

Tudors

A Very Peculiar

History



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‘The most dangerous
and cruel man in the world.’

Henry VIII described by the
French ambassador, Castillon

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The Tudors

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Written by
Jim Pipe



'You have sent me
a Flanders mare!'

Henry VIII, angry that Anne of Cleves was less
attractive than her portrait suggested



'Mary, Mary, quite contrary, How
does your garden grow? With silver
bells and cockleshells

And pretty maids all in a row.'
This nursery rhyme may refer to Mary I's
attempts to make England Catholic again



'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.'

Elizabeth I to her army at Tilbury in 1588

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Some right royal sayings

'We are, by the sufferance of God, King of England; and the Kings of England in times past never had any superior but God.'

Henry VIII to Cardinal Wolsey, 1515

'I will make you shorter by a head.'

Elizabeth I's retort to anyone who was taller than her and disagreed with her.

'I have already joined myself in marriage to a husband, namely the kingdom of England. Do not blame me for the miserable lack of children, for every one of you are children of mine.'

Elizabeth's answer to critics who said she should marry and raise a family.

'Let every man have his doctor.
This is mine.'

Said by Henry VIII as he toasted the Dean of Westminster with a glass of wine, 1513

'With your head and my purse I could do anything.'

Elizabeth I praises her minister William Cecil

'Pastime with good company
I love, and shall until I die.
Grouch who list,¹ but none deny;
So God be pleased, thus live will I.
To my pastance,²
Hunt, sing and dance,
My heart is set;
All goodly sport
For my comfort –
Who shall me let?'³

First verse of a song attributed to Henry VIII

'The most obstinate woman that ever was.'
Thomas Cromwell writing about Mary I. June 1536

'I'm reasonably sorry.'
Philip II of Spain on hearing that his wife Mary I had died.

'When anyone speaks of her beauty,
she says she was never beautiful.
Nevertheless, she speaks of her
beauty as often as she can.'

André Hurault, Sieur de Maisse, French ambassador
to Elizabeth's court, 1597

1. Grouch who list: Let people complain if they want to.

2. pastance: pleasure. 3. let: prevent.

Henry VII

Born 28 January 1457

Reigned 22 August 1485 – 21 April 1509

Henry VIII

Born 28 June 1491

Reigned 21 April 1509 – 28 January 1547

Edward VI

Born 12 October 1537

Reigned 28 January 1547 – 6 July 1553

Lady Jane Grey

Born 1536/7

Reigned 10-19 July 1553

Executed 12 February 1554

Mary I

Born 18 February 1516

Reigned 19 July 1553 – 17 November 1558

Elizabeth I

Born 7 September 1533

Reigned 17 November 1558 – 24 March 1603

Introduction

What is it about the Tudors?



hen it comes to drama, few royal families can match the Tudors. Want betrayals and back-stabbing, intrigues and scandals, bloody rebellions and gruesome executions? It's all here, against the glamorous backdrop of grand castles and lavish palaces, sumptuous feasts, gorgeous clothes and spectacular tournaments.

And what a cast of characters! Our tale begins with dark horse Henry VII, the rank outsider who battled against the odds to seize the crown and – even trickier – hold on to it. All that hard work paved the way for the legendary

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excesses of his son, Henry VIII, the larger-than-life monarch with a twinkle in his eye and a swagger in his step, who famously beheaded two wives and divorced two others. Henry's son and heir, Edward VI, may have been nicknamed the 'godly imp' for his saintly behaviour, but the fiendish antics of powerful nobles such as Edward Seymour and John Dudley ensured there was rarely a dull moment during the boy king's short reign – or after, when Lady Jane Grey ruled the country for a few brief days. The turmoil continued under 'Bloody' Mary, who undid everything her father had done and had hundreds burnt at the stake in the process. No less determined was her younger sister, Elizabeth I, 'Good Queen Bess', who defeated the mighty Armada and ruled over a colourful court of writers, poets and explorers.

In total, the five Tudors ruled for just 118 years. Yet some 500 years later, they remain among the best-known and most easily recognised of English monarchs – not least because Henry VIII and Elizabeth I left behind a string of splendid (and very flattering) portraits. The Tudors also did their best to spread the word that they were a bit special: poets such as Edmund Spenser

Introduction

linked them to legendary British kings such as Arthur, and Cadwaladr of Wales.¹

Do the Tudors live up to their own hype? They were able, cunning, ambitious and ruthless. Henry VII greatly increased the power of the king and parliament by cracking down on lawless nobles, while Henry VIII's break with the Catholic Church was a turning point in English history. Elizabeth I's reign brought peace, stability, and a sense that England was a world power. England's merchants prospered under Tudor rule. The country grew into a great naval power while its sailors discovered many new lands. The court became a centre for the arts and sciences, and the works of William Shakespeare and others are still enjoyed today.

Enjoy the drama. But don't forget: for all their temper tantrums, excesses and cruelty, the Tudors knew how to get things done.

1. Despite this, the Tudors generally played down their Welsh roots in order to emphasise their right to the English throne. Mary, for example, was known as 'the daughter of Henry VIII', rather than Mary Tudor.

The birth of a dynasty



For those who like their history bloody, the Tudor age began on 22 August 1485 when ambitious Welsh nobleman Henry Tudor, 2nd Earl of Richmond, thrashed King Richard III of England at the Battle of Bosworth Field in Leicestershire. As one dynasty kicked off, another ended — after Henry's victory, England waved goodbye to the Plantagenets who had ruled the country since the 12th century.

In Tudor times, the battle was portrayed as a clash of the titans: Saintly Henry versus Wicked Richard. But in real life there were few saints



Bosworth
Field, 1485:
the last Plantagenet
king bites the dust

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in the dog-eat-dog world of medieval politics. The battle was won by a dirty trick played by knavish noble Lord William Stanley, who watched and waited from the wings with his 8,000 troops before deciding which side to join. When Henry rode towards Stanley asking for his support, Richard took a gamble. He charged down the hill at Henry's bodyguard, with 800 knights thundering along at his side.

Richard hoped to end the fight quickly by killing Henry. He hadn't bargained on the foul play of Lord Stanley, who suddenly attacked Richard from the flank. No wonder Richard was heard shouting, 'Treason, Treason!' After this happened, within a few minutes the battle was over. Though Richard almost cut his way through to Henry, he was now surrounded. Toppled from his horse, the last of the Plantagenets continued to fight on foot until he was cut down by Welsh spearmen.

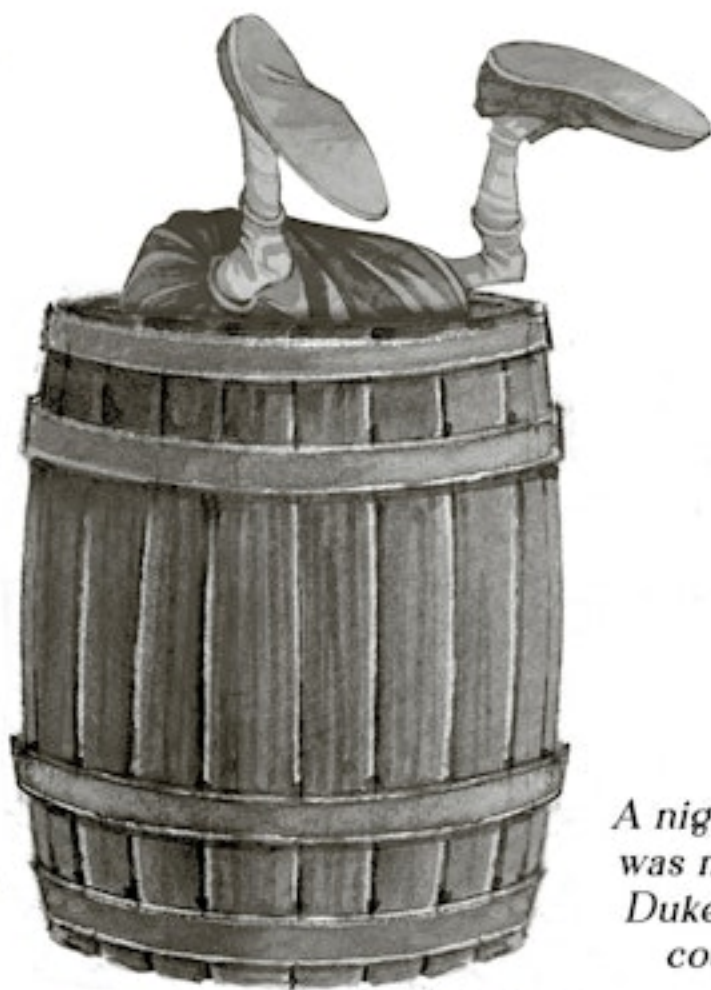


The horrible hunchback?

King Richard III, Henry's opponent at Bosworth, is often depicted as a cruel, ugly villain, a ruthless tyrant. This all stems from the bad press he got in Tudor times from the likes of William Shakespeare and Sir Thomas More, when the royal court wanted to show how evil Richard was compared to Henry VII. But can we believe them?

- Richard was painted by Tudor artists as a hunchback with a withered arm and a limp. But these pictures were painted long after Richard's death – there's no sign of these deformities in earlier portraits or in records written at the time.
- Richard's famous line 'A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!' was probably made up by Shakespeare, who wanted to show him as a coward. But brave Richard died fighting with a sword in his hand.
- OK, so Richard did grab the throne from his young nephew Edward V. But far from being a tyrant, Richard introduced many new laws that improved life for his subjects.
- In the traditional story of the murder of Edward V and his brother – the 'Little Princes in the Tower' – they're smothered to death by three of Richard's men, then buried in a shallow grave at the foot of a flight of stairs. The jury is still out on this one. Richard had already had the law changed so they couldn't come to the throne, so he had no need to kill them.

- Richard was also blamed for the death of his brother, George, duke of Clarence, who was allegedly drowned in a butt of Malmsey (a barrel of sweet wine) after a long drinking session at the Tower of London. Given that Clarence had just had a shouting match with King Edward IV (Richard's other brother), it's far more likely that Edward was behind his murder.



*A night on the tiles
was more than the
Duke of Clarence
could handle.*

No love lost

You may have heard a story about Henry's men finding Richard III's crown in a hawthorn bush.¹ True or not, Henry wasted no time in having himself crowned king on the battlefield. To make it clear who was boss, he had Richard's body stripped and lashed to a horse. In Leicester, the ex-king's naked corpse was displayed in a church for all to see, then buried in an unmarked grave two days later.

