

Chapter 10
The Tudors 1



1 Stage Play
4 Fencing

2 Bringing in the Boar's Head
5 Wrestling

3 May-Day
6 Archery

TUDOR PASTIMES

Henry VII (1485–1509)



Henry's claim to the throne was not a strong one. Relatives of Edward IV had a stronger claim to the throne. Like Henry IV before him Henry VII had to make sure that his subjects would not desert him in favour of someone with a stronger claim to the throne. His position was strengthened when he was elected King of England by Parliament. He then married Edward IV's daughter, Elizabeth of York. This strengthened him further by winning him Yorkist support. The marriage united the two houses of York and Lancaster, the two warring factions of the Wars of the Roses.

Henry VII was a Welshman, educated in Wales. He could trace his ancestry back to the princes of the House of Gwynedd. All his life he retained a love for Welsh poetry and Welsh traditions. The Welsh looked on him as their king in a special way. In Wales the battle of Bosworth was regarded as a Welsh victory. The Welsh flag, a red dragon on a white and green background, had floated over Henry's army in the battlefield. The bards had prepared the ground before Henry's invasion and because he had connections with South Wales and Anglesey, his hold on the loyalty of the people of Wales was stronger even than that of Owen Glendower. When Henry marched into London, it was the Welsh flag that flew over his triumphant entry. Welshmen flocked to his court and he began to put the country in order. It was left to his son, however, to complete this job.¹

Disorder In Wales

At this time Wales included parts of what are now Shropshire, Herefordshire and Gloucestershire. Today in these areas you will notice Welsh place names as a reminder of this. There was a very complicated administrative situation, with the Prince of Wales ruling Anglesey, Caernarvon, Merioneth, Cardigan and Carmarthen, while Flint, Pembroke and Glamorgan were ruled directly by the King. The rest of Wales, which was called the Marches, was ruled by the individual Marcher lords all of whom were practically independent. Because of this confused system, wrong-doers could often escape from one lordship to another, and the lords even encouraged this, demanding service from a fleeing criminal in return for protection. The king himself was one of the Marcher lords and ruled those Marcher lordships which had reverted to the crown. The central lands of Wales, once ruled by the Mortimers, had passed to Edward IV and before that Lancastrian lands had passed to Henry IV and so these vast parts of Wales were ruled directly by the crown. Henry VII (and later Henry VIII) increased the size of this territory still more by buying some lordships and confiscating others when their lords were convicted of treason. Nevertheless there was still no attempt to bring all of Wales under the same system of government and much confusion remained. Outlaws and robbers flourished.

The Council Of Wales

To combat this situation Henry VII was determined to restore order to Wales. He was also very conscious that Wales was an easy route for an invasion of England – he himself had come to the throne by this route! He decided, therefore, to rule Wales through branches of his privy council and revived the Council of Wales which had lapsed since 1483.² The young Prince of Wales, Arthur, was sent down to Ludlow and the officials of his court formed the Council of Wales.

1 See below, "Wales And The Act Of Union", p. 114.

2 See Chapter 9, "Wales Under Edward IV And Richard III", p. 104.

Revival Of Lollardry

Throughout the difficult years of the reign of Henry V, the Wars of the Roses, Edward IV and Richard III, Lollardry "... had been faithfully preserved in the cottage and workshop as a poor man's tradition ..."³ When Henry VII came to the throne there was a revival in Lollardry. In the Chilterns, the Home Counties, London itself, Bristol and other towns, people met secretly to read the forbidden English Bible, and to encourage one another in the faith. Wycliffe's works were read in these secret meetings too. How would the new king react? Would the Lollards be left in peace?

Henry VII did not leave the Lollards in peace. Persecution became fiercer than ever. Many Lollards were burned at the stake for their faith. Others recanted to save their lives. In spite of this persecution, Lollardry increased.

Impostors

During the reign of Henry VII there were two rebellions organised by Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy who was the sister of Edward IV. The first rebellion was led by Lambert Simnel who claimed to be the young Earl of Warwick. The second was led by Perkins Warbeck who claimed that he was the younger son of Edward IV. In reality Edward IV's son had been murdered in the Tower of London on the orders of Richard III. Henry succeeded in putting down both rebellions and ensuring that there was no return to the Wars of the Roses.

Money

Henry VII realised how much previous kings had been hampered by shortages of money. He set himself the task of acquiring as much of it as possible. He fined his enemies and confiscated their estates. Like Edward IV he made his wealthy subjects give him forced loans or benevolences. Towards the end of his reign he employed Sir Richard Empson and Sir Edmund Dudley to raise money for him. This they did by reviving old laws and fining people for having broken them. It is not surprising that these two men soon became hated throughout the kingdom. These money-making efforts allowed Henry VII to gather a vast treasure at the end of his reign and to become independent of Parliament.

The Barons

At the beginning of his reign Henry VII took back all the lands which the Crown had lost or given away since the beginning of the Wars of the Roses in 1455. Many of the barons had been killed in the Wars of the Roses. This helped the king in his quest for power. Henry then began to rid the country of the evil of Livery and Maintenance which had grown up before and during the Wars of the Roses.⁴ He passed a law against livery and maintenance and enforced it fairly against all.

The Star Chamber

The legal system in England was in a poor state. Because of the old Livery and Maintenance and the difficulties of the Wars of the Roses there was bribery and corruption. Henry needed something to make sure the local Justices of the Peace did their work fairly and well. He decided to use the Star Chamber. This royal court had existed before Henry VII's reign as a special court under the king's direct authority. Henry strengthened it and used it to deal with rebellion, lawlessness or any subjects

³ Trevelyan, G. M., op. cit., p. 289.

