its revolutionary tendrils would reach even further than that. By the end of his ascendancy, the entire government of the realm had been overhauled by his reforms.

17 21 January 1535 The Dissolution of the Monasteries

On 21 January 1535, Henry appointed Cromwell viceregent in spirituals, or 'vicar-general'. This gave him considerable new powers over the church and he wasted no time in dispatching commissioners across the country to assess the state of each religious house. With typical attention to detail, he even investigated a few himself. Eustace Chapuys reported: "Wherever the King goes, Cromwell, who accompanies him, goes about visiting the abbeys in the neighbourhood, taking inventories of their lands and revenues."

Motivated as much by tales of widespread corruption as by the prospect of seizing their immense wealth and landholdings, Cromwell began a programme of systematic dissolution which would see the closure and demolition of hundreds of monasteries. At the same time, he organised a series of executions to make an example of those who refused to recognise Henry's supremacy. Principal among his victims were Bishop John Fisher and Sir Thomas More, both of whom had been thrown in the Tower for refusing to sign the oath of supremacy.

When Fisher and More resisted intense pressure from Cromwell to conform, they went to the block. His favour with the king now seemed unassailable. The Venetian ambassador scathingly remarked that although "this Cromwell was a person of low origin and condition; he is now Secretary of State, the King's prime minister, and has supreme authority".



The Cellarium at Fountains Abbey, one of the many monasteries dissolved by Henry

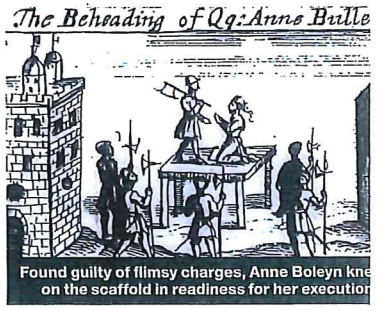
DREAMSTIME/BRIDGEMAN

18 19 May 1536 Anne Boleyn is executed

Although Henry VIII had pursued Anne Boleyn relentlessly for seven long years, shaking England to its core in the process, once won, she had proved a disappointment. Her high-handed and 'unqueenly' manner made her dangerously unpopular and sparked frequent rows with her husband. Most damning of all her 'sins', though, was her failure to produce the longed-for Tudor prince. When she miscarried a male foetus on the day of Catherine of Aragon's funeral in January 1536, things began to unravel rapidly. "This king has not spoken 10 times to the Concubine… when formerly he could not leave her for an hour," reported a gleeful Chapuys in February.

Worse still, for Anne, was the fact that her royal husband had already found a new favourite to replace her: the virtuous and rather insipid Jane Seymour. Henry wanted rid of Anne and there was only one man who could fix it: the same man who had arranged the marriage in the first place. Cromwell was swift to act. He gathered 'evidence' (flimsy at best) of her adultery with not one but five men, including her own brother. It was one of the most brutal plots in history, resulting in the beheading not only of the queen, but of all her alleged lovers.

"Her high-handed manner **sparked frequent rows** with her husband"



Found guilty of flimsy charges, Anne Boleyn kne on the scaffold in readiness for her execution

19 1 October 1536 Pilgrimage of Grace

On 1 October 1536 Thomas Kendall, vicar of Louth in Lincolnshire, used his weekly sermon to speak out against the royal commissioners who were expected in the town the following day. It was rumoured that these men were planning to raid all of the local churches, as well as the monasteries, seizing their treasures and laying waste to their adornments. The rumours spread like wildfire and, within days, almost all of northern Lincolnshire was up in arms. Henry VIII's religious reforms had swiftly sparked widespread resentment among his subjects – and this was the first open expression of their fury.

The uprisings, which became known collectively as the Pilgrimage of Grace, spread rapidly across the northern counties, winning support from nobility and commoners alike. They constituted the greatest threat to Henry's authority that he had faced during his 27 years on the throne. Although he was inclined to clemency at first, when fresh revolts continued to break out during the early months of 1537, he took swift and brutal action. All the ringleaders were executed, including the most influential: Robert Aske, a one-eyed Yorkshire lawyer, who was hanged from the walls of Clifford's Tower in York as a grim warning to the inhabitants of that rebellious city. For all his bluster, though, Henry's confidence in the Reformation had been badly shaken.

The Pilgrimage of Grace was brutally suppressed by Henry VIII, who had the ringleaders executed

Henry's joy at Edward's birth was tempered by Jane Seymour's death just 12 days later

20 12 October 1537 Birth of Edward VI

Henry VIII had married his third wife just 11 days after the execution of his second. Jane Seymour had proved a welcome contrast to Anne Boleyn. Meek and compliant, she was likely to give the king little trouble as a wife. What he hoped she *would* give him was a son. In May 1537, it was announced at court that the new queen was pregnant. Henry was transported with joy, convinced that this time God would grant him a boy. A mass was held to celebrate later that month.

Jane's pregnancy progressed without incident and, in the middle of September, she began her confinement at Hampton Court. The king and his courtiers waited anxiously for news as Jane's labour dragged on for two days and three nights. Finally, at about two o'clock on the morning of 12 October, the child was born. It was a boy.

Henry's long struggle for a son and heir was over at last. There was great rejoicing throughout the court and beyond. England had a male heir; her troubles would surely now be over. But Jane never recovered from the long and tortuous birth. She died, possibly of puerperal fever, some 12 days later. The grief-stricken king lamented: "Divine Providence has mingled my joy with the bitterness of the death of her who brought me to this happiness."

"**England had a male heir**; her troubles would surely now be over"

BRIDGEMAN/ALAMY

21 1539 Every parish is given an English Bible

One of the greatest legacies of the English Reformation was to provide every parish church in the country with a copy of the Bible in English. This gave the king's subjects direct access to the word of God for the first time in history. The move was masterminded by Thomas Cromwell, whose reforming drive was motivated by personal piety, not just a desire to swell the royal coffers. So committed was he to the project that he had contributed £400 of his own money to bring it to fruition.

In 1538, he ordered that "one book of the whole Bible of the largest volume in English" should be set up in every church, so "that every man having free access to it by reading of the same may both be the more apt to understand the declaration of it at the preacher's mouth, and also the more able to teach and instruct his wife, children and family at home". The task of distributing copies of the 'Great Bible', translated by Miles Coverdale, to all 8,500 parishes in the country was a gargantuan one. It took several false starts before it was finally achieved.

"Cromwell was so committed to the project that he contributed **£400 of his own money** to it"

The title page of the 'Great Bible' shows Henry distributing copies of this first English translation

Henry believed that Holbein's portrait of Anne of Cleves was misleading

ALAMY

22 6 January 1540 Henry VIII marries Anne of Cleves

Within weeks of the death of the king's third wife, Jane Seymour, the search was on for a successor. With no obvious home-grown candidate, the net had to be cast further afield. Anne, daughter of the Duke of Cleves, soon became the lead contender. Her father had expelled papal authority from his realm and was therefore a natural ally for the English king.

But Henry's ambassadors admitted they had heard "no great praise either of her personage or of her beauty", so Henry demanded that Holbein be dispatched to Cleves to paint Anne's likeness. The result was flattering enough to convince him that she would make a pleasant wife and the marriage treaty was duly signed.

