



*Great Chalfield manor, rebuilt in 1480, is a fine example of a late Middle Ages manor house. It was owned by a local landowner and lawyer who, like many of the gentry class, profited greatly from the destruction of the nobility in the Wars of the Roses. The front of the house is almost exactly as it was in 1480, but the building on the right is much later. The great hall is immediately inside the main entrance, a typical arrangement for this period.*

of the yeoman farmers became part of the “landed gentry”, while many “esquires”, who had served knights in earlier times, now became knights themselves. The word “esquire” became common in written addresses, and is only now slowly beginning to be used less.

Next to the gentlemen were the ordinary freemen of the towns. By the end of the Middle Ages, it was possible for a serf from the countryside to work for seven years in a town craft guild, and to become a “freeman” of the town where he lived. The freemen controlled the life of a town. Towns offered to poor men the chance to become rich and successful through trade. The most famous example of this was Dick Whittington. The story tells how he arrived in London as a poor boy from the

countryside, and became a successful merchant and Lord Mayor of London three times. Whittington was, actually, the son of a knight. He was probably an example of the growing practice of the landed families of sending younger sons to town to join a merchant or craft guild. At the same time, many successful merchant families were doing the opposite thing, and obtaining farmland in the countryside. These two classes, the landed gentry and the town merchants, were beginning to overlap.

In the beginning the guilds had been formed to protect the production or trade of a whole town. Later, they had come to protect those already enjoying membership, or who could afford to buy it, from the poorer classes in the same town. As



*A leading citizen of Bristol is made mayor, 1479. The appointment of the mayor and alderman of a city was usually controlled by senior members of a city's merchant and craft guilds.*

they did not have the money or family connections to become members of the guilds, the poorer skilled workers tried to join together to protect their own interests. These were the first efforts to form a trade union. Several times in the fourteenth century skilled workers tried unsuccessfully to protect themselves against the power of the guilds. The lives of skilled workers were hard, but they did not suffer as much as the unskilled, who lived in poor and dirty conditions. However, even the condition of the poorest workers in both town and country was better than it had been a century earlier.

In fact, the guilds were declining in importance because of a new force in the national economy. During the fourteenth century a number of English merchants established trading stations, "factories", in different places in Europe. The merchant organisations necessary to operate these factories became important at a national level, and began to replace the old town guilds as the most powerful trading institutions. However, they copied the aims and methods of the guilds, making sure English merchants could only export through their factories, and making sure that prices and quality were maintained.



*All women, from the highest, as in this picture, to the lowest in the land were expected to know how to prepare, spin and weave wool. From Saxon times onwards English women were famous for their embroidery skills. Women were expected to spend their time in embroidery or in making garments right up to the end of the nineteenth century.*

One of the most important of these factories was the "Company of the Staple" in Calais. The "staple" was an international term used by merchants and governments meaning that certain goods could only be sold in particular places. Calais became the "staple" for all English wool at the end of the fourteenth century when it defeated rival English factories in other foreign cities. The staple was an arrangement which suited the established merchants, as it prevented competition, and it also suited the Crown, which could tax exports more easily. The other important company was called the "Merchant Adventurers". During the fourteenth century there had been several Merchant

Adventurers' factories in a number of foreign towns. But all of them, except for the Merchant Adventurers in Antwerp, Flanders, closed during the fifteenth century. The Antwerp Merchant Adventurers' factory survived because of its sole control of cloth exports, a fact recognised by royal charter.

Wages for farmworkers and for skilled townspeople rose faster than the price of goods in the fifteenth century. There was plenty of meat and cereal prices were low. But there were warning signs of problems ahead. More and more good land was being used for sheep instead of food crops. Rich and powerful sheep farmers started to fence in land which had

always been used by other villagers. In the sixteenth century this led to social and economic crisis.

Meanwhile, in the towns, a new middle class was developing. By the fifteenth century most merchants were well educated, and considered themselves to be the equals of the esquires and gentlemen of the countryside. The lawyers were another class of city people. In London they were considered equal in importance to the big merchants and cloth manufacturers. When law schools were first established, student lawyers lived in inns on the western side of the City of London while they studied. Slowly these inns became part of the law schools, just as the student accommodation halls of Oxford and Cambridge eventually became the colleges of these two universities.

By the end of the Middle Ages the more successful of these lawyers, merchants, cloth manufacturers, exporters, esquires, gentlemen and yeoman farmers were increasingly forming a single class of people with interests in both town and country. This was also true in Wales and Scotland. A number of Welsh landowners came to England; some studied at Oxford, and some traded, or practised law in London. Fewer Scots came to England, because they had their own universities, and their own trade centres of Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen.

The growth of this new middle class, educated and skilled in law, administration and trade, created a new atmosphere in Britain. This was partly because of the increase in literacy. Indeed, the middle class could be described as the "literate class". This literate class questioned the way in which the Church and the state were organised, for both religious and practical reasons. On the religious side support for Wycliffe came mainly from members of this new middle class, who believed it was their right to read the Bible in the English language. They disliked serfdom partly because it was now increasingly viewed as unchristian, but also for the practical reason that it was not economic. The middle class also questioned the value of the feudal system because it did not create wealth.

The development of Parliament at this time showed the beginnings of a new relationship between the middle class and the king. Edward I had invited knights from the country and merchants from the towns to his parliament because he wanted money and they, more than any other group, could provide it. But when Edward III asked for money from his parliament, they asked to see the royal accounts. It was an important development because for the first time the king allowed himself to be "accountable" to Parliament. Merchants and country gentlemen were very anxious to influence the king's policies both at home and abroad. They wanted to protect their interests. When France threatened the wool trade with Flanders, for example, they supported Edward III in his war.

During the time of Edward III's reign Parliament became organised in two parts: the Lords, and the Commons, which represented the middle class. Only those commoners with an income of forty shillings or more a year could qualify to be members of Parliament. This meant that the poor had no way of being heard except by rebellion. The poor had no voice of their own in Parliament until the middle of the nineteenth century.

The alliance between esquires and merchants made Parliament more powerful, and separated the Commons more and more from the Lords. Many European countries had the same kind of parliaments at this time, but in most cases these disappeared when feudalism died out. In England, however, the death of feudalism helped strengthen the House of Commons in Parliament.

There was another important change that had taken place in the country. Kings had been taking law cases away from local lords' courts since the twelfth century, and by the middle of the fourteenth century the courts of local lords no longer existed. But the king's courts could not deal with all the work. In 1363 Edward III appointed "justices of the peace" to deal with smaller crimes and offences, and to hold court four times a year.

These JPs, as they became known, were usually less important lords or members of the landed gentry. They were, and still are, chosen for their fairness

and honesty. The appointment of landed gentry as JPs made the middle classes, that class of people who were neither nobles nor peasants, still stronger. Through the system of JPs the landed gentry took the place of the nobility as the local authority. During the Wars of the Roses the nobles used their private armies to force JPs and judges to do what they wanted. But this was the last time the nobility in Britain tried to destroy the authority of the king. The JPs remained the only form of local government in the countryside until 1888. They still exist to deal with small offences.

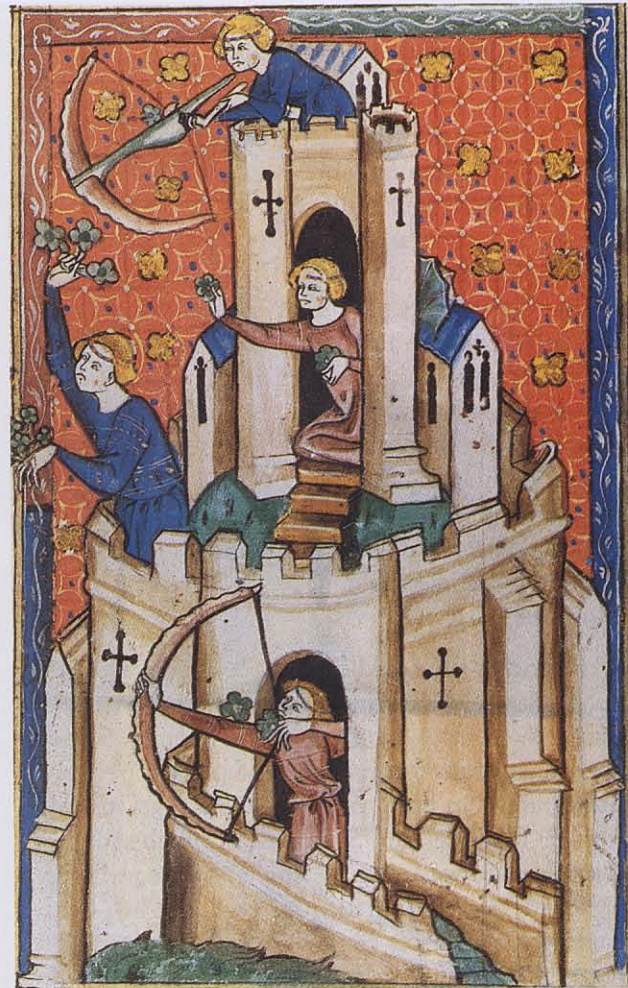
## The condition of women

Little is known about the life of women in the Middle Ages, but without doubt it was hard. The Church taught that women should obey their husbands. It also spread two very different ideas about women: that they should be pure and holy like the Virgin Mary; and that, like Eve, they could not be trusted and were a moral danger to men. Such religious teaching led men both to worship and also to look down on women, and led women to give in to men's authority.

Marriage was usually the single most important event in the lives of men and women. But the decision itself was made by the family, not the couple themselves. This was because by marriage a family could improve its wealth and social position. Everyone, both rich and poor, married for mainly financial reasons. Once married, a woman had to accept her husband as her master. A disobedient wife was usually beaten. It is unlikely that love played much of a part in most marriages.

The first duty of every wife was to give her husband children, preferably sons. Because so many children died as babies, and because there was little that could be done if a birth went wrong, producing children was dangerous and exhausting. Yet this was the future for every wife from twenty or younger until she was forty.

The wife of a noble had other responsibilities. When her lord was away, she was in charge of the manor and the village lands, all the servants and



*Women defending their castle. Throughout the Middle Ages, if a castle or manor was attacked while its lord was away, it was the duty of his wife, the "chatelaine" (or "castlekeeper"), to defend it. A lady had to know everything about administering her lord's manor and lands, for she was responsible when he was away. One lady who did not completely trust her lord's ability to manage while she was away, wrote to him, "Keep all well about you till I come home, and treat not [do not enter into business arrangements] without me, and then all things shall be well."*

villagers, the harvest and the animals. She also had to defend the manor if it was attacked. She had to run the household, welcome visitors, and store enough food, including salted meat, for winter. She was expected to have enough knowledge of herbs and plants to make suitable medicines for those in the village who were sick. She probably visited the poor and the sick in the village, showing that the



*Bay Leaf Farm, a fifteenth-century Kent farmhouse, a timber-frame building with walls made of "wattle and daub", basically sticks and mud. This was a very effective type of building, but required skilled carpenters to make a strong frame. One man who did not like this new method called these houses little more than "paper work". But examples are still lived in as ordinary homes in many parts of England.*

rulers "cared" for them. She had little time for her own children, who in any case were often sent away at the age of eight to another manor, the boys to "be made into men".

Most women, of course, were peasants, busy making food, making cloth and making clothes from the cloth. They worked in the fields, looked after the children, the geese, the pigs and the sheep, made the cheese and grew the vegetables. The animals probably shared the family shelter at night. The family home was dark and smelly.

A woman's position improved if her husband died. She could get control of the money her family had given the husband at the time of marriage, usually about one-third of his total land and wealth. But she might have to marry again: men wanted her land, and it was difficult to look after it without the help of a man.

## Language and culture

With the spread of literacy, cultural life in Britain naturally developed also. In the cities, plays were performed at important religious festivals. They were called “mystery plays” because of the mysterious nature of events in the Bible, and they were a popular form of culture. In the larger cities some guilds made themselves responsible for particular plays, which became traditional yearly events.

The language itself was changing. French had been used less and less by the Norman rulers during the thirteenth century. In the fourteenth century Edward III had actually forbidden the speaking of French in his army. It was a way of making the whole army aware of its Englishness.

After the Norman Conquest English (the old Anglo-Saxon language) continued to be spoken by ordinary people but was no longer written. By the end of the fourteenth century, however, English was once again a written language, because it was being used instead of French by the ruling, literate class. But “Middle English”, the language of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, was very different from Anglo-Saxon. This was partly because it had not been written for three hundred years, and partly because it had borrowed so much from Norman French.

Two writers, above all others, helped in the rebirth of English literature. One was William Langland, a mid-fourteenth century priest, whose poem *Piers Plowman* gives a powerful description of the times in which he lived. The other, Geoffrey Chaucer, has become much more famous. He lived at about the same time as Langland. His most famous work was *The Canterbury Tales*, written at the end of the fourteenth century.

*The Canterbury Tales* describe a group of pilgrims travelling from London to the tomb of Thomas Becket at Canterbury, a common religious act in England in the Middle Ages. During the journey each character tells a story. Collections of stories were popular at this time because almost all literature, unlike today, was written to be read out

aloud. The stories themselves are not Chaucer’s own. He used old stories, but rewrote them in an interesting and amusing way. The first chapter, in which he describes his characters, is the result of Chaucer’s own deep understanding of human nature. It remains astonishingly fresh even after six hundred years. It is a unique description of a nation: young and old, knight and peasant, priest and merchant, good and bad, townsman and countryman. Here is part of Chaucer’s description (in a modernised version) of the knight, and his son, the squire:



There was a *knight*, a most distinguished man,  
Who from the day on which he first began  
To ride abroad had followed chivalry,  
Truth, honour, generousness and courtesy . . .  
He had his son with him, a fine young *squire*,  
A lover and cadet, a lad of fire  
With locks as curly as if they had been pressed.  
He was some twenty years of age, I guessed . . .  
He was embroidered like a meadow bright  
And full of freshest flowers, red and white.  
Singing he was, or fluting all the day;  
He was as fresh as is the month of May.  
Short was his gown, the sleeves were long and  
wide;  
He knew the way to sit a horse and ride.  
He could make songs and poems and recite,  
Knew how to joust and dance, to draw and write.  
He loved so hotly that till dawn grew pale  
He slept as little as a nightingale.