If that sounds a bit over the top, we should bear in mind that after years of bitter struggle Henry had a ruthless survival instinct that became a Tudor trademark. Now is probably a good time to wind back the clock and take a look at Henry's past. The squeamish among you can relax for a while, as even the Tudors had their romantic moments.



1. A hawthorn bush became part of Henry's coat of arms, so there may be some truth in the tale.

The long road to the top

Henry's granddad, Owen Tudor (in Welsh, Owain ap Maredudd ap Tewdwr),² had joined the household of English king Henry V as a pageboy. After winning his spurs at the Battle of Agincourt in 1415, he was promoted to the king's bodyguard. When Henry V died in 1422, Owen stayed on to guard the new king, 9-month-old Henry VI.

The dashing young squire soon caught the eye of the young king's mother, Catherine of Valois. According to a popular story of the time, she dressed up as one of her own ladies-in-waiting to play a trick on Owen when she heard he was chasing after one of her maids. She intended to scold him, but found herself falling head over heels in love. The couple may even have married in secret. The powerful Duke of Gloucester, who ruled England on the baby king's behalf, did not approve. Owen was flung into Newgate Prison

2. In Welsh, *ap* means 'son of', so Henry was technically Henry ap Owain ap Maredudd ap Tewdwr. Henry was terribly proud of his ancestry, and claimed he was descended from the famous Welsh prince Cadwallader (Cadwaladr) the Great and even from Brutus, the mythical king of Britain and founder of London.

in London and the queen was sent to a convent, where sadly she died the following year — by which time she had given Owen three sons. When Henry VI grew up he became good friends with his Tudor half-brothers. He made one of them, Edmund Tudor, earl of Richmond,³ and in 1455 the king arranged Edmund's marriage to Lady Margaret Beaufort — a real catch, as she was a direct descendant of King Edward III.

Trouble was brewing, however. Henry VI's rule was being challenged by Richard, duke of York (father of the future Richard III). Civil war broke out between the Yorkists and Henry VI, leader of the house of Lancaster. Edmund Tudor, a supporter of Henry VI like his father, was taken prisoner less than a year later.⁴ He died in Carmarthen Castle the following winter, leaving a 13-year-old widow who was by now seven months' pregnant.

3. Edmund's brother Jasper was created earl of Pembroke. We shall meet him again soon.

4. His father, Owen Tudor, had been released from prison by Henry VI and in 1461 led the Lancastrian forces at the Battle of Mortimer's Cross against Edward, Earl of March. Defeated, Owen was captured and beheaded. Right to the end, his thoughts were of his beloved Catherine: 'The head which used to lie in the Queen's lap will now lie in the executioner's basket.'

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On 28 January 1457, Edmund's wife Margaret gave birth to her only child, Henry Tudor, in Pembroke Castle, Wales. For a while they stayed there under the protection of Henry's uncle Jasper Tudor, but soon after the Yorkist Edward IV seized the throne and his forces captured the castle. Some would have you believe that 4-year-old Henry Tudor was whisked away to live a secret life in the misty Welsh mountains – all very romantic, but in fact he probably grew up in the household of Yorkist Lord William Herbert, as the intended husband of Herbert's little daughter Maud.

Battle raged between the Houses of York and Lancaster. In 1470 the Earl of Warwick, known as the 'Kingmaker', restored Henry VI to the throne. Within a year, Edward IV recovered the crown after Warwick was slain at the Battle of Barnet. Henry VI was imprisoned in the Tower of London, where he died two months later, probably murdered on Edward's orders.

Confused? Well, imagine what it was like for little Henry, whose world was turned on its head after his protector William Herbert was executed for treachery.

The birth of a dynasty

As other royal heirs dropped like flies, Henry Tudor suddenly became a real contender for the throne, thanks to his mother's links to the royal family. He was no longer safe in Wales, so Uncle Jasper (only just back from exile himself) took Henry off to Brittany where they were taken in by Duke Francis. It would be 14 years before Henry returned to England. Hardened by the long years of exile and always fighting against the odds, young Henry grew up fast. A tall, athletic man with dark hair and fair skin, he was tough, determined, and ready for the challenges that lay ahead.

In the meantime, the Yorkists had started fighting each other. When Edward IV died in 1483, his unpopular brother made himself King Richard III and had several leading Yorkist barons beheaded. Around this time, Richard was suspected of having murdered his nephews in the Tower of London (see pages 17–18) – the final straw for many Yorkists who were already tired of Richard's rule. Soon they were plotting to bring young Henry Tudor to the throne, who had cleverly promised to patch things up with the Yorkists by marrying Elizabeth of York, niece of Richard III.

The secret Tudors

Roland de Velville. Henry Tudor didn't spend all his time in Brittany thinking up fiendish schemes to win the throne. His French was a lot better than his English, and after Henry fell in love with a local girl, she bore him a son named Roland de Velville. After his father became Henry VII, Roland followed him to England and was made a knight after fighting at the Battle of Blackheath in 1497. Soon after, he became constable of Beaumaris Castle on the Isle of Anglesey in Wales, and married a Welsh woman. Very wisely, he kept his head down and never challenged the crown of his half-brother Henry VIII.

Henry Fitzroy. King Henry VIII was apparently delighted when his affair with 'Bessie' Blount led to the birth of a son in 1519. He always looked after Bessie and granted her son his own household. At 16, handsome Henry Fitzroy married the Duke of Norfolk's daughter, and for a short while he was even heir to the throne. He died in 1536, just before Edward VI was born.

Henry Carey. In 1525, Henry VIII also had a brief affair with Mary Boleyn, the elder sister of Anne Boleyn. In 1526, Mary gave birth to a son, known as Henry Carey, who also died in 1536.

William Shakespeare? Some writers have claimed that 'William Shakespeare' was the pen name of Edward de Vere, who was born as the outcome of an affair between Elizabeth I and Thomas Seymour. Could the Virgin Queen have given birth in secret while out of London?

It's an intriguing theory, but sadly there isn't much evidence for it.



"Why can't people believe I wrote those plays?"

In September 1483, the exiled Henry was invited back to England by the Yorkist duke of Buckingham. When bad weather stalled the rebellion, Richard III bribed Duke Francis of Brittany to hand Henry over to him. In the nick of time, the Tudors got wind of the plan and escaped to France (then a separate kingdom). They were soon joined by a gang of Yorkist rebels fleeing from England.

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Henry Tudor charmed the French king Charles VIII into backing another invasion of England. By the summer of 1485, he had assembled an army of 2,000 men, mostly French and Scots mercenaries. Despite this foreign force, he had the backing of many powerful English nobles who were united in their hatred of Richard III.⁵

On 7 August 1485, Henry Tudor landed in his native Wales and marched east, joined by Lancastrian supporters. Surprisingly few Welshmen joined his army, but Henry did get the backing of the famous bard (traditional Welsh poet) Dafydd Llwyd ap Llywelyn, who had predicted that a Welsh king would one day appear to free his people from English rule. When Henry asked Dafydd to predict whether his expedition would end in defeat or triumph, Dafydd replied that he'd like to sleep on it before giving his answer. According to legend, the bard's wife advised him to predict success. If Henry became king, he would be rewarded;⁶ if he was defeated, it wouldn't matter!

5. Rumours were now circulating that Richard had cruelly poisoned his wife in order to marry his niece Elizabeth of York before Henry Tudor had the chance to do so.

6. Good call. When Henry became king, he made the bard a gentleman of his personal bodyguard.

The birth of a dynasty

King at last

Henry's army marched 185 km (115 miles) in just eight days. Though Henry was heavily outnumbered when he faced Richard's forces at Bosworth, Lord Stanley's stab in the back swung the battle in his favour. Quick as he could, Henry had himself crowned (again) at Westminster Abbey, before Parliament had time to challenge his claim to the throne.⁷ He then promptly married Elizabeth of York, combining the white rose emblem of York and the red rose of Lancaster into the Tudor rose.

The so-called Wars of the Roses had dragged on for 32 years. Though the actual fighting only amounted to about 18 months in all, a whole generation had been decimated. The English looked on in horror as the royal family chopped up their cousins and stuck their body parts on spikes all over the country. The Tudors used this to their advantage, threatening: 'If you don't obey us, it will only lead to another bloody civil war.'

7. Even though he was a distant relation of the royal family, Henry's main claim to the throne was the fact that God had given him victory on the field of battle!

Red dragon vs. white boar

The Wars of the Roses is a pretty name for a long, bloodthirsty struggle for the English crown. But the rose symbols that give the conflict its name (red for Lancaster, white for York) weren't worn much at the time. Most soldiers fought under their lord's banner, so Henry VII's forces at Bosworth fought under the Welsh red dragon, while the Yorkist army used Richard III's symbol of a white boar.



The red and white Tudor rose combines the colours of York and Lancaster.

The birth of a dynasty

Henry had finally made it to the top of the greasy pole. To stay there, he would have to work very hard as there were at least six Plantagenets with a better claim to the throne. Rarely calling Parliament, the new king relied on brute force to hang on to the crown. Though he retained several of Henry VI's advisors, he also brought in new faces such as Cardinal John Morton (his most trusted minister), Bishop Fox of Winchester, Richard Empson and Edmund Dudley.

At least there were now fewer barons around to kick-start a rebellion. Half the nobles in England had been wiped out during the Wars of the Roses – many were young men without an heir. Henry VII was in no rush to replace them. Knowing only too well how easily nobles swapped sides, he passed new laws banning the barons from building up large private armies. A court known as the Star Chamber had the power to arrest any nobles who broke the law. It also forced them to 'loan' large sums of money to the king. Anyone who had fought against Henry at Bosworth was declared a traitor, so the king could confiscate their lands and give them to his supporters.

The miracle king

Henry VII regarded himself as a lucky so-and-so – and he certainly survived against the odds to claim the throne. Once in power, he spun the line 'God is on my side', using prophecies, religious images and miracles to boost his image. Henry had to rely on such propaganda as he knew that others had a better claim to the throne. He also got Welsh bards to sing his praises: they cast him in the role of a returning avenger while slagging off Richard III as a murdering uncle.

Henry was right not to trust his nobles. In 1487 he crushed a revolt by the Earl of Lincoln on behalf of Lambert Simnel, a young lad who claimed to be one of the missing princes from the Tower. Five years later, a Dutch boy named Perkin Warbeck made a similar claim, this time backed by Margaret of Burgundy, Edward IV's sister. Other plots simmered away, though none was a serious threat to Henry's rule.

