

buried at Peterborough Cathedral. Her 20-year-old daughter, Mary, was refused permission to attend the ceremony.

Henry VIII, like his father before him, mistrusted the hereditary barons who had dominated the political landscape of the previous century and instead surrounded himself with the same hard-nosed administrators, many of low birth, who had helped Henry VII amass his fortune. In particular, Henry VIII was soon attracted by the energy and financial and negotiating skills of Thomas Wolsey, the son of an Ipswich butcher.

It was under Wolsey's guidance that English foreign policy was redirected over the next two decades or so, a change that was to cement Henry VIII's position as one of Europe's most preeminent statesmen. The king and Wolsey began this process by building up England's navy, turning a fleet of only a few ships into one of fifty, so that Henry's island kingdom would always remain protected. Henry VIII, unlike his father before him, was keen for war and conquest and, in 1512, landed English troops on the continent for the first time since the end of the Hundred Years War. His forces landed in Gascony and they were to form there a small part of the Holy League that joined England with Ferdinand of Aragon and the north Italian states. This alliance faced the joint force of France and the Papacy, and this first sortie by Henry VIII into modern, continental warfare proved to be an unmitigated disaster.

The king was no more than 21 years old at the time and might have been expected after this embarrassment to stay at home to lick his wounds. But Henry VIII chose differently and, in August 1513, won a stunning victory against the French at the Battle of the Spurs, so called because of the readiness of the French cavalry to ride away from the battle. As a result, the important strategic stronghold of Tournai was soon taken with the annuity arranged by Henry VII in the early years of the century doubled.

A month later, triumph in France was followed up by another decisive victory in Scotland where Henry VIII's forces, under the nominal control of Queen Catherine who had been left in England as the king's regent, defeated and killed the Scottish king at the Battle of Flodden Field, as well as most of

Just before this time, Henry VIII had written a series of religious pamphlets that had criticised the Protestant Reformation that had been initiated by Martin Luther from 1517. This had won him in 1521 the title of *Defender of the Faith* from the pope. Henry VIII and those around him were to use this papal title during the break with Rome 15 years later to justify Henry's position concerning his divorce from Catherine, his break with Rome and his claims to land held by the monasteries. But throughout his life, Henry VIII remained faithful to the doctrines of Roman Catholicism and continued to celebrate mass in Latin.

Thus, he was not a great supporter of men such as John Calvin who, in the 1530s, continued the Reformation in the footsteps of Luther. This led to a great divide in European Christian civilisation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and was a central reason for the French Wars of Religion in the 1560s. This led to the flight of many French protestants, the Huguenots, with many finding sanctuary in other protestant European countries, including Britain, while others looked further afield finding new homes on the Cape in southern Africa and many more searching for a new life in the Americas.

The Royal Divorce and Anne Boleyn

Henry VIII had remained successfully married to Catherine of Aragon for much of his adult life but decided, nonetheless, in the late 1520s, for a series of personal and diplomatic reasons, to try and end his marriage. This was to set in motion a decade-long period of crisis that was to change the course of his country's history in a way that it had not experienced since the Norman Conquest.

Henry VIII was a deeply religious man and there seems to have been within him some deep conviction that the marriage to his dead brother's wife, which was explicitly prohibited in the book of *Leviticus*, was one that was unblessed by God. Henry VIII, of course, was less keen to use other biblical references that positively encouraged this practice, but he came to believe that

For all his previous infatuation with Anne, Henry VIII was little affected by her death and, within a fortnight, had married Jane Seymour, one of Anne's former ladies-in-waiting. This perhaps says something of the enormous callousness and viciousness that seems to punctuate Henry VIII's life, and this perhaps was made even worse after January 1536 when a jousting accident, which left him unconscious for 2 hours, was to affect his mental health for the rest of his life. Within a year, this new union had at last produced a male heir, Prince Edward, thus guaranteeing the continuation of the Tudor line. However, it was also to take the life of the new prince's mother who died within days of the birth from septicaemia.

This was also the year in which Wales was absorbed into the king's expanded kingdom. This was enacted through a series of reforms that most importantly banned the Welsh language for all official government business, and reorganized the country into 13 counties, 5 of which were new, that were to be represented at parliament in Westminster.

The English Reformation and the Dissolution of the Monasteries

The central figure in the events surrounding the elevation and then the execution of Anne Boleyn was Thomas Cromwell whose power and authority over England in the 1530s even outstripped that of Wolsey in the 1520s. Cromwell was in many ways a reincarnation of Wolsey who had, within a few months, created a web of governmental servants, spies and enforcers that were to help him force through a series of changes in a decade of immense upheaval and importance in the history of the nation. Cromwell carried with him on this journey Thomas Cranmer who had started life as a lowly Cambridge theologian but who had been, at the end of 1533, elevated to become the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The first scheme of this double act had been to extract Henry VIII from his marriage to Catherine, and this they did by resurrecting various tracts that argued the omnipotence of princes in the early church. This appealed to the king's huge ego, an ego that soon led to him becoming the first English king to take the title 'majesty'. This was soon followed by the marriage and then execution of Anne Boleyn, but it was with the English Reformation, and the

her mother, who she was rarely allowed to see, died. Such was her dire position that he was even refused permission to attend her mother's funeral.