By the end of the Middle Ages, English as well as Latin was being used in legal writing, and also in elementary schools. Education developed enormously during the fifteenth century, and many schools were founded by powerful men. One of these was William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester and Lord Chancellor of England, who founded both Winchester School, in 1382, and New College, Oxford. Like Henry VI's later foundations at Eton and Cambridge they have remained famous for their high quality. Many other schools were also opened at this time, because there was a growing need for educated people who could administer the government, the Church, the law and trade. Clerks started grammar schools where students could learn the skills of reading and writing. These schools offered their pupils a future in the Church or the civil service, or at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. The universities themselves continued to grow as colleges and halls where the students could both live and be taught were built. The college system remains the basis of organisation in these two universities.

The Middle Ages ended with a major technical development: William Caxton's first English printing press, set up in 1476. Caxton had learnt the skill of printing in Germany. At first he printed popular books, such as Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*. This prose work described the adventures of the legendary King Arthur, including Arthur's last battle, his death, and the death of other knights of the Round Table. Almost certainly Malory had in mind the destruction of the English nobility in the Wars of the Roses, which were taking place as he wrote.

Caxton's printing press was as dramatic for his age as radio, television and the technological revolution are for our own. Books suddenly became cheaper and more plentiful, as the quicker printing process replaced slow and expensive copywriting by hand. Printing began to standardise spelling and grammar, though this process was a long one. More important, just as radio brought information and ideas to the illiterate people of the twentieth century, Caxton's press provided books for the

newly educated people of the fifteenth century, and encouraged literacy. Caxton avoided printing any dangerous literature. But the children and grandchildren of these literate people were to use printing as a powerful weapon to change the world in which they lived.



*The chapel of King's College, Cambridge, with its fan-vaulted roof and large areas of glass and delicate stone work, marks the highest point of Gothic architecture in England. The vault was completed at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and the wooden organ screen across the centre of the chapel is of Tudor design.*





# The Tudors

## 10 The birth of the nation state

*The new monarchy • The Reformation • The Protestant–Catholic struggle*

The century of Tudor rule (1485–1603) is often thought of as a most glorious period in English history. Henry VII built the foundations of a wealthy nation state and a powerful monarchy. His son, Henry VIII, kept a magnificent court, and made the Church in England truly English by breaking away from the Roman Catholic Church. Finally, his daughter Elizabeth brought glory to the new state by defeating the powerful navy of Spain, the greatest European power of the time. During the Tudor age England experienced one of the greatest artistic periods in its history.

There is, however, a less glorious view of the Tudor century. Henry VIII wasted the wealth saved by his father. Elizabeth weakened the quality of government by selling official posts. She did this to avoid asking Parliament for money. And although her government tried to deal with the problem of poor and homeless people at a time when prices rose much faster than wages, its laws and actions were often cruel in effect.

### The new monarchy

Henry VII is less well known than either Henry VIII or Elizabeth I. But he was far more important in establishing the new monarchy than either of

*Left: The defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 was the most glorious event of Elizabeth I's reign. It marked the arrival of England as a great European sea power, leading the way to the development of the empire over the next two centuries. It also marked the limit of Spain's ability to recapture Protestant countries for the Catholic Church.*

*Right: Henry VII was clever with people and careful with money. He holds a red Lancastrian rose in his hand, but he brought unity to the Houses of York and Lancaster. His successors symbolised this unity by use of a red rose with white outer petals, the "Tudor" rose.*

them. He had the same ideas and opinions as the growing classes of merchants and gentleman farmers, and he based royal power on good business sense.

Henry VII firmly believed that war and glory were bad for business, and that business was good for the state. He therefore avoided quarrels either with Scotland in the north, or France in the south.



During the fifteenth century, but particularly during the Wars of the Roses, England's trading position had been badly damaged. The strong German Hanseatic League, a closed trading society, had destroyed English trade with the Baltic and northern Europe. Trade with Italy and France had also been reduced after England's defeat in France in the mid-fifteenth century. The Low Countries (the Netherlands and Belgium) alone offered a way in for trade in Europe. Only a year after his victory at Bosworth in 1485, Henry VII made an important trade agreement with the Netherlands which allowed English trade to grow again.

Henry was fortunate. Many of the old nobility had died or been defeated in the recent wars, and their

lands had gone to the king. This meant that Henry had more power and more money than earlier kings. In order to establish his authority beyond question, he forbade anyone, except himself, to keep armed men.

The authority of the law had been almost completely destroyed by the lawless behaviour of nobles and their armed men. Henry used the "Court of Star Chamber", traditionally the king's council chamber, to deal with lawless nobles. Local justice that had broken down during the wars slowly began to operate again. Henry encouraged the use of heavy fines as punishment because this gave the Crown money.

Henry's aim was to make the Crown financially independent, and the lands and the fines he took from the old nobility helped him do this. Henry also raised taxes for wars which he then did not fight. He never spent money unless he had to. One might expect Henry to have been unpopular, but he was careful to keep the friendship of the merchant and lesser gentry classes. Like him they wanted peace and prosperity. He created a new nobility from among them, and men unknown before now became Henry's statesmen. But they all knew that their rise to importance was completely dependent on the Crown.

When Henry died in 1509 he left behind the huge total of £2 million, about fifteen years' worth of income. The only thing on which he was happy to spend money freely was the building of ships for a merchant fleet. Henry understood earlier than most people that England's future wealth would depend on international trade. And in order to trade, Henry realised that England must have its own fleet of merchant ships.

Henry VIII was quite unlike his father. He was cruel, wasteful with money, and interested in pleasing himself. He wanted to become an important influence in European politics. But much had happened in Europe since England had given up its efforts to defeat France in the Hundred Years War. France was now more powerful than England, and Spain was even more powerful, because it was united with the Holy Roman Empire (which



Henry VIII, by the great court painter Hans Holbein. Henry was hard, cruel, ambitious and calculating. Few survived his anger. He executed two of his wives, Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard, and several of his ministers and leading churchmen. Best known among these were his Lord Chancellor, Thomas More, and his assistant in carrying out the Reformation, Thomas Cromwell.

included much of central Europe). Henry VIII wanted England to hold the balance of power between these two giants. He first unsuccessfully allied himself with Spain, and when he was not rewarded he changed sides. When friendship with France did not bring him anything, Henry started talking again to Charles V of Spain.

Henry's failure to gain an important position in European politics was a bitter disappointment. He spent so much on maintaining a magnificent court, and on wars from which England had little to gain, that his father's carefully saved money was soon gone. Gold and silver from newly discovered America added to economic inflation. In this serious financial crisis, Henry needed money. One way of doing this was by reducing the amount of silver used in coins. But although this gave Henry immediate profits, it rapidly led to a rise in prices. It was therefore a damaging policy, and the English coinage was reduced to a seventh of its value within twenty-five years.

## The Reformation

Henry VIII was always looking for new sources of money. His father had become powerful by taking over the nobles' land, but the lands owned by the Church and the monasteries had not been touched. The Church was a huge landowner, and the monasteries were no longer important to economic and social growth in the way they had been two hundred years earlier. In fact they were unpopular because many monks no longer led a good religious life but lived in wealth and comfort.

Henry disliked the power of the Church in England because, since it was an international organisation, he could not completely control it. If Henry had been powerful enough in Europe to influence the pope it might have been different. But there were two far more powerful states, France, and Spain, with the Holy Roman Empire, lying between him and Rome. The power of the Catholic Church in England could therefore work against his own authority, and the taxes paid to the Church

reduced his own income. Henry was not the only European king with a wish to "centralise" state authority. Many others were doing the same thing. But Henry had another reason for standing up to the authority of the Church.

In 1510 Henry had married Catherine of Aragon, the widow of his elder brother Arthur. But by 1526 she had still not had a son who survived infancy and was now unlikely to do so. Henry tried to persuade the pope to allow him to divorce Catherine. Normally, Henry need not have expected any difficulty. His chief minister, Cardinal Wolsey, had already been skilful in advising on Henry's foreign and home policy. Wolsey hoped that his skills, and his important position in the Church, would be successful in persuading the pope. But the pope was controlled by Charles V, who was Holy Roman Emperor and king of Spain, and also Catherine's nephew. For both political and family reasons he wanted Henry to stay married to Catherine. The pope did not wish to anger either Charles or Henry, but eventually he was forced to do as Charles V wanted. He forbade Henry's divorce.

Henry was extremely angry and the first person to feel his anger was his own minister, Cardinal Wolsey. Wolsey only escaped execution by dying of natural causes on his way to the king's court, and after Wolsey no priest ever again became an important minister of the king. In 1531 Henry persuaded the bishops to make him head of the Church in England, and this became law after Parliament passed the Act of Supremacy in 1534. It was a popular decision. Henry was now free to divorce Catherine and marry his new love, Anne Boleyn. He hoped Anne would give him a son to follow him on the throne.

Henry's break with Rome was purely political. He had simply wanted to control the Church and to keep its wealth in his own kingdom. He did not approve of the new ideas of Reformation Protestantism introduced by Martin Luther in Germany and John Calvin in Geneva. He still believed in the Catholic faith. Indeed, Henry had earlier written a book criticising Luther's teaching

and the pope had rewarded him with the title *Fidei Defensor*, Defender of the Faith. The pope must have regretted his action. The letters "F.D." are still to be found on every British coin.

Like his father, Henry VIII governed England through his close advisers, men who were completely dependent on him for their position. But when he broke with Rome, he used Parliament to make the break legal. Through several Acts of Parliament between 1532 and 1536, England became politically a Protestant country, even though the popular religion was still Catholic.

Once England had accepted the separation from Rome Henry took the English Reformation a step further. Wolsey's place as the king's chief minister was taken by one of his assistants, Thomas Cromwell. Henry and Cromwell made a careful survey of Church property, the first properly organised tax survey since the Domesday Book 450 years earlier. Between 1536 and 1539 they closed 560 monasteries and other religious houses. Henry did this in order to make money, but he also wanted to be popular with the rising classes of landowners and merchants. He therefore gave or sold much of the monasteries' lands to them. Many smaller landowners made their fortunes. Most knocked down the old monastery buildings and

used the stone to create magnificent new houses for themselves. Other buildings were just left to fall down.

Meanwhile the monks and nuns were thrown out. Some were given small sums of money, but many were unable to find work and became wandering beggars. The dissolution of the monasteries was probably the greatest act of official destruction in the history of Britain.

Henry proved that his break with Rome was neither a religious nor a diplomatic disaster. He remained loyal to Catholic religious teaching, and executed Protestants who refused to accept it. He even made an alliance with Charles V of Spain against France. For political reasons both of them were willing to forget the quarrel over Catherine of Aragon, and also England's break with Rome.

Henry died in 1547, leaving behind his sixth wife, Catherine Parr, and his three children. Mary, the eldest, was the daughter of Catherine of Aragon. Elizabeth was the daughter of his second wife, Anne Boleyn, whom he had executed because she was unfaithful. Nine-year-old Edward was the son of Jane Seymour, the only wife whom Henry had really loved, but who had died giving birth to his only son.



*The ruins of Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire, one of the greatest and wealthiest English monasteries. It finally surrendered to Henry's reformation in 1539. The stained glass and lead window frames and roofing were removed immediately. But it was not until 1611 that some of the stone was taken to build Fountains Hall, nearby. Even so, the abbey was so huge that most of the stone was never taken and the abbey survived as a ruin.*

## The Protestant–Catholic struggle

Edward VI, Henry VIII's son, was only a child when he became king, so the country was ruled by a council. All the members of this council were from the new nobility created by the Tudors. They were keen Protestant reformers because they had benefited from the sale of monastery lands. Indeed, all the new landowners knew that they could only be sure of keeping their new lands if they made England truly Protestant.

Most English people still believed in the old Catholic religion. Less than half the English were Protestant by belief, but these people were allowed to take a lead in religious matters. In 1552 a new prayer book was introduced to make sure that all churches followed the new Protestant religion. Most people were not very happy with the new religion. They had been glad to see the end of some of the Church's bad practices like the selling of "pardons" for the forgiveness of sins. But they did not like the changes in belief, and in some places there was trouble.

Mary, the Catholic daughter of Catherine of Aragon, became queen when Edward, aged sixteen, died in 1553. A group of nobles tried to put Lady

Jane Grey, a Protestant, on the throne. But Mary succeeded in entering London and took control of the kingdom. She was supported by the ordinary people, who were angered by the greed of the Protestant nobles.

However, Mary was unwise and unbending in her policy and her beliefs. She was the first queen of England since Matilda, 400 years earlier. At that time women were considered to be inferior to men. The marriage of a queen was therefore a difficult matter. If Mary married an Englishman she would be under the control of a man of lesser importance. If she married a foreigner it might place England under foreign control.

Mary, for political, religious and family reasons, chose to marry King Philip of Spain. It was an unfortunate choice. The ordinary people disliked the marriage, as Philip's Spanish friends in England were quick to notice. Popular feeling was so strong that a rebellion in Kent actually reached London before ending in failure. Mary dealt cruelly with the rebel leader, Wyatt, but she took the unusual step of asking Parliament for its opinion about her marriage plan. Parliament unwillingly agreed to Mary's marriage, and it only accepted Philip as king of England for Mary's lifetime.

*A Protestant propaganda picture of Edward VI being told by his dying father, Henry VIII, to uphold the true Protestant religion. At Edward's feet the pope collapses defeated. Under Edward England became far more Protestant than before, and more Protestant, probably, than his father intended. The young king was assisted by men who had profited from Church lands and property after the break with Rome.*



Mary's marriage to Philip was the first mistake of her unfortunate reign. She then began burning Protestants. Three hundred people died in this way during her five-year reign, and the burnings began to sicken people. At the same time, the thought of becoming a junior ally of Spain was very unpopular. Only the knowledge that Mary herself was dying prevented a popular rebellion.

Elizabeth, Mary's half sister, was lucky to become queen when Mary died in 1558. Mary had considered killing her, because she was an obvious leader for Protestant revolt. Elizabeth had been wise enough to say nothing, do nothing, and to express neither Catholic nor Protestant views while Mary lived. And Philip persuaded Mary to leave Elizabeth unharmed.

When she became queen in 1558, Elizabeth I wanted to find a peaceful answer to the problems of the English Reformation. She wanted to bring together again those parts of English society which were in religious disagreement. And she wanted to make England prosperous. In some ways the kind of Protestantism finally agreed in 1559 remained closer to the Catholic religion than to other Protestant groups. But Elizabeth made sure that the Church was still under her authority, unlike politically dangerous forms of Protestantism in Europe. In a way, she made the Church part of the state machine.