The Rival Claimants for the Crown

The son of an Oxford baker. 10-year-old Lambert Simnel was proclaimed Edward VI in Dublin by Lord Kildare, the Lord Deputy of Ireland, in May 1487. Simnel was also backed by his alleged aunt Margaret of Anjou (widow of Henry IV), who sent 2,000 German mercenaries to help him. Did they believe his story? Probably not. They were just using him to get at Henry. The rebels were defeated at Stoke Field on 16 June 1487. Remarkably, Henry pardoned Simnel and gave him a job in the palace kitchens, where he lived for almost 40 years. Had Henry gone soft?

Perkin Warbeck. the son of a Dutch tax collector, had some big hitters on his side, including the French king, the Holy Roman Emperor, James IV of Scotland and Margaret of Burgundy. But after years of plotting, he was captured in 1497 when his invasion of England failed. After two years in the Tower of London, where he saw 'neither sun nor moon', Warbeck was executed for treason. That's more like a Tudor, Henry!

De la Pole brothers. After John (named heir by Richard III) died fighting for Lambert Simnel, Edmund de la Pole became the leading Yorkist claimant to the throne until Henry VIII had him executed in 1513. The last remaining Pole, Richard, carried the flag until his death at the Battle of Pavía in 1525.

I'm a legend

Henry VII boasted that he was related to King Arthur, and named his first son after him. He first fell in love with the tales of the Knights of the Round Table while in Brittany. It's no coincidence that Sir Thomas Malory's version of the legend, *Le Morte d'Arthur*, was first printed by William Caxton in 1486, the year Prince Arthur was baptised. It was the first romance ever printed in English.

Henry was a smooth operator: while he walloped his nobles with taxes, he was more generous towards ordinary men and women. As a result, many of the rebels got a lot less support than they hoped for. Henry was also merciful and put to death only a handful of his enemies (unlike his son Henry VIII and granddaughter Elizabeth I). He solved many of England's problems overseas by diplomatic means. Lord Kildare, the former supporter of Lambert Simnel, ended up running Ireland for Henry, while a treaty with Scotland in 1502 ended a war that had rumbled on for 200 years.⁸

8. The 'Treaty of Perpetual Peace' was backed up by the marriage of his daughter Margaret Tudor to James IV of Scotland. The treaty was broken in 1513 when James invaded England in support of the French.

The birth of a dynasty

The year before, a treaty with Spain led to a wedding between Henry's 15-year-old son Arthur and Catherine of Aragon, the daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain. For years, the young couple exchanged love letters in Latin. Henry's plans were almost dashed by Arthur's death in 1502, just five months after the wedding.⁹ Afraid he would have to pay back the large dowry, the king persuaded the Pope to allow Catherine to marry Arthur's younger brother, the future King Henry VIII.

Though Henry VII brought order and security to England after decades of chaos, he wasn't well-loved. His nobles grumbled at the hefty taxes. His minister Cardinal Morton is said to have come up with a sneaky scheme known as Morton's Fork. If a noble was a big spender, Morton argued, he could clearly afford to pay more taxes. If a lord lived simply and spent little, he must have money to spare for – you've guessed it – more taxes!

9. It had taken 13 years to arrange the marriage, partly due to haggling over money (worth 200,000 crowns to the royal coffers, or about £5 million today), but also due to worries over the stability of the Tudor dynasty. As the Spanish ambassador Dr Rodrigo de Puebla put it in 1488: 'Bearing in mind what happens to the kings of England every day, it is surprising that Ferdinand and Isabella dare think of giving their daughter at all.'

Groom of the Stool. Wiping the king's bottom was a plum job (should that be 'plumbing?'), as only the most trusted nobleman was allowed to get near the royal rump (most Tudor kings and queens were terrified of being bumped off). The main tool for the job was a diaper cloth woven in two different directions, which made it very absorbent. If your master got constipated, it was also your job to flush him out. Don't ask...

Gong farmer. Another dirty job: there were no sewers in Tudor times, just large pits where human waste collected. As a gong farmer, you used a bucket and spade to clear up the mess and break up logjams. You were only allowed to work at night, by candlelight, and the filth you scraped up, known as 'night soil', had to be dumped outside the city walls. Mind you, the job was well paid and one of Elizabeth I's gong farmers, Samson, was paid partly in brandy.



"Since I took up this newfangled tobacco, I can hardly smell my work at all."

Headsmen. You needed a steady hand and a strong nerve to be an executioner, as the job was usually done in front of a large crowd. You were also public enemy no. 1, and though your face was covered by a mask everyone knew exactly who you were. At least the tips were good, as many nobles paid extra for a quick, neat job.

Spit-boy. A Spanish visitor to the Tudor court in 1554 described the royal kitchens as a living hell. One of the worst jobs was turning huge chunks of meat as they slowly roasted on a spit over a fire. This was hot, dirty and mind-numbingly boring work. You had to dress properly too, as Henry VIII banned kitchen workers from going about naked or in ragged clothes. But if you were light-fingered, you never went hungry.

Dyers. Though dyeing was a skilled job, Queen Elizabeth I wouldn't let you work within 8 km (5 miles) of her. Why? The woad used to dye clothes blue smelt like rotting cabbage. It stained your hands and even made your sweat blue!

Whipping boy. The royal court kept a child who got whipped if the young prince did wrong. This doesn't sound like fun, but you got educated alongside the prince and shared his five-star lifestyle.

Weeder. Women carried out the back-breaking work of making the royal gardens weed-free.

No expense spared

Henry VII was known for being a miser in his private life, but it didn't show in public. Throughout Europe, his court was known for its magnificence. Though Henry already lived in luxury in the palaces at Westminster, Greenwich and Eltham, he built a splendid new palace at Richmond, Surrey, with a round tower 124 steps high that offered a fabulous view of the surrounding countryside. Here the king held great banquets, where 700 guests or more were fed 60 dishes in a single meal. What better way to show off his new dynasty?

The Master of the Tents and Revels was responsible for staging eye-popping parties and entertainments at court. In November 1502, a dazzling display devised by composer William Cornish greeted the arrival of Catherine of Aragon in England. Knights paraded past the princess, some hidden inside a dragon escorted by a fancy-dress 'giant'. Others rode on a float decked out as a ship, with seamen firing cannon. That evening, a huge candlelit tower was hauled into the hall by men in seahorse costumes,

escorted by ladies dressed as mermaids. It was some show. Such pageants left visiting princes in no doubt about Henry VII's great wealth.

The king didn't scrimp when it came to looking good, either. Compared with Louis XI, the 'Spider King' of France,¹⁰ who wore rough, simple clothes, Henry looked absolutely fabulous in gold and silver cloth, luxurious furs and glittering jewellery. To complete the show, he kitted out his private bodyguard, the Yeomen of the Guard, in smart red and yellow uniforms. Henry also knew how to enjoy life. A keen huntsman, and with his own private zoo, Henry had a great love of music, which he passed on to his son Henry VIII. The first English king to build a library in his palace, he was an admirer of William Caxton, the first known printer in England, who had set up a press in Westminster in 1476.

With an eye for money-making ventures, Henry also funded Italian explorer John Cabot's voyage to North America in 1497.

10. He earned this nickname by spinning a 'spider's web' of plots and intrigue.

The royal bodyguard

The Yeomen of the Guard, formed by Henry VII, are still on duty on occasions such as the State Opening of Parliament, when they 'search' the cellars of the Palace of Westminster¹¹ - a tradition that dates back to the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, when Guy Fawkes and his associates tried to blow up Parliament. The oldest royal bodyguard in England, the Yeomen of the Guard are very proud of their heritage:

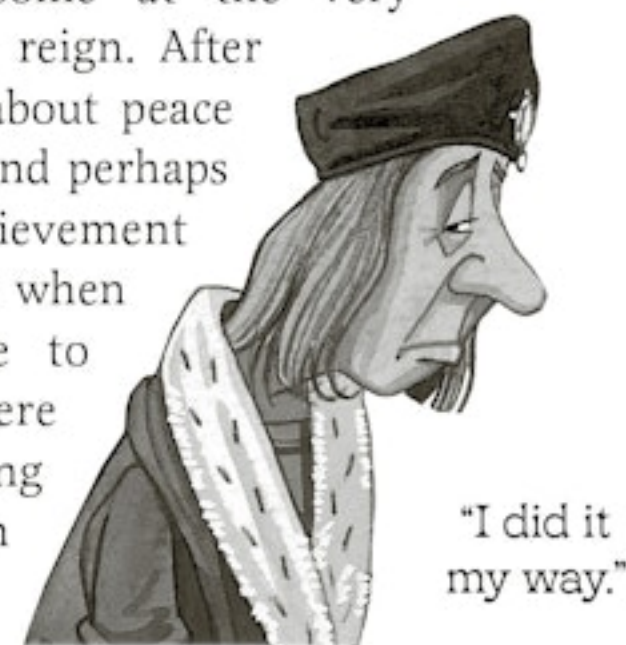
- Though they no longer carry the hagbuts (guns) or longbows of the original Yeomen Archers, they still wear Tudor-style uniforms that have changed little in over 520 years.
- If you want to annoy them, just confuse them with the Yeomen Warders who guard the Tower of London. Though their full-dress uniforms are similar, Yeomen of the Guard have cross belts, worn from the left shoulder.
- They also carry a sword and a pike known as a 'partisan', a reminder of the weapons used at the Battle of Bosworth Field.
- In the past, they carried a ceremonial axe when escorting prisoners from the Tower to trial at Westminster. If the prisoner was found guilty, the sharp edge of the axe was turned towards him or her on the return journey - a simple way of spreading the news.

11. Nowadays the actual search is carried out by police officers.

The birth of a dynasty

Henry's reputation for being mean probably stems from the gloomy mood at court following the sudden death of his son Arthur in 1502, closely followed by his wife Elizabeth less than two years later. Poor Henry was devastated, and though he thought about remarrying, his heart wasn't in it. Increasingly isolated, he was terrified of losing his eyesight as he liked to check the court papers himself and was afraid of being cheated.¹² Thanks to the insecurity of his early years, he never learned to trust even his closest friends.

Henry died on 21 April 1509 at Richmond Palace, a lonely and sad figure. His moment of glory had come at the very beginning of his reign. After that, it was all about peace and prosperity, and perhaps his biggest achievement was the fact that when Henry VIII came to the throne, there were no rivals lining up to snatch it from him.