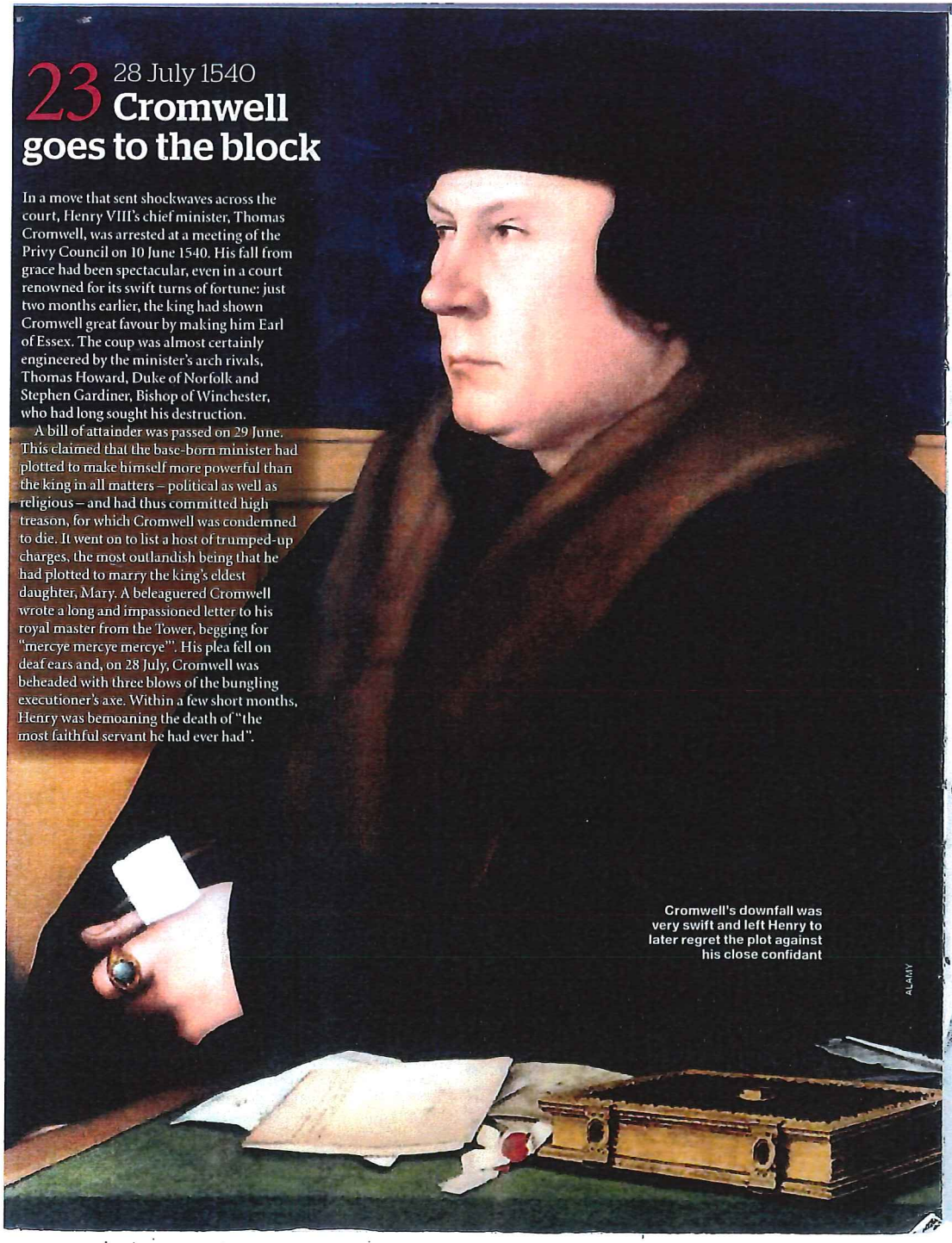
But when Henry met Anne upon her arrival in England in December 1539, he was bitterly disappointed. "I like her not! I like her not!" he shouted at a dismayed Cromwell, and ordered him to find a way out of the marriage.

But the treaty was binding; it was with extreme reluctance that Henry was obliged to "put his neck in the yoke" and marry Anne on 6 January 1540. He found his bride so repugnant that he was unable to consummate the union. This at least made it easier to secure an annulment, which Henry succeeded in doing just six months later on the grounds that Anne had been betrothed to someone else before their marriage.

23 28 July 1540
Cromwell goes to the block

In a move that sent shockwaves across the court, Henry VIII's chief minister, Thomas Cromwell, was arrested at a meeting of the Privy Council on 10 June 1540. His fall from grace had been spectacular, even in a court renowned for its swift turns of fortune: just two months earlier, the king had shown Cromwell great favour by making him Earl of Essex. The coup was almost certainly engineered by the minister's arch rivals, Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk and Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, who had long sought his destruction.

A bill of attainder was passed on 29 June. This claimed that the base-born minister had plotted to make himself more powerful than the king in all matters – political as well as religious – and had thus committed high treason, for which Cromwell was condemned to die. It went on to list a host of trumped-up charges, the most outlandish being that he had plotted to marry the king's eldest daughter, Mary. A beleaguered Cromwell wrote a long and impassioned letter to his royal master from the Tower, begging for "mercye mercye mercye". His plea fell on deaf ears and, on 28 July, Cromwell was beheaded with three blows of the bungling executioner's axe. Within a few short months, Henry was bemoaning the death of "the most faithful servant he had ever had".



Cromwell's downfall was very swift and left Henry to later regret the plot against his close confidant

ALAMY

24 13 February 1542
Catherine Howard is executed

Henry VIII married his fifth wife on the very same day as Cromwell's execution. Catherine was only about 16 years old, making her the king's junior by more than 30 years. A lady-in-waiting to Anne of Cleves, Catherine had quickly beguiled the king with her seductive charms. But the new queen's past did not bear scrutiny. Her first sexual liaison was with her music teacher when she may have been as young as 12 and it had been followed by a relationship with her kinsman, Francis Dereham.

None of this was known to Henry, who prized chastity in his brides. Neither was he aware that, not long after the wedding, Catherine began an illicit affair with Thomas Culpepper, a gentleman of the privy chamber. When their affair was discovered, an investigation was launched into the queen's conduct. Her previous indiscretions soon came to light.

Confronted with the evidence, Catherine confessed on 8 November 1541. Her affair with Culpepper had been testified to by her lady-in-waiting, Jane Rochford, as well as by a love letter that Catherine had written to him, which she had signed: "Yours, as long as life endures." Meanwhile, Dereham, she said, had used her "in such sort as a man doth use his wife many and sundry times". Heartbroken and humiliated, Henry had no hesitation in sending her to the block.