The "parish", the area served by one church, usually the same size as a village, became the unit of state administration. People had to go to church on Sundays by law and they were fined if they stayed away. This meant that the parish priest, the "parson" or "vicar", became almost as powerful as the village squire. Elizabeth also arranged for a book of sermons to be used in church. Although most of the sermons consisted of Bible teaching, this book also taught the people that rebellion against the Crown was a sin against God.

The struggle between Catholics and Protestants continued to endanger Elizabeth's position for the next thirty years. Both France and Spain were Catholic. Elizabeth and her advisers wanted to avoid open quarrels with both of them. This was

not easy, because both the French and Spanish kings wanted to marry Elizabeth and so join England to their own country. Elizabeth and her advisers knew how much damage Mary had done and that it was important that she should avoid such a marriage. At the same time, however, there was a danger that the pope would persuade Catholic countries to attack England. Finally, there was a danger from those Catholic nobles still in England who wished to remove Elizabeth and replace her with the queen of Scotland, who was a Catholic.

Mary, the Scottish queen, usually called "Queen of Scots", was the heir to the English throne because she was Elizabeth's closest living relative, and because Elizabeth had not married. Mary's mother had been French, and Mary had spent her childhood in France, and was a strong Catholic. When she returned to rule Scotland as queen, Mary soon made enemies of some of her nobles, and to avoid them she finally escaped to the safety of England. Elizabeth, however, kept Mary as a prisoner for almost twenty years. During that time Elizabeth discovered several secret Catholic plots, some of which clearly aimed at making Mary queen of England.

It was difficult for Elizabeth to decide what to do with Mary. She knew that France was unlikely to attack England in support of Mary. But she was afraid that Spain might do so. Mary's close connection with France, however, was a discouragement to Philip. He would not wish to defeat Elizabeth only to put Mary on the throne. It would be giving England to the French. So for a long time Elizabeth just kept Mary as a prisoner.

When Elizabeth finally agreed to Mary's execution in 1587, it was partly because Mary had named Philip as her heir to the throne of England, and because with this claim Philip of Spain had decided to invade England. Elizabeth no longer had a reason to keep Mary alive. In England Mary's execution was popular. The Catholic plots and the dangers of a foreign Catholic invasion had changed people's feelings. By 1585 most English people believed that to be a Catholic was to be an enemy of England. This hatred of everything Catholic became an important political force.

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## 11 England and her neighbours

*The new foreign policy • The new trading empire • Wales • Ireland • Scotland and England • Mary Queen of Scots and the Scottish Reformation • A Scottish king for England*

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### The new foreign policy

During the Tudor period, from 1485 until 1603, English foreign policy changed several times. But by the end of the period England had established some basic principles. Henry VII had been careful to remain friendly with neighbouring countries. His son, Henry VIII, had been more ambitious, hoping to play an important part in European politics. He was unsuccessful. Mary allied England to Spain by her marriage. This was not only unpopular but was politically unwise: England had nothing to gain from being allied to a more powerful country. Elizabeth and her advisers considered trade the most important foreign policy matter, as Henry VII had done. For them whichever country was England's greatest trade rival was also its greatest enemy. This idea remained the basis of England's foreign policy until the nineteenth century.

Elizabeth's grandfather, Henry VII, had recognised the importance of trade and had built a large fleet of merchant ships. His son, Henry VIII, had spent money on warships and guns, making English guns the best in Europe.

Elizabeth's foreign policy carried Henry VII's work much further, encouraging merchant expansion. She correctly recognised Spain as her main trade rival and enemy. Spain at that time ruled the Netherlands, although many of the people were Protestant and were fighting for their independence from Catholic Spanish rule. Because Spain and France were rivals, Spanish soldiers could only reach the Netherlands from Spain by sea. This

meant sailing up the English Channel. Elizabeth helped the Dutch Protestants by allowing their ships to use English harbours from which they could attack Spanish ships, often with the help of the English. When it looked as if the Dutch rebels might be defeated, after they lost the city of Antwerp in 1585, Elizabeth agreed to help them with money and soldiers. It was almost an open declaration of war on Spain.

English ships had already been attacking Spanish ships as they returned from America loaded with silver and gold. This had been going on since about 1570, and was the result of Spain's refusal to allow England to trade freely with Spanish American colonies. Although these English ships were privately owned "privateers", the treasure was shared with the queen. Elizabeth apologised to Spain but kept her share of what had been taken from Spanish ships. Philip knew quite well that Elizabeth was encouraging the "sea dogs", as they were known. These seamen were traders as well as pirates and adventurers. The most famous of them were John Hawkins, Francis Drake and Martin Frobisher, but there were many others who were also trying to build English sea trade and to interrupt Spain's.

Philip decided to conquer England in 1587 because he believed this had to be done before he would be able to defeat the Dutch rebels in the Netherlands. He hoped that enough Catholics in England would be willing to help him. Philip's large army was already in the Netherlands. He built a great fleet of ships, an "Armada", to move his army across the





*Elizabeth triumphant. The famous "Armada portrait" shows the Spanish Armada in full sail (left) and wrecked upon Ireland's shores (right). Under Elizabeth's right hand lies the world, a reference to Francis Drake's successful voyage around the world, the expeditions of other explorers, and England's growing seapower. Elizabeth enjoyed glory, and her great vanity shows in this portrait.*

English Channel from the Netherlands. But in 1587 Francis Drake attacked and destroyed part of this fleet in Cadiz harbour.

Philip started again, and built the largest fleet that had ever gone to sea. But most of the ships were designed to carry soldiers, and the few fighting ships were not as good as the English ones. English ships were longer and narrower, so that they were faster, and their guns could also shoot further than the Spanish ones.

When news of this Armada reached England in summer 1588, Elizabeth called her soldiers together. She won their hearts with well-chosen words: "I am come . . . to live or die amongst you all, to lay down for my God, and for my kingdom, and for my people, my honour and my blood even in the dust. I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too."

The Spanish Armada was defeated more by bad weather than by English guns. Some Spanish ships were sunk, but most were blown northwards by the wind, many being wrecked on the rocky coasts of Scotland and Ireland. For England it was a glorious moment, but it did not lead to an end of the war with Spain, and England found itself

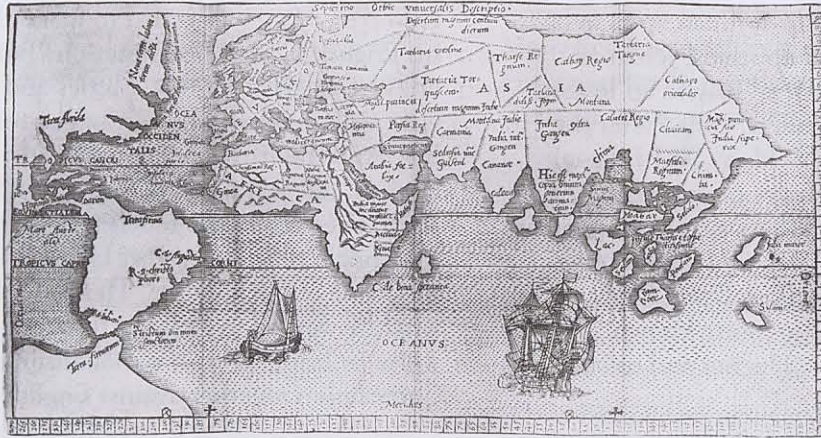
having to spend more than ever on England's defence. Peace was only made with Spain once Elizabeth was dead.

## The new trading empire

Both before and after the Armada, Elizabeth followed two policies. She encouraged English sailors like John Hawkins and Francis Drake to continue to attack and destroy Spanish ships bringing gold, silver and other treasures back from the newly discovered continent of America. She also encouraged English traders to settle abroad and to create colonies. This second policy led directly to Britain's colonial empire of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The first English colonists sailed to America towards the end of the century. One of the best known was Sir Walter Raleigh, who brought tobacco back to England. The settlers tried without success to start profitable colonies in Virginia, which was named after Elizabeth, the "virgin" or unmarried queen. But these were only beginnings.

England also began selling West African slaves to work for the Spanish in America. John Hawkins carried his first slave cargo in 1562. By 1650 slavery had become an important trade, bringing wealth



A map of the world drawn in the early years of the sixteenth century shows geographical knowledge decreasing with distance from Europe. Australia, for example, is still completely unknown. Even so, this map was a great improvement on geographical knowledge a century earlier. By the end of the century far more accurate maps were appearing.

particularly to Bristol in southwest England. It took until the end of the eighteenth century for this trade to be ended.

This growth of trade abroad was not entirely new. The Merchant Adventurers Company had already been established with royal support before the end of the fifteenth century. During Elizabeth's reign more "chartered" companies, as they were known, were established. A "charter" gave a company the right to all the business in its particular trade or region. In return for this important advantage the chartered company gave some of its profits to the Crown. A number of these companies were established during Elizabeth's reign: the Eastland Company to trade with Scandinavia and the Baltic in 1579; the Levant Company to trade with the Ottoman Empire in 1581; the Africa Company to trade in slaves, in 1588; and the East India Company to trade with India in 1600.

The East India Company was established mainly because the Dutch controlled the entire spice trade with the East Indies (Indonesia). Spices were extremely important for making the winter salted meat tastier. The English were determined to have a share in this rich trade, but were unsuccessful. However, the East India Company did begin to operate in India, Persia and even in Japan, where it had a trading station from 1613–23. The quarrel over spices was England's first difficulty with the Dutch. Before the end of the seventeenth century trading competition with the Dutch had led to three wars.

## Wales

Closer to home, the Tudors did their best to bring Wales, Ireland and Scotland under English control.

Henry VII was half Welsh. At the battle of Bosworth in 1485 Henry's flag was the red dragon of Wales. It had been the badge of the legendary last British (Welsh) king to fight against the Saxons. At the time, Caxton was printing Malory's poem *Morte d'Arthur*. Henry cleverly made the most of popular "Arthurian" interest to suggest that he was somehow connected with the ancient British king, and named his eldest son Arthur. He also brought many Welshmen to his court.

Arthur, Prince of Wales, died early and Henry's second son became Henry VIII. But he did not share his father's love of Wales. His interest was in power and authority, through direct control. He wanted the Welsh to become English.

One example of the changes Henry VIII made was in the matter of names. At that time the Welsh did not have family names. They used their own first name with those of their father and grandfather, using *ap*, which meant "son of". Names were long, and the English, who had been using family names for about three hundred years, found them difficult. From 1535 the English put pressure on the Welsh to use an English system of names by preventing Welsh names being used in law courts and on official papers. By 1750 the use of Welsh names had almost disappeared, although not before one Welshman had made a final and humorous protest.

He signed his name “Sion ap William ap Sion ap William ap Sion ap Dafydd ap Ithel Fychan as Cynrig ap Robert ap lowerth ap Rhyrid ap lowerth ap Madoc ap Ednawain Bendew, called after the English fashion John Jones.” Many Welsh people accepted wrong English ways of pronouncing their names. Others took their fathers’ first names and ap Richard, ap Robert, ap Hywel, ap Hugh soon became Pritchard, Probert, Powell and Pugh. Others who had not used “ap” were known as Williams, Thomas, Davies, Hughes and so on.

Between 1536 and 1543 Wales became joined to England under one administration. English law was now the only law for Wales. Local Welshmen were appointed as JPs, so that the Welsh gentry became part of the ruling English establishment. Those parts of Wales which had not been “shired” were now organised like English counties. Welshmen entered the English parliament. English became the only official language, and Welsh was soon only spoken in the hills. Although Welsh was not allowed as an official language, Henry VIII gave permission for a Welsh Bible to be printed, which became the basis on which the Welsh language survived.

Although most people gave up speaking Welsh, poets and singers continued to use it. The spoken word had remained the most important part of Welsh culture since the Saxon invasion. The introduction of schools, using English, almost destroyed this last fortress of Welsh culture. The gatherings of poets and singers, known as *eisteddfods*, which had been going on since 1170 suddenly stopped. But at the end of the eighteenth century, there were still a few who could speak Welsh. *Eisteddfods* began again, bringing back a tradition which still continues today.

## Ireland

Henry VIII wanted to bring Ireland under his authority, as he had done with Wales. Earlier kings had allowed the powerful Anglo-Irish noble families to rule, but Henry destroyed their power. He persuaded the Irish parliament to recognise him as king of Ireland.

However, Henry also tried to make the Irish accept his English Church Reformation. But in Ireland, unlike England, the monasteries and the Church were still an important part of economic and social life. And the Irish nobility and gentry, unlike the English, felt it was too dangerous to take monastic land. They refused to touch it. When an Anglo-Irish noble rebelled against Henry VIII, he did so in the name of Catholicism. Henry VIII failed to get what he wanted in Ireland. In fact he made things worse by bringing Irish nationalism and Catholicism together against English rule.

It is possible that, without the danger of foreign invasion, the Tudors might have given up trying to control the Irish. But Ireland tempted Catholic Europe as a place from which to attack the English. In 1580, during Elizabeth I’s reign, many Irish rebelled, encouraged by the arrival of a few Spanish and French soldiers.

Queen Elizabeth’s soldiers saw the rebellious Irish population as wild and primitive people and treated them with great cruelty. Edmund Spenser, a famous Elizabethan poet, was secretary to the English commander. After the rebellion was defeated he wrote, “Out of every corner of the woods . . . they [the Irish rebels] came creeping forth upon their hands, for their legs would not bear them. They looked like . . . death. They spoke like ghosts crying out of their graves. They did eat the dead . . . happy where they could find them.”

The Tudors fought four wars during the period to make the Irish accept their authority and their religion. In the end they destroyed the old Gaelic way of life and introduced English government.

Ireland became England’s first important colony. The effect of English rule was greatest in the north, in Ulster, where the Irish tribes had fought longest. Here, after the Tudor conquest, lands were taken and sold to English and Scottish merchants. The native Irish were forced to leave or to work for these settlers.

The Protestant settlers took most of the good land in Ulster. Even today most good land in Ulster is owned by Protestants, and most poor land by Catholics. The county of Derry in Ulster was taken

over by a group of London merchants and divided among the twelve main London guilds. The town of Derry was renamed Londonderry, after its new merchant owners. This colonisation did not make England richer, but it destroyed much of Ireland's society and economy. It also laid the foundations for war between Protestants and Catholics in Ulster in the second half of the twentieth century.