The marriage of Henry VIII to Catherine Parr brought some respite, and she had been treated well by her father's last queen. However, after his death her faith was again challenged by the Protestant cabal surrounding Edward VI who himself admonished her for celebrating mass. Mary, along with her half-sister, Princess Elizabeth, had been restored to the line of succession in 1544 but, in 1553, finally had to deal with the revolt of Northumberland that had proclaimed for the Protestant Lady Jane Grey.

However, Mary's support across the country was strong enough to rebuff this challenge and, in August 1553, she was able to enter London where she was crowned. Mary was in many ways a very good queen who enacted a series of reforms, especially connected with the collection of finance. This was to undo much of the harm done during the previous decade.

However, Mary was confused in her belief that the willingness of the people of England to accept her as their queen indicated a desire to see the restoration of the Roman Catholic faith. This was proved so very wrong when Elizabeth I took the throne a few years later. This, within a few months, had brought about the wide-ranging series of changes that led to the Protestantisation of the nation. Mary was accepted as queen for no other reason than the most obvious. After her brother, she was the legitimate heir to the throne and had been chosen as such in the will of her father, the last adult monarch.

Mary's main ambition was to restore her faith to England but this was not at all easy to do. Protestantism in its many guises had been dominant for two decades and many changes that would bring a return to the Roman faith could only be completed with an appropriate act of parliament. But parliament had grown in eminence and importance over the previous two centuries, and many inside it now resisted Mary's many overtures, threats and exhortations.

he returned without the gold he had promised and was executed in October 1618.

The Dutch Question and the Threat from Philip II

The growing aspirations in the Americas of a Protestant mercantile kingdom such as England was becoming increasingly unacceptable to Philip II who, as early as the 1560s, had given up on the idea of a marriage alliance with Elizabeth. In the decade that followed, her foreign policy had become increasingly more antagonistic and aggressive towards Spain, and losses to English piracy were making a huge dent in the war chest he needed to prosecute his war in the Low Countries.

This Dutch Revolt in the Low Countries had for a long time been a focal point of the religious battle between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism in Europe, and this clearly positioned Elizabeth I against Philip. The war had begun in the 1560s and was sparked by Philip's decision to introduce the Spanish Inquisition there. This particularly cruel and repressive institution was charged with hunting and burning heretics throughout Spanish lands in Europe and the New World, and it was responsible for sending thousands to their death. The Spanish Inquisition in the Low Countries was particularly aimed at the Calvinists who made up a majority in the local population.

The revolt quickly spread through the various provinces and princedoms that made up the Low Countries that, by 1572, had come under the control of William the Silent, the Prince of Orange. The prince was to lead the revolt until 1584 when he was to become the first ever leader to be first assassinated with a handgun. His forces united opposition to Spanish rule through the 1570s, although their battle for independence was not to be completed until 1648, at the end of the Thirty Years War, when independence from Spain was finally won.

A further reason that Elizabeth I was persuaded to support the Dutch Revolt was the fate of the French Huguenots, Protestants who had escaped the persecution of the Spanish in the Low Countries by settling in France. Many of these fled to London after massacres in France. William of Orange was

Sir Francis Drake had been promoted to second-in-command of the English navy after his successful skirmishes in Spain, and was famously playing bowls on Plymouth Hoe when the Armada first came into sight off Plymouth Sound at the end of July 1588. Whether or not there is any truth behind the enduring myth that he finished his game before moving on to the question of saving his queen's kingdom, Drake, who had been an important figure in the transformation of Elizabeth's navy into a collective national fleet, was to play a crucial role in ruining Medina Sidonia's best laid plan.

Drake's commander was Lord Howard of Effingham who knew that the fate of England rested on the successful deployment of his smaller but much more manoeuvrable ships. These needed to rush the enemy from angles from where the large Spanish guns could not unload, fire their accurate and penetrative volleys and swiftly retire. As a result, he set sail in pursuit with his fleet from Plymouth and gave orders to his commanders to hound the Armada on its eastward procession up the English Channel. However, this led to only a few Spanish losses and so Medina Sidonia was in the ascendency a week later when the Spanish Armada arrived, according to plan, near Calais at the beginning of August.

But this was a situation that was soon to be dramatically reversed with two major problems quickly facing the Spanish command. Firstly, it became clear that the Duke of Parma had perilously underestimated the power and strength of the Dutch forces that he was likely to face. With Parma's land forces hemmed in by determined Dutch resistance, the Spanish looked to their fleet for help but this too was soon in severe trouble.

The Spanish fleet was in the main made up of large galleons and these had been anchored off Calais. However, they were troubled hugely by unseasonal storms that were blowing them further and further north, and Medina Sidonia's distress was further increased when Howard ordered his commanders to attack the Armada with fireships. These attacks caused massive damage and panic in the Spanish fleet, and matters were made even worse on 8 August when an increasingly ragged-looking Armada, which had

was provided by the City of London Corporation and the Worshipful Company of Mercers, who still jointly own the freehold. It is trapezoidal in shape and is flanked by Cornhill and Threadneedle Street, which converge at Bank junction in the heart of the City. It lies in the ward of Cornhill. The building's original design was inspired by a bourse Gresham had seen in Antwerp, the Antwerp bourse, and was Britain's first specialist commercial building.

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