

AS Reading

Tudor England 1485-1603

T. Lambert – A History of C16th England

In the late 15th century England was torn by a series of civil wars between two dynasties, the Yorkists and the Lancastrians. The wars ended in 1485 when Henry Tudor won the battle of Bosworth and gained the throne of England.

Henry Tudor (1457-1509) was crowned Henry VII on 30 October 1485 beginning a new dynasty. In January 1486 he married Elizabeth of York, daughter of Edward IV, uniting the dynasties of York and Lancaster.

However the Yorkists were unwilling to accept the situation. In 1487 they attempted a rebellion. They claimed that a man named Lambert Simnel was Earl of Warwick and tried to put him on the throne. The Yorkists gathered an army in Ireland and landed in Cumbria. However they were crushed at the battle of Stoke on 16 June 1487. Simnel was captured. Henry VII could have executed him but instead he made Simnel a menial servant in the royal kitchens.

Henry VII invaded France in 1492 but the French were preoccupied elsewhere and they quickly made peace. By a treaty of November 1492 they agreed to pay the English money and the French king agreed not to support any pretenders to the English throne.

Afterwards Henry VII followed a policy of peace with France. Wars were expensive and Henry was a prudent man who avoided extravagant expenditure.

Henry also strengthened government by creating the Court of Star Chamber (so called because it met in a room with stars painted on the ceiling). The court dealt with 'unlawful maintenance, giving of licences, signs and tokens, great riots, unlawful assemblies'.

Then in 1497 Henry VII faced two rebellions. First rebels from the West Country marched on London. However they were crushed by a royal army at Blackheath on 17 June 1497.

Later that year a man named Perkin Warbeck claimed to be Richard, the nephew of Richard III (one of the two princes who was murdered in the Tower of London). He called himself Richard IV. He landed in Cornwall in September 1497. However royal forces quickly defeated the rebellion and Warbeck was captured in October. He was finally executed in 1499.

Meanwhile Henry VII was keen to make an alliance with Spain. In 1501 his oldest son Arthur married Catherine of Aragon. However Arthur died in April 1502.

Henry VII's son Henry now became heir to the throne. Henry married Catherine of Aragon, his brother's widow on 11 June 1509. Normally such a marriage would not have been allowed but the Pope gave a special dispensation.

Meanwhile in 1503 Henry VII's daughter Margaret married James IV of Scotland.

S.T. Bindoff *Tudor England – Henry VII*

The battle was over. On a stretch of high ground in the midland heart of the kingdom twenty thousand men had met in fierce, clumsy combat, and the day had ended in the decisive defeat of the stronger army. Its leader, the King, had been killed fighting heroically, and men had seen his naked

corpse slung across his horse's back and borne away to an obscure grave. His captains were dead, captured, or in flight, his troops broken and demoralized. But in the victor's army all was rejoicing. In following the claimant to the throne his supporters had chosen the winning side, and when they saw the golden circlet which had fallen from the King's head placed upon their leader's, their lingering doubts fled before the conviction that God had blessed his cause, and they hailed him joyously as their sovereign.

The day was 22 August 1485; the battlefield was to be named after the small neighbouring town of Market Bosworth; the fallen King was the third and ablest of English monarchs who bore the name Richard; and the man whom the battle made a king was to be the seventh and perhaps the greatest of those who bore the name Henry.

The very fact that Henry Tudor became King of England at all is somewhat of a miracle. His claim to the English throne was tenuous at best. His father was Edmund Tudor, a Welshman of Welsh royal lineage, but that was not too important as far as his claim to the English throne went. What was important though was his heritage through his mother, Margaret Beaufort, a descendant of Edward III. This descent from King Edward was through his third son, John of Gaunt. John's third wife, Katherine Swynford had borne him several children as his mistress before he married her. The children born before the marriage were later legitimised, but barred from the succession. Margaret Beaufort was descended from one of the children born before the marriage of John and Katherine.

By 1485 the Wars of the Roses had been raging in England for many years between the Houses of York and Lancaster. The Lancastrian Henry later took for his bride Elizabeth of York thereby uniting the houses.

The real matter was decided on the battlefield, at the Battle of Bosworth Field. It was here that Henry and his forces met with Richard III and Henry won the crown. It was truly through the defeat of Richard and the 'right of conquest' that Henry claimed the throne. It was solidified however, by his marriage to Elizabeth of York, the eldest child of the late king, Edward IV.