## Scotland and England

The Scottish monarchs tried to introduce the same kind of centralised monarchy that the Tudors had so successfully developed in England. But it was much harder, because the Scottish economy was weaker, and Scottish society more lawless. However, James IV, James V, Mary who was executed by her cousin Elizabeth of England, and her son James VI made important steps forward. They tried to control the lawless border country with England, and the disobedient Highland clans in the north. For the Scottish kings there was always a problem. The most disobedient were often the best fighters, and no king wanted to make enemies of those who might help him in battle against the English.

Knowing how weak they were, the Scottish kings usually avoided war with England. They made a peace treaty with Henry VII, the first with an English king since 1328, and James IV married Henry's daughter Margaret. But Henry VIII still wanted Scotland to accept his authority. In 1513 his army destroyed the Scottish army at Flodden. It was the worst defeat the Scots ever experienced. James himself was killed, and with him over twenty Scottish nobles.

The battle of Flodden increased the disagreement between those Scottish nobles who felt that Scotland should move towards a closer friendship with England and those who wanted to remain loyal to the Auld Alliance with France. The Scottish monarch had to find a balance between these two, to keep both his nobles and his neighbours happy. The Protestant Reformation in Europe, and particularly in England, also increased the uncertainty and danger. There was talk of a

Catholic invasion of England by France and Spain. Many Scots wanted to stay on the side of Catholic Europe in the hope of sharing the fruits of a Catholic invasion of England.

But Henry VIII reminded the Scots that it was dangerous to work against him. He sent another army into Scotland to make the Scottish James V accept his authority. James's army was badly defeated and James himself died shortly after. Henry hoped to marry his son Edward to the baby Queen of Scots, Mary, and in this way join the two countries together under an English king. An agreement was reached in 1543.

Ordinary Scots were most unhappy at the idea of being ruled by England. In spite of their fear of the powerful English armies, a new Scottish parliament, aware of popular feeling, turned down the marriage agreement. For the next two years English soldiers punished them by burning and destroying the houses of southern Scotland. Rather than give little Mary to the English, the Scots sent her to France, where she married the French king's son in 1558.

## Mary Queen of Scots and the Scottish Reformation

Mary was troubled by bad luck and wrong decisions. She returned to Scotland as both queen and widow in 1561. She was Catholic, but during her time in France Scotland had become officially and popularly Protestant.

The Scottish nobles who supported friendship with England had welcomed Protestantism for both political and economic reasons. The new religion brought Scotland closer to England than France. Financially, the Scottish monarch could take over the great wealth of the Church in Scotland and this would almost certainly mean awards of land to the nobles. The yearly income of the Church in Scotland had been twice that of the monarch.

Unlike the English, however, the Scots were careful not to give the monarch authority over the new Protestant Scottish "Kirk", as the Church in Scotland was called. This was possible because the Reformation took place while the queen, Mary, was

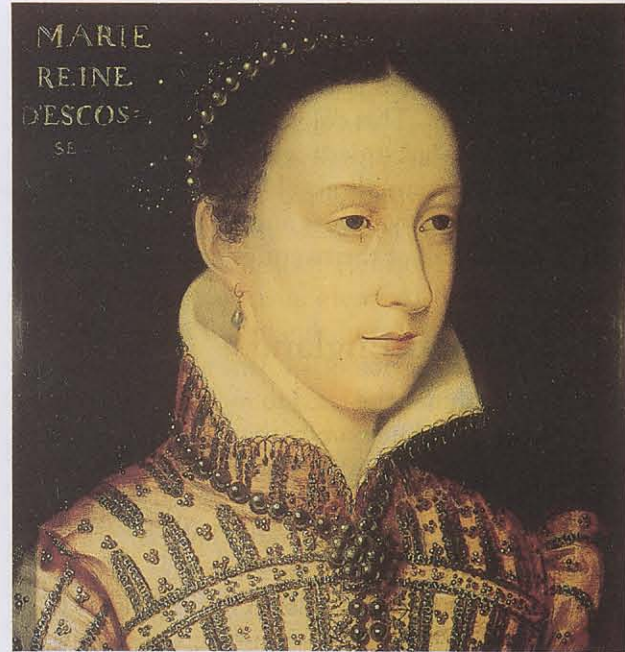
not in Scotland, and unable to interfere. The new Kirk was a far more democratic organisation than the English Church, because it had no bishops and was governed by a General Assembly. The Kirk taught the importance of personal belief and the study of the Bible, and this led quickly to the idea that education was important for everyone in Scotland. As a result most Scots remained better educated than other Europeans, including the English, until the end of the nineteenth century.

Protestantism had spread quickly through the Scottish universities, which were closely connected to those in Germany and Scandinavia. The new Kirk in Scotland disliked Mary and her French Catholicism. Mary was careful not to give the Kirk any reason for actually opposing her. She made it clear she would not try to bring back Catholicism.

Mary was soon married again, to Lord Darnley, a 'Scottish Catholic'. But when she tired of him, she allowed herself to agree to his murder and married the murderer, Bothwell. Scottish society, in spite of its lawlessness, was shocked. The English government did not look forward to the possibility of Mary succeeding Elizabeth as queen. In addition to her Catholicism and her strong French culture, she had shown very poor judgement. By her behaviour Mary probably destroyed her chance of inheriting the English throne. She found herself at war with her Scottish opponents, and was soon captured and imprisoned. However, in 1568 she escaped to England, where she was held by Elizabeth for nineteen years before she was finally executed.

## A Scottish king for England

Mary's son, James VI, started to rule at the age of twelve in 1578. He showed great skill from an early age. He knew that if he behaved correctly he could expect to inherit the English throne after Elizabeth's death, as he was her closest relative. He also knew that a Catholic alliance between Spain and France might lead to an invasion of England so he knew he had to remain friendly with them too. He managed to "face both ways", while remaining publicly the Protestant ally of England.



*Mary Queen of Scots had poor judgement, but she was a beauty. Neither of these qualities helped her in her relations with her cousin Elizabeth I, and an act of foolishness finally lost her her head.*

James VI is remembered as a weak man and a bad decision-maker. But this was not true while he was king only in Scotland. Early in his reign, in the last years of the sixteenth century, he rebuilt the authority of the Scottish Crown after the disasters which had happened to his mother, grandfather and great-grandfather. He brought the Catholic and Protestant nobles and also the Kirk more or less under royal control. These were the successes of an extremely clever diplomat. Like the Tudors, he was a firm believer in the authority of the Crown, and like them he worked with small councils of ministers, rather than Parliament. But he did not have the money or military power of the Tudors.

James VI's greatest success was in gaining the English throne when Elizabeth died in 1603 at the unusually old age of 70. If Elizabeth's advisers had had serious doubts about James as a suitable Protestant ruler, they would probably have tried to find another successor to Elizabeth. Few in England could have liked the idea of a new king coming from Scotland, their wild northern neighbour. The fact that England accepted him suggests that its leading statesmen had confidence in James's skills.

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## 12 Government and society

*Tudor parliaments • Rich and poor in town and country • Domestic life • Language and culture*

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During the Tudor period the changes in government, society and the economy of England were more far-reaching than they had been for centuries. But most far-reaching of all were the changes in ideas, partly as a result of the rebirth of intellectual attitudes known as the Renaissance, which had spread slowly northwards from its beginnings in Italy. In England the nature of the Renaissance was also affected by the Protestant Reformation and the economic changes that followed from it.

### Tudor parliaments

The Tudor monarchs did not like governing through Parliament. Henry VII had used Parliament only for law making. He seldom called it together, and then only when he had a particular job for it. Henry VIII had used it first to raise money for his military adventures, and then for his struggle with Rome. His aim was to make sure that the powerful members from the shires and towns supported him, because they had a great deal of control over popular feeling. He also wanted to frighten the priests and bishops into obeying him, and to frighten the pope into giving in to his demands.

Perhaps Henry himself did not realise that by inviting Parliament to make new laws for the Reformation he was giving it a level of authority it never had before. Tudor monarchs were certainly not more democratic than earlier kings, but by using Parliament to strengthen their policy, they actually increased Parliament's authority.

Parliament strengthened its position again during Edward VI's reign by ordering the new prayer book to be used in all churches, and forbidding the Catholic mass. When the Catholic Queen Mary came to the throne she succeeded in making Parliament cancel all the new Reformation laws, and agree to her marriage to Philip of Spain. But she could not persuade Parliament to accept him as king of England after her death.

Only two things persuaded Tudor monarchs not to get rid of Parliament altogether: they needed money and they needed the support of the merchants and landowners. In 1566 Queen Elizabeth told the French ambassador that the three parliaments she had already held were enough for any reign and she would have no more. Today Parliament must meet every year and remain "in session" for three-quarters of it. This was not at all the case in the sixteenth century.

In the early sixteenth century Parliament only met when the monarch ordered it. Sometimes it met twice in one year, but then it might not meet again for six years. In the first forty-four years of Tudor rule Parliament met only twenty times. Henry VIII assembled Parliament a little more often to make the laws for Church reformation. But Elizabeth, like her grandfather Henry VII, tried not to use Parliament after her Reformation Settlement of 1559, and in forty-four years she only let Parliament meet thirteen times.

During the century power moved from the House of Lords to the House of Commons. The reason for this was simple. The Members of Parliament (MPs) in the Commons represented richer and more

influential classes than the Lords. In fact, the idea of getting rid of the House of Lords, still a real question in British politics today, was first suggested in the sixteenth century.

The old system of representation in the Commons, with two men from each county and two from each "borough", or town, remained the rule. However, during the sixteenth century the size of the Commons nearly doubled, as a result of the inclusion of Welsh boroughs and counties and the inclusion of more English boroughs.

But Parliament did not really represent the people. Few MPs followed the rule of living in the area they represented, and the monarchy used its influence to make sure that many MPs would support royal policy, rather than the wishes of their electors.

In order to control discussion in Parliament, the Crown appointed a "Speaker". Even today the Speaker is responsible for good behaviour during debates in the House of Commons. His job in Tudor times was to make sure that Parliament discussed what the monarch wanted Parliament to discuss, and that it made the decision which he or she wanted.

Until the end of the Tudor period Parliament was supposed to do three things: agree to the taxes needed; make the laws which the Crown suggested; and advise the Crown, but only when asked to do so. In order for Parliament to be able to do these things, MPs were given important rights: freedom of speech (that is freedom to speak their thoughts freely without fear), freedom from fear of arrest, and freedom to meet and speak to the monarch.

The Tudor monarchs realised that by asking Parliament for money they were giving it power in the running of the kingdom. All the Tudor monarchs tried to get money in other ways. By 1600 Elizabeth had found ways to raise money that were extremely unwise. She sold "monopolies", which gave a particular person or company total control over a trade. In 1601, the last parliament of Elizabeth's reign complained to her about the bad effect on free trade that these monopolies had.

Elizabeth and her advisers used other methods. She and her chief adviser, Lord Burghley, sold official positions in government. Burghley was paid about £860 a year, but he actually made at least £4,000 by selling official positions. He kept this secret from Parliament. Elizabeth's methods of raising money would today be considered dishonest as well as foolish.

In their old age Elizabeth and Burghley noticed less, and became more careless and slower at making decisions. They allowed the tax system to become less effective, and failed to keep information on how much money people should be paying. England needed tax reform, which could only be carried out with the agreement of Parliament. Parliament wanted to avoid the matter of tax, and so did local government because the JPs who were responsible for collecting taxes were also landlords who would have to pay them. As JPs were not paid, they saw no reason for collecting unpopular taxes. Elizabeth left her successors to deal with the problem.

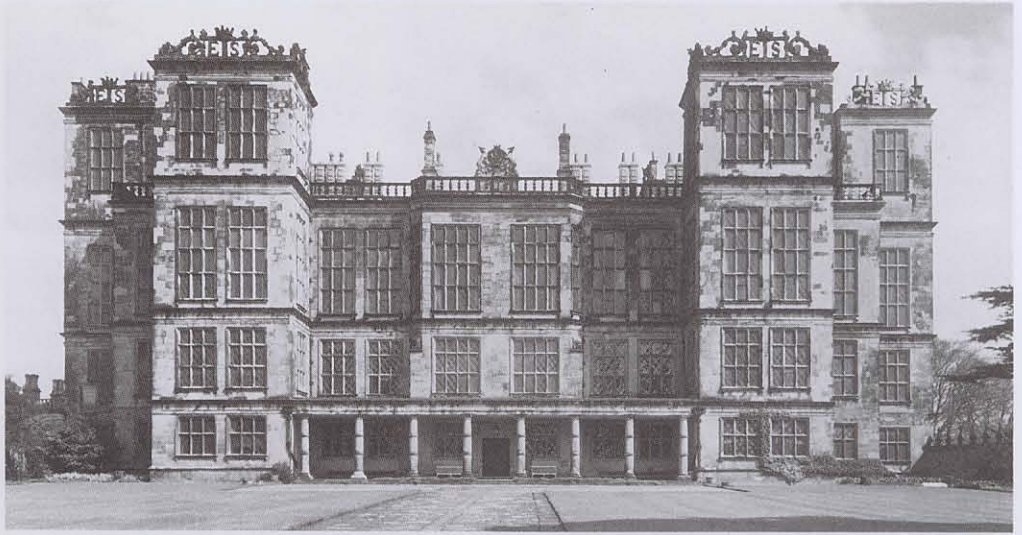
Elizabeth avoided open discussion on money matters with Parliament. There was clearly an unanswered question about the limits of Parliament's power. Who should decide what Parliament could discuss: the Crown or Parliament itself? Both the Tudor monarchs and their MPs would have agreed that it was the Crown that decided. However, during the sixteenth century the Tudors asked Parliament to discuss, law-make and advise on almost every subject.

Parliament naturally began to think it had a *right* to discuss these questions. By the end of the sixteenth century it was beginning to show new confidence, and in the seventeenth century, when the gentry and merchant classes were far more aware of their own strength, it was obvious that Parliament would challenge the Crown. Eventually this resulted in war.