BRIDGEMAN/ALAMY/DREAMSTIME - BACK COVER: DREAMSTIME

"Not long after the wedding, **Catherine began an illicit affair** with Thomas Culpepper, a gentleman of the privy chamber"

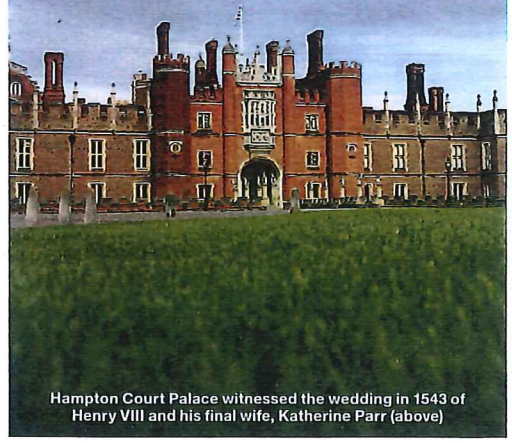
Catherine's previous and ongoing indiscretions made her the second wife of Henry to go to the scaffold

25 12 July 1543
Henry marries Katherine Parr

Henry spent a year licking his wounds after the humiliating betrayal of his flighty young fifth wife before yet again turning his thoughts to marriage. The lady he set his sights on was something of a contrast to his previous wives. The twice-widowed Katherine Parr joined the household of the king's eldest daughter, Mary, in February 1543. At 31 years of age, Katherine was a comely, if not exactly beautiful woman. In contrast to her direct predecessor, she was highly intelligent and articulate, with strong religious principles of a reformist nature.

Despite Henry's terrible track record (not to mention his increasing age and girth), being the wife of the king was still an attractive prospect, but Katherine was far from flattered by his attentions. In fact, she loved another: the handsome but reckless Thomas Seymour, brother of the late Queen Jane. Sensing a rival, the king found an excuse to send him away from court.

Katherine remained reluctant but eventually put her own desires aside and consented to be the sixth wife of this much-married monarch. The wedding took place on 12 July 1543 in the queen's private apartments at Hampton Court Palace. There were just 18 guests.



Hampton Court Palace witnessed the wedding in 1543 of Henry VIII and his final wife, Katherine Parr (above)

BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE

Welcome to the second and final part of *The Tudors in 50 Moments*. Last month we began with the two Henrys and now we take the story on to the reigns of Edward VI and Mary I, before turning our attention to the dazzling era of Elizabeth I. As before, the 25 moments have been selected by Tudor historian Tracy Borman who is also a regular contributor to the magazine.

Please do get in touch to let us know your thoughts on these supplements. We may well be tackling different topics in this manner in future, so do keep an eye out for that. And of course we will continue to explore the fascinating Tudor era within the magazine as the year progresses.

Rob Attar
Editor

Missed part 1?

The first half of our Tudors in 50 moments was included in our Christmas 2014 edition. You can order that edition as a back issue by calling us on 0844 844 0250

Tracy Borman, the writer of *The Tudors in 50 Moments*, is a historian whose latest book is *Thomas Cromwell: The Untold Story of Henry VIII's Most Faithful Servant* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2014)

26 Spring 1544 The third Act of Succession is passed

The first and second Acts of Succession (1533 and 1536) had declared Henry VIII's eldest daughter, Mary, and her half-sister, Elizabeth, to be bastards. Elizabeth – just two years and eight months old at the time of the second act – had been quick to appreciate the change in her status, demanding of her servants: "How happs it yesterday Lady Princess and to-day but Lady Elsabeth?"

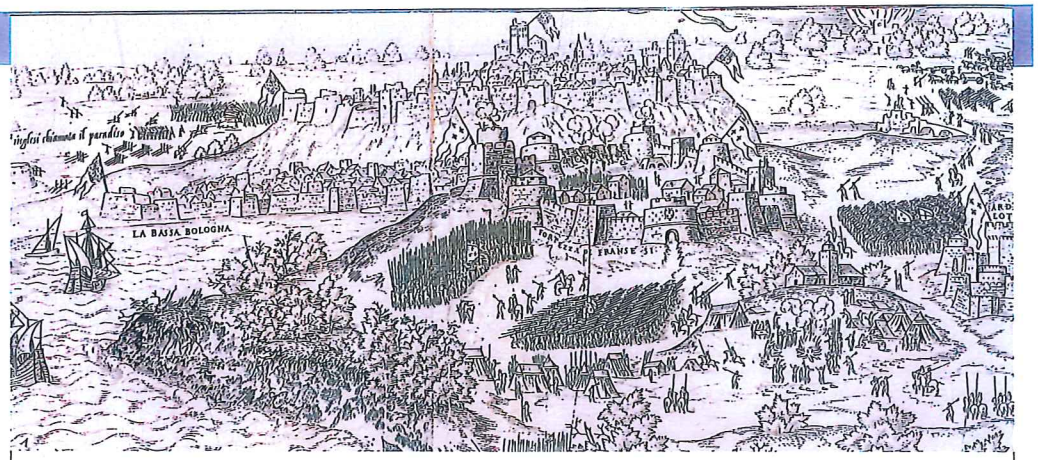
She and Mary had lived under the stigma of illegitimacy since the birth of their half-brother, Edward, in 1537, which had moved them further from the throne. But the benign influence of Henry's last wife, Katherine Parr, changed all of that.

Taking pity on the disinherited girls (Elizabeth in particular, with whom she shared a passion for Protestantism), Katherine persuaded her husband to invite them to court more often. It was almost certainly her influence that led the king to assent to the third Act of Succession in spring 1544, which acknowledged Mary and Elizabeth as heirs to the throne once more.

This transformed the status of both girls from illegitimate daughters to royal princesses. But no one could have expected that they would actually come into their inheritance: Edward was a strong, healthy boy with every prospect of a long life.

"No one expected that **Mary and Elizabeth** would actually come into their inheritance"

Lucas de Heere's allegory of the Tudor succession depicts Henry VIII with Elizabeth (right), Edward (kneeling) and Mary (with Philip II of Spain)



27 19 July 1544 Siege of Boulogne

Henry VIII's troops laid siege to Boulogne in July 1544, but just six years later the town was back in the hands of the French

For most of his reign, Henry played a complex game of diplomacy with the two great potentates of Europe: Francis I of France and Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. But peace never lasted long, and in 1543 Henry was on the offensive yet again.

When he discovered Francis had helped fortify Scotland against England, Henry made an alliance with Charles V and agreed to invade France. In early 1544, an English force departed from Calais and marched towards the coastal town of Boulogne, laying siege to it on 19 July.

Desperate to prove he was still a warrior king, Henry set out to join his troops a few weeks later. He arrived shortly after the French surrender on 13 September. But his triumph proved short-lived. The emperor promptly made a separate treaty with Francis I, and they agreed to unite their forces to reclaim Boulogne for the French.

Henry returned to England at the end of September, leaving the dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk in charge of holding the town. But they disobeyed his orders and withdrew most of the troops to Calais.

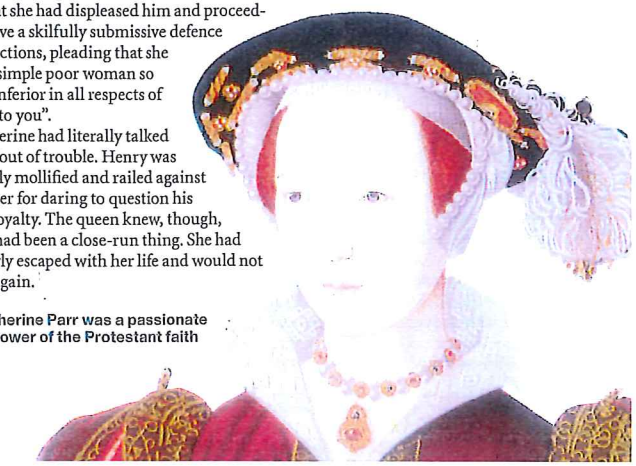
The remaining English forces managed to withhold the French bombardment for several years, but it was an expensive and largely futile campaign. In 1550 a treaty was signed that finally returned Boulogne to the French, by which time both Henry VIII and Francis I were dead.