⁴ See Chapter 9, "The Reign Of Henry VI", p. 100.

who were becoming too powerful. The court was allowed to use torture to obtain evidence. It could not inflict the death penalty. Henry did not mind this. He preferred to fine offenders and so gain more money. The Star Chamber differed from other courts in the land in that the system of justice used was the Roman Civil Law not the Common Law.⁵ When Henry VII became king the courts that operated under Common Law were in such a bad state that the Star Chamber did a good job. Justices of the Peace were afraid of appearing before the Star Chamber and so they fulfilled their duties well.⁶

Artillery

Henry VII was greatly helped in his efforts to keep the mighty barons in check by the use of artillery. The mediaeval castle was now less important as its walls could be destroyed by artillery. The law forbade anyone except the king to possess artillery.

The Middle Classes

Henry wished to weaken the powerful barons, he also wished to strengthen the smaller gentry and the merchants. He chose his important ministers from these groups. Men of this type were usually more efficient than the old barons. They were also more dependent on the king and he could dismiss them easily if he was not pleased with them. The hated Empson and Dudley were men of this middle class.

Trade

Henry VII was keen to encourage English trade and commerce. He supported the English wool merchants who exported to Flanders and passed navigation laws to encourage the use of English ships in English trade. He also granted a charter to the Merchant Adventurers who exported English cloth. The most important of all the Tudor trading companies, the Merchant Adventurers had their continental headquarters in Antwerp. From here they traded with Northern Europe.

Henry VII also gave permission to John Cabot to sail from Bristol and attempt to find new lands. Christopher Columbus had discovered America in 1492. Cabot and his son reached Newfoundland in 1497 where they were the first to raise the English flag.⁷

The Renaissance Reaches England

We have already seen that Lollardry revived despite persecution in the reign of Henry VII. Now other ideas began to reach England which also affected the way men thought and their view of the world.

In Italy there was an awakening of interest in the ideas, art, literature and science of the ancient Greek civilisation. From Italy these ideas were carried by scholars to Oxford. A great enthusiasm arose for the Greek language. The Dutch scholar Erasmus, who published a Greek New Testament,⁸ often visited England where he was very popular.

⁵ See Chapter 6, "Common Law", p. 52.

⁶ Under later Tudor monarchs the conflict between the Roman Civil Law and Common Law became more pronounced until it reached a peak under the Stuart monarchs who followed them.

⁷ Look at an atlas to find Newfoundland on the map.

⁸ Greek was the original language of the New Testament. Before the Renaissance few could read Greek and the Bible could only be studied in Latin.

Things To Do:

There is not space in this chapter to describe in full the ideas of the Renaissance or to discuss its effect on art, music and literature. Use your own books or the library to discover the Renaissance for yourself. Try to look at some Renaissance art.

The Reformation in Europe had an important effect in England. Look up the reformers especially Martin Luther and John Calvin in reliable books e.g.: Stanton, M. and Hyma, A., *Streams of Civilisation 1* (Illinois, 1976) or Houghton, S. M., *Sketches from Church History* (Edinburgh, 1980).

The discovery and exploration of the New World of America took place at this time. Read about the explorers and discoverers for yourself and make a map showing who owned what territory in the New World in this period.

Look up in your own books or library books the *Field of the Cloth of Gold*. Try to find some pictures.

Why do you think the fact that London had printing presses helped the ideas of Londoners to dominate over those of other parts of England?

Tyndale's translation of the New Testament forms the basis of our own Authorized Version (King James Version). A facsimile of Tyndale's New Testament has been produced and it is worth trying to order a copy from your local library. One of the originals can be seen in the British Library.

Discuss with your parents:

What is the meaning of "justification by faith alone"? How does the Roman Catholic church teach we can be justified? Where do we find justification by faith taught in the Bible?

For information about the Mary Rose (Tudor ship) contact:

Mary Rose Trust
College Road
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Tel. +44 208 294 2548 – Eltham Palace direct number.
www.english-heritage.org.uk – search for 'Eltham Palace'.
www.greenwich.gov.uk – search for 'Eltham Palace'.

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Chapter 10
Worksheet

Name _____

Date _____

Who were the first two Tudor monarchs?

_____ ()

_____ ()

How were the houses of York and Lancaster united under Henry VII?

What happened to the Lollards in Henry VII's reign? _____

Who were Lambert Simnel and Perkins Warbeck?

What was Henry VII's attitude to money?

Who were Empson and Dudley?

What was the Star Chamber?

The Renaissance was a reawakening of interest in the
a_____, s_____ and l_____ of the ancient
G_____ civilization.

What important book in Greek did Erasmus publish?

Who was Catherine of Aragon and whom did she come to England to marry?

True or false?

Henry VIII inherited very little money from his father. T/F

Henry VIII was not clever and disliked sports. T/F

Cardinal Wolsey became Henry VIII's most important advisor. He almost ran the country. T/F

Henry VIII and Wolsey tried to pursue a balance of power in Europe. T/F

Henry VIII liked Martin Luther. T/F

William Tyndale's English New Testaments were smuggled into England. T/F

Henry VIII broke with the pope because he wanted to divorce Catherine of Aragon and marry Anne Boleyn. T/F

Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries. T/F

What was the "Whip with Six Strings"?

The six wives of Henry VIII. Number them in order:

Anne of Cleves [], Catherine Parr [], Catherine Howard [],
Catherine of Aragon [] Anne Boleyn [], Jane Seymour [].

Henry VIII's children:

Edward's mother was _____

Mary's mother was _____

Elizabeth's mother was _____

Can you think of one good thing that Henry did at the end of his life?