12. Though he kept this a secret from everyone but his mother.

Bluff King Hal



enry VIII, surely the most famous English monarch of all, was never meant to be king. Born in Greenwich Palace on 28 June 1491, Henry was the third child of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York, and grew up in the shadow of his elder brother, Arthur, Prince of Wales. Henry was all set for a life in the Church: no playboy antics, no parties, no six wives and no lopping people's heads off.

As a result, young Henry was expected to study hard. He was taught by a priest called John Skelton, a famous poet and musician who encouraged the prince's love of music. Henry also had a good ear for language and became fluent in Latin, French and Spanish. Later on in life,

"I'll start my own church — that'll show you."

"Heretic!"



Henry and the Pope don't see eye to eye

The Tudors A very Peculiar History

he spent many evenings discussing astronomy, science and religion with his minister Thomas More. But Henry, just like his father, also loved stories about knights in armour battling fierce giants.

Even as a child, Henry had a team of servants scampering around him, including minstrels and a fool called John Goose. All in all, he was spoilt rotten and, as you can imagine, at times he was a little monster.

In 1502, Arthur died from a mysterious illness at the age of 15. Suddenly, 10-year-old Henry was thrust into the limelight as the new heir to the throne.



Arthur



Henry

Yes, Majesty!

Some boys like to collect stamps or fossils. Henry VIII collected titles:

- Aged 2: Constable of Dover Castle and Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports.
- Aged 3: Knight of the Bath and Duke of York.
- Aged 4: Knight of the Garter.
- Aged 13: Prince of Wales, following the death of his elder brother Arthur.
- Henry was later made Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, then King of Ireland in 1542. (The Irish were not consulted about this.)
- Ironically, the title of Defender of the Faith was given to Henry as a young man after he defended Pope Leo X against the Protestant Martin Luther. He called Luther 'a great limb of the Devil'. Luther responded by calling Henry 'a mad fool with a frothy mouth' and the 'king of lies'. Even after the split with Rome, Henry hung on to the title, which to this day is used by English kings and queens and can be seen on banknotes and coins.
- With all those titles, what would you call him? Around 1519, Henry decided he should be called 'Majesty' as well as 'Highness' and 'Grace', even in official documents.

The Tudors A very Peculiar History

Arthur had been married to Princess Catherine of Aragon,¹ and to ensure the alliance with Spain, young Henry took his place and was engaged to the princess just 14 months after Arthur's death.² Given that she had no choice in the matter, Catherine could have done a lot worse: as a teenager, her new hubby was handsome, charming and sporty.

At 6 ft 2 in (1.88 m) tall, Henry towered over most of his subjects,³ and his broad shoulders must have made him seem all the more regal. He had blue eyes, very fair skin, and red hair which he wore in a bob. One court visitor said, 'Nature could not have done more for him.' Another described him as 'the most handsomest potentate [ruler] I ever set eyes on'. Henry's calves were considered very sexy and his dancing was much admired: 'He leaps like a stag,' remarked one onlooker.

1. The youngest child of King Ferdinand II of Aragon and Queen Isabella I of Castile, who had funded Columbus's voyage to the New World in 1492.

2. In order for Henry to marry his brother's wife, he had to get permission from the Pope. Under pressure from Henry and Queen Isabella, the Pope finally agreed after Catherine swore she had been wedded but not bedded by Arthur. The actual marriage didn't take place until just before Henry's coronation, by which time he was 17.

3. In those days, the average Londoner was 5 ft 5 in (1.65 m).

A man of many talents

Musician: At the age of 10, Henry could already play the lute, harp, viol and drums. Later he owned a vast collection of instruments including 26 lutes, 10 trombones, 14 trumpets, 5 bagpipes, 76 recorders and 78 flutes. Songs which may have been composed by Henry include 'Hélas, madame', 'Pastime with good company' (see page 7) and, allegedly, 'Greensleeves' (pages 172-179). The king also liked to sing. Two of his favourite songs were 'By the banks as I lay' and 'As I walked the wood so wild'.

Archer: Henry showed off his skill at the Field of the Cloth of Gold (see page 56) by hitting a bullseye from 240 yards (220 m) – though in later life he needed glasses to read.

Knight: One of the best jousts in the country, Henry took on all comers along with his brother-in-law, Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, who, like the king, was a giant bear of a man.

Wrestler: Henry was a skilled wrestler, though he never quite got over his defeat by King Francis I of France, who threw him with a move known as a 'flying mare'.

Gambler: Henry was mad keen on cock-fighting and had his own pit built at Whitehall Palace.

The Tudors A very Peculiar History

Elizabeth must have been aware that many Protestant nobles were ready to rebel against Mary. One of them, Sir Thomas Wyatt, sent her a letter telling the princess of their plans. Though she probably agreed with them, she was wise not to reply as the plotters were soon rounded up. Mary ordered her sister to come to London to explain herself. Elizabeth knew she was playing a very dangerous game. One wrong move could give Mary an excuse to get rid of her closest rival.

Again Elizabeth tried to play for time, saying that she couldn't come as she had been struck down by a fever (a half-truth, as her kidneys were playing up). When Mary's doctors insisted that she was well enough to travel, Elizabeth had one more trick up her sleeve. She had herself carried to London on a litter,⁵ with 100 horsemen in front and behind her, all dressed in scarlet. Elizabeth, meanwhile, was dressed in white, and had the curtains open to let the world see her suffering.

After a few days at Whitehall Palace, Elizabeth was sent to the Tower — not to a dark, damp

5. A chair or bed carried on two poles.

Good Queen Bess

dungeon but to a royal suite with four rooms and dozens of servants.⁶ Wise to her half-sister's tricks, Mary had her smuggled upriver in a barge in the dead of night.⁷ As you can imagine, Elizabeth was petrified. In one version of the story, after the princess's boat passed through Traitors' Gate, she refused to go any further. As the rain beat down, a very soggy Elizabeth sat shivering on the stairs up to the gate until Kat Ashley finally persuaded her to enter. All very dramatic, but in reality it was low tide, so Elizabeth probably entered over the drawbridge!

Elizabeth had every reason to be nervous — the observant reader will have spotted that most people who entered the Tower soon lost their heads. But just before he was executed, the leader of the rebellion, Sir Thomas Wyatt, proclaimed that Elizabeth knew nothing about the plot. As the weeks went by, Mary relented and Elizabeth was sent to Woodstock Manor in Oxfordshire, where she was held for a year.

6. Even so, Elizabeth must have been badly spooked: it was the very place where her mother Anne Boleyn had spent her final days!

7. Mary would not have been amused to hear that some of the guards at the Tower took off their caps, knelt down and cried out 'God save Your Grace' as Elizabeth passed by.

The Tudors A very Peculiar History

On the outside, things were moving fast. By now Mary was gooey-eyed over Philip of Spain, who persuaded her to go easy on Elizabeth as he hoped to marry her to his ally, the Duke of Savoy. When Elizabeth refused, Mary threatened to lock her up again. But Mary's health was failing. Willing to let bygones be bygones, she was prepared to make Elizabeth her heir on two conditions:

1. Pay off my debts.
2. Keep England Catholic.

Elizabeth agreed, of course (fingers crossed and hope to die), knowing full well she could do what she liked once she was on the throne.

"My turn at last — and I'm not taking any nonsense from anyone."

Elizabeth's reign would be portrayed as a new Golden Age.



Good Queen Bess

Queen Elizabeth

On 17 November 1558, after 15 years of uncertainty, her time had come. For the first and only time in English history, the cry rang out: 'The queen is dead, long live the queen!'

The story goes that Princess Elizabeth was sitting under an oak tree at Hatfield House in Hertfordshire when a horseman galloped up with the news that would change her life for ever. Aged 25, she was now queen of England. But where to start? Wars, plagues and religious strife had left the country bankrupt and divided. And thanks to Mary, Elizabeth would have to kick-start the Protestant Church all over again.

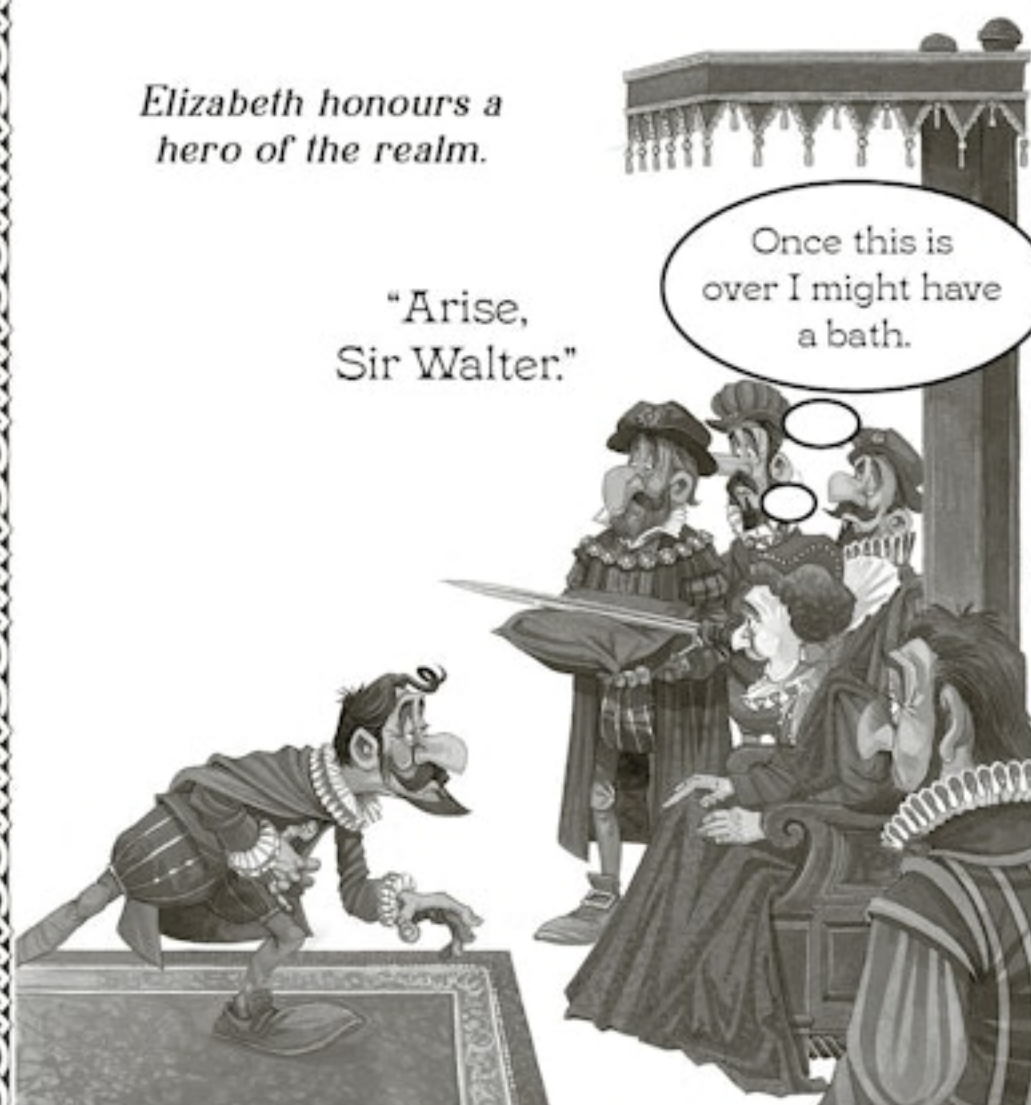
From day one, Elizabeth also had to prove herself to the men at court, who believed that as a woman she wasn't up to the job and needed a husband to help her out. Many nobles undoubtedly looked forward to pushing the young queen around. But just four days into her reign she had dismissed many of them and chosen a new, much smaller, Privy Council. Elizabeth 1, Doubters 0.