## Rich and poor in town and country

Even in 1485 much of the countryside was still untouched. There were still great forests of oak trees, and unused land in between. There were still

*Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire, built in the 1580s, astonished local people by the daring use of so much glass. Never had domestic buildings been so light inside. The owner, Elizabeth of Shrewsbury, was newly wealthy and anxious to be remembered. So she had the initials "E.S." placed in the stonework. In Tudor times furniture became better. Chairs replaced benches and stools, feather mattresses replaced straw mattresses. By 1600 the chests used to store clothes were larger, with a drawer in the bottom. It was the beginning of the chest of drawers.*



wild animals, wild pigs, wild cattle, and even a few wolves. Scattered across this countryside were "islands" of human settlement, villages and towns. Few towns had more than 3,000 people, the size of a large village today. Most towns, anyway, were no more than large villages, with their own fields and farms. Even London, a large city of over 60,000 by 1500, had fields farmed by its citizens.

In the sixteenth century, however, this picture began to change rapidly. The population increased, the unused land was cleared for sheep, and large areas of forest were cut down to provide wood for the growing shipbuilding industry. England was beginning to experience greater social and economic problems than ever before.

The price of food and other goods rose steeply during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. This inflation was without equal until the twentieth century. The price of wheat and barley, necessary for bread and beer, increased over five times between 1510 and 1650. While most other prices increased by five times between 1500 and 1600, real wages fell by half. The government tried to deal with the problem of rising costs by making coins which contained up to 50 per cent less precious metal. This only reduced the value of money, helping to push prices up.

People thought that inflation was caused by silver and gold pouring into Europe from Spanish

America. But a greater problem was the sudden increase in population. In England and Wales the population almost doubled from 2.2 million in 1525 to four million in 1603. Twice the number of people needed twice the amount of food. It was not produced. Living conditions got worse as the population rose. It is not surprising that fewer people married than ever before.

In the countryside the people who did best in this situation were the yeoman farmers who had at least 100 acres of land. They produced food to sell, and employed men to work on their land. They worked as farmers during the week, but were "gentlemen" on Sundays. They were able to go on increasing their prices because there was not enough food in the markets.

Most people, however, had only twenty acres of land or less. They had to pay rent for the land, and often found it difficult to pay when the rent increased. Because of the growing population it was harder for a man to find work, or to produce enough food for his family.

Many landowners found they could make more money from sheep farming than from growing crops. They could sell the wool for a good price to the rapidly growing cloth industry. In order to keep sheep they fenced off land that had always belonged to the whole village. Enclosing land in this way was





*A wedding feast in the village of Bermondsey, now a London suburb. Merry-making is just beginning, and the view gives us a good idea of village life. The Tower of London can be seen across the river in the background.*

often against the law, but because JPs were themselves landlords, few peasants could prevent it. As a result many poor people lost the land they farmed as well as the common land where they kept animals, and the total amount of land used for growing food was reduced.

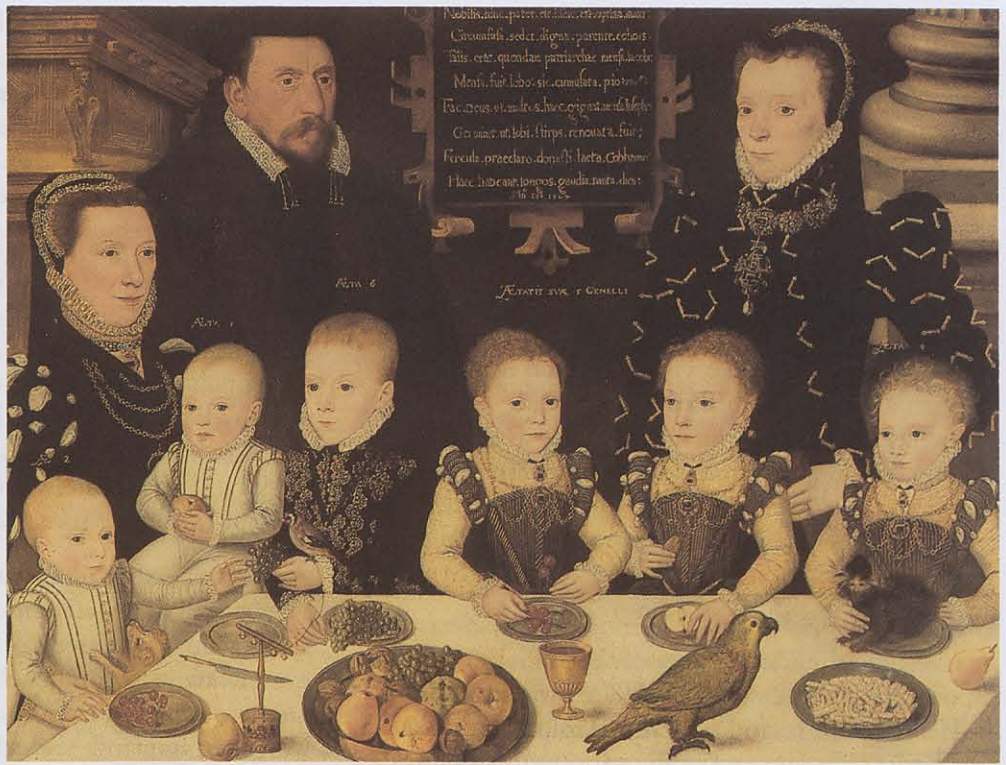
There was a clear connection between the damage caused by enclosures and the growth of the cloth trade. As one man watching the problem wrote in 1583, “these enclosures be the causes why rich men eat up poor men as beasts do eat grass.” All through the century the government tried to control enclosures but without much success. Many people became unemployed.

There were warning signs that the problem was growing. In 1536 large numbers of people from the north marched to London to show their anger at the dissolution of the monasteries. Their reasons were only partly religious. As life had become harder, the monasteries had given employment to many and provided food for the very poor. This “Pilgrimage of Grace”, as it was known, was cruelly

put down, and its leaders were executed. Without work to do, many people stole food in order to eat. It is thought that about 7,000 thieves were hanged during Henry VIII’s reign.

Efforts were made by government to keep order in a situation of rising unemployment. In 1547 Parliament gave magistrates the power to take any person who was without work and give him for two years to any local farmer who wanted to use him. Any person found homeless and unemployed a second time could be executed. It did not solve the crime problem. As one foreign visitor reported, “There are incredible numbers of robbers here, they go about in bands of twenty . . .”

In 1563 Parliament made JPs responsible for deciding on fair wages and working hours. A worker was expected to start at five o’clock in the morning and work until seven or eight at night with two and a half hours allowed for meals. In order to control the growing problem of wandering homeless people, workers were not allowed to move from the parish where they had been born without permission. But



A wealthy family in the 1560s. The girls in the centre are twins, but the family likeness of the others is evident. Children wore the same style of clothing as their parents. The dinner tables of the great and wealthy had become a good deal more orderly since the days of Sir Geoffrey Luttrell (see page 57). Parents often placed their children at the age of eight or nine in households of higher social standing. This offered the chance of an advantageous marriage later, and a rise in status and wealth.

already there were probably over 10,000 homeless people on the roads.

Good harvests through most of the century probably saved England from disaster, but there were bad ones between 1594 and 1597, making the problem of the poor worse again. In 1601 Parliament passed the first Poor Law. This made local people responsible for the poor in their own area. It gave power to JPs to raise money in the parish to provide food, housing and work for the poor and homeless of the same parish.

Many of the poor moved to towns, where there was a danger they would join together to fight against and destroy their rulers. The government had good reason to be afraid. In 1596, during the period of bad harvests, peasants in Oxfordshire rioted against the enclosures of common land. Apprentices in London rioted against the city authorities. The Elizabethan Poor Law was as much a symbol of authority as an act of kindness. It remained in operation until 1834.

The pattern of employment was changing. The production of finished cloth, the most important of England's products, reached its greatest importance during the sixteenth century. Clothmakers and merchants bought raw wool, gave it to spinners, who were mostly women and children in cottages, collected it and passed it on to weavers and other clothworkers. Then they sold it.

The successful men of this new capitalist class showed off their success by building magnificent houses and churches in the villages where they worked. England destroyed the Flemish cloth-making industry, but took advantage of the special skills of Flemish craftsmen who came to England.

The lives of rich and poor were very different. The rich ate good quality bread made from wheat, while the poor ate rough bread made from rye and barley. When there was not enough food the poor made their bread from beans, peas, or oats. The rich showed off their wealth in silk, woollen or linen clothing, while the poor wore simple clothes of leather or wool.

By using coal instead of wood fires, Tudor England learnt how to make greatly improved steel, necessary for modern weapons. Henry VIII replaced the longbow with the musket, an early kind of hand-held gun. Muskets were not as effective as longbows, but gunpowder and bullets were cheaper than arrows, and the men cheaper to train. Improved steel was used for making knives and forks, clocks, watches, nails and pins. Birmingham, by using coal fires to make steel, grew in the sixteenth century from a village into an important industrial city. In both Birmingham and Manchester ambitious members of the working and trading classes could now develop new industries, free from the controls placed on workers by the trade guilds in London and in many other older towns.

Coal was unpopular, but it burnt better than wood and became the most commonly used fuel, especially in London, the rapidly growing capital. In Henry VIII's reign London had roughly 60,000 inhabitants. By the end of the century this number had grown to almost 200,000. In 1560 London used 33,000 tons of coal from Newcastle, but by 1600 it used five times as much, and the smoke darkened the sky over London. A foreign ambassador wrote that the city stank, and was "the filthiest in the world".

## Domestic life

Foreign visitors were surprised that women in England had greater freedom than anywhere else in Europe. Although they had to obey their husbands, they had self-confidence and were not kept hidden in their homes as women were in Spain and other countries. They were allowed free and easy ways with strangers. As one foreigner delightedly noticed, "You are received with a kiss by all, when you leave you are sent with a kiss. You return and kisses are repeated."

However, there was a dark side to married life. Most women bore between eight and fifteen children, and many women died in childbirth. Those who did not saw half their children die at a

young age. No one dared hope for a long married life because the dangers to life were too great. For this reason, and because marriage was often an economic arrangement, deep emotional ties often seem to have been absent. When a wife died, a husband looked for another.

Both rich and poor lived in small family groups. Brothers and sisters usually did not live with each other or with their parents once they had grown up. They tried to find a place of their own. Over half the population was under twenty-five, while few were over sixty. Queen Elizabeth reached the age of seventy, but this was unusual. People expected to work hard and to die young. Poor children started work at the age of six or seven.

An Italian visitor to England gives an interesting view of English society in Tudor times: "The English are great lovers of themselves, and of everything belonging to them; they think that there are no other men than themselves, and no other world but England: and whenever they see a handsome foreigner, they say that 'he looks like an Englishman'." The English did not love their children, he thought, for "having kept them at home till they arrive at the age of seven or nine years at the most, they put them out, boys and girls, to hard service in the houses of other people, holding them to seven or eight years' hard service. They say they do it in order that their children might learn better manners. But I believe that they do it because they are better served by strangers than they would be by their own children."

In spite of the hard conditions of life, most people had a larger and better home to live in than ever before. Chimneys, which before had only been found in the homes of the rich, were now built in every house. This technical development made cooking and heating easier and more comfortable. For the first time more than one room could be used in winter.

Between 1530 and 1600 almost everyone doubled their living space. After 1570 the wealthy yeoman's family had eight or more rooms and workers' families had three rooms instead of one, and more furniture was used than ever before.

One group of people suffered particularly badly during the Tudor period. These were the unmarried women. Before the Reformation many of these women could become nuns, and be assured that in the religious life they would be safe and respected. After the dissolution of the monasteries, thousands became beggars on the roads of England. In future an unmarried woman could only hope to be a servant in someone else's house, or to be kept by her own family. She had little choice in life.

## Language and culture

At the beginning of the Tudor period English was still spoken in a number of different ways. There were still reminders of the Saxon, Angle, Jute and Viking invasions in the different forms of language spoken in different parts of the country. Since the time of Chaucer, in the mid-fourteenth century, London English, itself a mixture of south Midland and southeastern English, had become accepted as standard English. Printing made this standard English more widely accepted amongst the literate population. For the first time, people started to think of London pronunciation as "correct" pronunciation. One educator in Henry VIII's time spoke of the need to teach children to speak English "which is clean, polite, [and] perfectly . . . pronounced." Until Tudor times the local forms of speech had been spoken by lord and peasant alike. From Tudor times onwards the way people spoke began to show the difference between them. Educated people began to speak "correct" English, and uneducated people continued to speak the local dialect.

Literacy increased greatly during the mid-sixteenth century, even though the religious houses, which had always provided traditional education, had closed. In fact, by the seventeenth century about half the population could read and write.

Nothing, however, showed England's new confidence more than its artistic flowering during the Renaissance. England felt the effects of the Renaissance later than much of Europe because it was an island. In the early years of the sixteenth century English thinkers had become interested in

the work of the Dutch philosopher Erasmus. One of them, Thomas More, wrote a study of the ideal nation, called *Utopia*, which became extremely popular throughout Europe.

The Renaissance also influenced religion, encouraging the Protestant Reformation, as well as a freer approach to ways of thinking within the Catholic Church. In music England enjoyed its most fruitful period ever. There was also considerable interest in the new painters in Europe, and England developed its own special kind of painting, the miniature portrait.

Literature, however, was England's greatest art form. Playwrights like Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson, and William Shakespeare filled the theatres with their exciting new plays.

Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, and went to the local grammar school. His education was typical of the Tudor age, because at this time the "grammar" schools, which tried to teach "correct" English, became the commonest form of education. His plays were popular with both educated and uneducated people. Many of his plays were about English history, but he changed fact to suit public opinion.

Nothing shows the adventurous spirit of the age better than the "soldier poets". These were true Renaissance men who were both brave and cruel in war, but also highly educated. Sir Edmund Spenser, who fought with the army in Ireland, was one. Sir Philip Sidney, killed fighting the Spanish in the Netherlands, was another. A third was Sir Walter Raleigh, adventurer and poet. While imprisoned in the Tower of London waiting to be executed, he wrote a poem which describes how time takes away youth and gives back only old age and dust. It was found in his Bible after his execution:

Even such is time, that takes in trust  
Our youth, our joys, our all we have,  
And pays us but with earth and dust.  
Who, in the dark and silent grave,  
When we have wandered all our ways,  
Shuts up the story of our days.  
But from this earth, this grave, this dust,  
My God shall raise me up, I trust.