28 1546 Katherine Parr narrowly avoids arrest

Katherine Parr's passion for the 'new faith' became ever more pronounced during her marriage to Henry as his sixth and final wife. Gathering around her like-minded women (including her stepdaughter Elizabeth), she would spend hours debating the finer points of reform and even wrote some religious treatises herself. In doing so, she made some dangerous enemies among the religious conservatives at court, notably Stephen Gardiner, bishop of Winchester.

When the king confided in him that he resented his wife's outspokenness on matters of religion, Gardiner seized his chance. He and his faction gathered enough evidence of Katherine's heresy to secure a warrant for her arrest. By chance, the queen heard of this before the men could reach her and immediately took to her bed, claiming that she was mortally ill. When the king rushed to see her, she cleverly told him that she was sick with fear that she had displeased him and proceeded to give a skilfully submissive defence of her actions, pleading that she was "a simple poor woman so much inferior in all respects of nature to you".

Katherine had literally talked herself out of trouble. Henry was instantly mollified and railed against Gardiner for daring to question his wife's loyalty. The queen knew, though, that it had been a close-run thing. She had narrowly escaped with her life and would not risk it again.



Katherine Parr was a passionate follower of the Protestant faith

ALAMY, GETTY

29 19 January 1547
The Earl of Surrey is executed

Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey was the eldest son of an old stalwart of Henry VIII's court, Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk. A gifted poet, Surrey was also highly volatile and a notorious drunk, whom the king called a "foolish, proud boy".

Surrey made a dangerous enemy of the late queen Jane Seymour's brother, Edward, who was a dominant force at court. Edward played on the ageing king's increasing paranoia, convincing him that the Howards were plotting to place Surrey on the throne when Henry died. The fact that Surrey had displayed royal arms on his coat of arms was evidence enough for the king, who ordered his arrest and that of his father, Norfolk.

Both were found guilty of high treason and sentenced to death. But Surrey hatched a daring plan to escape from the Tower of London, where he and his father awaited their death. This involved squeezing through the shaft that ran from the latrine into the river below.

He almost succeeded, but guards raised the alarm when they saw his empty bed and found him making his way down the shaft. The hapless earl was executed on 19 January 1547. The king's own death nine days later won Norfolk a stay of execution, and he was pardoned by Henry's daughter Mary when she became queen in 1553.

Many believed Henry Howard had his eye on the throne of England

30 28 January 1547
Henry VIII dies

In his later years, Henry was increasingly incapacitated by an old jousting wound in his leg, which had turned ulcerous. As a result, he had long since lost his sporting prowess and his girth had expanded at an alarming rate. When he became king, he had boasted a trim 32in waist; by the end of his reign it had expanded to a colossal 52ins.

A sketch taken by the Antwerp artist Cornelis Massys at the end of Henry's life shows him as a grotesque figure. His beady eyes and tiny, pursed mouth are almost lost in the layers of flesh that surround them. He appears to have no neck, and his enormous frame extends beyond the reaches of the canvas. A contemporary chronicler corroborated this portrait: "The king was so stout that such a man has never been seen. Three of the biggest men that could be found could get inside his doublet."

Cornelis Massys' "grotesque figure" of Henry VIII

Henry's obesity hastened his death, at the age of 55, on 28 January 1547, in the palace of Whitehall. He was buried next to his beloved third wife, Jane Seymour, at Windsor Castle and was succeeded by their nine-year-old son, Edward VI, under the protectorship of Jane's brother Edward.

"By the end of his reign, **Henry's waist had expanded** to a colossal 52 inches"

31 January 1549
The first Act of Uniformity is passed

Although still very young, by the time of his accession, Edward VI was already strongly committed to the reformist faith. He and his half-sister Elizabeth had been tutored by men known to be sympathetic to the new Protestant teachings that were gaining ground across Europe.

Although he had spearheaded the English Reformation, Henry VIII had been a faithful Catholic at heart, only tolerating the radical new ideas when it served his interests to do so – notably in securing a divorce from his first wife.

But Edward was determined to introduce a full-scale Protestant reformation into England. He immediately issued a set of injunctions to the church which provided a blueprint for reform. Then, at the beginning of 1549, the first Act of Uniformity was passed. This established the Book of Common Prayer as the only legal form of worship in England.

Largely the work of Thomas Cranmer, archbishop of Canterbury, the book not only provided an English-language translation of the Latin liturgical books, but set down – for the first time – a consistent form of worship for all the king's subjects. It was nothing if not controversial: it was passed by the House of Lords with a majority of just two votes, and sparked riots later that year.

Edward's religious reforms included the introduction of the Book of Common Prayer

BRIDGEMAN/SUPERSTOCK

32 22 January 1552
The Duke of Somerset is executed

The turbulence that so often accompanies the succession of a minor soon dominated Edward's court. A deadly rivalry sprang up between the lord protector, Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset and John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland. Seymour's position was rendered increasingly unstable by the behaviour of his volatile and ambitious brother Thomas, who recklessly attempted to get physical possession of the king in January 1549.

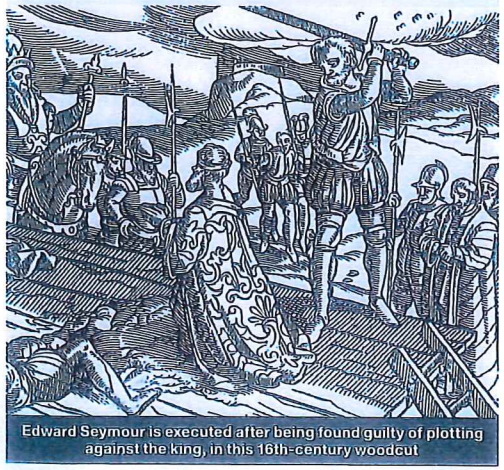
Breaking into Edward's privy garden at Westminster, pistol in hand, Thomas tried to gain access to the king's bedroom but was bitten by the boy's pet spaniel. Without thinking, he shot the dog dead, which prompted a furore as the royal guard rushed forward, thinking an assassin was in the palace.

Thomas was arrested and taken to the Tower. He was found guilty of treason and his own brother was obliged to sign the death warrant, which was carried out on 20 March.

The Duke of Somerset survived for three more years, though, and was even allowed back into the privy council. But when he was discovered plotting against his rival, Dudley, the new de facto leader of government, he was rearrested and executed.

Somerset's young nephew, the king, noted with cold detachment in his diary: "The Duke of Somerset had his head cut off upon Tower Hill between eight and nine o'clock in the morning."

"Thomas tried to gain access to the **king's bedroom** but was bitten by the boy's pet spaniel"



BRIDGEMAN/SUPERSTOCK

Edward Seymour is executed after being found guilty of plotting against the king, in this 16th-century woodcut

33 6 July 1553
Edward VI dies

In the spring of 1553, the 15-year-old king suddenly fell ill. An apparently minor chest infection had turned into something altogether more serious, and within weeks it was clear the boy was dying.