10 things you didn't know about Elizabeth I

1. She hated eating in public and took most of her meals in her privy chamber.
2. It's said that the queen would climb on a chair screaming if she saw a mouse!
3. Elizabeth was very proud that she took a bath once a month, 'whether she needed it or no'.
4. In 1596 a flush toilet, named the Ajax, was invented and built for Queen Elizabeth I by her godson, Sir John Harrington. At first she wasn't that impressed, but once she saw it in action, she wanted them in all of her palaces.
5. The queen owned the first wristwatch in England, given to her by Robert Dudley. It was encased in a bracelet.
6. Elizabeth caught smallpox at 29, and survived. She was lucky: Lady Mary Sidney, who nursed the queen, was so pockmarked by the disease that she never showed her face at court again.
7. She loved marzipan and used a sugary solution to keep her breath fresh. Unfortunately, these made her teeth rot.

8. Though she rarely mentioned her mother Anne Boleyn in public, in 1575 Elizabeth had a ring made which contained a picture of both herself and her mother.
9. Scared to death of being assassinated, for the last years of her life Elizabeth carried around a rusty old sword.
10. During Elizabeth's reign, one in four girls born in England were named after the queen.

Elizabeth honours a hero of the realm.



The Tudors A very Peculiar History

Elizabeth was crowned queen on Sunday 15 January 1559. The celebrations were sensational – the coronation banquet alone would have cost about £3.5 million today. Like all the Tudors, Elizabeth knew that a good show could win over the people. As she walked along the blue carpet laid out for her journey to Westminster Abbey, there was pandemonium as the crowds rushed forward to cut out pieces as souvenirs. Yet Elizabeth took her time to meet and greet the crowd and was an instant hit.

She hoped to sort out England's religion once and for all. Within a year, Elizabeth had broken with Rome (again) and made herself head of the Church of England.⁸ Elizabeth 2, Doubters 0. Over the next few years she also made it law for all services (and Bibles) to be in English, and reintroduced the *Book of Common Prayer* (still in use today). Elizabeth was no hardcore Protestant – she allowed Catholic traditions such as candlesticks and crucifixes – but this didn't stop a rash of Catholic plots against her.

8. You may wonder how religious leaders were able to switch from Protestant to Catholic and back again. But Tudor people generally accepted that the best way to obey God was to obey the king (or queen).

The Virgin Queen

- Elizabeth got this nickname because she never married, but she could have filled a palace with royal suitors such as Prince Eric of Sweden and Archduke Charles of Austria.
- The real love of her life was Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, whom she nicknamed 'Darling Robin' or 'Sir Eyes'. Though he was already married, Dudley and the queen were inseparable. She once jokingly said: 'You are like my little dog; when people see you, they know I am nearby.' But, though rumours spread like wildfire, marriage was impossible after Dudley's first wife, Amy Robsart, broke her neck falling down a flight of stairs – which looked suspiciously like murder.
- Elizabeth loved to be surrounded by handsome young men showering her with presents. She encouraged them to woo her with sweet words or by dancing with her. Outsiders sometimes mistook this flirting for the real thing. Elizabeth moaned: 'I do not know how such a bad opinion has been formed of me. A thousand eyes see all I do.'
- In 1579 Elizabeth, now 46, considered marrying Henry, Duke of Anjou, brother of Charles IX of France, who was 20 years her junior. After two years of negotiation she changed her mind. The jilted duke pulled off the queen's ring and hurled it to the ground.

What a show!

Dashing Dudley was something of a showman. To impress the queen, in the summer of 1575 he threw a fabulous party at his home, Kenilworth Castle. No expense was spared:

- Dudley added new rooms to the castle for the queen and her entourage. It's said that when Elizabeth complained that she couldn't see the gardens from her bedroom, he had a new garden built overnight under her window. (The gardens at Kenilworth were lavishly restored by English Heritage in 2009.)
- The moat had a floating island upon it, and an actress dressed as the Lady of the Lake sang a song praising Elizabeth as she passed by.
- There was also an artificial dolphin swimming on the moat, with a band of musicians tucked inside.
- All sorts of entertainments were laid on for the Queen, from plays, feasts, dances and fireworks to bear-baitings, hunting and mock battles.
- The party took years to prepare and lasted 19 days, reputedly costing Dudley £1,000 per day (worth £190,000 today). It almost bankrupted him, but it was worth it. The queen remembered him to her dying day.

Good Queen Bess

Meanwhile, Elizabeth kept everyone guessing about her love life. Ministers dreaded what would happen if she had no heir. In 1566 Parliament refused to hand over any money until she married. Pointing to her coronation ring, Elizabeth replied: 'I have already joined myself in marriage to a husband, namely the kingdom of England. Do not blame me for the miserable lack of children, for every one of you are children of mine.' The matter was never raised again. Elizabeth 3, Doubters 0.

Yet this was the same woman who had had a teenage crush on Thomas Seymour. Elizabeth loved the company of men and knew that flirting was often the easiest way to get things done. She also played hard to get. A visit from the queen was a sure way to get ahead at court. Some ministers gave their homes an extreme makeover, converting them into the shape of the letter E, but even this didn't guarantee a royal visit.

The queen took advantage of her single status to woo Henry, Duke of Anjou, and later his brother Francis, hoping to form an alliance with France against Spain. Nothing came of it, but the love

The Tudors A very Peculiar History

games kept her European rivals guessing. Even her relationship with Dudley had a political angle: it unnerved her ministers, who were convinced that a word from Dudley would turn her against them.

Elizabeth was a smart cookie, but she also valued the advice of ministers such as William Cecil (later Lord Burghley), Sir Nicholas Bacon and Sir Francis Walsingham (her spymaster, who more than anyone kept her in power). It can't have been easy serving under her, however. While the queen was known for her sharp tongue and ferocious temper (she was her father's daughter), she could also drive her ministers nuts by putting off an important decision until the very last moment.

Elizabeth called Parliament only when she had to. Her court was the real centre of power: a place to wow foreign visitors, make friends and influence people.⁹ Winning over the queen could bring fame and fortune, but you had to be prepared to splash out on lavish gifts and fancy clothes.

9. It was also a centre for the arts: Shakespeare was just one of many playwrights who were invited to court to put on plays. Like her father, Elizabeth loved music and dancing, and played the virginals and lute.

Temper tantrums

The queen was a control freak and hated being disobeyed. She refused to employ anyone ugly – one young man was turned away from court for a missing front tooth. Nobody could sit while she stood, and anyone addressing the queen had to do so on bended knee. And woe betide anyone who crossed her:

- She swore like a sailor and spat on a courtier's clothes for not dressing to her liking.
- She punched and kicked her secretary William Davison.
- She threw a slipper at Sir Francis Walsingham and hit him in the face.
- She once sent a letter to the Earl of Essex so rude and aggressive that he fainted!
- When annoyed, she boxed her ladies-in-waiting's ears.
- She attacked Robert Dudley's new wife, Lettice Knollys, calling her the 'she-wolf'.
- She broke Lady Mary Shelton's finger for secretly marrying.
- In 1579, John Stubbs criticized her plans to marry the duke of Anjou. She had him arrested and his right hand cut off. He raised his hat with his left hand, saying 'God save the Queen' before fainting.

Some do's and don'ts at court

- Breaking wind in public was one of the greatest crimes you could commit. The Earl of Oxford let one rip while bowing to swear his loyalty to Elizabeth. He was so embarrassed, he went into voluntary exile for seven years. On his return, the queen welcomed him back, saying, 'My Lord, I had forgot the fart.'
- The great scholar Erasmus advised guests:

Sit not down until you have washed.
Place your hands neatly on the table... and not
around your belly.
Don't shift your buttocks left and right as if to
let off some blast.

- The men of Henry VIII's court were forbidden to brawl, duel, or appear in public with their mistresses.
- Kissing was more straightforward. In Tudor times, if a businessman met a colleague and his wife he kissed her straight on the lips, even if they had never met before.
- When performing the volta, an energetic dance in which the man lifted his partner into the air, nobles were advised to remove their rapiers so no-one got stabbed in the process.

- Henry VIII had banned plays that mentioned what was going on at court, but Elizabeth loved the theatre and stood up to strict Protestants who wanted to close down the playhouses. Though Shakespeare's company of actors was popular at court, he rarely refers to Elizabeth in his plays. (Her birth is the climax of his play Henry VIII, but this was probably written ten years after her death.) Apparently, she liked the character of Falstaff so much, in Henry IV Part 1, that she asked Shakespeare to write something that showed the character in love – this is supposed to have inspired his comedy The Merry Wives of Windsor.



*Elizabethan court dress
made few concessions to
the shape of the human
anatomy.*

Blood relations

Though Elizabeth's reign got off to a flying start, there was trouble ahead. Elizabeth's only serious rival for the throne was her cousin Mary, Queen of Scots, who had grown up in Catholic France and had been married to French king Francis II.¹⁰ Mary headed back to Scotland after Francis's death in 1561. Elizabeth tried to hook her up with Robert Dudley (heaven knows what he thought of this arrangement), but Mary only had eyes for Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley.



Elizabeth and Mary never met.