# The Stuarts

## 13 Crown and Parliament

*Parliament against the Crown · Religious disagreement · Civil war*

The Stuart monarchs, from James I onwards, were less successful than the Tudors. They quarrelled with Parliament and this resulted in civil war. The only king of England ever to be tried and executed was a Stuart. The republic that followed was even more unsuccessful, and by popular demand the dead king's son was called back to the throne. Another Stuart king was driven from his throne by his own daughter and her Dutch husband, William of Orange. William became king by Parliament's election, not by right of birth. When the last Stuart, Queen Anne, died in 1714, the monarchy was no longer absolutely powerful as it had been when James VI rode south from Scotland in 1603. It had become a "parliamentary monarchy" controlled by a constitution.

These important changes did not take place simply because the Stuarts were bad rulers. They resulted from a basic change in society. During the seventeenth century economic power moved even faster into the hands of the merchant and landowning farmer classes. The Crown could no longer raise money or govern without their co-operation. These groups were represented by the House of Commons. In return for money the Commons demanded political power. The victory of the Commons and the classes it represented was unavoidable.

Charles I on horseback, painted in 1633 by the great court painter Anthony Van Dyck. This picture announces the triumph of kingship. At the time Charles was at the height of his power. He had no need of Parliament and it seemed that the king could rule alone, as the king of France was doing. Charles was fatally wrong. It was Parliament that triumphed during the seventeenth century. By the end of the century the powers of the sovereign were limited by the will of Parliament. In the bottom left corner are the Stuart arms, combining for the first time the English "quarters" with the Scottish Lion Rampant and the Irish Harp.

It would be interesting to know how the Tudors would have dealt with the growing power of the House of Commons. They had been lucky not to have this problem. But they had also been more

*James I was a disappointment to the English. As James VI in Scotland he had acted skilfully to survive the plots of his nobles. In England he was better known for his lack of skill in dealing with Parliament and with his ministers.*



willing to give up their beliefs in order that their policies would succeed. The Stuarts, on the other hand, held onto their beliefs however much it cost them, even when it was foolish to do so.

The political developments of the period also resulted from basic changes in thinking in the seventeenth century. By 1700 a ruler like Henry VIII or Elizabeth I would have been quite unthinkable. By the time Queen Anne died, a new age of reason and science had arrived.

## Parliament against the Crown

The first signs of trouble between Crown and Parliament came in 1601, when the Commons were angry over Elizabeth's policy of selling monopolies. But Parliament did not demand any changes. It did not wish to upset the ageing queen whom it feared and respected.

Like Elizabeth, James I tried to rule without Parliament as much as possible. He was afraid it would interfere, and he preferred to rule with a small council.

James was clever and well educated. As a child in Scotland he had been kidnapped by groups of nobles, and had been forced to give in to the Kirk. Because of these experiences he had developed strong beliefs and opinions. The most important of these was his belief in the divine right of kings. He believed that the king was chosen by God and therefore only God could judge him. James's ideas were not different from those of earlier monarchs, or other monarchs in Europe.

He expressed these opinions openly, however, and this led to trouble with Parliament. James had an unfortunate habit of saying something true or clever at the wrong moment. The French king described James as "the wisest fool in Christendom". It was unkind, but true. James, for all his cleverness, seemed to have lost the commonsense which had helped him in Scotland.

When Elizabeth died she left James with a huge debt, larger than the total yearly income of the Crown. James had to ask Parliament to raise a tax

to pay the debt. Parliament agreed, but in return insisted on the right to discuss James's home and foreign policy. James, however, insisted that he alone had the "divine right" to make these decisions. Parliament disagreed, and it was supported by the law.

James had made the mistake of appointing Elizabeth's minister, Sir Edward Coke, as Chief Justice. Coke made decisions based on the law which limited the king's power. He judged that the king was not above the law, and even more important, that the king and his council could not make new laws. Laws could only be made by Act of Parliament. James removed Coke from the position of Chief Justice, but as an MP Coke continued to make trouble. He reminded Parliament of Magna Carta, interpreting it as the great charter of English freedom. Although this was not really true, his claim was politically useful to Parliament. This was the first quarrel between James and Parliament, and it started the bad feeling which lasted during his entire reign, and that of his son Charles.

James was successful in ruling without Parliament between 1611 and 1621, but it was only possible because Britain remained at peace. James could not afford the cost of an army. In 1618, at the beginning of the Thirty Years War in Europe, Parliament wished to go to war against the Catholics. James would not agree. Until his death in 1625 James was always quarrelling with Parliament over money and over its desire to play a part in his foreign policy.

Charles I found himself quarrelling even more bitterly with the Commons than his father had done, mainly over money. Finally he said, "Parliaments are altogether in my power . . . As I find the fruits of them good or evil, they are to continue or not to be." Charles dissolved Parliament.

Charles's need for money, however, forced him to recall Parliament, but each time he did so, he quarrelled with it. When he tried raising money without Parliament, by borrowing from merchants, bankers and landowning gentry, Parliament decided to make Charles agree to certain "parliamentary

rights". It hoped Charles could not raise enough money without its help, and in 1628 this happened. In return for the money he badly needed, Charles promised that he would only raise money by Act of Parliament, and that he would not imprison anyone without lawful reason.

These rights, known as the Petition of Right, established an important rule of government by Parliament, because the king had now agreed that Parliament controlled both state money, the "national budget", and the law. Charles realised that the Petition made nonsense of a king's "divine right". He decided to prevent it being used by dissolving Parliament the following year.

Charles surprised everyone by being able to rule successfully without Parliament. He got rid of much dishonesty that had begun in the Tudor period and continued during his father's reign. He was able to balance his budgets and make administration efficient. Charles saw no reason to explain his policy or method of government to anyone. By 1637 he was at the height of his power. His authority seemed to be more completely accepted than the authority of an English king had been for centuries. It also seemed that Parliament might never meet again.

## Religious disagreement

In 1637, however, Charles began to make serious mistakes. These resulted from the religious situation in Britain. His father, James, had been pleased that the Anglican Church had bishops. They willingly supported him as head of the English Church. And he disliked the Presbyterian Kirk in Scotland because it had no bishops. It was a more democratic institution and this gave political as well as religious power to the literate classes in Scotland. They had given him a difficult time before he became king of England in 1603.

There were also people in England, known as Puritans, who, like the Scottish Presbyterians, wanted a democratic Church. Queen Elizabeth had been careful to prevent them from gaining power in the Anglican Church. She even executed a few of them for printing books against the bishops. In

1604, Puritans met James to ask him to remove the Anglican bishops to make the English Church more like the Kirk, but he saw only danger for the Crown. "A Scottish Presbytery agrees as well with monarchy as God with the Devil," he remarked, and sent them away with the words, "No bishop, no king."

Charles shared his father's dislike of Puritans. He had married a French Catholic, and the marriage was unpopular in Protestant Britain. Many MPs were either Puritans or sympathised with them, and many of the wealth-creating classes were Puritan. But Charles took no notice of popular feeling, and he appointed an enemy of the Puritans, William Laud, as Archbishop of Canterbury.

Archbishop Laud brought back into the Anglican Church many Catholic practices. They were extremely unpopular. Anti-Catholic feeling had been increased by an event over thirty years earlier, in 1605. A small group of Catholics had been caught trying to blow up the Houses of Parliament with King James inside. One of these men, Guy Fawkes, was captured in the cellar under the House. The escape of king and Parliament caught people's imagination, and 5 November, the anniversary, became an occasion for celebration with fireworks and bonfires.

Archbishop Laud tried to make the Scottish Kirk accept the same organisation as the Church in England. James I would have realised how dangerous this was, but his son, Charles, did not because he had only lived in Scotland as an infant. When Laud tried to introduce the new prayer book in Scotland in 1637 the result was national resistance to the introduction of bishops and what Scots thought of as Catholicism.

In spring 1638 Charles faced a rebel Scottish army. Without the help of Parliament he was only able to put together an inexperienced army. It marched north and found that the Scots had crossed the border. Charles knew his army was unlikely to win against the Scots. So he agreed to respect all Scottish political and religious freedoms, and also to pay a large sum of money to persuade the Scots to return home.



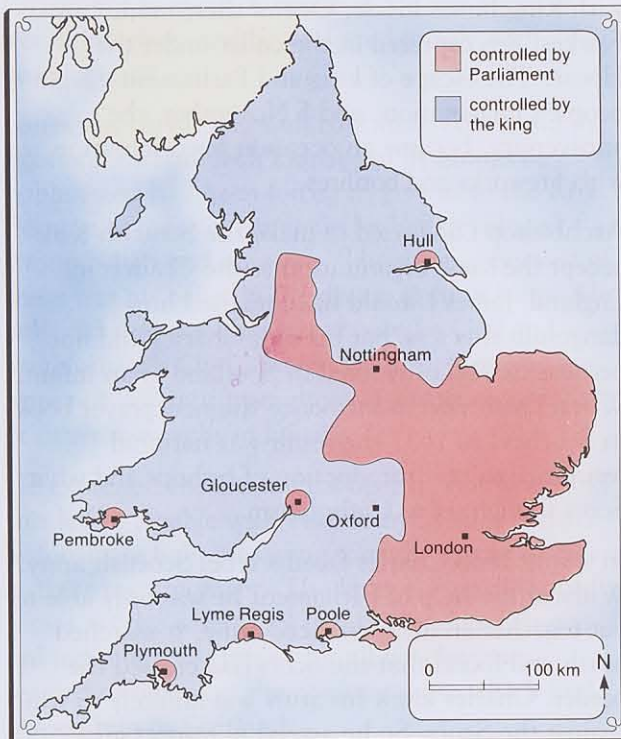
It was impossible for Charles to find this money except through Parliament. This gave it the chance to end eleven years of absolute rule by Charles, and to force him to rule under parliamentary control. In return for its help, Parliament made Charles accept a new law which stated that Parliament had to meet at least once every three years. However, as the months went by, it became increasingly clear that Charles was not willing to keep his agreements with Parliament. Ruling by "divine right", Charles felt no need to accept its decisions.

## Civil war

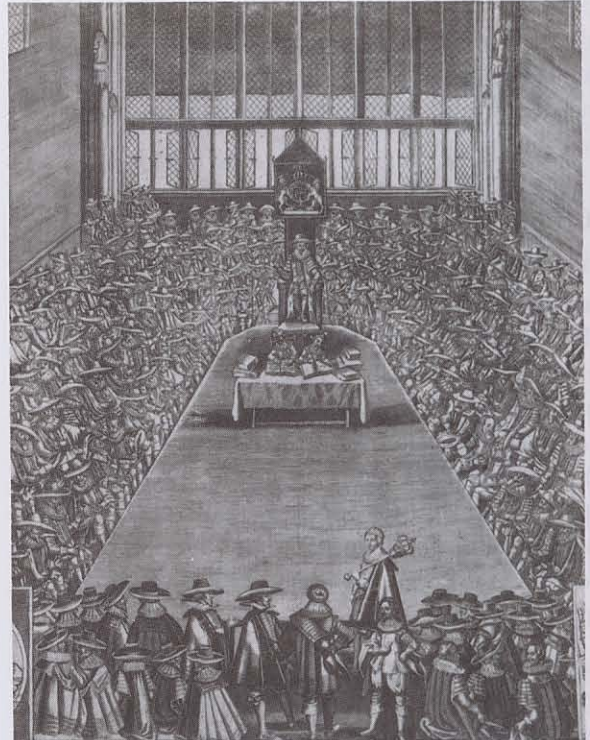
Events in Scotland made Charles depend on Parliament, but events in Ireland resulted in civil war. James I had continued Elizabeth's policy and had colonised Ulster, the northern part of Ireland,

mainly with farmers from the Scottish Lowlands. The Catholic Irish were sent off the land, and even those who had worked for Protestant settlers were now replaced by Protestant workers from Scotland and England.

In 1641, at a moment when Charles badly needed a period of quiet, Ireland exploded in rebellion against the Protestant English and Scottish settlers. As many as 3,000 people, men, women and children, were killed, most of them in Ulster. In London, Charles and Parliament quarrelled over who should control an army to defeat the rebels. Many believed that Charles only wanted to raise an army in order to dissolve Parliament by force and to rule alone again. Charles's friendship towards the Catholic Church increased Protestant fears. Already some of the Irish rebels claimed to be rebelling against the English Protestant Parliament,



The areas controlled by Parliament and the king halfway through the Civil War, 1642–1645.



Parliament met at Westminster in 1640, determined to limit Charles I's freedom and to ensure that Parliament would meet regularly in future. Because of rebellions in Scotland and in Ireland, Charles had to give in to Parliament's wish to oversee government.



The battle of Naseby in 1645 marked the final defeat of Charles I by Parliament. Charles can be seen in front of his army. General Fairfax commanded the Parliamentarians, and his second-in-command, Oliver Cromwell, commanded the right wing of the army.

but not against the king. In 1642 Charles tried to arrest five MPs in Parliament. Although he was unsuccessful, it convinced Parliament and its supporters all over England that they had good reason to fear.

London locked its gates against the king, and Charles moved to Nottingham, where he gathered an army to defeat those MPs who opposed him. The Civil War had started. Most people, both in the country and in the towns, did not wish to be on one side or the other. In fact, no more than 10 per cent of the population became involved. But most of the House of Lords and a few from the Commons supported Charles. The Royalists, known as "Cavaliers", controlled most of the north and west. But Parliament controlled East Anglia and the southeast, including London. Its army at first consisted of armed groups of London apprentices. Their short hair gave the Parliamentarian soldiers their popular name of "Roundheads".

Unless the Royalists could win quickly it was certain that Parliament would win in the end. Parliament was supported by the navy, by most of the merchants and by the population of London. It therefore controlled the most important national and international sources of wealth. The Royalists, on the other hand, had no way of raising money. By 1645 the Royalist army was unpaid, and as a result soldiers either ran away, or stole from local villages and farms. In the end they lost their courage for the fight against the Parliamentarians, and at Naseby in 1645 the Royalist army was finally defeated.

Most people were happy that the war had ended. Trade had been interrupted, and Parliament had introduced new taxes to pay for the war. In many places people had told both armies to stay away from their areas. They had had enough of uncontrolled soldiers and of paying the cost of the war.

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## 14 Republican and Restoration Britain

*Republican Britain · Catholicism, the Crown and the new constitutional monarchy · Scotland and Ireland · Foreign relations*

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### Republican Britain

Several MPs had commanded the Parliamentary army. Of these, the strongest was an East Anglian gentleman farmer named Oliver Cromwell. He had created a new “model” army, the first regular force from which the British army of today developed. Instead of country people or gentry, Cromwell invited into his army educated men who wanted to fight for their beliefs.