Anxious to prevent the accession of Edward's staunchly Roman Catholic sister, Mary, Dudley orchestrated a coup by marrying his youngest son, Guildford, to Lady Jane Grey, the great-niece of Henry VIII, and placing her on the throne.

On 8 July, two days after Edward's death, Jane (then aged 16 or 17 at most) was proclaimed queen and entered the Tower of London with great ceremony – and reluctance. She would reign for just nine days.

For all her dogmatism, Mary was a true Tudor princess and wasted no time in rallying thousands of subjects to her cause. Soon, the council turned its coat and declared for her. On 19 July, Mary was proclaimed queen, to the great rejoicing of Londoners.

Jane and her husband were convicted for treason in November, but the new queen bore them no ill-will and it was rumoured she would pardon them. A series of uprisings at the beginning of 1554 changed all of that.

Mary reluctantly acknowledged that Jane was too dangerous a threat to be allowed to live. She was led to her execution on 12 February, having watched the headless body of her husband, Guildford Dudley, being carried back from Tower Hill.

34 January 1554 Wyatt's Rebellion

Thomas Wyatt was vehemently opposed to Mary's Spanish marriage

In stark contrast to her half-sister, Elizabeth, Mary was resolved from the start of her reign to marry as quickly as possible. But her choice was deeply unpopular among her xenophobic subjects: the Catholic king of Spain, Philip II.

Shortly after their marriage settlement was agreed in January 1554, Sir Thomas Wyatt (son of the famous poet) raised an army of 3,000 rebels and marched towards London from Kent with the stated aim of deposing Mary and replacing her with Elizabeth.

Elizabeth was almost certainly innocent of any involvement in the plot, but Wyatt claimed he had written to her of his plans. Mary was taking no chances: having defeated the rebels – Wyatt would soon be executed – she had her sister brought to the Tower.

As she slowly mounted the steps, Elizabeth suddenly stopped and exclaimed: "Oh Lord! I never thought to have come in here as a prisoner; and I pray you all, good friends and fellows, bear me witness, that I come in no traitor, but as true woman to the queen's majesty as any is now living."

Subjected to interrogation by Mary's ministers, Elizabeth defended herself so stoically they were eventually forced to concede defeat and she was released on 19 May – 18 years to the day since her mother, Anne Boleyn, had been executed in the fortress.

"3,000 rebels **marched towards London** with the stated aim of deposing Mary"

John Rogers was the first of more than 300 Protestants to be burned alive for their religious beliefs

35 4 February 1555 The first Protestant martyr is burned

Upon her accession, Mary had made it clear that her most urgent priority was to return England to the papal fold. Driven on by an evangelising zeal, she ordered increasingly drastic measures in order to achieve this, not flinching from burning those subjects who persisted in their 'heretical' beliefs.

The first Protestant martyr was John Rogers, who went to the flames on 4 February 1555. Rogers had spent time in Antwerp, where he had met the influential reformer William Tyndale, whose teachings so inspired him that he immediately abandoned the Roman Catholic faith.

"The queen sent **more than 300 Protestants** to the flames"

Rogers soon befriended other leading reformers and proceeded to evangelise about their teachings when he returned to England in 1548. This won him great favour with Edward VI, but he alienated Mary as soon as she succeeded to the throne by preaching about the "true doctrine taught in King Edward's days", and warning his hearers against "pestilent popery, idolatry and superstition".

During the next three years, the fiercely dogmatic queen sent more than 300 Protestants to the flames in her quest to re-establish Catholicism's supremacy in England. Most prominent among them were Thomas Cranmer, former archbishop of Canterbury, and the bishops Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley. Many more Protestants might have followed if it had not been for 'Bloody' Mary's early death after just five years as queen.

ALAMY

36 17 November 1558 Mary I dies

Mary (pictured right) had never enjoyed good health, and it deteriorated rapidly after she became queen. Desperate to conceive an heir, she suffered the humiliation of two phantom pregnancies during which she displayed all the symptoms of an expectant mother. But her swollen stomach may have been due to a cancerous tumour.

Early in 1558, as Mary persisted in believing that she would soon be delivered of an heir, it was obvious to everyone else that she was dying. By 28 October, wracked with pain, she finally acknowledged that there would be no "fruit of her body", and confirmed that the crown would pass to Elizabeth. She begged her half-sister to uphold the Roman Catholic faith, but the knowledge of how unlikely Elizabeth was to honour this request tormented Mary until her last breath.

Upon hearing that Mary was dead and that she was now queen, Elizabeth proclaimed: "My Lordes, the law of nature moveth me to sorrowe for my sister: The burdaine that is fallen uppon me maketh me amazed." When Elizabeth was proclaimed queen in the City of London, there was great rejoicing. All across the capital, church bells were rung and at night bonfires were lit, around which thousands of people gathered to drink and make merry.

The brief, brutal reign of Mary Tudor was over: now the nation's hopes rested upon her beautiful and charismatic successor.

ALAMY

37 1559 The Act of Uniformity

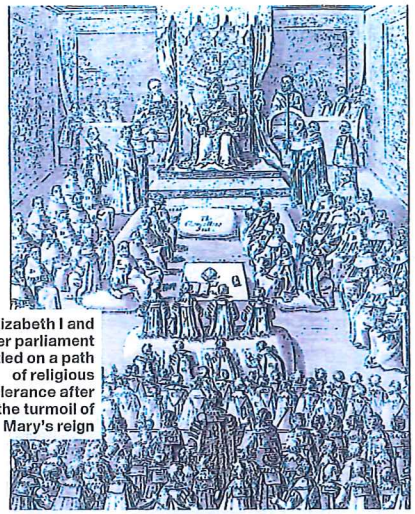
Elizabeth I once famously declared that she had no wish to "make windows into men's souls", and this became immediately apparent during her first parliament.

The most pressing issue of the new reign was to provide clarity on the vexed question of religion. Elizabeth had witnessed first-hand her late sister's disastrously dogmatic religious policy, which had torn the country in two and created a dangerous groundswell of opposition to the monarchy.

Although she was inclined to the Protestant faith, Elizabeth had no intention of trying to impose it upon her subjects in the same way that Mary had with Roman Catholicism.

The keynote of her religious settlement, which was expressed in the Act of Uniformity of 1559, was moderation. This reinstated the English Book of Common Prayer that had been introduced by Edward VI in 1549, and set down that all of Elizabeth's subjects must attend church at least once a week or be fined 12 pence – a considerable sum for the poor.

Meanwhile, Matthew Parker was appointed archbishop of Canterbury. He shared the queen's vision for a single, united Church of England; it was thanks to his influence that the Anglican theology began to take shape.



Elizabeth I and her parliament settled on a path of religious tolerance after the turmoil of Mary's reign

SUPERSTOCK

38 May 1568 Mary, Queen of Scots flees to England

From the earliest days of her reign, Elizabeth had been plagued by rival claimants to the throne. Chief among them was Mary, Queen of Scots. Nine years younger than Elizabeth and widely acclaimed for her beauty, Mary had a strong blood line to the English throne. And as a Catholic, she also rapidly became a figurehead for all of those opposed to the 'heretical' English queen.