Unfortunately for Mary, Darnley wanted to be king himself. He was also convinced Mary was having an affair with her Italian secretary, David Rizzio, so he had Rizzio murdered in 1566. Three months later, Darnley himself was dead. Mary didn't mourn him long: soon she was married again, this time to James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell.

10. Mary's mother, Marie de Guise, was from a powerful French family. She once turned down a marriage proposal from Henry VIII.

A Tudor murder mystery

There was definitely something fishy about Lord Darnley's death:

- Cause of death: Strangulation.
- The evidence: on 10 February 1567 two dead bodies were found in an orchard outside Edinburgh: Darnley and his valet. Darnley was dressed in his nightgown. On the same night, a huge explosion ripped through Darnley's house.
- Prime suspect: Darnley was a drunk and bullied Mary, so she may have had a hand in his death.
- What happened? We will never know the full story, but it seems likely that the assassins planned to blow Darnley up while he lay in bed recovering from an illness. He escaped by fleeing from his bedroom, only to be murdered when he got outside.



The Tudors A very Peculiar History

At this point, civil war broke out in Scotland. In June 1567 Protestant rebels arrested Mary and imprisoned her in Loch Leven Castle. She fled to England, hoping that Elizabeth would help her regain the Scottish throne.¹¹ But the longer she stayed in England, the more she became a threat to Elizabeth. Matters weren't helped in 1570 when the Pope ordered English Catholics to kill Elizabeth. Until then, Elizabeth had left the Catholics alone, but now the gloves were off: anyone caught celebrating Mass was put in prison for a year.

Catholic conspirators flocked to Mary like moths to a flame. Some, such as the Duke of Norfolk, fell hopelessly in love with her. Elizabeth didn't want trouble, and for 19 years she kept Mary under house arrest in various castles around England. Time and again, Mary was linked to plots against the queen, and matters finally came to a head in 1586 when Sir Francis Walsingham 'discovered' a letter from Mary backing a plot to assassinate Elizabeth. It was a set-up, engineered by Walsingham to get rid of Mary once and

11. Her baby son, crowned James VI of Scotland in 1567, was raised by Mary's half-brother, the Earl of Moray. In 1603 James succeeded Elizabeth and became James I of England.

Good Queen Bess

for all. Mary was tried and found guilty of treason. At first Elizabeth did not want to sign her cousin's death warrant (some say she secretly wanted to have her assassinated). When she eventually did sign, she ordered it not to be sealed.

For once, the Privy Council dared to bypass the queen, and in February 1587 it had the letter sealed and delivered. Mary was duly beheaded on 8 February at Fotheringhay Castle, Northamptonshire. The first Elizabeth knew about it was when she heard the church bells ringing in celebration. The queen was hopping mad, but she could do nothing.

Catholic Europe was outraged, and the Pope urged Philip of Spain to invade England. Though the English and their powerful Catholic neighbours tangled time and again over the years, the queen had always tried to avoid a long war — she just didn't have the money to pay for it. Though Dudley persuaded her to support the Protestant Huguenots in France, she soon backed down.

If at first you don't succeed...

Poor Mary, Queen of Scots had a very messy end. She paid the executioner a purse of gold to do a good job. She should have got her money back. Whoosh! The axe came swinging down – and missed! Actually it caught the side of her neck, causing Mary to cry out in pain.

Second time lucky? Not quite. Though the axe cut through most of her neck, the headsman still had to hack through the grisly remnants.

To add insult to injury, when the executioner picked up Mary's head to show it to the crowd, he forgot she wore a wig. He was left holding the wig, while the head bounced onto the floor.

Legend has it that Mary's pet dog was hiding in her skirts all along, refusing to be parted from its owner. It finally emerged covered in blood.



The Golden Age

Though she tried to avoid war, Elizabeth was happy to look the other way as English sea captains plundered Spanish treasure ships returning from the New World. In the 1570s she did her best to patch things up by giving back some of the stolen loot on at least two occasions, but everyone could see where this game of cat and mouse was heading.

In 1572, Francis Drake boldly pounced on a Spanish treasure fleet and returned home loaded with booty. Five years later, he repeated the trick after raiding several Spanish colonies. For good measure, he then sailed round the world, the first Englishman to do so. On his triumphant return in 1580 Elizabeth knighted Drake, knowing full well that the Spanish ambassador was watching.

The final straw came when English troops were sent to the Netherlands in support of a Protestant rebellion against Philip's brother Ferdinand.¹² While Philip's commanders ummed and aahed about how to invade England, fiendish Sir

12. Much of the Netherlands was ruled by the Spanish branch of the Habsburg dynasty at this time.

The Tudors A very Peculiar History

Francis sailed into Cádiz harbour and destroyed over 30 Spanish ships, a feat he described as 'singeing the King of Spain's beard'.¹³ The invasion of England was delayed by a year, but in 1588 a giant fleet of 130 ships, known as the 'Invincible Armada', finally set sail, carrying 19,000 troops and 8,000 sailors.

The smaller, faster English ships outmanoeuvred the lumbering Spanish galleons, but after five days of fighting the Spanish had only lost three ships. The English then sent in eight fireships packed with burning tar and gunpowder. Remembering what had happened at Cádiz, the Spanish panicked. Now scattered to the four winds, the Armada's commanders had little choice but to head for home. They decided to go the safer but longer way back, around the north of Britain. Bad move! Off the coast of Scotland, the Spanish sailed smack into a hurricane. Half the fleet was destroyed, and many of those who were wrecked off Ireland were hunted down and killed by English forces. Only 67 out of 130 ships made it back home.

13. This phrase means doing enough to delay your enemy, but not enough to cripple them.

Good Queen Bess



There was still a threat from the huge 18,000-strong invasion force led by the Duke of Parma, expected to land at Margate on the east coast. As a woman, Elizabeth wasn't expected to go to war, but she famously roused her troops at Tilbury docks, saying:

'I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too!' Cue big cheers all round.

Victory over the Armada saved England from invasion, but the queen's triumph was tinged with sadness when her beloved Dudley died just four weeks later.¹⁴

14. A heartbroken Elizabeth kept Dudley's last letter in a chest in her bedroom until the day she died.

Sailors' tales

A COOL HEAD

The myth: When the Spanish Armada was sighted, Francis Drake was playing bowls on Plymouth Hoe. Playing it cool, he said there was time to finish the match and still defeat the Spanish; he lost the game, but won the battle.

The truth: Drake did play bowls, but he would surely have jumped into action straight away – unless he knew he had to wait for the tide to turn anyway.

BANG FOR HELP

The myth: Sir Francis Drake took a snare drum on his voyage around the world. When he died, the drum was taken to Buckland Abbey in Devon. It was said that if England was ever in danger again, someone should bang on the drum and Drake would return from the grave to defend his country.

The truth: Throughout history people have claimed to have heard the drum beating – such as when World War I broke out in 1914 – but there have been no sightings of Sir Francis himself.

"The Spaniards are coming!"



RALEIGH'S CLOAK

The myth: Explorer and all-round scallywag Sir Walter Raleigh gallantly placed his cloak over a puddle in order to save Queen Elizabeth from getting her shoes muddy.

The truth: The story comes from 17th-century historian Thomas Fuller, noted for his love of a good tale, so who knows?

BACCY AND SPUDS

The myth: Sir Walter Raleigh introduced both tobacco and potatoes to England.

The truth: Potatoes were first brought back to Europe by the Spanish, while Frenchman Jean Nicot (as in **nicotine**) introduced tobacco to France in 1560, and from there it hopped across the Channel. Sir Walter did help to make smoking popular at court.

A royal progress

Elizabeth and her court travelled across southern England and East Anglia on some 25 'progresses' during her reign. These yearly tours were a chance for the queen to be seen in public, though they must have been a nightmare for her security chiefs as she stopped and spoke to anyone and everyone. She also tucked into local food without having it tasted first for signs of poison.

A typical royal progress travelled about 10 miles (16 km) a day. There were few good roads, and in bad weather coaches and wagons soon got stuck in the mud. The queen stayed at the houses of nobles along the way. Though this was a great honour, it was also a potential minefield for the host, who had to indulge the monarch without appearing too flash. Elizabeth expected the finest rooms, lavish gifts of jewellery or clothes, and a full line-up of entertainments. When she arrived, everything had to be just so:

- fresh plaster on houses
- flags and tapestries hanging
- clean toilets
- swept chimneys
- no animals in streets
- the royal route strewn with petals and rushes.



Good Queen Bess

The war with Spain rumbled on. Philip II hoped to use Ireland as a base to attack England, and sent two more Armadas in 1596 and 1597. Both were wrecked by storms, so he sent another 4,000 soldiers to support a rebellion led by Hugh O'Neill, earl of Tyrone. In 1598 O'Neill defeated an English army at the Battle of the Yellow Ford, then headed south, calling on other Irish lords to join him.

In 1599 Elizabeth sent her young favourite Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, to put down the rebellion. Essex, unhappy at being away from court, spent £300,000 in just five months without ever attacking O'Neill. In the end he agreed a truce and returned to court. The Queen was not impressed and stripped Essex of most of his titles. He was put under house arrest, charged with not carrying out orders. Angry at his treatment, in 1601 Essex made a half-hearted attempt to overthrow the government and soon found himself in the Tower. As a traitor, he couldn't be forgiven (in public, anyway), and he was executed on 25 February 1601. Elizabeth then dispatched her best general, Lord Mountjoy, who defeated the rebel army on Christmas Eve 1601.

Keeping up appearances

- The Queen knew all about public relations. Poets, playwrights, painters and songwriters were all paid to make her into a legend in her own lifetime. They called her names like Astraea (a goddess from Greek mythology) or Gloriana (from Edmund Spenser's famous poem about her, *The Faerie Queene*).
- Elizabeth I was like a Hollywood superstar and if she didn't like a portrait, it was destroyed. As she grew older, painters were given special 'face patterns' to make sure that their portraits made the Queen look younger. One rumour (probably not true) said she even banned mirrors so she wouldn't have to look at her crumbling face.
- If we can't trust any of the pictures, what did the ageing Queen Bess really look like? A German visitor described her black teeth, slightly hooked nose and wig of red hair. The Queen couldn't bear to have any of her rotten teeth removed, even though the bishop of London pulled one of his own teeth out in front of her to show how painless it was.
- To prove she was still up to the job, Elizabeth danced the galliard, an energetic leaping dance, every morning to keep herself fit. Even in her sixties, she could ride a distance of 10 miles (16 km).