Cromwell and his advisers had captured the king in 1645, but they did not know what to do with him. This was an entirely new situation in English history. Charles himself continued to encourage rebellion against Parliament even after he had surrendered and had been imprisoned. He was able to encourage the Scots to rebel against the Parliamentary army. After the Scots were defeated some Puritan officers of the Parliamentary army demanded the king’s death for treason.

The Parliamentary leaders now had a problem. They could either bring Charles back to the throne and allow him to rule, or remove him and create a new political system. By this time most people in both Houses of Parliament and probably in the country wanted the king back. They feared the Parliamentarians and they feared the dangerous behaviour of the army. But some army commanders were determined to get rid of the king. These men were Puritans who believed they could build God’s kingdom in England.

Two-thirds of the MPs did not want to put the king on trial. They were removed from Parliament by



*It is said that Oliver Cromwell, with Puritan humility, told his painter, Samuel Cooper, to include the warts on his face. But as well as humility Cromwell also had a soldier’s belief in authority. As a result he was unpopular as Lord Protector. He failed to persuade the English that republican government was better than monarchy, mainly because people had less freedom under his authoritarian rule than they had under Charles I.*

the army, and the remaining fifty-three judged him and found him guilty of making “war against his kingdom and the Parliament”. On 31 January 1649 King Charles was executed. It was a cold day and he wore two shirts so that the crowd who came to watch would not see him shiver and think him frightened.

King Charles died bravely. As his head was cut from his body the large crowd groaned. Perhaps the execution was Charles's own greatest victory, because most people now realised that they did not want Parliamentary rule, and were sorry that Charles was not still king.

From 1649–1660 Britain was a republic, but the republic was not a success. Cromwell and his friends created a government far more severe than Charles's had been. They had got rid of the monarchy, and they now got rid of the House of Lords and the Anglican Church.

The Scots were shocked by Charles's execution. They invited his son, whom they recognised as King Charles II, to join them and fight against the English Parliamentary army. But they were defeated, and young Charles himself was lucky to escape to France. Scotland was brought under English republican rule.

Cromwell took an army to Ireland to punish the Irish for the killing of Protestants in 1641, and for the continued Royalist rebellion there. He captured two towns, Drogheda and Wexford. His soldiers killed the inhabitants of both, about 6,000 people in all. These killings were probably no worse than the killings of Protestants in 1641, but they remained powerful symbols of English cruelty to the Irish.

The army remained the most powerful force in the land. Disagreements between the army and Parliament resulted in Parliament's dissolution in 1653. It was the behaviour of the army and the dissolution of Parliament that destroyed Cromwell's hopes. Many in the army held what were thought to be strange beliefs. A group called "Levellers" wanted a new equality among all men. They wanted Parliament to meet every two years, and for most men over the age of twenty-one to have the right to elect MPs to it. They also wanted complete religious freedom, which would have allowed the many new Puritan groups to follow their religion in the way they wished.

Two hundred years later, such demands were thought of as basic citizens' rights. But in the middle of the seventeenth century they had little popular support. Levellers in the army rebelled, but their rebellion was defeated.

From 1653 Britain was governed by Cromwell alone. He became "Lord Protector", with far greater powers than King Charles had had. His efforts to govern the country through the army were extremely unpopular, and the idea of using the army to maintain law and order in the kingdom has remained unpopular ever since. Cromwell's government was unpopular for other reasons. For example, people were forbidden to celebrate Christmas and Easter, or to play games on a Sunday.

When Cromwell died in 1658, the Protectorate, as his republican administration was called, collapsed. Cromwell had hoped that his son, rather than Parliament, would take over when he died. But Richard Cromwell was not a good leader and the army commanders soon started to quarrel among themselves. One of these decided to act. In 1660 he marched to London, arranged for free elections and invited Charles II to return to his kingdom. The republic was over.

When Charles II returned to England as the publicly accepted king, the laws and Acts of Cromwell's government were automatically cancelled.

Charles managed his return with skill. Although Parliament was once more as weak as it had been in the time of James I and Charles I, the new king was careful to make peace with his father's enemies. Only those who had been responsible for his father's execution were punished. Many Parliamentarians were given positions of authority or responsibility in the new monarchy. But Parliament itself remained generally weak. Charles shared his father's belief in divine right. And he greatly admired the magnificent, all-powerful, absolute ruler of France, Louis XIV.



Charles II, who “never said a foolish thing, nor ever did a wise one,” was a welcome change from Cromwellian rule. Charles II believed as strongly as his father and grandfather in the divine right of kings, but had the good sense to avoid an open break with Parliament. His reign was carefree and relaxed, as this portrait suggests, quite different from the mood suggested in Van Dyck’s portrait of his father (page 86).

## Catholicism, the Crown and the new constitutional monarchy

Charles hoped to make peace between the different religious groups. He wanted to allow Puritans and Catholics who disliked the Anglican Church to

meet freely. But Parliament was strongly Anglican, and would not allow this. Before the Civil War, Puritans looked to Parliament for protection against the king. Now they hoped that the king would protect them against Parliament.

Charles himself was attracted to the Catholic Church. Parliament knew this and was always afraid that Charles would become a Catholic. For this reason Parliament passed the Test Act in 1673, which prevented any Catholic from holding public office. Fear of Charles’s interest in the Catholic Church and of the monarchy becoming too powerful also resulted in the first political parties in Britain.

One of these parties was a group of MPs who became known as “Whigs”, a rude name for cattle drivers. The Whigs were afraid of an absolute monarchy, and of the Catholic faith with which they connected it. They also wanted to have no regular or “standing” army. In spite of their fear of a Catholic king, the Whigs believed strongly in allowing religious freedom. Because Charles and his wife had no children, the Whigs feared that the Crown would go to Charles’s Catholic brother, James. They wanted to prevent this, but they were undecided over who they did want as king.

The Whigs were opposed by another group, nicknamed “Tories”, an Irish name for thieves. It is difficult to give a simple definition of each party, because they were loosely formed groups. Generally speaking, however, the Tories upheld the authority of the Crown and the Church, and were natural inheritors of the “Royalist” position. The Whigs were not against the Crown, but they believed that its authority depended upon the consent of Parliament. As natural inheritors of the “Parliamentarian” values of twenty years earlier, they felt tolerant towards the new Protestant sects which the Anglican Church so disliked. These two parties, the Whigs and the Tories, became the basis of Britain’s two-party parliamentary system of government.

The struggle over Catholicism and the Crown became a crisis when news was heard of a Catholic plot to murder Charles and put his brother James

on the throne. In fact the plan did not exist. The story had been spread as a clever trick to frighten people and to make sure that James and the Catholics did not come to power. The trick worked. Parliament passed an Act forbidding any Catholic to be a member of either the Commons or the Lords. It was not successful, however, in preventing James from inheriting the crown. Charles would not allow any interference with his brother's divine right to be king. Stuarts might give in on matters of policy, but never on matters of principle.

James II became king after his brother's death in 1685. The Tories and Anglicans were delighted, but not for long. James had already shown his dislike of Protestants while he had been Charles's governor in Scotland. His soldiers had killed many Presbyterian men, women and children. This period is still remembered in some parts of Scotland as the "killing times".

James then tried to remove the laws which stopped Catholics from taking positions in government and Parliament. He also tried to bring back the Catholic Church, and allow it to exist beside the Anglican Church. James almost certainly believed sincerely that this would result in many returning to the Catholic Church. But Parliament was very angry, particularly the Tories and Anglicans who had supported him against the Whigs.

James tried to get rid of the Tory gentry who most strongly opposed him. He removed three-quarters of all JPs and replaced them with men of lower social class. He tried to bring together the Catholics and the Puritans, now usually called "Nonconformists" because they would not agree with or "conform" to the Anglican Church.

In spite of their anger, Tories, Whigs and Anglicans did nothing because they could look forward to the succession of James's daughter, Mary. Mary was Protestant and married to the Protestant ruler of Holland, William of Orange. But this hope was destroyed with the news in June 1688 that James's son had been born. The Tories and Anglicans now joined the Whigs in looking for a Protestant rescue.

They invited William of Orange to invade Britain. It was a dangerous thing for William to do, but he was already at war with France and he needed the help of Britain's wealth and armed forces. At this important moment James's determination failed him. It seems he actually had some kind of mental breakdown.

William entered London, but the crown was offered only to Mary. William said he would leave Britain unless he also became king. Parliament had no choice but to offer the crown to both William and Mary.

However, while William had obtained the crown, Parliament had also won an important point. After he had fled from England, Parliament had decided that James II had lost his right to the crown. It gave as its reason that he had tried to undermine "the constitution of the kingdom by breaking the original contract between King and People." This idea of a contract between ruler and ruled was not entirely new. Since the restoration of Charles II in 1660 there had been a number of theories about the nature of government. In the 1680s two of the more important theorists, Algernon Sidney and John Locke, had argued that government was based upon the consent of the people, and that the powers of the king must be strictly limited. The logical conclusion of such ideas was that the "consent of the people" was represented by Parliament, and as a result Parliament, not the king, should be the overall power in the state. In 1688 these theories were fulfilled.

Like the Civil War of 1642, the Glorious Revolution, as the political results of the events of 1688 were called, was completely unplanned and unprepared for. It was hardly a revolution, more a *coup d'etat* by the ruling class. But the fact that Parliament made William king, not by inheritance but by their choice, was revolutionary. Parliament was now beyond question more powerful than the king, and would remain so. Its power over the monarch was written into the Bill of Rights in 1689. The king was now unable to raise taxes or keep an army without the agreement of Parliament, or to act against any MP for what he said or did in Parliament.

In 1701 Parliament finally passed the Act of Settlement, to make sure only a Protestant could inherit the crown. It stated that if Mary had no children the crown would pass to her sister Anne. If she also died without children, it would go to a granddaughter of James I, who had married the German elector of Hanover, and her children. The Act of Settlement was important, and has remained in force ever since, although the Stuarts tried three times to regain the crown. Even today, if a son or daughter of the monarch becomes a Catholic, he or she cannot inherit the throne.

## Scotland and Ireland

Neither Scotland, nor Ireland accepted the English removal of James peacefully. In Scotland supporters of the Stuarts rebelled, but although they successfully defeated a government army, their rebellion ended after the death of their leader. Most of the rebels were Highlanders, many of them still Catholic.

Scotland was still a separate kingdom, although it shared a king with England (James II had been James VII of Scotland). The English wanted Scotland and England to be united. But the English Act of Settlement was not law in Scotland. While Scotland remained legally free to choose its own king there was a danger that this might be used to put a Stuart back on the throne. Scotland might renew its Auld Alliance with France, which was now England's most dangerous European enemy.

On the other hand, Scotland needed to remove the limits on trade with England from which it suffered economically. The English Parliament offered to remove these limits if the Scots agreed to union with England. The Scots knew that if they did not agree there was a real danger that an English army would once again march into Scotland. In 1707 the union of Scotland and England was completed by Act of Parliament. From that moment both countries no longer had separate parliaments, and a new parliament of Great Britain, the new name of the state, met for the first time. Scotland, however, kept its own separate legal and judicial system, and its own separate Church.



*"No surrender", the motto of the Londonderry Protestants under siege in 1690 by the Catholic Irish, has remained the motto of the Ulster Protestants to this day. This Protestant home displays the crossed flags of the Union of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of Ulster.*

In Ireland the Catholicism of James II had raised the hopes of those who had lost their lands to the Protestant settlers. When he lost his throne in England, James naturally thought that Ireland would make a strong base from which to take back his throne. In 1689 he landed in Ireland, with French support.

In Dublin a Catholic parliament immediately passed an Act taking away all the property of Protestants in Ireland. But it was not so easy to carry this out. Thirty thousand Protestants locked themselves in the city of Londonderry (or "Derry" as the Catholics continued to call it). James encircled the city but the defenders refused to surrender. After fifteen weeks, English ships arrived bringing fresh supplies and the struggle for Londonderry was over. The battlecry of the Protestants of Londonderry "No Surrender!" has remained to this day the cry of Ulster Protestantism.

King William landed in Ireland in 1690, and defeated James's army at the River Boyne. James left Ireland for France a few days later, and never returned to any of his kingdoms. With the battle of the Boyne the Protestant victory was complete.

## Foreign relations

During the seventeenth century Britain's main enemies were Spain, Holland and France. War with Holland resulted from competition in trade. After three wars in the middle of the century, when Britain had achieved the trade position it wanted, peace was agreed, and Holland and Britain co-operated against France.

At the end of the century Britain went to war against France. This was partly because William of Orange brought Britain into the Dutch struggle with the French. But Britain also wanted to limit French power, which had been growing under Louis XIV. Under the duke of Marlborough, the British army won several important victories over the French at Blenheim (on the Danube), Ramillies, Oudenarde and Malplaquet (in the Netherlands).

By the treaty of Utrecht in 1713 France accepted limits on its expansion, as well as a political settlement for Europe. It accepted Queen Anne instead of James II's son as the true monarch of Britain. In the war Britain had also won the rock of Gibraltar, and could now control the entrance to the Mediterranean.

The capture of foreign land was important for Europe's economic development. At this stage Britain had a smaller empire abroad than either Spain or Holland. But it had greater variety. On the east coast of America, Britain controlled about twelve colonies. Of far greater interest were the new possessions in the West Indies, where sugar was grown. Sugar became a craze from which Britain has not yet recovered.

The growing sugar economy of the West Indies increased the demand for slaves. By 1645, for example, there were 40,000 white settlers and 6,000 negro slaves in Barbados. By 1685 the balance had changed, with only 20,000 white settlers but 46,000 slaves. The sugar importers used their great influence to make sure that the government did not stop slavery.

During this time Britain also established its first trading settlements in India, on both the west and east coasts. The East India Company did not interfere in Indian politics. Its interest was only in trade. A hundred years later, however, competition with France resulted in direct efforts to control Indian politics, either by alliance or by the conquest of Indian princely states.