The main problem facing Henry was restoring faith and strength in the monarchy. He also had to deal with other claimants, with some of them having a far stronger claim than his own. To deal with this, Henry strengthened the government and his own power, at the expense of the nobles. Henry also had to deal with a treasury that was nearly bankrupt. The English monarchy had never been one of the wealthiest of Europe and even more so after the War of the Roses. Through his monetary strategy, Henry managed to steadily accumulate wealth during his reign, so that by the time he died, he left a considerable fortune to his son, Henry VIII.

It could be debated whether or not Henry VII was a great king, but he was clearly a successful king. He had several goals that he had accomplished by the end of his reign. He had established a new dynasty after 30 years of struggle, he had strengthened the judicial system as well as the treasury and had successfully denied all the other claimants to his throne. The monarchy that he left to his son was a fairly secure one and most definitely a wealthy one.

Henry had seven children by Elizabeth of York, four of whom survived infancy: Arthur, who died shortly after his marriage to Catherine of Aragon (a point of some importance during "The Divorce"), Henry, Margaret and Mary.

S.T. Bindoff *Tudor England – Henry VIII*

Henry Tudor, named after his father, Henry VII, was born by Elizabeth of York June 28, 1491 in Greenwich Palace. Since he was the second son, and not expected to become king, we know little of

his childhood until the death of his older brother Arthur, Prince of Wales. We know that Henry attended the wedding celebrations of Arthur and his bride, Catherine of Aragon, in November 1501 when he was 10 years old.

Shortly after the wedding, Arthur and Catherine went to live in Wales, as was tradition for the heir to the throne. But, four months after the marriage began, it ended, with Arthur's death.

A treaty was signed that would allow Catherine to marry the next heir to the throne -- Prince Henry. Until then, Catherine's parents, Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain would send over 100,000 crowns worth of plate and gold as a wedding gift and Henry would pay the agreed upon dowry.

It was deemed necessary for a papal dispensation to be issued allowing Henry to marry Catherine, as she was his dead brother's wife, and this marriage was prohibited in Leviticus. At the time, and throughout her life, Catherine denied that her marriage to Arthur had even been consummated (and given the boy's health, that is most likely the case) so no dispensation was needed. However, both the parties in Spain and England wanted to be sure of the legitimacy of the marriage, so permission from the pope was sought and received. This issue would be very important during the Divorce and the Break with Rome.

The marriage still did not take place however. Henry VII had been slow to pay his part of the arrangement and her parents were refusing to send the marriage portion of plate and gold. The stalemate continued until Henry VII died on April 22, 1509 and his son became Henry VIII.

Henry was just shy of 18 years old when he became king, and had been preparing for it from the time of his older brother Arthur's death. At this age, he was not the image that we usually call to mind when we hear the name Henry VIII. He was not the overweight and ill man of his later years. In his youth, he was handsome and athletic. He was tall and had a bright red-gold cap of hair and beard, a far cry from the fat, balding and unhealthy man that is often remembered

Henry's marital career is probably the thing that he is most known for. The story of Henry's wives is told on their own pages.

The Young King

Shortly after becoming king, Henry VIII took Catherine of Aragon as his bride on 11 June 1509. He inherited £1.5 million pounds from his father and succeeded in the first peaceful transition of power after the Wars of the Roses. Henry brought a youth and vigour to the Court that had long been lacking and Henry dreamed of glory beyond the hunt and joust.

Catherine of Aragon gave birth to their first child, a son named Henry after his father, in January 1511. The child died two months later, and was destined to be the first of many unhappy births the couple would suffer. Henry consoled himself by going to war against France, hoping to emulate his ancestors Edward III and Henry V.

Henry met with some success in France, but while he was distracted on the Continent, his Scottish brother-in-law James IV used the opportunity to attack. Thomas Howard, Earl of Surrey led the English forces against James and defeated the Scots army at the Battle of Flodden Field. James was killed, leaving his infant son as the new king James V and Henry VIII's sister Margaret a widow.

By 1514, Thomas Wolsey had risen to power in Henry's court and was to eventually rival Henry himself in wealth and opulence. He built Hampton Court Palace, which he eventually "gave" to Henry as a gift as he began to fall from power in the 1520s.

Questions to answer in full sentences:

1. What was the context (position/picture) of C16th England?
2. Who rebelled against the Tudor dynasty and why?
3. Why did Henry VII have a weak claim to the throne?
4. What problems faced Henry VII in establishing the Tudor dynasty?
5. Why did Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon's marriage require Papal dispensation? What did this do to England's relationship with Rome?