Good Queen Bess

By now Elizabeth was nearly 70. Though fit, she had lost her edge, and she increasingly relied on Robert Cecil to run the kingdom.¹⁵

In March 1603 she retired to one of her favourite homes, Richmond Palace. Though growing weaker by the day, she stubbornly refused to lie down, instead choosing to stand for hours on end. When her death finally came on 24 March 1603 it was said that she passed away 'mildly like a lamb, easily like a ripe apple from the tree'.

She had not named a successor, so the throne passed to Scottish king James VI, who became James I of England. One of her ladies-in-waiting took off her sapphire ring and dropped it out of the window to Sir Richard Carey, who carried it north to James as proof of the queen's death. The journey took him less than 60 hours, a record that was only beaten by a team of coach and horses in 1832. With Elizabeth's death, the Tudor dynasty had ended, 118 years after it had begun at the Battle of Bosworth Field.¹⁶

15. She was also paranoid about the threat of assassination.

16. The Tudors who survive today are all descended from Henry VII's two daughters, Mary, Queen of France and Margaret, Queen of Scots. Elizabeth II is a direct descendant of Margaret in the 15th generation.

Speak like a Tudor

To give you a flavour of the times, get your tongue around some common Tudor words:

A is for Apothecary – a pharmacist

B is for Bodkin – a dagger, or a long pin for fastening clothing or pinning up hair

C is for Cockshut time – twilight

D is for Duckles – breasts (used by Henry VIII in a love letter to Anne Boleyn)

E is for Eftsoons – repeatedly or immediately

F is for Fopdoodle – an idiot

G is for Gorebelly – a paunch

H is for Hocheput – a mixture or stew, giving us the word 'hodgepodge'

I is for Ire – anger

K is for Kim-kam – crooked or strange

L is for Leech – a doctor or healer

M is for Mead – an alcoholic drink made from honey

N is for Neaf – a fist

O is for Oratory – a chapel

P is for Privy – a toilet

Q is for Quat – a pimple

R is for Revelry – fun and games

S is for Sorely – very

T is for Trencher – a plate made of stale bread

U is for Usury – moneylending

W is for Wench – a girl

X is for eXhale – draw your sword!

Y is for Yeoman – a servant who was born free

Z is for Zounds – good heavens!

Note: The Tudor alphabet only contained 24 letters; 'i' and 'j' counted as one letter, as did 'u' and 'v'.

Love like a Tudor

This poem attributed to Elizabeth I tells a sad story: she desperately loves someone but because she is queen, she has to hide her feelings. Some believe it was written about Francis, duke of Alençon, whom the Queen nicknamed her 'Little Frog'. Others argue that the poem was written with Robert Dudley in mind (pet name 'Sweet Robin').

*I grieve and dare not show my discontent,
I love and yet am forced to seem to hate,
I do, yet dare not say I ever meant,
I seem stark mute but inwardly do prate,
I am and not, I freeze and yet am burned,
Since from myself another self I turned.*

*My care is like my shadow in the sun,
Follows me flying, flies when I pursue it,
Stands and lies by me, doth what I have done,
His too familiar care doth make me rue it,
No means I find to rid him from my breast,
Till by the end of things it be suppress.*

*Some gentler passion slide into my mind,
For I am soft and made of melting snow;
Or be more cruel, love, and so be kind,
Let me or float or sink, be high or low,
Or let me live with some more sweet content,
Or die and so forget what love ere meant.*

Feel like a Tudor

Visit these sites to soak up some Tudor atmosphere!

TOWER OF LONDON. Where Anne Boleyn, Lady Jane Grey and countless others got the chop. Worth a visit just to see the famous Traitors' Gate where prisoners were brought in by boat at high tide. The Tower also has an amazing collection of armour, including suits belonging to Henry VIII.

HAMPTON COURT PALACE, LONDON. Henry VIII loved Hampton Court so much that he 'persuaded' Cardinal Wolsey to give it to him. The King then rebuilt it into one of Europe's finest palaces. Hopefully you won't bump into the screaming ghost of Catherine Howard which is said to haunt the palace.

HEVER CASTLE, KENT. This spectacular castle was Anne Boleyn's childhood home. It contains a chilling collection of beheading swords and torture instruments as well as one of the best collections of Tudor portraits in England.

LONGLEAT HOUSE, WARMINSTER, WILTSHIRE. One of the finest Elizabethan houses in the country. The great hall has changed little since the Virgin Queen's visit in 1574.

SHAKESPEARE'S GLOBE THEATRE, LONDON. This remarkable reconstruction, close to the original site, gives a real flavour of open-air theatre in Elizabethan times.

LEEDS CASTLE, KENT. Henry VIII spent a fortune turning this into a luxury home, adding a whole new floor for Catherine of Aragon. But he may only have spent a few days here on his way to meet Francis I at the Field of the Cloth of Gold.

WESTMINSTER ABBEY. The burial place of Elizabeth I and Mary I; Mary, Queen of Scots; Anne of Cleves; Henry VII and his queen, Elizabeth of York.

GREENWICH PALACE. Henry VIII was born here in 1491 and this palace remained one of his favourites. Though the original building was destroyed in the 17th century, the surrounding park is much as it was.

ELTHAM PALACE, GREENWICH. Where Henry VIII spent his childhood. Again most of the Tudor palace is gone, with the exception of the magnificent great hall.

KNOLE PALACE, KENT. Given by Elizabeth I to the Sackville family in 1566, this grand house is stuffed with Tudor furniture and portraits.

HATFIELD HOUSE. Elizabeth I spent most of her childhood here and, though most of the old palace was demolished in the 17th century, the great hall where Elizabeth held her first Council of State still survives. You can also see famous portraits of Elizabeth, and her hat, gloves and stockings.

WINDSOR CASTLE. One of Elizabeth I's main homes. The chapel was finished during Henry VIII's reign and Elizabeth also added many new buildings. It contains the famous painting of Henry VIII and his children Edward, Mary and Elizabeth, and a giant suit of armour built for Henry when he was 50.

PORTSMOUTH. One of Henry's favourite ships, the **Mary Rose**, sank off the Isle of Wight in 1545 but was salvaged in 1982. The wreck is preserved in a new purpose-built museum (opened in 2013), along with weapons, sailing equipment, naval supplies and all sorts of other objects used by the crew, providing a fascinating glimpse into Tudor life.

IGHTHAM MOTE, KENT. This spectacular moated manor house is one of the most complete medieval or Tudor buildings in England. Highlights include the great hall, the crypt, and a Tudor chapel with a hand-painted ceiling.

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, LONDON. Home to many famous portraits of the Tudors – but remember, the painters were under strict instructions to make their subjects look as good as possible.

Act like a Tudor

The Tudors were made for the movies. Many famous actors have brought these huge personalities to life on big and small screens.

Henry VIII

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF HENRY VIII (1936). Actor Charles Laughton shows the vulnerable side of Henry, a lonely man at the mercy of his six wives (but didn't he execute two of them?).

ANNE OF A THOUSAND DAYS (1969). Richard Burton's Henry is handsome, charismatic and ruthless. He delivers the classic line: 'Divorce is like killing – after the first time, it's easy.'

A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS (1966). The King Henry played by Robert Shaw is everyone's nightmare boss: laughing and joking one minute, screaming with rage the next.

CARRY ON HENRY (1971). Forget the history as Sid James's Henry falls miserably to bump off his made-up queen, Marie of Normandy. Elizabethan audiences would probably have loved the bad jokes and dirty humour.

HENRY VIII (2003). Ray Winstone plays Henry as if he were a murdering gangster – which he probably was! To play the young, fit Henry, Winstone had to diet for weeks. As Henry got older, he put on a fat suit!

THE TUDORS (2007). Jonathan Rhys Meyers shows what a handsome devil the young Hal was. Unlike Winstone, he refused to don a fat suit to play the ageing tyrant.

WOLF HALL (2015). Damian Lewis as Henry and Mark Rylance as Thomas Cromwell are the stars of this acclaimed TV series. Adapted from two novels by Hilary Mantel, it daringly portrays Cromwell's rise to power through his own eyes.

Elizabeth I

THE LOVES OF QUEEN ELIZABETH (1911). The great French actress Sarah Bernhardt played Elizabeth I in this silent movie, which looks at her relationship with the Earl of Essex.

FIRE OVER ENGLAND (1937) and THE SEA HAWK (1940).

Flora Robson shows two sides to Elizabeth in these swashbuckling adventures: sharp-tongued and dominating at court, kind and gentle in private.

THE PRIVATE LIVES OF ELIZABETH and ESSEX (1939). Bette Davis had her eyebrows removed to look more like Elizabeth. She later complained they never grew back properly.

ELIZABETH R (1971). A very accurate version of Elizabeth's life, brilliantly played by Glenda Jackson. The actress even learned to play the virginals. Some of the costumes were so heavy she couldn't stand up in them.

BLACKADDER. PART II (1985). In this comedy, Miranda Richardson plays Elizabeth as the completely loopy 'Queenie'. Lots of fun!

ELIZABETH (1998) and ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE (2007). Though beautiful to look at, these movies play fast and loose with history. But Cate Blanchett does a wonderful job of showing how the young queen turned into a proud and ruthless monarch.

Others

THE EXECUTION OF MARY STUART (1895). This silent film was made by Thomas Edison, the famous US inventor. Just one minute long, it was one of the first films ever made. Mary is played by a man, Robert Thomae.

THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER (1937). A film version of Mark Twain's novel in which Edward VI trades places with a poor boy from the streets who looks just like him. Twins Billy and Robert J. Mauch played the two boys.

MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS (1971). Mary, Queen of Scots, played by Vanessa Redgrave, clashes with Elizabeth I, again played by Glenda Jackson. Though the two queens never met in real life, this is great drama!

LADY JANE (1986). Helena Bonham Carter stars as the tragic Lady Jane Grey. Though the actress has dark eyes and hair, in reality Lady Jane had blonde hair and brown eyes.

Sing like a Tudor

Legend has it this famous tune was written by Henry VIII for his lover Anne Boleyn. It's a nice idea but unlikely to be true. The words were first published in 1520 and the tune was described as 'new' in 1524.

A- las, my love, ye do me wrong. To

cast me off dis- cour-teous-ly: And

I have lo- ved you so long. De-

-ligh- ting in your com- pa- ny.



Green- sleeves was all my joy.

Green- sleeves was my de- light:

Green-sleeves was my heart of gold, And

who but la- dy Green-sleeves.

