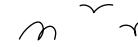


TUDORS



HOW THE TUDORS ROSE TO THE TOP?

The Tudors were a royal 'house', like the Normans and Plantagenets before them (and like the Windsors today). They first came to prominence during the Wars of the Roses – a series of bitter and brutal conflicts between the rival houses of York and Lancaster. The Tudors were a minor branch of the Lancastrians, but because so many candidates for the throne had died or been killed in the wars, their claim to the crown was stronger than almost anyone else's.



BOTHER AT BOSWORTH

In 1485 Henry Tudor invaded England and defeated Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth. He became Henry VII, and his canny marriage to Elizabeth of York brought together the houses of Lancaster and York.

Henry spent much of his reign making money, keeping the peace and restoring the crown's power over the nobility. He was pretty successful, although by the end of his reign his enthusiasm for raising money from the nobility had made him rather unpopular, too.

HENRY'S HUNT FOR AN HEIR

Henry VII died in 1509 and was succeeded by his popular 17-year-old son, Henry VIII. In his youth, Henry VIII was a model Renaissance monarch – he was cultured, athletic, keen on foreign wars, musically talented and, thanks to his dad, very wealthy.



But from the mid-1520s he was increasingly obsessed with his quest for a legitimate male heir, and because of this, his romantic life was rather rocky. Out of six wives, he divorced two and executed two. The breakdown of his first marriage and his obsession with Anne Boleyn helped bring about the English Reformation – perhaps the most significant event in the whole Tudor period. The consequences of the split from the Roman Catholic Church divided the kingdom for centuries to come.



REFORMATION AGITATION

Henry's government organised the Dissolution of the Monasteries between 1536-40, which closed hundreds of religious houses, taking their lands and wealth. There were protests and revolts against this, like the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536-7, but they were brutally put down. Henry spent his ill-gotten gains on rewarding his supporters and building a series of coastal artillery forts to counter the threat from Catholic Europe.

In his middle age Henry became tyrannical, overweight and unwell. In 1547 he was succeeded by his only son, the young Edward VI. Unlike his father, Edward was a keen Protestant, and unleashed a wave of radical reforms. But after his death in 1553, his Catholic sister Mary I undid all his reforms, and burned hundreds of Protestants at the stake, an act many found outrageous. She died in 1558.

Elizabeth I, Mary's sister, was one of England's most successful monarchs. She had her critics, but she saw off the Spanish Armada, put paid to plots, called on competent advisors and chose a middle way for the Church of England that kept a lid on religious ructions. She chose not to marry, and the Tudor line came to an end when she died in 1603.

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