That Elizabeth resented her charismatic cousin on a personal as well as a political level there can be no doubt. She quizzed her Scottish ambassador as much about Mary's appearance as about affairs of state. On one occasion, she demanded to know whether Mary was taller than her, and when the beleaguered ambassador reluctantly acceded, Elizabeth snapped: "Then she is too high!"

Her jealousy increased when, in June 1566, Mary gave birth to a son, James. But things soon began to unravel for the Scottish queen. Always one to rule with the heart rather than the head, she formed a passionate attachment to Lord Bothwell, the chief suspect in the murder of her husband, Lord Darnley.

Forced out of Scotland by a coup, Mary unwisely chose to throw herself on the mercy of Elizabeth, who had sent her messages of support. But when Mary arrived in England in May 1568, Elizabeth wasted no time in making the Scottish queen her prisoner.

Mary, Queen of Scots had a blood claim to the English throne – a fact her cousin, Elizabeth I, couldn't afford to overlook

ALAMY

Thomas Howard planned to seize the English throne. Instead, he ended up going to the block

39 Summer 1571 The Ridolfi Plot is revealed

As Elizabeth's reign progressed, the number of plots against her increased. Most were Catholic conspiracies, aimed at placing Mary, Queen of Scots on the English throne.

In 1571, the most serious plot yet was discovered. At its heart was the dangerously ambitious Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk, who planned to marry the captive Queen of Scots and with her seize the English throne.

In early 1571, Mary wrote to the papal agent, Roberto Ridolfi, urging him to solicit help from the pope, Philip II and the Duke of Alva. Mary criticised her cousin for feigning a "willingness to entertain the suggestion of my liberation, to amuse herself at my expense", and accused her of having been "many a time… on the point of compassing my death".

This was treasonous enough, but there was still more evidence: Mary had embroidered a cushion for the Duke of Norfolk with a design that showed a hand clipping off a barren vine so that the fruitful vine might flourish. The message was clear: she, the fertile Queen of Scots, should supplant her childless cousin.

When Elizabeth heard of the plot, she reportedly flew into a "ferocious rage". Norfolk was executed the following year, but Mary – "that devilish woman" – was allowed to live… for now.

"Mary urged Ridolfi **to solicit help** from the pope, Philip II and the Duke of Alva"

40 1575 Robert Dudley proposes to Elizabeth

Although famous for being the 'Virgin Queen', Elizabeth enjoyed an intimate relationship with Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester.

Friends since childhood, they had rapidly developed a relationship that many said went beyond the niceties of court gallantry. The pair acted more like lovers, even in public, as they shared intimate conversations and spent many hours together hunting, dancing and enjoying other courtly pastimes.

Rumours abounded that the pair would marry, particularly after Dudley's first wife, Amy Robsart, was found dead at their home in Oxfordshire. But for all her flirtatiousness, Elizabeth showed no inclination to marry Dudley – or anyone else.

This did not stop him from trying, though. In 1575, Dudley staged a spectacular series of entertainments for the queen at his Warwickshire home, Kenilworth Castle, as a last-ditch attempt to persuade Elizabeth to marry him. But while she revelled in his attentions and at times seemed to be giving serious consideration to his proposal, Elizabeth remained tantalisingly out of reach.

Frustrated, Leicester turned his attentions to the beautiful and vivacious Lettice Knollys, whom he secretly married in 1578. When Elizabeth found out, she was incandescent with rage, boxing Lettice's ears and screaming that "as but one sun lightened the Earth, she would have but one queen in England".

Robert Dudley pulled out all the stops to woo his queen, but to no avail

ALAMY

"For all her flirtatiousness, Elizabeth showed **no inclination** to marry Dudley"

41 1579 The Duke of Anjou courts Elizabeth

For the first 20 years of her reign, Elizabeth faced intense pressure from her councillors to marry and beget an heir. Although she flirted with several home-grown and foreign suitors, in reality she had no intention of ceding her power to a husband, famously declaring: "I will have but one mistress here, and no master."

Elizabeth seems to have harboured a deep psychological fear of marriage, which is perhaps not surprising given the fate of her mother and step-mothers – not to mention her half-sister, Mary. But she appreciated the diplomatic necessity of at least pretending to consider the proposals of the various foreign princes who courted her.

Principal among these was Francis, Duke of Anjou and Alençon. Some 21 years Elizabeth's junior, Anjou arrived in England in 1579, becoming the only foreign suitor to court the English queen in person.

Elizabeth, still smarting from Robert Dudley's betrayal, welcomed Anjou with every courtesy and the pair struck up a flirtatious relationship. The queen nicknamed the young duke her 'frog' and conducted many private audiences with him. When he left the English court in 1581 with nothing more than "fair promises", Elizabeth penned an apparently regretful poem *On Monsieur's Departure*.

Francis, Duke of Anjou and Alençon, was the only one of Elizabeth's foreign suitors to court her in person

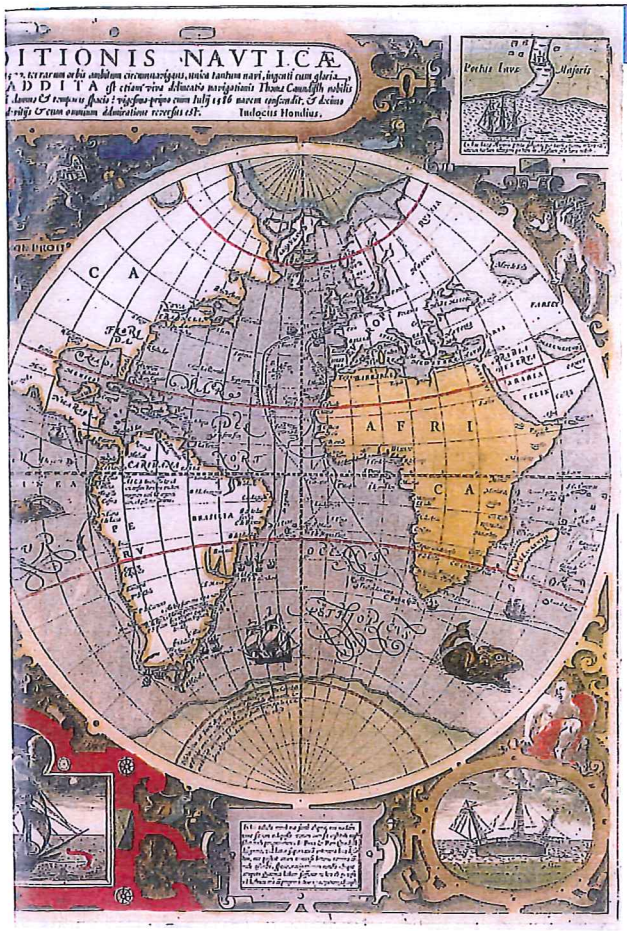
Sir Francis Drake was one of the greatest explorers of the Elizabethan period, as this 1595 world map, which depicts the routes travelled by Drake and fellow English explorer Thomas Cavendish, shows

42 1580 Sir Francis Drak

The Elizabethan age witnessed greater overseas exploration than ever before. One of its most celebrated adventurers was Francis Drake, a highly skilled sailor, navigator, privateer and politician. In 1577, he embarked upon what was termed a 'voyage of discovery', which was in fact an ambitious raiding voyage that marked the beginning of England's challenge to Spanish global domination.