Eat like a Tudor

Tudor recipes were very vague – there was no list of ingredients, no amounts, and no cooking temperatures and times. Here is an original recipe for gilded marchpane, along with a modern version. This marzipan cake – made either as a disc or as a 3-D sculpture – was the centrepiece of a Tudor banquet. It was iced and, on special occasions, covered with a layer of gold. You can get something of the effect by using gold food colouring.

ORIGINAL RECIPE

Take blancht¹ Almonds and sugar and beat them up into a Past,² and when you have beaten it into a Past, rowl³ it out about the thickness that you will have your Marchpane Cakes to be and cut them in 3 square⁴ pieces and set an Edge to them of the same past, and Impress⁵ the Edges of them, then take Rose Water and beat searced⁶ sugar in it till it be as thick as Pancakes, butter and wet them within it and strew⁷ a few of Bisketts in them and set them upon Wafers, and set them againe upon Papers and bake them, and keep them for your use.

1. blancht: blanched (cooked briefly in boiling water)
2. Past: paste
3. rowl: roll
4. 3 square: triangular
5. Impress: flatten
6. searced: sieved
7. strew: scatter

MODERN VERSION (CONTAINS NUTS)

Ingredients:

- 1 lb (450 g) ground almonds
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb (225 g) caster sugar
- 3 tablespoons (45 ml) rose-water

For the glaze:

- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) rose-water
- 3 tablespoons (45 ml) icing sugar

Method:

1. Preheat the oven to 150°C (300°F).
2. Mix the almonds, sugar and rose-water into a stiff paste. Knead until smooth. Put aside some of this marzipan for decoration and place the rest on a sheet of greaseproof paper.
3. Using a rolling pin, roll it into a disc about 1 cm thick. Smooth the edges with the back of a knife.
4. Bake for 15 mins then allow to cool for another 15 mins until firm.
5. To make the glaze, mix the rose-water and icing sugar in a small bowl. Paint this over the marzipan disc with a pastry brush. Place back in the oven and cook for another 5 mins.
6. Now for the creative bit. Roll out the remaining marzipan then cut into shapes or letters with pastry cutters. Paint these with edible gold or other food colouring. After taking the marzipan disc out of the oven, use these shapes to decorate it. Enjoy!

Glossary

alchemist A scientist who tried to turn cheap metals like lead and copper into gold. (It's impossible!)

ambassador The top diplomat who represents his or her country abroad.

apothecary A maker and seller of medicines.

armada A large fleet.

astrologer Someone who tries to predict the future from the positions of the Sun, Moon and planets.

bear-baiting A blood sport in which bears were tied to a post and attacked by a pack of dogs.

chronicle A history of events day by day or year by year.

civil war A war between rivals in the same country.

cockpit A place used for the blood sport of cock fighting.

codpiece A flap or pouch covering the front of the crotch of men's breeches.

consumption Another name for tuberculosis (or TB), a deadly disease which attacks the lungs.

coronation The crowning of a new king or queen.

courtier Someone who attends the court of a king, queen or other powerful person.

dowry A gift made by a bride's family to her bridegroom.

dynasty A line of royals or other leaders belonging to the same family.

excommunicate To banish someone from the Church. In Tudor times, this meant being sent to hell.

exiled Forced to leave your city or country, often as a punishment.

fool A jester.

headsman An executioner.

Glossary

heir A person who expects to inherit a relative's property or titles.

heretic A person who holds religious beliefs which the Church does not approve of.

Huguenots French Protestants, many of whom were forced to leave France in the 16th and 17th centuries.

lady-in-waiting A noblewoman who attends a queen or princess (a sort of very high-class servant).

litter A chair or bed carried on two poles by footmen.

medieval Belonging to the Middle Ages, a period from about 450 to 1450 AD.

mercenary A professional soldier who fights for money, not out of loyalty to a ruler.

minstrel A professional musician or entertainer.

New World North and South America.

Parliament The English (later British) government, or the building where it meets.

pilgrimage A long journey to worship at a holy place.

plague A fast-spreading and often deadly disease.

Plantagenets The family name of a dynasty of English kings that reigned from 1154 to 1485.

privy A simple toilet, usually a bench with a hole in it, above a pit.

progress A royal tour around the country.

rapier A light, slender sword with a sharp point.

refugee A person forced to leave home for their own safety, often to another country.

treachery The act of betraying someone, especially a king or queen.

tyrant A harsh and cruel ruler.

ulcer An open sore or wound, often full of pus.

viol A stringed instrument, played with a bow.

Timeline of Tudor history

- 1485** Battle of Bosworth Field. Henry Tudor defeats and kills Richard III and is crowned as Henry VII.
- 1486–1487** Revolt of Lambert Simnel.
- 1491** Birth of Henry VIII.
- 1492** Henry VII's expedition to Boulogne in France. Signs Treaty of Étaples with Charles VIII of France.
- 1495–1497** Revolt of Perkin Warbeck.
- 1497** John Cabot reaches Newfoundland, Canada, and claims it for Henry VII.
- 1499–1500** Deadly plague kills 30,000 in London.
- 1501** Henry VII's son Arthur marries Catherine of Aragon.
- 1502** Prince Arthur dies.
- 1503** Henry VII's wife, Elizabeth of York, dies.
- 1509** Henry VII dies. Henry VIII becomes king and marries Catherine of Aragon.
- 1512** Wolsey becomes Henry VIII's chief minister.
- 1513** Henry VIII invades France. James IV of Scotland defeated at Battle of Flodden Field.
- 1516** Birth of Henry VIII's daughter, Mary I.
- 1517–1518** Outbreak of sweating sickness.
- 1520** Henry VIII meets Francis I of France at the Field of the Cloth of Gold.
- 1521** Duke of Buckingham executed. Secret treaty between Henry VIII and Emperor Charles V to invade France.
- 1526** Henry VIII starts chasing Anne Boleyn.
- 1527** Henry VIII asks Pope for divorce from Catherine of Aragon.
- 1530** Death of Wolsey.
- 1531** Catherine of Aragon banished from court.

Timeline of Tudor history

- 1531–1535** England breaks with Catholic Church in Rome. Henry VIII becomes head of Protestant Church of England.
- 1533** Henry VIII marries Anne Boleyn in secret and is excommunicated by Pope Clement VII. Elizabeth I born. Thomas Cromwell becomes Henry VIII's chief minister. Thomas Cranmer becomes Archbishop of Canterbury.
- 1535** Henry VIII first grows a beard. Anne Boleyn is beheaded. Henry VIII marries Jane Seymour. Thomas More is executed.
- 1536** Henry VIII badly injured in a jousting accident.
- 1536–1539** Henry VIII loots and destroys many of England's monasteries and churches.
- 1536–1537** Revolt known as Pilgrimage of Grace breaks out in northern England. Mary I agrees to renounce the throne. Leader of Pilgrimage of Grace, Robert Aske, hanged in York.
- 1537** Birth of Edward VI. Jane Seymour dies. Henry VIII authorises first English Bible.
- 1540** Henry VIII marries and divorces Anne of Cleves, then marries Catherine Howard.
- 1542** Catherine Howard beheaded. Henry VIII declared King of Ireland. Mary, Queen of Scots born.
- 1543** Henry VIII marries Catherine Parr. 9-month-old Mary, Queen of Scots is crowned. Mary I and Elizabeth I made heirs to the throne by Parliament.
- 1544** Henry VIII's forces capture Boulogne. Thomas Wriothesley becomes Lord Chancellor.
- 1545** *Mary Rose* sinks. English defeated by Scots at Battle of Ancrum Moor.

The Tudors A very Peculiar History

- 1547** Death of Henry VIII. Edward VI crowned king. Duke of Somerset becomes Lord Protector. Catherine Parr secretly marries Sir Thomas Seymour.
- 1547–1548** Sir Thomas Seymour tries to woo Elizabeth I. Catherine Parr dies.
- 1549** First *Book of Common Prayer*. Catholic revolts defeated in Devon, Cornwall and Norfolk. Duke of Northumberland overthrows Duke of Somerset. Sir Thomas Seymour executed for planning to kidnap King Edward; Elizabeth I is linked to the plot.
- 1552** Duke of Somerset executed.
- 1553** Death of Edward VI. Revolt by duke of Northumberland and Lady Jane Grey defeated by Mary Tudor. She is crowned Mary I. Northumberland is executed.
- 1554** Protestant revolt led by Sir Thomas Wyatt is defeated by Mary I. Jane Grey is executed. Cardinal Pole reunites England with Catholic Church in Rome. Elizabeth I imprisoned in the tower for 8 weeks. Mary I marries Prince Philip of Spain.
- 1555** False news that Mary is pregnant. Elizabeth I becomes heir to Mary's throne.
- 1555–1558** 280 Protestants burned on Mary's orders, including Cranmer.
- 1556** England declares war on France. Mary's husband Prince Philip becomes King Philip II of Spain.
- 1557** Anne of Cleves dies.
- 1558** English forces lose Calais to the French. Mary I dies. Elizabeth I is crowned. Sir William Cecil becomes her chief minister.
- 1558–1563** Elizabeth ends religious strife in England by reforming Church of England.

Timeline of Tudor history

- 1558–1559** Elizabeth makes peace with France.
- 1560** Sir Robert Dudley, the Queen's favourite, is suspected of murdering his wife.
- 1565** Mary, Queen of Scots marries Lord Darnley. Mary, Queen of Scots gives birth to James VI of Scots (later James I of England).
- 1567** Darnley murdered. Mary, Queen of Scots imprisoned and forced to abdicate her throne.
- 1569** Catholic rising in north defeated by Elizabeth I.
- 1570** Pope Pius V excommunicates Elizabeth I.
- 1572** Treaty of Blois between France and England.
- 1577–1581** Francis Drake sails around the world and is knighted on his return.
- 1584** Sir Walter Raleigh establishes a colony in North America, named Virginia after Elizabeth I.
- 1585** Elizabeth I sends English troops to help Protestant rebellion in Netherlands.
- 1586** Babington Plot against Elizabeth is defeated. Drake attacks Spanish fleet at Cádiz.
- 1587** Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots.
- 1588** Defeat of the Spanish Armada.
- 1592–1602** Many of Shakespeare's plays first performed in south London.
- 1594–1603** Rebellion by Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, in Ireland.
- 1597** Earl of Essex fails to defeat O'Neill.
- 1601** Rebellion by Essex defeated; Essex executed.
- 1602** Spanish forces defeated at Kinsale in Ireland.
- 1603** Death of Elizabeth I. End of the Tudor dynasty. James I, the first Stuart king, comes to the throne.

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