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## 15 Life and thought

*The revolution in thought • Life and work in the Stuart age • Family life*

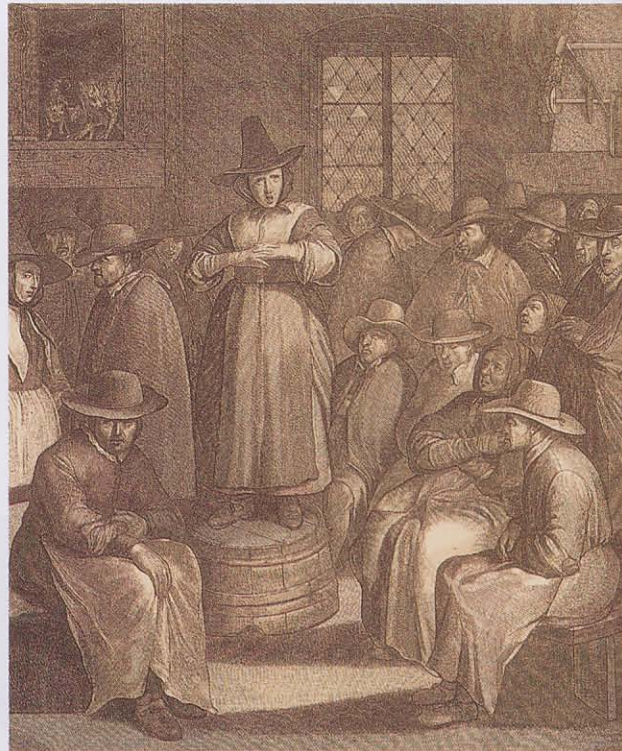
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The political revolution during the Stuart age could not have happened if there had not been a revolution in thought. This influenced not only politics, but also religion and science. By 1714 people's ideas and beliefs had changed enormously. The real Protestant revolution did not, in fact, happen until the seventeenth century, when several new religious groups appeared. But there were also exciting new scientific ideas, quite separate from these new beliefs. For the first time it was reasonable to argue that everything in the universe had a natural explanation, and this led to a new self-confidence.

Another reason for this self-confidence was the change in Britain's international position during the century. In 1603, in spite of the Armada victory of 1588 and in spite of the union of England and Scotland under one sovereign, Britain was still considered less important than France, Spain and the Holy Roman Empire. But by 1714 the success of its armies against France had made Britain a leading European power. At the same time Britain had so many new colonies that it was now in competition with earlier colonial nations, Spain, Portugal and the Netherlands.

### The revolution in thought

The influence of Puritanism increased greatly during the seventeenth century, particularly among the merchant class and lesser gentry. It was the Puritans who persuaded James I to permit a new official ("authorised") translation of the Bible. It was published in 1611. This beautiful translation



*A Quaker meeting addressed by a woman. Quakers had a number of striking ideas, for example, that all men and women were equal. The Quaker movement began during the Civil War, and in 1661 it adopted the "peace principle", the idea that all war was wrong. Since then Quakers have been pacifist.*

was a great work of English literature, and it encouraged Bible reading among all those who could read. Although the Bible was read most by merchants and lesser gentry, many literate labourers began to read it too. Some of them understood the Bible in a new and revolutionary way. As a result, by the middle years of the seventeenth century Puritanism had led to the formation of a large number of small new religious groups, or "sects", including the "Levellers".

Most of these Nonconformist sects lasted only a few years, but two are important, the Baptists and the Quakers. In spite of opposition in the seventeenth century, both sects have survived and have had an important effect on the life of the nation. The Quakers became particularly famous for their reforming social work in the eighteenth century. These sects brought hope to many of the poor and the powerless. Social reform and the later growth of trade unionism both owed much to Nonconformism. In spite of their good work, however, the Nonconformists continued to be disliked by the ruling class until the end of the nineteenth century.

The Anglican Church, unlike the Nonconformist churches, was strong politically, but it became weaker intellectually. The great religious writers of the period, John Bunyan, who wrote *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and John Milton, who wrote *Paradise Lost*, were both Puritan.

For some Nonconformists, the opposition to their beliefs was too great to bear. They left Britain to live a free life in the new found land of America. In 1620, the "Pilgrim Fathers" sailed in a ship called the *Mayflower* to Massachusetts. Catholic families settled in Maryland for the same reasons. But most of the 400,000 or so who left England were young men without families, who did so for economic and not religious reasons. They wanted the chance to start a new life. At the same time there were other people coming in from abroad to live in Britain. Cromwell allowed Jews to settle again, the first Jews since the earlier community had been expelled 350 years earlier. And after 1685 many French Protestants, known as Huguenots, escaped from Louis XIV's persecution and settled in Britain.

The revolution in religious thinking was happening at the same time as a revolution in scientific thinking. Careful study of the natural world led to important new discoveries.

It was not the first time that the people of Britain had taken a lead in scientific matters. Almost a thousand years earlier, the English monk and historian, Bede, had argued that the earth stood still, fixed in space, and was surrounded by seven

heavens. This, of course, was not correct, but no one doubted him for centuries. In the twelfth century, during the reign of Henry I, another English scientist had gained European fame. He was Adelard of Bath, and he played a large part in the revolution in scientific thinking at the time. He knew that the Church considered his ideas dangerous. "I do not want to claim," he wrote, "that God is less than all-powerful. But nature has its own patterns and order, and we should listen to those who have learnt something of it."

In the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries English scientists, most of them at the University of Oxford, had led Europe. Friar Roger Bacon, one of the more famous of them, had experimented with light, heat and magnetism. Another, William of Ockham, had studied falling objects. Another, William Marlee, had been one of the first to keep a careful record of the weather. Chaucer himself wrote a book to teach his son how to use an astrolabe. At the same time, the practical effects of such curiosity were seen in new machinery, water mills, geared wheels and lathes.

But the seventeenth century saw the development of scientific thinking on an entirely new scale. The new mood had been established at the very beginning of the century by a remarkable man, Francis Bacon. He became James I's Lord Chancellor, but he was better known for his work on scientific method. Every scientific idea, he argued, must be tested by experiment. With idea and experiment following one after the other, eventually the whole natural world would be understood. In the rest of the century British scientists put these ideas into practice. The British have remained at the front of experiment and research ever since.

In 1628 William Harvey discovered the circulation of blood and this led to great advances in medicine and in the study of the human body. The scientists Robert Boyle and Robert Hooke used Harvey's methods when they made discoveries in the chemistry and mechanics of breathing.

These scientific studies were encouraged by the Stuarts. The Royal Society, founded by the Stuart

monarchy, became an important centre where thinkers could meet, argue, enquire and share information. Charles II, a strong supporter of its work, gave the Royal Society firm direction “to examine all systems, theories, principles . . . elements, histories and experiments of things natural, mathematical and mechanical”.

In 1666 the Cambridge Professor of Mathematics, Sir Isaac Newton, began to study gravity, publishing his important discovery in 1684. In 1687 he published *Principia*, on “the mathematical principles of natural philosophy”, perhaps the greatest book in the history of science. Newton’s work remained the basis of physics until Einstein’s discoveries in the twentieth century. Newton’s importance as a “founding father” of modern science was recognised in his own time, and Alexander Pope, a leading poet of the day, summed it up neatly:

Nature, and Nature’s laws lay hid in night:  
God said, *Let Newton be!* and all was light.

Newton had been encouraged and financed by his friend, Edmund Halley, who is mostly remembered for tracking a comet (Halley’s Comet) in 1682. There was at that time a great deal of interest in astronomy. The discovery of the geometric movement of stars and planets destroyed old beliefs in astrology and magic. Everything, it seemed, had a natural explanation.

It was no accident that the greatest British architect of the time, Christopher Wren, was also Professor of Astronomy at Oxford. In 1666, following a year of terrible plague, a fire destroyed most of the city of London. Eighty-seven churches, including the great medieval cathedral of St Paul, were destroyed. Wren was ordered to rebuild them in the modern style, which he did with skill.



The Royal Observatory at Greenwich was founded by Charles II, who had a great interest in scientific matters. On the left a quadrant is being used, larger but similar to those used for navigation on ocean-going ships. On the right an extremely long telescope is being used to observe the heavenly bodies.



*When London was rebuilt, a new law made sure that all buildings were made of brick or stone. The jewel of the new city was the new cathedral, designed by Sir Christopher Wren. Almost every church in the new city was also designed by Wren, or by his able assistant, Nicholas Hawksmoor. Although some buildings were pulled down and others built during the next 250 years, the city only changed significantly in the rebuilding that followed the Second World War.*

As a result of the rapid spread of literacy and the improvement in printing techniques, the first newspapers appeared in the seventeenth century. They were a new way of spreading all kinds of ideas, scientific, religious and literary. Many of them included advertisements. In 1660 Charles II advertised for his lost dog.

## Life and work in the Stuart age

The situation for the poor improved in the second half of the seventeenth century. Prices fell compared with wages, and fewer people asked for help from the parish. But it was the middle groups who continued to do well. Many who started life as

yeoman farmers or traders became minor gentry or merchants. Part of their success resulted from a strong interest in farming improvements, which could now be studied in the many new books on the subject.

By the middle of the century the government had already begun to control the trade in cereals to make sure that merchants did not export these while Britain still needed them. However, by 1670 Britain was able to export cereals to Europe, where living conditions, particularly for the poor, were much worse than in Britain. This was partly the result of the Thirty Years War, 1618–48, which had badly damaged European agriculture.





*"The Tichborne Dole", a late seventeenth-century picture, shows a Hampshire landowner, his family, servants and farm tenants. It shows the way in which dress differed according to class and occupation. One of the servants on the left is black, while there is a Quaker woman (holding a baby) among the farming people on the right.*

Trade within Britain itself changed enormously in the seventeenth century. The different regions became less economically separate from each other. No place in Britain was more than seventy-five miles from the sea, and by 1690 few places were more than twenty miles from a river or canal. These waterways became important means of transport, allowing each region to develop its own special produce. Kent, for example, grew more fruit and vegetables to export to other regions, and became known as "the garden of England".

Improved transport resulted in a change in buying and selling. Most towns did not have shops before the seventeenth century. They had market days when farmers and manufacturers sold their produce in the town square or marketplace. By 1690, however, most towns also had proper shops. Shopkeepers travelled around the country to buy goods for their shops, which were new and exciting and drew people from the country to see them. Towns which had shops grew larger, while smaller towns without shops remained no more than villages.

London remained far larger than any other town, with more than 500,000 people by 1650. It controlled almost all the sea trade with other countries. The next largest cities, Norwich, Newcastle and Bristol, had only 25,000 each. (London's great plague of 1665 killed 68,000 people in only six months, almost equal to the total population of these three cities.) After the fire of 1666, the richer citizens for the first time had water supplied to their houses, through specially made wooden pipes. The city streets had traffic jams just as bad as today's, and the noise was probably far worse, with the sound of iron-tyred wheels and the hammering of craftsmen.

In London there was a new class of rich "aristocrats", most of whom belonged to the nobility, but not all. Money could buy a high position in British society more easily than in Europe. After 1650 the rich began to meet in the new coffeehouses, which quickly became the meeting places for conversation and politics.



*Coffeehouses became very popular at the end of the seventeenth century, and remained so for much of the eighteenth century. While coffeehouses were visited only by men, their wives increasingly held tea parties at home. Tea drinking, and the special utensils necessary for this, became very popular among the wealthy. At first tea was made in silver teapots and was drunk from bowls without handles. In the second half of the century china pots replaced silver ones, and teacups replaced bowls. These teacups sat in saucers, the little dishes that were normally used for holding sauces.*

Some of the old nobility, however, did not accept the new rich as equals. While new Stuart yeomen wanted to be gentry, descendants of the older Tudor gentry started to call themselves “squires”, the ruling class of the countryside. They did not wish to be confused with the new gentry.

The squires and JPs governed locally during Cromwell’s Protectorate, and continued to do so afterwards. They had the power to tax for local purposes, to call out soldiers and to try most criminals. They had the same interests as the government, and were therefore usually willing to

pay taxes. As one gentleman said in 1625, “we must not give an example of disobedience to those beneath us”.

While the rich of London visited the coffeehouses, the ordinary people went to the drinking houses, called “alehouses”, in town and country. These soon became the centre of popular culture, where news and ideas could be passed on. By the end of the century the government had secret informers watching the alehouses and listening for rebellious talk.

## Family life

After the rapid increase in population in the Tudor century, the number of births began to fall in the Stuart age. In 1600 Britain and Ireland had a total population of 6 million. Although it increased to 7.7 million by 1650, the rate then started to fall. No one is quite sure why the population either rose so rapidly in the Tudor age, or steadied during the seventeenth century.

One reason for the smaller number of births was that people married later than anywhere else in Europe. Most people married in their mid twenties, and by the end of the century the average age of first marriages was even older, at twenty-seven. This, of course, meant that women had fewer babies. Some women tried to control the size of their families by breast-feeding babies for as long as possible. It also seems that more men remained unmarried than before. But the pattern of population growth and human behaviour remains puzzling. A study of south Wales, for example, shows that one in three of all heads of gentry families remained unmarried at the end of the seventeenth century. A century earlier, hardly any heads of gentry families in the area had remained unmarried. There is uncertainty as to why this should have been.

By the end of the sixteenth century there were already signs that the authority of the husband was increasing. This resulted from the weakening of wider family ties. Furthermore, just as the power of the monarch became more absolute during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, so also did that of the husband and father. But while the power of the monarchy was brought under control, the authority of the head of the family continued to grow.

This power partly resulted from the increasing authority of the Church following the Reformation. The Protestants believed that personal faith was important, and put extra responsibility on the head of the family for its spiritual welfare. The father always led daily family prayers and Bible reading. In some ways he had taken the place of the priest. As a result, his wife and children belonged to him,

mind, body and soul. Absolute obedience was expected. Disobedience was considered an act against God as well as the head of the house.

One result of this increase in the father's authority was that from the early seventeenth century children were frequently beaten to break their "sinful" will. The child who was not beaten was unusual. William Penn, the Quaker who founded the colony of Pennsylvania in north America, advised parents to "love them [their children] with wisdom, correct them with affection, never strike in passion, and suit the corrections to their ages as well as their fault." It is unlikely his advice was accepted except among the Quaker sect, which rejected all violence. Another result was the loss of legal rights by women over whatever property they had brought into a marriage.

However, the Protestant religion also gave new importance to the individual, especially in Presbyterian Scotland. Many Scottish women were not afraid to stand up to both their husbands and the government on matters of personal belief. In fact many of those who chose to die for their beliefs during Scotland's "killing times" were women. This self-confidence was almost certainly a result of greater education and religious democracy in Scotland at this time.