The queen heartily – but secretly – approved of the enterprise and gave it her financial backing, as did several leading members of her court, including Robert Dudley, Christopher Hatton and Francis Walsingham.

Their investment brought rich returns. By 1580, Drake had achieved considerably more than a modest 'voyage of discovery': he had circumnavigated the globe – the first Englishman to do so. Along the way, he and the crew of his famous galleon, the *Golden Hind*, had looted scores of



circumnavigates the globe

Spanish ships and ports, and the treasures that they brought back swelled the royal coffers considerably.

Anxious to avoid war with Spain, Elizabeth played down Drake's achievement in public, but in private she was delighted, and rewarded him with £10,000 and a knighthood.

Drake's capture of treasure ships belonging to the most powerful monarch in the world made him a national hero and transformed England into a force to be reckoned with.

"By 1580, Drake had achieved **considerably more** than a modest 'voyage of discovery'"

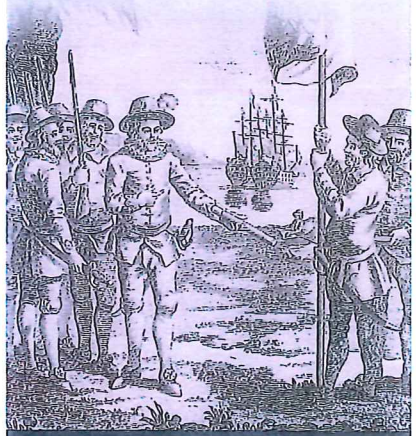
43 1585 Walter Ralegh founds 'Virginia'

The other great Elizabethan adventurer was the charismatic Sir Walter Ralegh. A multi-talented courtier, politician, soldier, sailor, philosopher, historian and poet, he was one of the best-known men in England and a great favourite of the queen.

Although 21 years Elizabeth's junior, he paid court to her like a lover, showering her with romantic poems and letters, all praising her beauty. Ever the gallant, he treated his royal mistress like a precious jewel and went out of his way to fulfil her every desire. According to popular legend, on one occasion, he threw down his cloak over a "plashy place", so that the queen might walk over it without getting her feet wet.

But his ultimate compliment to Elizabeth came from his overseas ventures. Ralegh had for some time organised and financed exploration in North America, with the aim of generating huge wealth by mining gold and increasing trade (notably in tobacco, which he insisted was a cure for coughs).

Elizabeth did not allow her favourite to risk such hazardous voyages himself, so the first one, in 1584, was commanded by members of his household. The following year, Ralegh sent a party of colonists to found a settlement on the east coast of North America. They landed in North Carolina, which Ralegh named Virginia in honour of his royal mistress, the Virgin Queen.



The 1585 voyage to North Carolina, funded by Ralegh, saw the founding of the settlement of Virginia

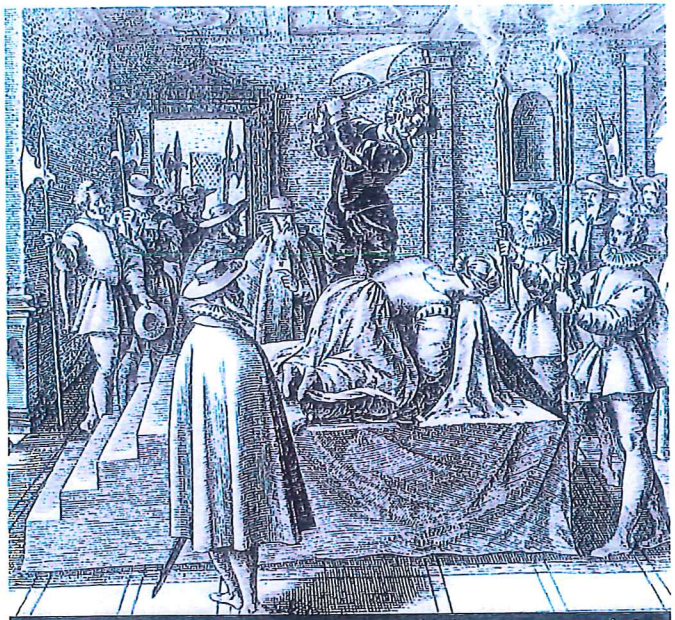
44 10 August 1585 The Treaty of Nonsuch

Among the vast domains of Philip II of Spain were the 17 provinces of the Low Countries. The area was a flourishing centre of trade and brought great riches to the Spanish king. But it was also a centre of Protestantism, and the increasing religious tensions between the Dutch and their Roman Catholic overlord spilled out into open revolt in the 1560s, resulting in the seven northern provinces breaking away from Spanish rule and establishing themselves as an independent territory.

The proximity of the southern (Spanish) provinces to England's coastline had always constituted a threat to Elizabeth, and in 1584 Philip II laid siege to the key port of Antwerp, part of the northern provinces. In the same year, he signed the Treaty of Joinville with the Catholic League – a powerful body of Roman Catholic leaders committed to eradicating Protestantism altogether.

Elizabeth hated embroiling England in foreign wars, but Philip's actions were too aggressive to be ignored. So, at Nonsuch, she made an alliance with the independent Dutch provinces, pledging 6,400 foot soldiers, 1,000 cavalry and 600,000 florins a year to support the revolt. To Philip II, it was a declaration of war. Three years later he would wreak his vengeance.

Philip II's aggressive foreign policy created tension between England and Spain



Mary, Queen of Scots kneels before her executioner in this contemporary woodcut

45 8 February 1587 Mary, Queen of Scots is executed

For as long as she remained a prisoner on English soil, Mary Stuart was the focus of plots and rebellions against Elizabeth. She had always carefully avoided being implicated in any of them, but by 1586, after 18 years of captivity, she had started to lose patience.

Elizabeth's spymaster, Francis Walsingham, sensed her desperation and lay a trap. He had discovered a plot led by Anthony Babington that aimed to assassinate Elizabeth and place Mary on the throne, and intercepted letters between Mary and the conspirators. This was evidence enough to condemn her, and Mary was sentenced to death. But Elizabeth flinched from signing her death warrant. If she executed an anointed queen, then it would give tacit permission for someone to do the same to her. Eventually, under extreme pressure from her council, she put her signature to the document. It was carried out before the notoriously fickle queen could change her mind, and Mary was executed at Fotheringhay Castle. No sooner had this been done than Elizabeth furiously upbraided her councillors, screaming that Mary's execution was "a thing she never commanded or intended".

"Elizabeth tried to **distance herself** from all blame for Mary's death"

It was all an act: anxious about the reprisals from Catholic Europe, Elizabeth was desperately trying to distance herself from all blame for Mary's death. But she was fooling no one and would soon pay the consequences.

ALAMY

The c1588 *Armada Portrait* was painted to commemorate the most famous conflict of Elizabeth's reign

46 August 1588 The Armada is scattered

If Elizabeth had hoped that by putting Mary to death, she had extinguished her most dangerous rival for good, then she was mistaken. Her cousin had made sure that in the eyes of the world she died a martyr, not a traitor.

Mary had called upon the Catholic powers to avenge her death and, the very next year, the greatest of them took her at her word. In May 1588, Philip II launched his Armada against England. Of course, it was not entirely due to Mary, but her death had given Philip the excuse he needed finally to destroy this troublesome heretical queen whose privateers never ceased plundering his treasure ships. It was the greatest threat that Elizabeth had faced in her reign – and that England had faced since the Norman invasion more than 500 years before.

Philip gathered 150 ships laden with 30,000 men – the largest fleet ever seen in Europe – and set sail for England. The Armada was soon spotted off the coast of Cornwall, and Sir Francis Drake, who commanded the English navy, ordered his men to attack it as it sailed along the English Channel.

After a series of skirmishes, the English fleet rallied for a final, decisive attack near Gravelines in the Spanish Netherlands. Philip II's 'invincible' Armada was scattered. It was Elizabeth I's finest hour.

47 1599 The Globe Theatre opens

There were no purpose-built theatres in London until 1576, when the actor-manager James Burbage built the Theatre in Shoreditch. In the 1580s, it welcomed its most famous member in the form of the talented young playwright and actor, William Shakespeare, who joined the company, known as the Lord Chamberlain's Men.

Born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564, Shakespeare became a father at the age of just 19. What first brought him to London is not certain, but he rapidly established a name for himself as a writer, with such early works as *Henry VI, The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *The Comedy of Errors*.

Shakespeare's genius for wordplay, dramatic dialogue and characterisation was unprecedented, and the fact that he was also an actor gave him an edge over other notable playwrights of the age, such as Christopher Marlowe.

In 1598, the Lord Chamberlain's Men leased a plot near the Rose, a rival theatre in Southwark, and the following year built the Globe out of the timbers of their previous playhouse, the Theatre. The quality of Shakespeare's plays and Elizabeth I's love of theatre (which made it respectable for the first time) ensured the Globe was packed with spectators every night for the next 14 years.

Today's reconstructed Globe is sited just metres from the original buildi

SUPERSTOCK/DREAMSTIME

In 1613, during a performance of *Henry VIII*, wadding from a stage cannon ignited the thatched roof and the theatre burned down in less than two hours. It was rebuilt and remained the home of Shakespeare's plays until the closure of all theatres by Oliver Cromwell's Puritan regime in 1642.

Robert Devereux quickly fell from grace after seeing the queen without her famous 'mask of youth'

48 February 1601 The Essex Rebellion

Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex was Elizabeth's last great favourite. Some 30 years younger than the queen, he played the game of courtly love to perfection. Before long he was the queen's closest confidant and enjoyed many promotions as a result. But in 1599 he overreached himself by defying her express command to quell a rebellion in Ireland and instead returned home in disgrace, having concluded a humiliating truce. Desperate to regain her favour, he burst unannounced into her bedchamber early one morning and found his royal mistress without her makeup, wig and other adornments with which she attempted to keep the 'mask of youth' in place.

Elizabeth was furious and refused to listen to his excuses. Scorning the queen as "crooked in her mind as she is in her carcass", Essex gathered together a body of supporters, including his close friend Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, and launched a desperate, badly organised revolt against Elizabeth and her council. This soon ended in ignominious defeat, and Essex and Southampton were conveyed to the Tower, along with many of their followers. A verdict of treason was swiftly passed, and Essex was beheaded at the Tower on 25 February.

49 30 November 1601 The last Tudor parliament

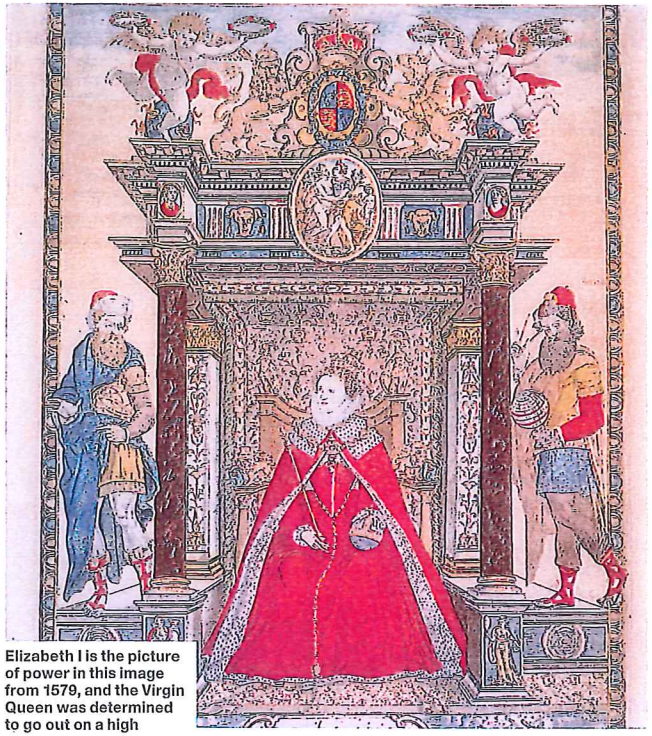
The business to be considered at the parliament that opened on 11 September 1601 was mundane enough: recent economic issues had raised some pricing concerns that needed to be addressed. But the speech Elizabeth gave when she attended on 30 November has secured its place in history.

To the astonishment of the 141 members of the House of Commons who were present that day, Elizabeth revealed that it would be her last parliament. She was determined to go out with a bang. Her ensuing speech was the most beautifully crafted and moving expression of love for her country that she had ever given – greater even than her famous Armada speech of 1588.

She told the hushed assembly: "I do assure you there is no prince that loves his subjects better, or whose love can countervail our love. There is no jewel, be it of never so rich a price, which I set before this jewel: I mean your love… And though you have had, and may have, many princes more mighty and wise sitting in this seat, yet you never had nor shall have, any that will be more careful and loving."

The 'Golden Speech', as it became known, was printed and reprinted numerous times. Ironically, its name derives from a version published during Oliver Cromwell's interregnum, which was inscribed: "This speech ought to be set in letters of gold."

"Her speech was the most **beautifully crafted and moving** expression of love for her country"



Elizabeth I is the picture of power in this image from 1579, and the Virgin Queen was determined to go out on a high

SUPERSTOCK/GETTY

The ageing Elizabeth, shown in a painting dating from 1610, may have hastened her own death. Her demise brought an end to the age of the Tudors

50 24 March 1603 Elizabeth I dies

Although in her later years Elizabeth started to lose her grip on the affairs of the court, she enjoyed good health almost until the end of her life. She still rode in the hunt, enjoyed her accustomed long walks "as if she had been only 18 years old", and danced energetically until well into her sixties. But even this formidable lady could not defy time forever.

In January 1603, the queen left the court in Whitehall and moved to Richmond Palace, her "warm box", to which she could "best trust her sickly old age". Once there, she slipped into a steady decline and it soon became clear that it would be her final illness. Elizabeth, too, realised this and – ever mistress of her fate – apparently resolved to hasten her end. Her attendants looked on in despair as day after day the queen turned food and drink away, "holding her finger almost continually in her mouth, with her eyes open and fixed upon the ground, where she sat on cushions without rising or resting herself, and was greatly emaciated by her long watching and fasting".

Finally, in the early hours of 24 March, the queen breathed her last, relinquishing her hold on life "easily like a ripe apple from the tree". The throne passed to James VI of Scotland, the son of her old rival, Mary, Queen of Scots. The brilliant, dazzling, incomparable Tudor age was at an end.